

West Bank Urban Renewal Plan

Great Falls, Montana



2007

Acknowledgements

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- Great Falls Neighborhood Council #2
- Great Falls Economic Development Authority
- West Bank Area Property Owners and Stakeholders
- Great Falls Planning Board

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The City of Great Falls, Montana is embarking on a program of urban renewal for the area known as West Bank, bounded on the West by 3rd Street NW/SW, on the East by the center line of the Missouri River, on the North by a point just north of 14th Avenue NW and on the South by a point just south of 5th Avenue SW. (See Figure 1, below.) The area, which has been designated by the Great Falls City Commission as the West Bank Urban Renewal District is in transition. Historically, the District was characterized by heavy industrial uses. However, as the City has grown, industrial development has shifted to the city's periphery. At the same time, the community is promoting a more diversified and integrated development within the city's core, focusing on mixed uses – recreational, commercial and residential. The West Bank's proximity to the River and associated parkland, as well as to a major roadway (3rd Street NW/SW), makes it a logical place to encourage new mixed-use development in concert with efforts to revitalize downtown Great Falls. The revitalization of the West Bank area is being undertaken in cooperation with efforts to address contamination of an area within the District, formerly occupied by a brewery and an oil refinery and currently occupied by the County Shop complex and a specialty seed mill.

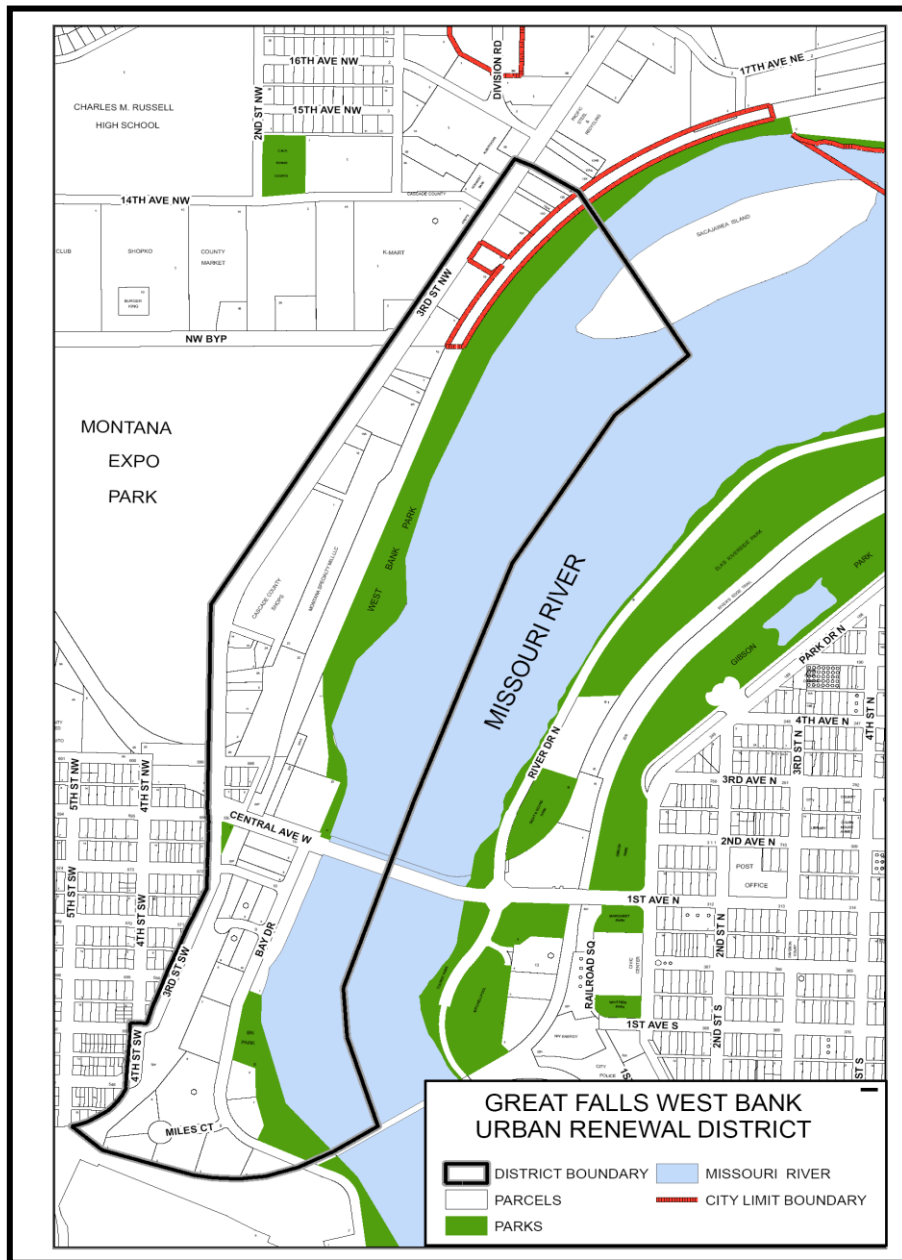
This urban renewal effort is being undertaken in accordance with the Montana Urban Renewal Law which provides for the renewal of "blighted" areas in 7-15-42 and 7-15-43, MCA, as follows:

- 7-15-4209.** Development of workable urban renewal program. (1) A municipality, for the purposes of this part and part 43, may formulate a workable program for utilizing appropriate private and public resources:
- (a) to eliminate and prevent the development or spread of blighted areas;
 - (b) to encourage needed urban rehabilitation;
 - (c) to provide for the redevelopment of such areas; or
 - (d) to undertake such of the aforesaid activities or other feasible municipal activities as may be suitably employed to achieve the objectives of such workable program.
- (2) Such workable program may include, without limitation, provision for:
- (a) the prevention of the spread of blight into areas of the municipality which are free from blight through diligent enforcement of housing, zoning, and occupancy controls and standards;
 - (b) the rehabilitation of blighted areas or portions thereof by replanning, removing congestion, providing parks, playgrounds, and other public improvements; by encouraging voluntary rehabilitation; and by compelling the repair and rehabilitation of deteriorated or deteriorating structures; and
 - (c) the clearance and redevelopment of blighted areas or portions thereof.

On November 8, 2006, the Great Falls City Commission authorized an investigation of the West Bank area. The purpose of the investigation was to determine the presence and extent of blight within the area as defined by the Montana Urban Renewal Law (7-15, Parts 42 and 43 MCA) as a first step in preparing a *West Bank Urban Renewal Plan*. The investigation culminated in a "Finding of Blight", that was adopted by Resolution 9626 (attached as Appendix A) by the Great Falls City Commission on December 5, 2006. In particular, the Resolution identified the following blighted conditions:

1. Physical deterioration of buildings and properties
 - Many of the structures in the defined area are in poor repair and properties are poorly maintained. City building permit information indicates that the majority of existing structures have not been substantially improved for at least twenty years.
2. Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings
 - The presence of existing heavy industrial uses within the defined area is incompatible with retail, commercial, residential and parkland development. This land use conflict has proven to be a disincentive to the improvement of properties within the area by private enterprise.
3. Defective street layout
 - Much of the area is without streets, sidewalks, curbs, or gutters resulting in poor traffic circulation and storm drainage problems.
4. Unsanitary and unsafe conditions
 - Portions of the defined area are included in the list of priority sites maintained by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality under the Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA) and are designated a Brownfield site as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Contamination on the site is associated with historic industrial activity and has affected both the soil and groundwater and threatens to contaminate the Missouri River.

Figure 1. Great Falls West Bank Urban Renewal District



Statement of Purpose

Changes in land use in the West Bank area, in conjunction with the proposed removal of contamination associated with historic industrial activities, provides an opportunity for area redevelopment through public-private partnerships. The City of Great Falls has chosen to participate in this redevelopment effort through the creation of an urban renewal program, including a tax increment financing (TIF) provision to help fund public investment in the area.

This Urban Renewal Plan provides direction to the City of Great Falls in fostering the revitalization and economic development of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. The Plan provides a “platform” for redevelopment activities that will be undertaken by a variety of public and private entities over the next several decades. More particularly, this Plan recommends a series of programs and projects that will be undertaken by the local government to encourage reinvestment in the District and to address blighted conditions that have diminished the environmental, economic and cultural well-being of the West Bank area over time.

Although the Montana Urban Renewal Law recognizes that eliminating urban blight is a matter of public interest, this Plan has been developed, based on the underlying principle that it is the citizens who work, reside and own property in the West Bank Renewal District who will be engaged directly in the revitalization effort. Further, the Plan has been prepared with respect to three Guiding Principles as follows:

- The plan for the West Bank Urban Renewal District should foster economic development and job creation.
- The improvement of the overall environmental quality of the West Bank Urban Renewal District is critical.
- Protection and enhancement of the West Bank Park and the Missouri River, which form the eastern boundary of the District are key in the redevelopment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District.

The West Bank Urban Renewal Plan outlines the approach that the City of Great Falls will take in responding to blighted conditions within the District. The Plan recommends ways to comprehensively address the problems and opportunities that face the area. However, the Plan recognizes that this area is in transition and therefore prescribes a large measure of flexibility in devising solutions and provides for ongoing planning on the part of the City, the residents, the businesses and property owners.

Chapter 2. Description of the Urban Renewal District

Legal Description of the West Bank Urban Renewal District

The West Bank Urban Renewal District includes all that real property in the City of Great Falls, County of Cascade, State of Montana, which lies within the following described boundary, excluding any unincorporated property, as of October 2006:

“The POINT OF BEGINNING is at the intersection of the north right of way line of 4th Avenue SW and the east right of way line of 4th Street SW; thence northeasterly along the west right of way line of 3rd Street SW and 3rd Street NW to its intersection with the northwest/southeast projection of the north property line of the parcel of land legally described as Mark No.13, Section 2, Township 20 North, Range 3 East (Geo-code #3015-02-1-10-06); thence southeasterly along the northwest/southeast projection of the north property line of the parcel of land legally described as Mark No.13, Section 2, Township 20 North, Range 3 East (Geo-code #3015-02-1-10-06) to the centerline of the Missouri River; thence southwesterly/southeasterly along the centerline of the Missouri River to the north edge of the BNSF Railway/Missouri River Bridge; thence southwesterly along the north edge of the BNSF Railway/Missouri River Bridge and the north right of way line of the BNSF Railway main line (coincidental with the south property line of Lots 1-4, Block 9, BN Car Shop Addition to Great Falls) to its extended connection with the south end of the east right of way line of 5th Street SW (coincidental with the southwest corner of Lot 10, Block 546, 6th Addition to Great Falls); thence northeasterly along the west right of way line of the BNSF Railway spur line (coincidental with the south/southeast boundary of Block 546, 6th Addition to Great Falls) to the intersection of the south right of way line of 5th Avenue SW and the west right of way line of 4th Street SW; thence north along the west right of way line of 4th Street SW to its intersection with the north right of way line of 4th Avenue SW; thence east to the POINT OF BEGINNING.”

Area History

Historically, the west side of the Missouri River in Great Falls was the home of Montana’s largest gasoline refinery, built by the Great Falls Sunburst Oil and Refinery Company. The refinery began operations in early 1923 along the 300 and 400 block of 3rd Street Northwest and was subsequently purchased by the California Eastern Oil Company in 1927. Cascade County took possession of the property in 1936 after California Eastern failed to pay gasoline license taxes and associated delinquent fees. By 1938 Cascade County had constructed its shops (Figure 2) at the site (Great Falls Tribune, December 16, 2001).



Figure 2 Cascade County Shops

The West Bank area includes the site of the former Montana Brewing Company complex, built in 1893-94, just north of Central Avenue West, along the Missouri River. In 1933, it became the malt plant for the Great Falls Brewery, Inc., finally closing in 1968. (Figure 3.) The last remnants of the site were finally removed in July of 2006 to make way for a new 54,000 square foot Federal Courthouse (July 11, 2006, Sun River News).

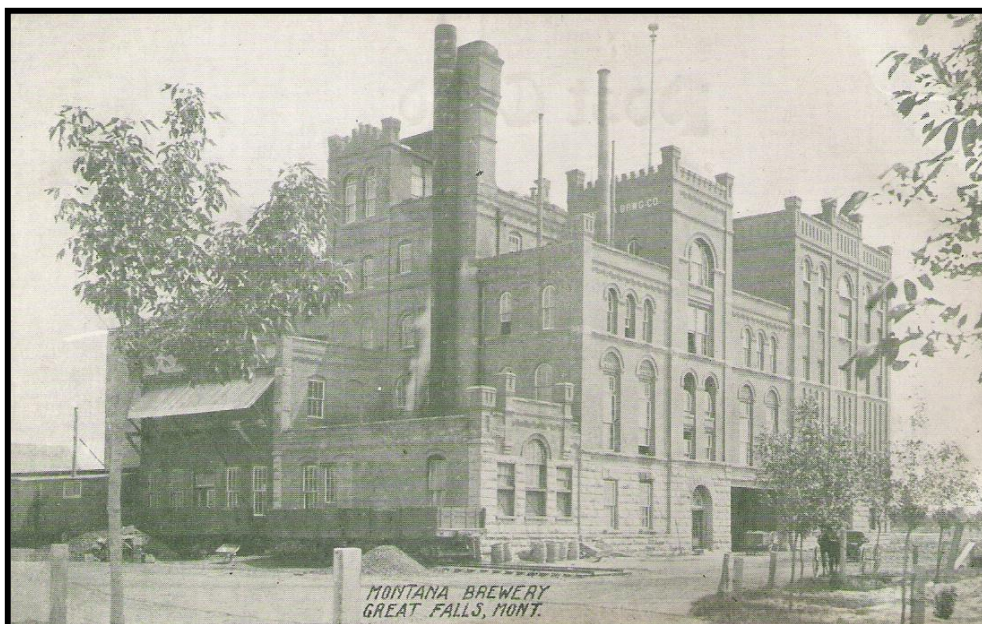


Figure 3. Montana Brewery.

Existing Characteristics

The West Bank Urban Renewal District continues to be largely characterized by industrial and warehouse uses. It also contains a small number of residences and a variety of retail and service oriented businesses, including a veterinary clinic, the Cowboy's Bar and the J Bar T Tavern. The area just south of the County Shops and Montana Specialty Mills includes the site where the new Federal Courthouse will be built. South of Central Avenue West, the District is more sparsely developed, but includes the Montana Association of Electrical Cooperatives offices as well as a former highway department structure, now held privately (Figure 4). The northern end of the District is directly adjacent to a growing commercial area. It includes the Stockman Bank, built within the last few years and will include a new Walgreens Pharmacy, already under construction.



Figure 4. Former Highway Department Building

The District encompasses portions of two Census Tracts (See Table 1) and 51 parcels. A list of the properties by parcel is included in Appendix B.

Census Tract	Census Block Group	Block Number	Population	Housing Units
16	2	2000	0	0
16	2	2017*	45	15
16	5	5001	8	3
16	5	5002	0	0
16	5	5004	0	0
16	5	5005	0	0
18	3	3000*	4	2
18	3	3019**	0	0
18	3	3020*	0	0
Totals			57	20

Source: U.S. Census (2000 Information)

Notes: * Only a portion of this block is in the Urban Renewal District

** This is the parcel that is not incorporated into the City of Great Falls

Census designations are noted in Figure 5.

Zoning Designation

The City of Great Falls has zoned the West Bank area M-2, *Mixed-use Transitional*. The Great Falls Zoning Ordinance describes an M-2 zone as follows: “This zoning designation is intended to promote a transition over time to a predominately mixed-use land use pattern. Because of changing economic conditions and other factors, some current uses do not represent the highest and best use, given other more suitable areas. Current industrial uses and warehouses are not considered nonconforming. As such, current industrial uses and warehouses existing at the time this Title was adopted are allowed to expand or to be re-established, if damaged, provided development and appearance standards under the purview of the Design Review Board are met.”

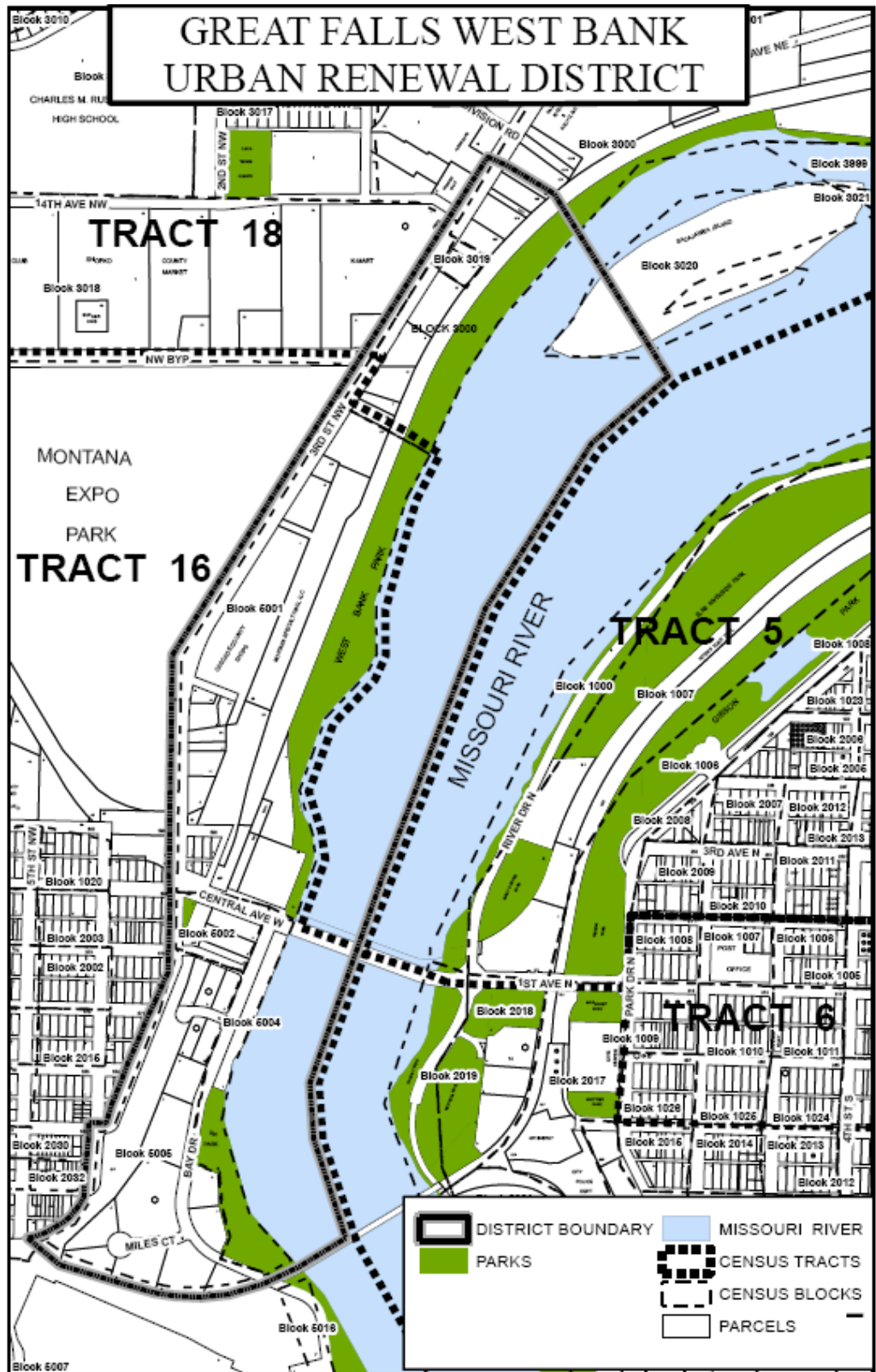


Figure 5. Census Designations

Chapter 3. Key Findings

This chapter of the Urban Renewal Plan provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities associated with the redevelopment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. Information presented here has been gleaned from interviews and meetings with area property owners and residents, local government staff, Neighborhood Council #2 and other area stakeholders. While the West Bank Urban Renewal District can be characterized as blighted, the area has a number of recognized assets that will help foster redevelopment. For example, there is wide-spread support for area revitalization among property owners, stakeholders and the community in general.

Area Assets and Opportunities

The Missouri River and West Bank Park

The West Bank Urban Renewal District is bounded on the east by West Bank Park and the Missouri River which provide important scenic, natural, historic and recreational resources to residents and visitors. As noted in the 2004 *Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan*, the River is “a major community asset for enhanced livability, growth and economic development”. The District’s proximity to the river, in combination with West Bank Park can attract new development. The *Corridor Plan* also points out that the “Riverfront...creates real estate value [associated with its] proximity to water, views and public open space.”

Proximity to Downtown/Combating Urban Sprawl

The City’s plan to undertake the renewal of the West Bank area can be viewed as part of the overall effort to revitalize the city’s central business district and to discourage urban sprawl in general. As noted in the 2002 Great Falls Development Authority’s proposal to EPA for Brownfield Assessment grant funds, the redevelopment of “lands that have existing infrastructure...makes good planning sense, and it keeps redevelopment affordable and reduces urban sprawl. It also creates jobs in the city, close to where people live.”

Proximity to Transportation Corridors

The West Bank area is situated along two critical four-lane arterials – Central Avenue West and 3rd Street NW, which provide important links between downtown Great Falls, Interstate 15, the airport and the fairgrounds. The area has experienced increased traffic counts on 3rd Street Northwest and the Northwest Bypass, offering opportunities for successful development. The 2003 *Great Falls Area Transportation Plan* identifies 3rd Street Northwest as a major traffic corridor that is experiencing heavy traffic volumes.

Finally, railroad service is provided on an as needed basis to service Montana Specialty Mills and Montana Refining Company.

Existing and Proposed Area Development

As noted above, the West Bank Urban Renewal District is experiencing a change in land use, from heavy industrial to mixed uses. The new Federal Building, to be located on the former brewery property and the Walgreens Pharmacy, which is under construction in the northern portion of the District, will provide two important anchors for the District. The area is also home to a number of retail and service businesses. Finally, the Montana Expo Park borders the District on the west, providing an important traffic generator, as well as a potential partner in redevelopment efforts.

Challenges

Clean-up of Contaminants

The Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site is located within the West Bank Urban Renewal District and includes the County Shops, Montana Specialty Mills, portions of the BNSF Railway spur and West Bank Park. The Site is listed on the State of Montana's "Mini- Superfund Sites" because of petrochemical related contamination. Figure 6 shows the contaminated portion of the District.

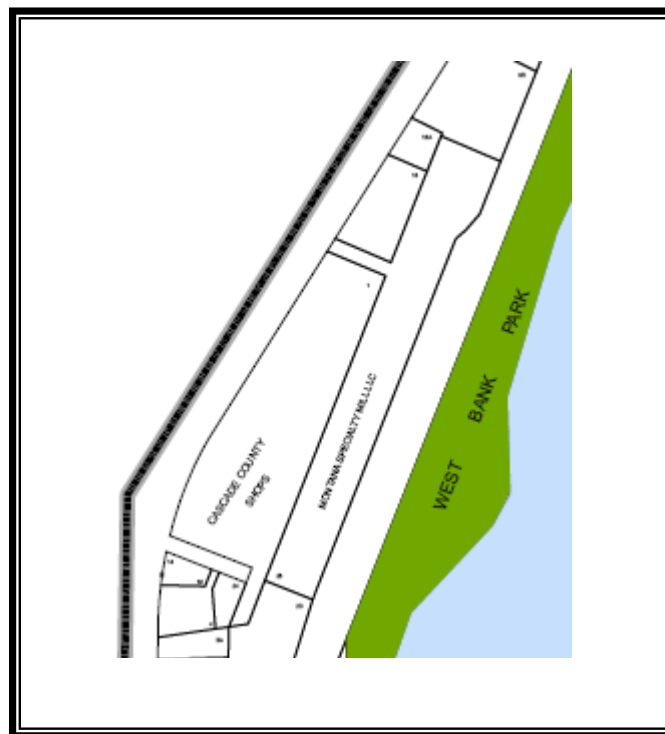


Figure 6. Contaminated Area

Clean-up of these contaminants will occur sequentially. For example, contaminants cannot be removed from West Bank Park until the County Shops and Montana Specialty Mill areas are addressed, because they are the “upstream” source of the pollutants. (See Table 2, Remediation Schedule in Chapter 4.) Redevelopment cannot occur in these areas until clean-up is complete.

Lot Size

Some of the properties within the urban renewal district are too small to accommodate new office or commercial development. Prior to significant redevelopment occurring, some of the smaller parcels of land will have to be consolidated, particularly those at the southern end of the District.

Access

While the District is adjacent to major arterials, access to and within the West Bank area is limited. In addition to the absence of roads, the railroad tracks that run north-south and parallel to the riverfront make it difficult to address the District’s transportation needs of vehicles and pedestrians. In particular, the sidetrack which currently serves Montana Specialty Mills, and which will no longer be needed once the mill is relocated, limits east-west access through a large portion of the District. Overall, the area lacks the necessary infrastructure to link recreational and commercial uses, which will ultimately be key to the successful redevelopment of the District.

Blighted Conditions in the West Bank Urban Renewal District

A Finding of Blight report for the West Bank Urban Renewal District was prepared in November of 2006. The following excerpts provide a general overview of blighted conditions in the District.

Physical deterioration of buildings

Although most of the buildings within the proposed West Bank Urban Renewal District are in use, the area generally has a deteriorating appearance. Many structures are in poor repair and properties are often poorly maintained, cluttered with refuse and waste storage areas.

According to building permit information prepared by the Great Falls Community Development Department, the majority of structures in the proposed district were constructed prior to the 1980s and many were constructed in the 1950s. While age alone does not indicate deterioration, permit information indicates that few major improvements have been made in recent decades.

Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings

The eastern edge of the West Bank Urban Renewal District includes portions of West Bank Park, an important recreation and scenic resource for the City of Great Falls. The park is located adjacent to areas that have been blighted by industrial pollution and refuse storage sites. These detract from and diminish the quality of the park. The District includes a number of retail and service establishments, reflective of the land uses on those properties adjacent to the urban renewal district. The presence of heavy industrial activities in close proximity to these less intensive uses creates incompatibilities associated with industrial noise, odor and dust.

The West Bank Urban Renewal District also includes a small number of homes. The presence of heavy industrial sites in close proximity to residences can result in the devaluation of property over time. A review of residential property values within the district indicates that while the land values have increased slightly, the value of improvements has stagnated between 2000 and 2006.

Public Infrastructure/Defective or Inadequate Street Layout

The sewer and water lines within the district were installed primarily in the 1960's and 1970's to serve the commercial and large industrial users in the area. There are also some large sewer trunk lines which traverse the area from south to north. They are generally in good condition and would be able to accommodate new commercial, office and residential development. (See Appendix C, Public Utilities.) The streets that are in the area serve the perimeter of the planning area well, but are virtually non-existent in the interior, especially on the north end of the district. Access is very poor to the area between the River and the railroad tracks. Of the roads that do exist, some require paving, while others should be realigned. The district is characterized by large industrial and heavy commercial uses and in some cases, there is no public access to individual sites via roads. For example, better access is needed to West Bank Park and the new Federal Building that is slated for construction to the north of Central Avenue West. Overall the interior of the area lacks sidewalks, curbs and gutters, landscaping and adequate lighting.

Unhealthy or Unsafe Conditions

The West Bank Urban Renewal District includes the Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site, which is listed on the Montana Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA) listing of "Mini-Superfund" priority sites. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, contaminants at the site include benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, chlorinated solvents and phenols. (Great Falls Tribune, December 16, 2001)

In 2002, the Great Falls Development Authority applied for and obtained a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Assessment Grant as a first step in facilitating the redevelopment of the West Bank area. Brownfields are defined as those properties for which the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. (<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>)

The proposal to EPA noted that the potential for in-fill development and reuse of lands in the West Bank area had been “marginalized” by the environmental pollution, creating a “lost opportunity” for reinvestment in the area. (Great Falls Riverfront Redevelopment Project...Final Grant Proposal).

Chapter 4. Goals and Strategies of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan

This chapter presents the goals and strategies of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan by category of concern.

Remediation of Environmental Pollutants

The West Bank Urban Renewal District includes the Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site, which is listed on the Montana Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA) listing of “Mini-Superfund” priority sites. CECRA provides the Montana Department of Environmental Quality with similar authorities as provided under the federal Superfund Act. CECRA ranks these sites as maximum, high, medium, low and operation and maintenance priority based on the severity of contamination at the facility and the actual and potential impacts of contamination to public health, safety, and welfare and the environment. The Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site has been listed with a ranking of medium. (<http://www.deq.state.mt.us/StateSuperfund/index.asp>). According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, contaminants at the site include benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, chlorinated solvents and phenols. (Great Falls, *Tribune*, December 16, 2001)

In 2002, the Great Falls Development Authority applied for and obtained a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Assessment Grant as a first step in facilitating the redevelopment of the West Bank area. Brownfields are defined as those properties for which the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. (<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>). The proposal noted that the grant would help “facilitate development through completion of environmental assessments on properties in the area...and would identify the nature and severity of contamination on the properties and allow for the selection of cleanup remedies”. (*Finding of Blight Report*, 2006)

Cascade County is largely responsible for the removal of contaminants from the Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site which includes the site of the County Shops and Montana Specialty Mills (Figure 7). The clean-up of contaminants should occur sequentially. The clean-up phases are summarized below in Table 2. (Commencement dates, as provided by Cascade County, are approximate.)

Table 2. Remediation Schedule for the Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site		
Phase	Corrective Action	Proposed Date of Commencement
I	Remove contaminants from Cascade County Road and Bridge Department Shop (southern end of property)	November, 2007
II	Remove contaminants from Montana Specialty Mills site	Late, 2008
III	Clean-up Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) right of way	2009
IV	Clean-up West Bank Park area	2010
V	Remove contaminants from the Cascade County Solid Waste District Shop (northern end of property)	2007-2008
VI	Clean-up northeast area of County Shop	2007-2008

The *Great Falls Growth Policy* notes that Brownfields are currently “dealt with on a case-by-case basis, with clean-up usually funded as part of the cost of redeveloping the property”. The removal of contaminants in the West Bank Urban Renewal District by Cascade County will enable the property to be redeveloped for non-industrial uses. While the City of Great Falls is not responsible for contaminant removal, the Urban Renewal Plan must reflect the timing of clean-up activities.



Figure 7. Montana Specialty Mills

Goal: Foster development in the West Bank Urban Renewal District in phases with respect to the availability of land following the removal of contaminants.

Strategies:

- Communicate regularly with Cascade County to enable the coordination of development activities as contaminants are removed.
- Work with Cascade County in determining an approach to clean-up non-county properties including the BNSF railroad and West Bank Park.

Public Infrastructure Improvements

Sewer and Water Services

The sewer and water lines within the West Bank Urban Renewal District were installed primarily in the 1960's and 1970's to serve the commercial and large industrial users in the area. There are also some large sewer trunk lines which traverse the area from south to north. They are generally in good condition and would be able to accommodate new development. However, due to the lack of streets, curbs and sidewalks in the area, the storm drain system is inadequate and will have to be addressed.

Goal: Ensure that all land uses within the West Bank Urban Renewal District have safe water supplies, environmentally sound wastewater disposal systems, solid waste recycling/collection programs, and stormwater management systems that protect the public health, safety and welfare." (Great Falls Growth Policy, 2005)

Strategies:

- Work with the City of Great Falls Public Works Department to assure that the sewer and water infrastructure is appropriate for the scale and type of proposed development in the West Bank Urban Renewal District.
- Evaluate the current condition of the storm drain system with respect to proposed development within the West Bank Urban Renewal District and make improvements accordingly.

Area Access – Pedestrian and Vehicular

The streets in the area serve the perimeter of the Urban Renewal District well, but are virtually non-existent in the interior, especially on the north end of the District. Access is very poor to the area between the River and the railroad tracks. Of the roads that do exist, some require paving, while others should be realigned. The District is characterized by large industrial and heavy commercial uses and in some cases there is no public road access to individual sites. Better access is needed to West Bank Park and

the new Federal Building that is slated for construction to the north of Central Avenue West. In addition to the absence of roads within the District, it is difficult to access 3rd Street Northwest and Central Avenue West via a left turn from the existing roads within the District. The entire interior of the District lacks sidewalks, curbs and gutters. (*Finding of Blight Report*)

Goal: Provide a safe, efficient, accessible and cost-effective transportation system that offers viable choices for moving people and goods throughout the West Bank Urban Renewal District. (*Great Falls Growth Policy*)

Strategies:

- Identify and construct road system improvements for the West Bank Urban Renewal District that serve existing and proposed uses and address:
 - Access to and within the District
 - Sidewalks/Trails
 - Curbs
 - Gutters and Storm Drains
- Install traffic control signals and other safety features to improve access at appropriate locations.
- Work with BNSF to identify ways to provide access across the railroad right-of-way for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- Work with BNSF to determine the feasibility of removing the sidetrack rail serving Montana Specialty Mills to accommodate better access to the area.
- Provide for pedestrian access to and within the West Bank Urban Renewal District, providing links to Montana ExpoPark, West Bank Park, River's Edge Trail and nearby residential areas.

Park Development

West Bank Park (Figure 8) is an important area and community resource. Protection and enhancement of the Park is a key component in the redevelopment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. More particularly, the Park is located within the Primary Impact Area, as defined in the *Great Falls Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan* (2004), "which includes those lands that have strong relationships to the river..." The Plan, which was called for in the 1999 *Great Falls City-County Comprehensive Plan* (now the *Great Falls Growth Policy, 2005*) presents a vision for what is possible in this corridor and includes general recommendations for access to the river, trails and the maintenance of public land. A companion document, the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment* (September 2002) characterizes existing conditions in the Corridor and makes recommendations for appropriate stabilization and recreational improvements.

The West Bank Park has also been identified by Great Falls Neighborhood Council #2 as an important neighborhood asset that contributes to the quality of life in the area and ties well to the Montana Expo Park. Area property owners have noted that West Bank Park and the riverfront help contribute to adjacent property values and provide an attractive setting for tenants and customers.



Figure 8. West Bank Park (Missouri River Corridor Plan)

Goal: Maintain and Improve West Bank Park within the West Bank Urban Renewal District.

Strategies:

- Prepare and Implement a Park Improvement Plan that addresses:
 - Pedestrian and Vehicular Access
 - Vegetation and Habitat
 - Trail & Pedestrian Use Within the Park
 - Connections to the River's Edge Trail System
 - Park Amenities and Facilities
 - Maintenance
 - Implementation Tools and Resources
- Work with adjacent property owners and developers to address Park access, visual integration with adjoining development/uses, and maintenance.

Area Design Features, Including Lighting and Landscaping

The *Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan* observes that "...there is a hodgepodge of poor quality design elements. In some areas, Quonset hut-style buildings and other structures of little aesthetic or architectural value, a surplus of unattractive and prominent signage, and a lack of unifying design details like street lighting and landscaping have resulted in a chaotic, unappealing environment. Development of this type discourages investment and upgrade to area properties." Design concepts such as buffering, shared open spaces, connection to public spaces, preservation of river views, street trees, and mixed uses are all encouraged to promote area identity, marketability and area vibrancy.

In addition, the *Great Falls Growth Policy* notes that it is the policy of the City to "encourage and promote street tree planting throughout the community and as a matter of policy, consider street trees as public infrastructure with priorities for preservation, replacement and maintenance".

Landscaping undertaken in association with development of streets, sidewalks and trails will serve to enhance the West Bank Urban Renewal District. In addition, the area will need adequate lighting to provide a safe and welcoming environment.

Goal: Urban Renewal Projects should be designed in a manner that is respectful of the area's natural and cultural setting with particular attention to landscaping and lighting.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement an urban tree planting program for the West Bank Urban Renewal District in association with the development of streets and sidewalks and in conjunction with the City Parks & Recreation Department that defines appropriate species, planting cycles and maintenance. Per the *Great Falls Growth Policy*, the City should prepare and implement a comprehensive planting, management and maintenance plan for street trees in the public rights-of-way.
- Identify an appropriate light standard that can be used throughout the District in conjunction with public improvements and private development.
- Encourage the preparation and adoption by area property owners of area-wide development standards to provide for cohesive development with a unique identity. Such standards could be used by developers when preparing plans and by the City's Design Review Board when considering proposed developments. This could be accomplished through the creation of neighborhood conservation overlay district.

Community and Economic Development

The *Great Falls Growth Policy* identifies a series of economic development goals, including the following that directly relate to the West Bank Urban Renewal District. These are:

- Diversify the base economy
- Enhance, strengthen and expand the existing economic base
- Encourage businesses and industries that will utilize existing infrastructure

The redevelopment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District can strengthen the economic base of Great Falls while taking advantage of existing sewer and water infrastructure within the urban core. This approach helps to counter urban sprawl and the associated costs in providing public services.

Fostering Private Development

The West Bank Urban Renewal Plan calls for public improvements in the West Bank Urban Renewal District in support of new investment. The role of the private sector will be critical in the redevelopment process. Private investments made in the area will, in turn, provide the City with the necessary financial resources (via Tax Increment Financing and other mechanisms) to develop public infrastructure that will contribute to the overall revitalization of the area.

This Urban Renewal Plan provides the necessary administrative structure to direct community resources to renewal activities within the District. However, it will be the private sector that undertakes specific site planning and development activities on privately owned lands. To achieve a high quality of design, representatives of private property owners, including Cascade County and area developers will work together to prepare a development master plan that will reflect the following underlying principles:

- ✓ Public access to West Bank Park and other riverfront parks will be incorporated into area design schemes.
- ✓ Lighting, street design and other landscaping features will be consistent throughout the District. Unifying architectural features and signage is also encouraged.
- ✓ Development will be phased in accordance with the contaminated soils clean-up schedule, as developed by Cascade County and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Goal: Encourage thoughtful, well designed private development activity.

Strategies:

- Encourage the preparation of a development master plan for the West Bank District by property owners and developers that recognizes the sequential nature of the removal of pollutants from the area.
- Encourage the preparation of a development master plan that addresses the various sub-areas within the Urban Renewal District as follows:
 - The area to the south of the Cascade County Shops (including the area south of Central Avenue
 - The area that includes both the Cascade County Shops and the Montana Specialty Mills (MSM)
 - The area to the north of the Shops and MSM
- Consider the use of protective covenants in addition to existing zoning provisions to assure high quality development within the area
- Facilitate thoughtful project design that focuses on enhancing and protecting the area's natural and scenic resources
- Work with the private sector to identify public infrastructure needs for the area.
- Work with BNSF to determine the feasibility of removing the sidetrack rail serving Montana Specialty Mills to create more privately-owned land for development
- Foster cooperative efforts among public and private entities to achieve the goals of the Urban Renewal Plan
- Work with property owners and developers to identify opportunities to realign Bay Drive to facilitate redevelopment

Working in Partnership with Downtown

The City's plan to undertake the renewal of the West Bank District is part of an overall effort to revitalize the City's urban core and to discourage urban sprawl in general. The redevelopment of the West Bank District will serve to both expand and enhance Great Falls' urban center. The proposed private and public investment in the West Bank District will enable the City's core business area to encompass both sides of the Missouri River, taking full advantage of this important asset.

Goal: Coordinate the West Bank Urban Renewal program with ongoing efforts to revitalize Downtown Great Falls.

Strategies:

- Coordinate planning efforts between the West Bank District and Downtown.

- Identify joint activities, such as the creation of transportation and recreation services that connect Downtown and the West Bank District.

Historic/Cultural Resources

Historically, the west side of the Missouri River in Great Falls was the home of Montana's largest gasoline refinery, built by the Great Falls Sunburst Oil and Refinery Company. The refinery began operations in early 1923 along the 300 and 400 blocks of 3rd Street Northwest and was subsequently purchased by the California Eastern Oil Company in 1927. Cascade County took possession of the property in 1936 after California Eastern failed to pay gasoline license taxes and associated delinquent fees. By 1938, Cascade County had constructed its road and bridge department shops at the site (Great Falls, *Tribune*, December 16, 2001). The West Bank District also included the site of the former Montana Brewing Company complex, built in 1893-94, just north of Central Avenue West, along the Missouri River. In 1933, it became the malt plant for the Great Falls Breweries, Inc., which closed in 1968. The last remnants of the site were removed in July, 2006 to make way for a new 54,000 square foot Federal Courthouse (*Sun River News*, July 11, 2006).

Today, there are 51 parcels in the West Bank Urban Renewal District, including a small number of residences and a variety of retail and service oriented businesses, such as, a veterinary clinic, J Bar T Tavern, and the Cowboy's Bar. Overall, the West Bank District is undergoing a transition from heavy industrial uses to commercial and retail uses, reflective of development that is occurring on adjacent properties, particularly along 3rd Street NW/SW. As this transition continues, it will be important to take stock of the remaining historic properties and to plan carefully for their interpretation, preservation and appropriate integration into area development. For example, the Montana Cowboy's Association is interested in having the Cowboy's Bar and associated museum placed on the National Register of Historic Places. (See Figure 9, below.) Additionally, the Missouri River and Sacagawea Island are important natural, cultural and historic resources that should be included in any area assessments. Other properties may be eligible for listing as well. Most federal and state grant programs require applicants to address potential impacts on properties eligible for listing in the National Register. An inventory of historic resources would help assure more thoughtful development.

Goal: Assess, preserve and interpret historic and cultural resources within the West Bank Urban Renewal District.

Strategies:

- Conduct an inventory of historic and cultural resources within the West Bank Urban Renewal District
- Work with private property owners to preserve historic sites
- Develop a pedestrian oriented interpretive program to include information concerning:
 - Existing sites of historic or cultural interest
 - Former occupants of the area
 - Environmental history of the area
 - History of the River



Figure 9. Cowboy's Bar

Natural Resources

The Missouri River and the associated West Bank Park are the defining features of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. Not only do these resources make the area more attractive for investment and overall community renewal, but they are intrinsic to the quality of life in the City of Great Falls and the surrounding region. They offer scenic and recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors to Great Falls.

The area along the River has undergone a significant transition. As recently as 20 years ago, the current West Bank Park was the site of a construction waste dump. The area was “reclaimed” through a major effort to remove the waste and restore the river front area, providing an important recreation resource for the people of Great Falls. The Park is now part of the city wide park system and a key component of the public corridor along the Missouri River.

The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan identifies guiding principles and “communicates a vision for economic vitality” associated with the River while, at the same time recognizing “that the River is a vital part of a large ecosystem and that the environmental integrity of the River must be protected.” The following Urban Renewal Plan Goal is taken directly from the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan*.

Goal: Promote beneficial, sustainable economic development that utilizes the River as an amenity while preserving and enhancing its ecological integrity and asset values.

Strategies

- Restore, enhance and protect water quality, natural shoreline vegetation and wetlands in association with improvements to West Bank Park and the River’s Edge Trail
- Assure that the environmental health of the River will not be compromised by development
- Work with property owners to develop shoreline protection programs in conjunction with their development activities

Chapter 5. Planning Approach – The Defining Elements

The design and implementation of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan is being undertaken in a manner that is reflective of sound public policy and thoughtful planning. To this end, a number of “defining” elements have been identified that will characterize the projects and activities undertaken in connection with the revitalization and redevelopment of the West Bank area.

Sub Area Planning – Phased Development

The West Bank Urban Renewal District is likely to be developed in stages. The sequential nature of the removal of contaminants from the area currently occupied by the County Shops and Montana Specialty Mills will dictate, to some extent, which lands are redeveloped first. Given that the removal of contaminants will not be completed for approximately three years, the areas to the north and south of the Third Street Northwest Groundwater Site will likely be developed first. The building of the new Federal Courthouse to the south and the new Walgreens Pharmacy to the north provide examples of likely development patterns. Private development and public infrastructure improvements should be designed in a manner that will allow for phased implementation.

Thoughtful Design

The location of the West Bank Urban Renewal District, adjacent to the Missouri River and West Bank Park, requires that projects are designed in a manner that is sensitive to the area’s natural resources. The River and the Park add value to the lands within the District by providing an aesthetically pleasing environment within which reinvestment can occur. Urban renewal projects should serve to complement these resources rather than create a development pattern that diminishes their value. Thoughtful, well-designed development will, in turn, enhance the natural setting, drawing additional investment.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The successful implementation of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan will rely on cooperation between the City of Great Falls, Cascade County and the State of Montana. Cascade County, over the next several years, will be working with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to address contaminated soils in the central portions of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. Following clean-up, the County will exercise its options regarding redevelopment of its properties. It will be important for Cascade County to be involved with other property owners in the West Bank Urban Renewal District, as well as the City of Great Falls in planning for the District’s redevelopment. The County’s participation in the development master planning

process for the area will be particularly critical. The proximity of the Montana Expo Park with the Renewal District is also a key factor in redevelopment. The Expo Park provides an important area asset that can help contribute to the District's revitalization.

Public Investment

The revitalization of the West Bank Urban Renewal District will require cooperation between the public and private sectors. As noted above, the City of Great Falls intends to invest in public infrastructure improvements in order to foster private investment. Public improvement projects will be undertaken in support of private development and with respect to area master plans developed by area property owners and investors. Funding for public infrastructure improvements will come from a number of sources including, but not limited to Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Specific projects will be undertaken in accordance with the Montana Urban Renewal Law, 7-15-42 and 7-15-43, MCA.

Planning Consistency

Conformity with the Growth Policy

This Urban Renewal Plan must conform to the Great Falls, *Growth Policy*, adopted in 2005, per 7-15-4213, MCA. Where appropriate, specific reference has been made to the *Growth Policy*, particularly in Chapter 4 of this Plan. *On February 27, 2007, the Great Falls City Planning Board reviewed this Urban Renewal Plan and found it to be in conformance with the Growth Policy, per statutory requirements.*

Other Planning Documents

In the preparation of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan, a variety of other planning documents were consulted to assure that the Urban Renewal Plan would work in concert with other efforts to plan for the future of Great Falls. These included:

- Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory and Assessment (2002)
- Great Falls Area Transportation Plan (2003)
- Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan (2004)

Chapter 6. Implementation

The West Bank Urban Renewal Plan sets a direction for redevelopment and revitalization of the West Bank Urban Renewal District. Upon its adoption, this Plan will serve as the official policy guide for public action. However, these policies can only be transformed to action through an effective implementation program. Key to implementation will be sound processes of administration, financing and program evaluation.

Administration

The administration of the redevelopment effort outlined in this plan will be the responsibility of the Great Falls City Commission. Under 7-15- 4232, the City Commission may choose to create a separate urban renewal agency or authorize an existing department to implement this Urban Renewal Plan. However, it is the intent of the Commission to retain the responsibility and authority for administering the West Bank Urban Renewal Program. Various city departments will be authorized by the Commission to undertake specific tasks associated with implementation as necessary.

Each year the City of Great Falls, or the authorized department will prepare an annual work program and budget and will list the activities and costs of the activities for the coming fiscal year, as well as the method of financing those activities. This program and budget may be amended during the course of the fiscal year, in light of funding and program changes. All budgets and revised budgets shall be reviewed and approved by the City of Great Falls. Urban renewal activities undertaken by the City of Great Falls will be in accordance with Montana State statute. (See specific provisions below.)

7-15-4233. Powers which may be exercised by urban renewal agency or authorized department. (1) In the event the local governing body makes such determination, such body may authorize the urban renewal agency or department or other officers of the municipality to exercise any of the following urban renewal project powers:

- (a) to formulate and coordinate a workable program as specified in [7-15-4209](#);
- (b) to prepare urban renewal plans;
- (c) to prepare recommended modifications to an urban renewal project plan;
- (d) to undertake and carry out urban renewal projects as required by the local governing body;
- (e) to make and execute contracts as specified in [7-15-4251](#), [7-15-4254](#), [7-15-4255](#), and [7-15-4281](#), with the exception of contracts for the purchase or sale of real or personal property;
- (f) to disseminate blight clearance and urban renewal information;
- (g) to exercise the powers prescribed by [7-15-4255](#), except the power to agree to conditions for federal financial assistance and imposed pursuant to federal law relating to salaries and wages shall be reserved to the local governing body;
- (h) to enter any building or property in any urban renewal area in order to make surveys and appraisals in the manner specified in [7-15-4257](#);
- (i) to improve, clear, or prepare for redevelopment any real or personal property in an urban renewal area;
- (j) to insure real or personal property as provided in [7-15-4258](#);
- (k) to effectuate the plans provided for in [7-15-4254](#);
- (l) to prepare plans for the relocation of families displaced from an urban renewal area and to coordinate public and private agencies in such relocation;
- (m) to prepare plans for carrying out a program of voluntary or compulsory repair and rehabilitation of buildings and improvements;
- (n) to conduct appraisals, title searches, surveys, studies, and other preliminary plans and work necessary to prepare for the undertaking of urban renewal projects;
- (o) to negotiate for the acquisition of land;
- (p) to study the closing, vacating, planning, or replanning of streets, roads, sidewalks, ways, or other places and to make recommendations with respect thereto;
- (q) to organize, coordinate, and direct the administration of the provisions of this part and part 43;
- (r) to perform such duties as the local governing body may direct so as to make the necessary arrangements for the exercise of the powers and performance of the duties and responsibilities entrusted to the local governing body.

(2) Any powers granted in this part or part 43 that are not included in subsection (1) as powers of the urban renewal agency or a department or other officers of a municipality in lieu thereof may only be exercised by the local governing body or other officers, boards, and commissions as provided under existing law.

Program Funding

Tax Increment Financing Provision

The implementation of the West Bank Urban Renewal Plan will include the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Under Section 7-15-4282 of the Montana Urban Renewal Law communities may establish tax increment districts for the purposes of revitalizing blighted neighborhoods and central business districts. Tax increment financing directs new property tax dollars resulting from increases in the market value of real property to the area where the real property is located. The base property tax (before any improvements to real property) continues to be distributed to the local governments and school districts. However, tax dollars that accrue from increases in property values (from rehabilitation, new construction, etc.) are available for urban renewal projects as defined by the Montana Urban Renewal Law. More particularly, costs which may be paid using TIF dollars are included in 7-15-4288, MCA. (See Appendix D.)

A tax increment program is authorized for 15 years or longer if the tax increment revenue is pledged to the payment of tax increment bonds. 7-15-4289, MCA provides for the use of tax increments for bond payments. The tax increment may be pledged to the payment of the principal of premiums, if any, and interest on bonds which the municipality may issue for the purpose of providing funds to pay such costs.

The City of Great Falls will establish a Tax Increment Financing program for the West Bank Urban Renewal District, as defined in Chapter 2 of this Urban Renewal Plan. The base year for the purposes of measuring any incremental value will be January 1, 2007.

Per 7-15-4291, MCA, the City of Great Falls may enter into agreements with the other affected taxing bodies to remit to such taxing bodies any portion of the annual tax increment not currently required for the payment of the costs listed in 7-15-4288, MCA or pledged to the payment of the principal of premiums, if any, and interest on bonds.

Other Financing Mechanisms

There are a number of financial assistance programs that can be used in the revitalization of the West Bank Urban Renewal District in addition to Tax Increment Financing. Financing strategies for addressing urban renewal needs identified in this Plan will likely include combining various funding sources. For example, a local special improvement district might be used in combination with a Montana Board of Investment Intercap loan to match federal or state dollars. The following is a summary of programs available to fund urban renewal projects

Transportation Infrastructure

This section describes funds and funding sources that are available to finance urban renewal transportation related projects. These funding methods, such as local option taxes, improvement districts and other types of bonds, enable local citizens to participate in funding projects. In general, however, the ability to use additional property tax levies to fund urban renewal is governed by Montana Statute under 15-10-402 MCA that limits taxes to 1996 levels.

A. Bridge and Road Mills (Property Taxes)

Montana law provides for cities (7-14-4101, MCA) to manage transportation infrastructure. Counties are specifically responsible for all the bridges in a county, including those within cities and towns, except those managed by the Montana Department of Transportation. Municipalities may establish a city road fund under 7-14-4113 MCA.

B. Transportation Improvement Authority

Established under 7-14-1001, MCA, the purpose of a transportation improvement authority is to blend the interests of local, state, and federal governments with the interests of the general public and the business community to build, modify, or improve transportation facilities and systems within its jurisdiction. A county and a municipality within a county may, by joint resolution, create a transportation improvement authority. The Authority may enter into contracts and accept local, state, federal and private funds to undertake transportation projects.

C. Community Transportation Enhancement Program

Under 23 USC 133 (d) (2) (Federal Code) 10 percent of the Surface Transportation Program monies are awarded to each state for transportation enhancements. Montana is unique in that enhancements are made available to communities under the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) administered by the Montana Department of Transportation. The MDT distributes these funds for all counties and cities that are 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class cities, and tribal governments. Local governments are responsible for providing the required 13 percent of project costs as non-federal match for their transportation enhancement projects.

In order to receive funding, transportation enhancement projects must be included in the local Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Eligible CTEP categories include:

- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Historic preservation

- Acquisition of scenic easements and historic or scenic sites
- Archaeological planning and research
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused
- Wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity
- Scenic or historic highway programs including provisions of tourist and welcome center facilities
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use for bicycle or pedestrian trails)
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities (including railroads)
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising
- Establishment of transportation museums
- Provisions of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists

Projects addressing these categories and that are linked to the transportation system by proximity, function or impact, and where required, meet the "historic" criteria, may be eligible for enhancement funding. For example, where an historic bridge must be replaced because of structural deficiencies, enhancement funds might be used to preserve the original bridge as part of an interpretive trail.

D. State Fuel Tax

Under 15-70-101, MCA, Montana assesses a tax of \$.27 per gallon on gasoline and diesel fuel used for transportation purposes. Each incorporated city and town receives a portion of the total tax funds allocated to cities and towns based on:

- 1) The ratio of the population within each city and town to the total population in all cities and towns in the State;
- 2) The ratio of the street mileage within each city and town to the total street mileage in all incorporated cities and towns in the State. The street mileage is exclusive of the Interstate, National Highway, and Primary Systems.

All fuel tax funds allocated to city governments must be used for the construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of rural roads or city streets and alleys. Priorities for the use of these funds are established by the cities receiving them.

Debt Financing – All Types of Projects

Cities can make use of various kinds of debt financing to fund urban renewal projects. These include general obligation bonds, special improvement district bonds and

revenue bonds as well as Tax Increment Financing Bonds. Debt financing enables local governments to finance major infrastructure projects using future revenue from special assessments, user fees, and other forms of revenue. Under 7-7-4101, MCA, a city or town council has power to incur indebtedness by borrowing money, issuing bonds, issuing notes, entering into leases, entering into lease-purchase agreements, or entering into installment purchase contracts for the following purposes:

- (1) acquiring land for and designing and erecting public buildings;
- (2) acquiring land for and designing and constructing sewers, sewage treatment and disposal plants, waterworks, reservoirs, reservoir sites, and lighting plants;
- (3) supplying the city or town with water by contract and the construction or purchase of canals or ditches and water rights for supplying the city or town with water;
- (4) designing and constructing bridges, docks, wharves, breakwaters, piers, jetties, and moles;
- (5) acquiring, opening, or widening any street and improving the street by constructing, reconstructing, and repairing pavement, gutters, curbs, and vehicle parking strips and to pay all or any portion of the cost relating to the project;
- (6) purchasing or leasing fire apparatus, street and other equipment, and personal property, including without limitation, vehicles, telephone systems, and photocopy and office equipment, including computer hardware and software;
- (7) building, purchasing, designing, constructing, and maintaining devices intended to protect the safety of the public from open ditches carrying irrigation or other water;
- (8) funding outstanding warrants and maturing bonds; and
- (9) repaying tax protests lost by the city, town, or other municipal corporation.

The local government incurs various administrative costs in conjunction with issuing bonds. These costs include the retention of legal counsel and financial consultants, the establishment of reserve funds and the preparation of the prospectus and various required documents. These bonds provide tax-free interest earnings to purchasers and are therefore subject to detailed scrutiny under both state and federal law. The citations in the Montana Code are listed below, for each type of bond described.

A. Special Improvement Districts

Under 7-12-4101, MCA, cities and towns can create special improvement districts for a number of activities including:

- The acquisition, construction or reconstruction of public streets and roads
- The acquisition, construction or reconstruction of sidewalks, culverts, bridges, gutters, curbs, steps and parks including the planting of trees

- The construction or reconstruction of sewers, ditches, drains, conduits, and channels for sanitary or drainage purposes, with outlets, cesspools, manholes, catch basins, flush tanks, septic tanks, connecting sewers, ditches, drains, conduits, channels, and other appurtenances
- The construction of sewer and water systems including fire hydrants
- The acquisition and improvement of land to be designated as public park or open-space land
- The conversion of overhead utilities to underground locations in accordance with 69-4-311 through 69-4-314, MCA
- The purchase, installation, maintenance, and management of alternative energy production facilities

B. General Obligation Bonds

General obligation bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the city and must be approved by the voters in an election. General obligation bonds are generally payable from ad valorem taxes (based on the value of property) and expressed in mills. General obligation bonds are attractive to bond buyers because they have voter approval and are not as vulnerable to fluctuations in revenue. Cities are assigned a bond debt limit based on a percentage of taxable valuation. General obligation bonds must fall within this limit.

C. Revenue Bonds

Under 7-7-4401, MCA, a city or town may issue revenue bonds to finance any project or activity authorized

Railroad Crossing Related Programs

A. STPRP - Rail/Highway Crossing Protective Devices Program

The purpose of the Federal Rail/Highway Crossing – Protective Devices Program is to identify high hazard rail crossing sites and install new rail crossing signals. MDT's Rail - Highway Safety manager is responsible for surveying, identifying and prioritizing those railroad crossings that require new protective devices or upgrading of existing devices. The funds are distributed on a statewide basis determined by a priority list ranked by a hazard index. The Federal/State ratio is 90% Federal and 10% State.

B. STPRR - Rail/Highway Crossing Elimination of Hazard Program

The purpose of the Federal Rail/Highway Crossing – Elimination of Hazard Program is to identify high hazard rail crossing sites and construct new rail/highway grade crossings. The program also uses funds to rehabilitate existing grade separations.

Grade separation projects are funded with 90% Federal funds and 10% State funds. Since funding for this program is limited, STPRR funds are often used in combination with other Federal funding sources to fund costly grade separation projects.

Eligible expenditures include the separation or protection at grade crossings, reconstruction of existing crossings and relocation of highways to eliminate crossings.

Projects for this program are selected by identifying those sites where only a grade separation will eliminate an identified hazard or where an existing grade separation exists but needs rehabilitation or replacement.

Funding for Public Improvements (Sewer, Water, Roads, Community Facilities, Parks)

A. Treasure State Endowment Program ~ Montana Department of Commerce

The Montana Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) is a state-funded program, authorized under 90-6-701 through 710, MCA, and is administered by the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC). It is designed to assist local governments in financing capital improvements to sewer and water facilities. Funds are derived from the Montana coal severance tax and made available to local governments as matching grants, loans and grant/loan combinations. TSEP also provides matching grants of up to \$15,000 to local governments for preliminary engineering study costs.

TSEP funds may not be used for annual operation and maintenance; the purchase of non-permanent furnishings; or for refinancing existing debt, except when required in conjunction with the financing of a new TSEP project. Grant requests cannot exceed \$500,000 and the local government must typically provide a dollar for dollar match that can include other grant funds. Matching funds can be public or private funds provided by a TSEP applicant to directly support the cost of eligible project activities. There are a number of ways in which local governments can provide matching funds for bridge projects. Eligible types of matching funds include:

- local general funds or other cash;
- proceeds from the sale of general obligation, revenue, special assessment or other bonds;
- entitlement or formula-based federal or state funds such as federal highway funds or payments in lieu of taxes;
- loan or grant funds from a state or federal program (including TSEP loans);
- funds expended for engineering studies, reports, and plans, or other reasonable expenses expended for the preparation of the application, directly related to the proposed project during the period 24 months prior to the TSEP application deadline;

- funds expended after the TSEP application deadline, but before being approved by the Legislature, for project management, final engineering design, and other reasonable expenses necessary to prepare the project as proposed in the TSEP application for the construction phase;
- the value of land or materials provided by the applicant, if appraised within a two-year period preceding the application deadline. The appraisal must be:
 - an impartially written statement that adequately describes the land or materials, and states an opinion of defined value as of a specific date;
 - supported by an analysis of relevant market information; and
 - prepared by a qualified appraiser independent from the applicant.
- the value of labor performed by the applicant's employees on the proposed project, after the TSEP project has been approved for funding and a TSEP contract has been signed, as long as the employee is paid at his or her standard hourly rate of pay and the time worked is adequately documented; and
- the value of machinery used in the process of constructing the project that is owned (or leased) and operated by the applicant. The value of the use of the machinery will be determined using the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) equipment rate schedules.

B. The Montana Intercap Program ~ Montana Board of Investments

The INTERCAP Program is a low cost, variable-rate program that lends money to Montana local governments, state agencies and the university system for the purpose of financing or refinancing the acquisition and installation of equipment or personal and real property and infrastructure improvements. The Board of Investments issues tax-exempt bonds and loans the proceeds to eligible borrowers. In addition to long-term financing, INTERCAP is an excellent source for interim financing.

Funding is always available with no specific cycle. Allocations of \$200,000 and under are considered and approved by the Board of Investments staff. Allocations in excess of \$200,000 are considered and approved by the Board. Funds are released on an on-going basis as the project is completed. The program provides loans at a variable rate plus a one percent loan origination fee on loans over one year and for a term of 5 or 10 years depending on the borrower's legal authority. Short-term loans of less than a year are also available. Interest and principal payments are due bi-annually (February 15 and August 15 of each year). Loans may be pre-paid without penalty with 30 days notice. Types of financing include installment purchase loans, general fund loans, general obligation bonds, revenue bonds and special improvement district and rural improvement district bonds. Gas tax revenues may not be used to service debt. Projects that will use rural improvement district payments to cover the annual debt are

limited to a total loan of \$300,000. Intercap funds may be used in association with other grant and loan programs as well as local sources.

C. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)- US Department of Urban Development (HUD)

This program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. The program is authorized under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Public Law 93-383, as amended; [42 U.S.C.-5301 et seq.](#)

HUD awards grants to entitlement community grantees to carry out a wide range of community development activities directed toward revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and providing improved community facilities and services.

Entitlement communities develop their own programs and funding priorities. However, grantees must give maximum feasible priority to activities which benefit low- and moderate-income persons. A grantee may also carry out activities which aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. Additionally, grantees may fund activities when the grantee certifies that the activities meet other community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community where other financial resources are not available to meet such needs. CDBG funds may not be used for activities which do not meet these broad national objectives.

Eligible grantees are as follows:

- principal cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs);
- other metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and
- qualified urban counties with populations of at least 200,000 (excluding the population of entitled cities) are entitled to receive annual grants.

HUD determines the amount of each entitlement grant by a statutory dual formula which uses several objective measures of community needs, including the extent of poverty, population, housing overcrowding, age of housing and population growth lag in relationship to other metropolitan areas. CDBG funds may be used for activities which include, but are not limited to:

- acquisition of real property;
- relocation and demolition;
- rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures;
- construction of public facilities and improvements, such as water and sewer facilities, streets, neighborhood centers, and the conversion of school buildings for eligible purposes;
- public services, within certain limits;
- activities relating to energy conservation and renewable energy resources; and
- provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities.

D. Public Works Program ~ Economic Development Administration

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The purpose of the Public Works Program is to assist communities with the funding of public works and development facilities that contribute to the creation or retention of private sector jobs and to the alleviation of unemployment and underemployment. Such assistance is designed to help communities achieve lasting improvement by stabilizing and diversifying local economies, and improving local living conditions and the economic environment of the area.

Grants are awarded up to a participation level of 80 percent but the average EDA grant covers approximately 50 percent of project costs. Acceptable sources of match include cash, local general obligation or revenue bonds; Community Development Block Grants, TSEP grants and loans, entitlement funds, Rural Development loans; and other public and private financing, including donations.

Projects must result in private sector job and business development in order to be considered for funding. Eligible applicants under this program include any state, or political subdivision thereof, Indian tribe (and other U.S. political entities), private or public nonprofit organization or association representing any redevelopment area if the project is within an EDA-designated redevelopment area. Redevelopment areas, other than those designated under the Public Works Impact Program must have a current EDA-approved Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) in place.

E. Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team

In 1982, a group of professionals from state, federal, and non-profit organizations that finance, regulate, or provide technical assistance for community water and wastewater systems, decided to start meeting in order to coordinate and enhance their efforts. This group calls itself the "Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team"

or W2ASACT for short. W2ASACT meets several times a year to find ways to improve our state's environmental infrastructure. All of the programs represented in W2ASACT have different missions and meet unique needs. However, it has been the common elements shared by the funding programs that have been the driving force of W2 SACT. These programs provide money (grants or loans), take applications from communities to fund their projects, and administer those monies once the project is funded. While W2ASACT cannot change all of the state or federal requirements, it can identify unnecessary duplication of requirements that make compliance difficult for communities.

Voluntary Programs

In some cases, homeowner associations, business groups or other property owners may finance urban renewal projects voluntary basis.

West Bank Urban Renewal Program Evaluation

The West Bank Urban Renewal Plan will be evaluated on a yearly basis in conjunction with the preparation of the annual report. Measures that may be used in evaluating program success include:

- Increases in the property tax base
- Creation of jobs within the Urban Renewal District
- Elimination of blighted conditions
- The extent of redevelopment in previously contaminated areas
- Use of the public spaces within the District including the West Bank Park and the riverfront trail system

Success will also be measured in terms of the overall guiding principles noted in Chapter 1 of this plan and restated here:

- The plan for the West Bank Urban Renewal District should foster economic development and job creation.
- The improvement of the overall environmental quality of the West Bank Urban Renewal District is critical.
- Protection and enhancement of West Bank Park and the Missouri River, which form the eastern boundary of the District are key in the redevelopment of the West Bank Urban Renewal District.

The plan provides flexibility to accommodate a variety of approaches. However, changes over time may necessitate more formal amendments to the Urban Renewal Plan. The Urban Renewal Plan may be modified by ordinance under 7-15-4221, MCA.



Figure 10. Urban Renewal Area from the north

APPENDIX A. RESOLUTION OF BLIGHT

RESOLUTION 9626

A RESOLUTION DECLARING A BLIGHTED AREA EXISTS WITHIN THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA AND THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THAT AREA IS NECESSARY IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF THE RESIDENTS OF GREAT FALLS AND TO DETERMINE THE BOUNDARIES OF THAT AREA

WHEREAS, the State of Montana has provided for the redevelopment of those portions of its cities which constitute a menace to public health and safety, constitute an economic and social liability and substantially impair the sound growth of a municipality; 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 that substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the city or its environs; retards the provision of housing accommodations; constitutes an economic or social liability and/or is detrimental or constitutes a menace to the public health, safety, welfare, and morals in its present condition and use; and,

WHEREAS, on November 8, 2006, the City Commission directed the study to determine the existence of blight within the urban area; and,

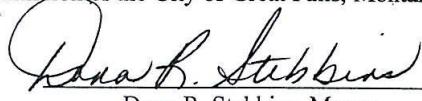
WHEREAS, the City of Great Falls has conducted the study (attached as Exhibit "A" to this Resolution) to determine the existence of blight in an area known as the West Bank and generally described as bounded on the West by 3rd Street NW/SW, on the East by the center line of the Missouri River, on the North by a point just north of 14th Avenue NW and on the South by a point just south of 5th Avenue SW and excludes any unincorporated property, as of October 2006, and in particular found:

1. Physical deterioration of buildings and properties
 - o Many of the structures in the defined area are in poor repair and properties are poorly maintained. Building permit information indicates that the majority of existing structures have not been substantially improved for at least twenty years.
2. Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings
 - o The presence of existing heavy industrial uses within the defined area is incompatible with retail, commercial, residential and parkland development. This land use conflict has proven to be a disincentive to the improvement of properties within the area by private enterprise.
3. Defective street layout
 - o Much of the area is without streets, sidewalks, curbs, or gutters resulting in poor traffic circulation and storm drainage problems.
4. Unsanitary and unsafe conditions
 - o Portions of the defined area are included in the list of priority sites maintained by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality under the Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA) and are designated a Brownfield site as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Contamination on the site is associated with historic industrial activity and has affected both the soil and groundwater and threatens to contaminate the Missouri River.

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

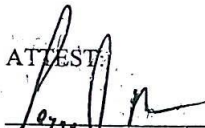
That the City Commission finds that blight exists within the City of Great Falls in the area described in Exhibit "A" of this Resolution under the definition contained in Section 7-15-4206 (2), M.C.A. and that rehabilitation and redevelopment of such area (pursuant to the Montana Urban Renewal Law) is 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.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, on this 5th day of December, 2006.



Dona R. Stebbins, Mayor

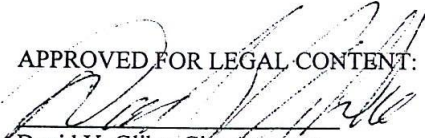
ATTEST:



Peggy J. Bourne, City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

APPROVED FOR LEGAL CONTENT:

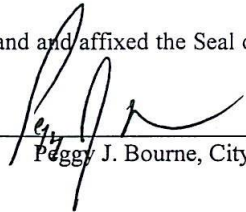


David V. Gliko, City Attorney

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

I, Peggy J. Bourne, City Clerk of the City of Great Falls, Montana, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution 9626 was placed on its final passage by the Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, at a meeting thereof held on the 5th Day of December, 2006, wherein it was approved by said Commission.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of said City this 5th day of December, 2006.



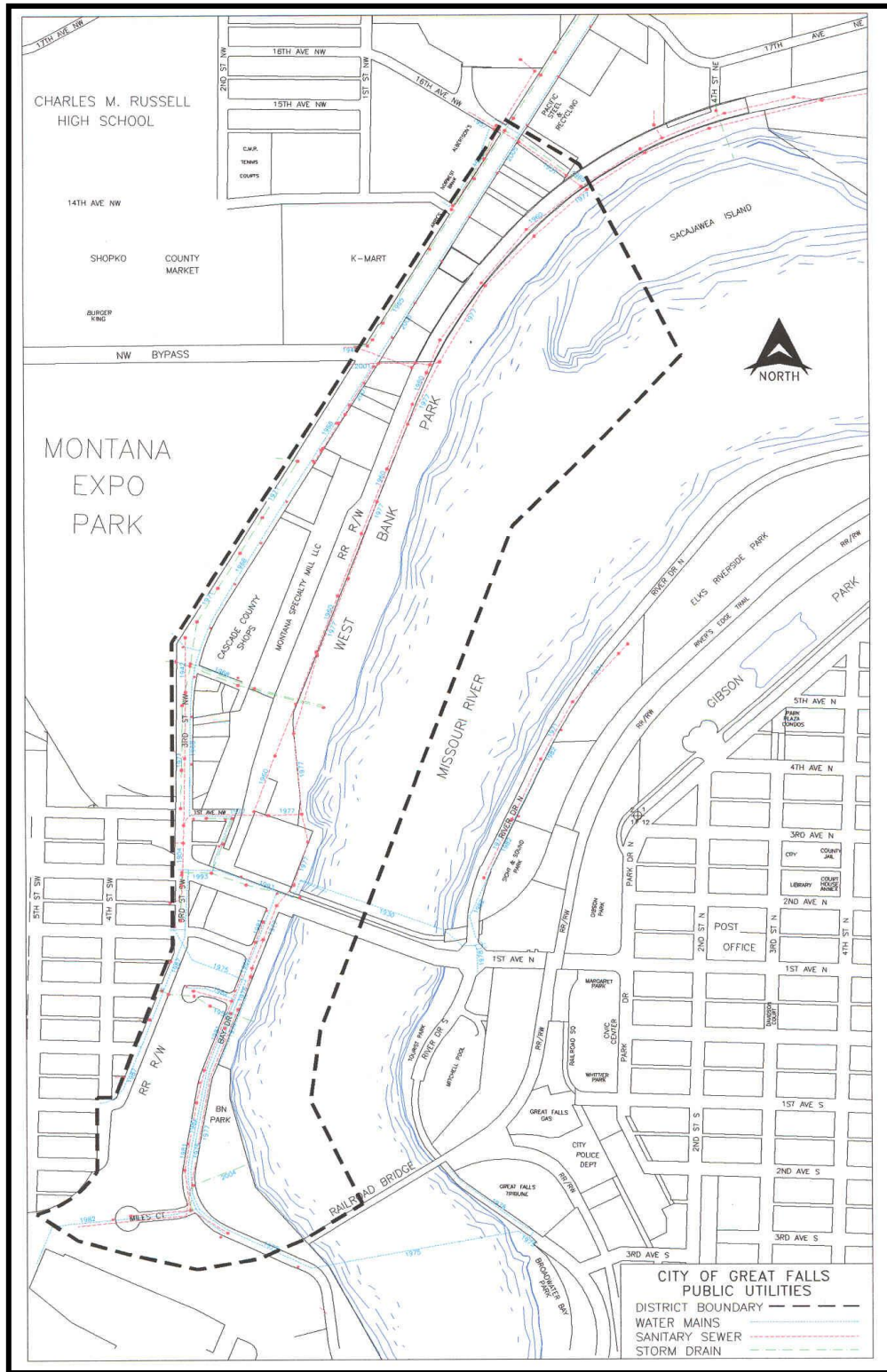
Peggy J. Bourne, City Clerk

(SEAL OF CITY)

APPENDIX B – WEST BANK URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT PARCEL DATA

OWNER OF RECORD	BUSINESS NAME/OCCUPANCY	STREET
GRH GLENWOOD LLC ETAL	WALGREENS (under construction)	3RD ST NW
CITY OF GREAT FALLS	SACAJAWIA ISLAND	
GRH GLENWOOD LLC ETAL	WALGREENS (under construction)	
GRH GLENWOOD LLC ETAL	WALGREENS (under construction)	3RD ST NW
ROGERS JEWELERS INC ETAL	ROGERS JEWELERS	3RD ST NW
BYPASS PROPERTY LLC (Outside City Limits)	BREEN OIL COMPANY	3RD ST NW
HENDERSON MICHAEL S & WILLIAM L	JOHNSON DISTRIBUTING	3RD ST NW
HENDERSON MICHAEL S & WILLIAM L		3RD ST NW
HENDERSON MICHAEL S ETAL		3RD ST NW
HENDERSON MICHAEL S ETAL		3RD ST NW
HILL RUSSELL & CATHERINE B		3RD ST NW
STOCKMAN BANK OF MONTANA	STOCKMAN BANK OF MONTANA	3RD ST NW
KRALICH JOANNE		
MONTANA SPECIALTY MILLS LLC	MONTANA SPECIALTY MILLS LLC	3RD ST NW
JOHNSON MOLLIE L ETAL	J BAR T INC	3RD ST NW
CASCADE COUNTY	CASCADE COUNTY SHOP COMPLEX	3RD ST NW
MONTANA COWBOYS ASSOCIATION INC	COWBOY'S BAR	3RD ST NW
MONTANA COWBOYS ASSN INC	COWBOY'S BAR	3RD ST NW
MONTANA COWBOYS ASSOCIATION	COWBOY'S BAR	4TH AVE NW
TALCOTT JAMES CONSTRUCTION INC		1ST AVE NW
FALLCAMP LLC		3RD ST NW
MITCHELL DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENTS LLC		CENTRAL AVE W
FALLCAMP LLC		
FALLCAMP LLC		3RD ST NW
TALCOTT PROPERTIES LLC		3RD ST NW
TALCOTT JAMES CONSTRUCTION CO		
BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILROAD CO	RIGHT OF WAY	BAY DR
CITY OF GREAT FALLS (West Bank Park - South End)	WEST BANK PARK	PARK-WEST BANK
SCHUMAN HENRY & ALICE		3RD ST NW
HIGH PLAINS PIZZA INC		3RD ST NW
MYHRE ADVERTISING		CENTRAL AVE W
MONTANA DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION	RIGHT OF WAY	
BUMBARGER FRED & PATRICIA S	PAYLESS FURNITURE	CENTRAL AVE W
HOLMAN GRAIN (Brick Building)		BAY DR
JORGENSEN ROBERT F JR		2ND AVE SW
HOLMAN GRAIN COMPANY		
HOLMAN GRAIN COMPANY		BAY DR
OKSNESS BERT		2ND AVE SW
BN LEASING CORPORATION		
ROBERTSON ENTERPRISES LLC		BAY DR
MARTIN JOHN L		2ND AVE SW
CITY OF GREAT FALLS (BN Park)	BN PARK	PARK-GARDEN HOME
BN LEASING CORPORATION		BAY DR
BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILROAD CO		
MONTANA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ASSO ETAL	MONTANA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ASSOC.	BAY DR
BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILROAD CO		BAY DR
BN LEASING CORPORATION		
BN LEASING CORPORATION		MILES CT
BN LEASING CORPORATION		
BN LEASING CORPORATION		
CITY OF GREAT FALLS (West Bank Park - North End)	WEST BANK PARK	

APPENDIX C. PUBLIC UTILITIES IN THE WEST BANK URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT



APPENDIX D

ALLOWABLE USES OF TAX INCREMENT FUNDS

(Note: This is under revision by the 2007 Montana Legislature)

7-15-4288. Costs that may be paid by tax increment financing. The tax increments may be used by the municipality to pay the following costs of or incurred in connection with an urban renewal project, industrial infrastructure development project, technology infrastructure development project, or aerospace transportation and technology infrastructure development project:

- (1) land acquisition;
- (2) demolition and removal of structures;
- (3) relocation of occupants;
- (4) the acquisition, construction, and improvement of infrastructure, industrial infrastructure, technology infrastructure, or aerospace transportation and technology infrastructure that includes streets, roads, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, pedestrian malls, alleys, parking lots and offstreet parking facilities, sewers, sewer lines, sewage treatment facilities, storm sewers, waterlines, waterways, water treatment facilities, natural gas lines, electrical lines, telecommunications lines, rail lines, rail spurs, bridges, spaceports for reusable launch vehicles with associated runways and launch, recovery, fuel manufacturing, and cargo holding facilities, publicly owned buildings, and any public improvements authorized by parts 41 through 45 of chapter 12, parts 42 and 43 of chapter 13, and part 47 of chapter 14 and items of personal property to be used in connection with improvements for which the foregoing costs may be incurred;
- (5) costs incurred in connection with the redevelopment activities allowed under [7-15-4233](#);
- (6) acquisition of infrastructure-deficient areas or portions of areas;
- (7) administrative costs associated with the management of the urban renewal area, industrial district, technology district, or aerospace transportation and technology district;
- (8) assemblage of land for development or redevelopment by private enterprise or public agencies, including sale, initial leasing, or retention by the municipality itself at its fair value;
- (9) the compilation and analysis of pertinent information required to adequately determine the infrastructure needs of secondary, value-adding industries in the industrial district, the needs of a technology infrastructure development project in the technology district, or the needs of an aerospace transportation and technology infrastructure development project in the aerospace transportation and technology district;
- (10) the connection of the urban renewal area, industrial district, technology district, or aerospace transportation and technology district to existing infrastructure outside the district;
- (11) the provision of direct assistance, through industrial infrastructure development projects, technology development projects, or aerospace transportation and technology infrastructure development projects, to secondary, value-adding industries to assist in meeting their infrastructure and land needs within the district; and
- (12) the acquisition, construction, or improvement of facilities or equipment for reducing, preventing, abating, or eliminating pollution.