



MISSOURI RIVER
Urban Corridor Plan

Great Falls, Montana - 2004



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A MAJOR ROLE FOR THE MISSOURI RIVER CORRIDOR

The River...

...a major community asset for enhanced livability, growth, and economic development.

The City on the River...

...a marketing theme and a strategy through which to tell the World about Great Falls, its business opportunities, and quality of life.

An Opportunity...

...to penetrate bigger markets in search of attracting quality jobs and, therefore, growth to sustain community and Riverfront development.

A Major Asset...

...around which all interests in the community can rally — recreation, environmental enhancement, commercial development, expansion of Downtown Great Falls, mixed-use and housing development, civic and cultural facilities, and more.

A Valuable Resource...

...as a clean and plentiful source of water upon which demands are increasing.

...as habitat for fish and wildlife.

...as visual and psychological relief from the urban environment.

Marketing the Strengths...

...of the Riverfront that creates real estate value—proximity to Water, Views and Public Open Space.

OBJECTIVE

PROLOGUE

Great Falls' founder, Paris Gibson, recognized the commercial value of this particular site on the Missouri River. The waterfall at Black Eagle was well suited to provide power needed for industry. Gibson's Townsite Company built the first dam and powerhouse at Black Eagle in the late 1880s. It transmitted mechanical power via cable drive to a grain mill where General Mills now stands. Three years later electric power was first produced at Black Eagle and the city began a robust period of economic growth.

Besides firing up the economic engines of Great Falls, Gibson was responsible for creating an impressive park system and for planting thousands of trees on the bare plain that was developing into a bustling commercial center. Gibson balanced his vision of an extensive park system with the challenge of establishing the economic viability of the young city. When presented with the opportunity of another railroad line (the Milwaukee) to link Great Falls with the rest of the country in 1913, Gibson moved his huge tree nursery from the southwest side of what is now Gibson Park to make room for the new berm that would link the line to the proposed new depot and bridge across the Missouri River.

In a period of several years a round-house, shops, switchyard, depot, freight house and a bridge over the Missouri were constructed in Great Falls, along with several public bridges and underpasses. The construction activity, jobs and investment were well timed boosts to Gibson's efforts to establish Great Falls as a city.

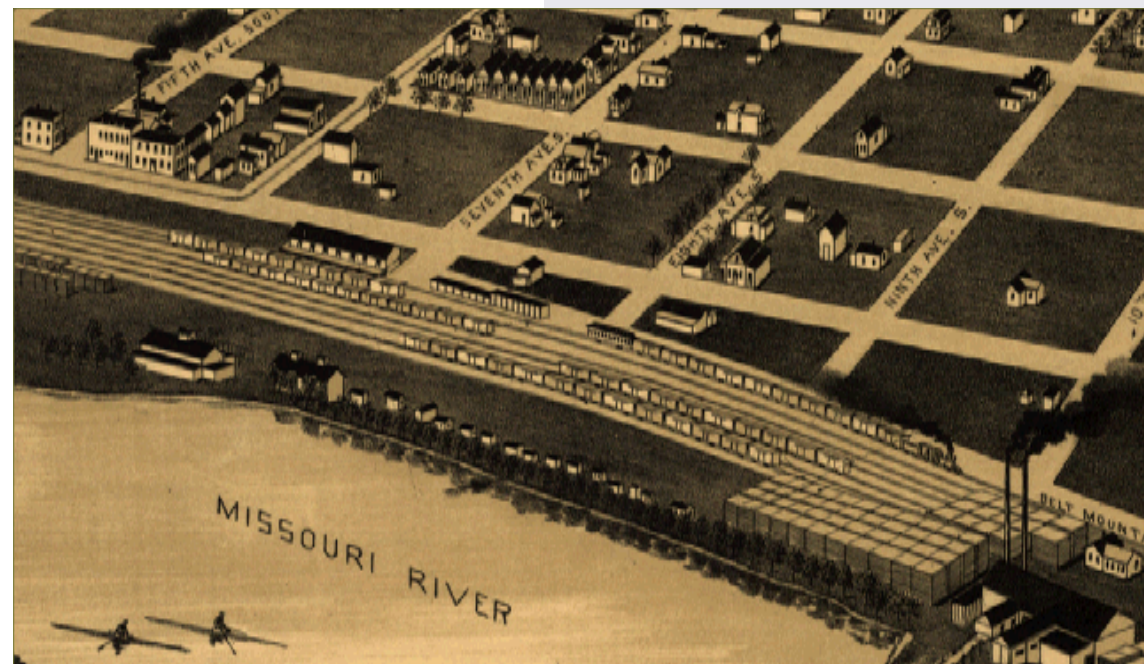
Paris Gibson did what he had to do. He moved his prized tree nursery, one of the most extensive in a 500 mile radius, for the economic vitality and greater good of the city. While times may have changed, the basic challenge has not. We must continually find ways for the community to grow and prosper. As a society we are more environmentally conscious, and conservation and preservation are high priorities. We cannot have the parks, trails, and native open spaces of our dreams without a healthy economy and tax base needed to sustain them.

Exceptional public open spaces, greenbelts, greenways, parks and trails along urban river corridors are **not** mutually exclusive with vibrant economic activity or commercial and residential development. Quite the opposite. Successful and growing cities along rivers all across this country are redeveloping their riverfronts to create inviting public spaces and encourage healthy commercial enterprise. We can do the same, though not through a "cookie cutter" approach. The Great Falls riverfront of the future



will not be just like any other urban riverfront. But, our riverfront and our downtown are the heart of our community, and they need help. It is going to take new strategies and new partnerships to breathe new life into them.

Unlike Gibson, we are not faced with an anxious Milwaukee Railroad poised to infuse large sums of money into the economy. It is only by attracting new partners that we will take our riverfront to a new era of robust economic health. In doing so, we can be more sensitive to environmental health and the value of public lands. Many people are working hard to improve the economy of Great Falls right now. The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan must assist and support these efforts, and we must guarantee that a healthy river will endure.



1891 Panoramic View of Broadwater Bay

CORRIDOR PLAN SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan originated as a priority recommendation of the Great Falls City-County Comprehensive Plan. The “Comp Plan” was two years in the making and was adopted jointly by the City of Great Falls and Cascade County Commissions in November, 1999. The Plan recognized that some development patterns along the river corridor represented an opportunity for more desirable, sustainable development that would capitalize on the river as an amenity and a resource. Both the Economic Development and Land Use Elements of the Comprehensive Plan call for “a Missouri River Corridor Master Plan to guide future development and redevelopment of the riverfront....” As a community, we have done a good job with open space and recreation along the river. However, we have not done as well with private development. Generally, the urban riverfront lands were first developed as industrial lands due to their proximity to the river as a power and transportation source, as well as their

proximity to the rail lines to move raw products in and finished goods in and out. Other sections of the riverfront were formal or informal dump sites and “squatter villages”, and the lack of mosquito abatement and flood control discouraged the very type of development that is attracted to the river today. Although the river corridor still contains many of these industrial uses that made perfect sense 40 or 50 years ago, there are usually better locations for such uses today—for example, locations with larger parcels and better access to major transportation routes such as the Interstate.

The primary purpose of this Plan is to present a vision for what is possible in the corridor. Once this vision is conveyed, the plan then sets forth a series of strategies and actions to make the vision a reality. It must be understood, however, that implementing the vision will take years—perhaps decades. Furthermore, implementation will most likely take place in small increments in many different areas of the corridor. Given the relatively slow real estate market in the Great Falls area and our modest rate of overall growth, some of the development concepts embodied in the vision may not even seem feasible at this time. But with some measure of success from our economic development efforts, we are confident that we will eventually achieve a level of community growth and awareness that will stimulate the type of demand needed to realize the vision for the corridor.



RURAL AREAS

While this plan addresses the urban corridor of the river, of equal importance are the vast rural reaches of the Missouri River in unincorporated Cascade County. In these rural areas there are multiple examples of unauthorized placement of fill material and other stream-bank stabilization projects which have adversely affected river dynamics and environmental functions.



Cascade County conducts floodplain management and permitting under the National Flood Insurance Program. Although Cascade County does not have a standard building setback requirement in the rural areas, the county subdivision regulations and the Cascade County Development Plan both address construction in floodplains. The subdivision regulations provide that land located in the floodplain of a 100-year frequency event as defined by Title 76, Chapter 5, MCA, or land deemed subject to flooding as determined by the governing body, shall not be subdivided for building or residential purposes or

other uses that may increase or aggravate flood hazards to life, health, or property.

The Flood Hazard Evaluation Areas included in the Cascade County Development Plan are those areas of the county intended to contain potential floodplains where it is necessary and desirable: because of the safety hazards

from floods; financial burdens imposed upon the County through rescue and relief efforts occasioned by occupancy or use of areas subject to periodic flooding; potential loss of life, property damage, and the losses and risks

associated with flood conditions; potential loss of location, character, and extent of natural drainage courses; to regulate and prohibit any non-agricultural or non-recreational uses, structures or activities. Therefore, in the bottomlands occupying watercourse valleys,



which are comprised of soils containing alluvial material, developers are required to use existing official floodplain delineations, or, cause to have floodplain lines engineered independently. Any development of non-agricultural or non-recreational uses will not be allowed to take place within these floodplain delineations.

Many existing riverfront lots in rural Cascade County were created either through the subdivision exemption process or were not subject to review by the County when State law exempted lots greater than 20 acres in size from local review. This has resulted in homes and other structures that, while in compliance with floodplain regulations, subdivision regulations, and the County development plan, are negatively impacting the river. Many of these structures have damaged or entirely

destroyed riparian areas and have encroached into pristine river viewsheds.

As part of this planning effort, a sub-group of the Corridor Plan Work Group began preliminary work on a program and regulatory framework for the rural areas. Of particular importance are the continued use of riprap and other stream-bank stabilization techniques and the removal of natural vegetation. This effort will continue and expand after adoption of this plan to include a larger group of stakeholders and citizens representative of rural interests. That work should result in a document and regulatory program that can be forwarded to and adopted by Cascade County as a complementary component of this plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



This Corridor Plan has multiple objectives. It seeks to communicate a vision for economic vitality; for development and redevelopment of lands within the Missouri River Corridor for the benefit of the entire community. At the same time it recognizes that the river is a vital part of a large ecosystem, and that the environmental integrity of the river must be protected. To better frame the issues to be addressed in this document, it is helpful to set forth the basic premises, or “guiding principles”, on which the plan is based. These principles can then be used as a yardstick with which to

measure all actions and recommendations contained in the plan.

1. From the standpoint of river dynamics, no riverside development or stream bank treatment will prevent the Missouri River from safely passing flood stage flows, nor will permanent development be allowed that will be damaged by those flows. (Note: This statement is not intended to prevent the placement of properly designed and lawfully constructed piers, decks, docks, trails, or other appurtenant improvements associated with a

substantial public interest that may in fact be damaged by major flood events).

2. Land and water based recreational values and opportunities associated with the river will be created, preserved, and enhanced, including public access to the river.
3. This Corridor Plan will promote beneficial, sustainable economic development that utilizes the river as an amenity while preserving and enhancing its ecological integrity and asset values. Specifically, water quality, natural shoreline vegetation, and wetlands will be restored, enhanced, or protected, and the environmental health of the river will not be compromised by development.
4. Major through transportation facilities in the river corridor are discouraged. Alternative routing of such facilities already in the corridor through responsible urban area transportation planning is encouraged.

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

— OPPORTUNITIES —

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The community of Great Falls supports the desire to grow through smart development and strategic use of the Missouri River Corridor. The City, having preserved large tracts of public land within this area, wishes to capitalize on the river's unique potential to spur economic growth. The river is already a great place for recreation. Creation of new and diverse opportunities for people within the corridor will attract more residents and visitors, raise the level of community activity, and in turn promote economic growth. Current and future residents and businesses can benefit from responsible development in the river corridor without compromising the environmental integrity of the river.

"The very things that hold you here are the very things that would attract someone else. This plan is about telling that story."

-Dave Leland



Historic Building Character
Historic residential and commercial buildings are evident near the river and the core of the City of Great Falls, creating a strong historic character and community identity.



Historic City Layout
The legacy of the original city design is visible throughout Great Falls. Double-rows of street trees and a strong street grid pattern exemplify the character of this planning heritage.



Proximity to Downtown
Great Falls' city center is located just a few blocks from the Missouri River. Roads lead to and from downtown, passing through and over the river corridor.

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

— OPPORTUNITIES —

Public Lands/Open Space on the Missouri River

Huge holdings of public land along the Missouri River are some of the community's greatest assets. These highly used parklands, owned by the City of Great Falls and maintained by the City Park and Recreation Department, have kept much of the river corridor functional and accessible to the community.



Trail System

An extensive trail system has been developed along the Missouri River Corridor. A diverse trail experience exists along both banks of the river, including extensive and varied wildlife viewing. The trail system, however, has limited connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial centers.



Access

Much of the vacant or underdeveloped land in the corridor lies adjacent or close to major thoroughfares, such as 3rd Street NW or River Drive. These higher-traffic corridors can be attractive to potential investors, making high-quality redevelopment of such lands much more likely.



STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

— CONSTRAINTS —

Streets

Several arterial and collector streets are routed along and across the river corridor. Some of these routes are characterized by wide roadways with multiple traffic lanes, heavy traffic and a lack of landscape buffers to help separate pedestrians from vehicles.



Although these routes generally provide good community traffic circulation, bicyclists and pedestrians are reluctant to travel these routes. This has resulted in a loss of connectivity between the river corridor and nearby residential neighborhoods.

Railroads

Although railroads in and through the river corridor were vital to early economic development efforts in Great Falls, they were and are now major barriers to river access. Ironically, some of these lines became the backbone of the trail system along the river after abandonment. Remaining active lines and spurs still restrict vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel to and through the corridor, which reduces the attractiveness for redeveloping lands with such limited access.



River Environment

High sediment loads from irrigation runoff in the Sun River and Muddy Creek drainages are evident at the confluence of the Missouri and Sun Rivers. This has altered the river channel and has had a negative effect on water quality and river ecosystems.

The system of hydroelectric power dams compounds this situation by not allowing sediments to be scoured out.



Bank erosion is also a concern along many stretches of the river. Random materials such as chunks of broken concrete have been used as riprap in an attempt to stabilize the riverbank, but uncontrolled use of fill materials that do not recognize river dynamics can have serious consequences downstream. Out of concern for this issue, the Cascade County Conservation District has had a river corridor inventory and assessment prepared by a consultant. This document inventories and documents existing shoreline conditions along the urban riverfront. It identifies the various bank stabilization techniques that have been employed through the urban sections of the Missouri River Corridor and makes recommendations for more effective and environmentally sound practices. That document, titled "Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment", is adopted as part of this Corridor Plan by reference.



STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

— CONSTRAINTS —

Design Standards

Throughout portions of the river corridor today, 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.



Housing

Most Great Falls residents live in one- or two-person households in single-family detached units. As the area population ages, it is anticipated that housing needs and demands will change accordingly. This presents an opportunity for housing product types that are tailored to the needs of our aging population—low-maintenance housing that is close to shopping, medical and financial services, and with areas for passive recreation. Especially lacking are multi-family housing options like apartments, condominiums, townhomes, and cluster/patio homes that provide alternatives for individuals, the elderly, or single-parent families that may not have the resources or desire to maintain a single-family home.



Economic Vitality

Recent population growth in the Great Falls area has hovered around one percent. Even without any real net population growth, the city has grown outward, leaving behind vacant storefronts and areas in need of revitalization. Though it is a challenge to create renewed activity and economic momentum in these areas, they can present great opportunities for partnerships and joint economic ventures between businesses and local governments.



CONCLUSION

While Great Falls has a number of developmental constraints to overcome, it also has strong community assets to build upon. It is those assets that will serve as a foundation for this plan. For example:

- Elements of the original Paris Gibson plan and existing historic buildings speak to the design and commercial heritage of the city.
- The Missouri River itself is Great Falls' most prominent feature, and central to the city's identity.
- Large holdings of public lands and trails along the river increase its value as both an amenity and a resource, as does its proximity to downtown.

There are also challenges:

- Vehicular and pedestrian access is difficult due to busy streets and railroad rights-of-way.
- The river divides the city, constricting traffic flow to just a few bridges.
- Much of the development that took place in the latter part of the 20th century was generally not strong from an aesthetic and economic standpoint, and has contributed to sprawl and pockets of "dead" space in the corridor.
- The river has sustained environmental damage over the years in the form of non-point pollution, sedimentation, improperly treated banks, and bank erosion.

It is important to remember, however, that these challenges also present opportunities for mitigation and restoration. Substantial grant funding, technical assistance, and opportunities for partnerships are available for projects involving redevelopment and reclamation.

PROJECT FOCUS AREA

OBSERVATIONS

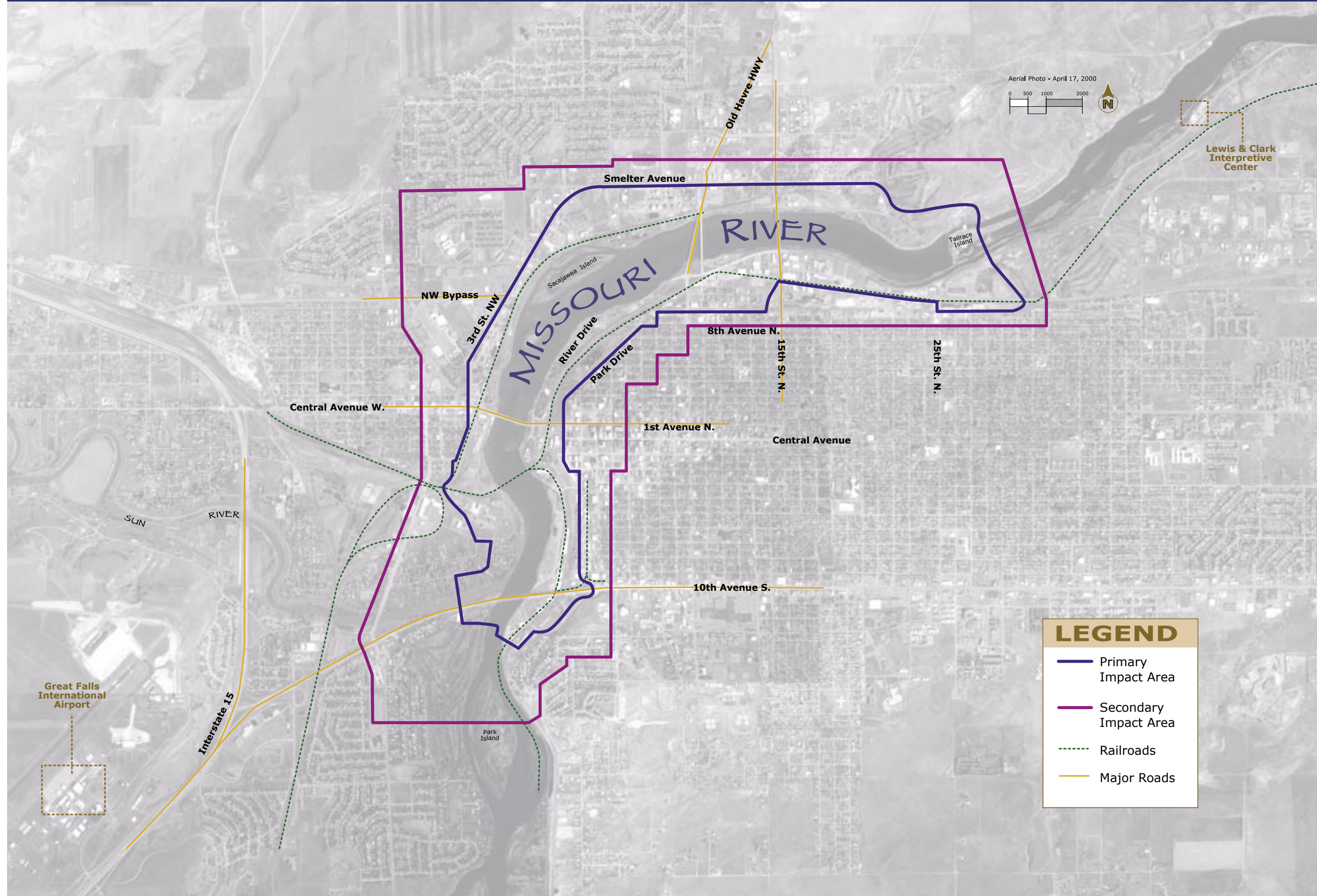
This Corridor Plan focuses on the role of the Missouri River and adjoining lands within the community. Included in this study are the river corridor itself and lands adjacent to it that transition between the river and other parts of Great Falls. Primary and Secondary Impact Areas are shown on the facing map. The "Primary Impact Area" within the dark purple line includes lands with strong relationships to the river that are most central to this planning effort. The "Secondary Impact Area" bounded by the lighter line has been included for a greater project context and to explore ways to better connect the corridor to downtown, residential neighborhoods, and the overall pulse of the city.

CONCLUSION

Any land use study must have limits. In this plan, the boundaries were restricted to the most intensely developed lands adjoining or in close proximity to the Missouri River. The boundaries are approximate, and many of the analyses, conclusions and recommendations contained in this plan could be applied to lands outside the boundaries shown. Likewise, there are properties within the Impact Areas for which the recommended development patterns and uses may not be appropriate. Common sense dictates that decisions on land use within the corridor made by developers and/or local government must be made in the proper context, and should not rely solely upon concepts or recommendations from this Plan.



PROJECT AREA



EXISTING LAND USE

OBSERVATIONS

In general, land use in the Primary Impact Area is characterized by a mixture of large amounts of industrial, commercial, parks and recreational uses, along with a certain amount of vacant and “underdeveloped” land. There are few residential uses in the core of the Primary Impact Area.



Of the **residential** uses, most are single-family houses located near the confluence of the Sun and Missouri Rivers. Other residential types, such as two-family residential, multiple family residential, and mobile homes are few. Many nearby residential neighborhoods, like those in the Riverview area, Black Eagle and the Upper North Side, lack strong connections to the river.

Small parcels of **office and commercial** uses checkerboard the Primary Impact Area. Larger tracts of commercial uses are found west of the river in the Secondary Impact Area along 3rd St. NW and Smelter Avenue.

Because the river and parallel railroads have played such important roles in the historical economy of Great Falls,

industrial land use is prominent in the corridor. It occurs both in large and smaller parcels adjacent or proximate to the river and railroad lines.

Park and recreation lands also have a strong presence in the Primary Impact Area, with over 100 acres of park land currently in use. These large, linear parcels



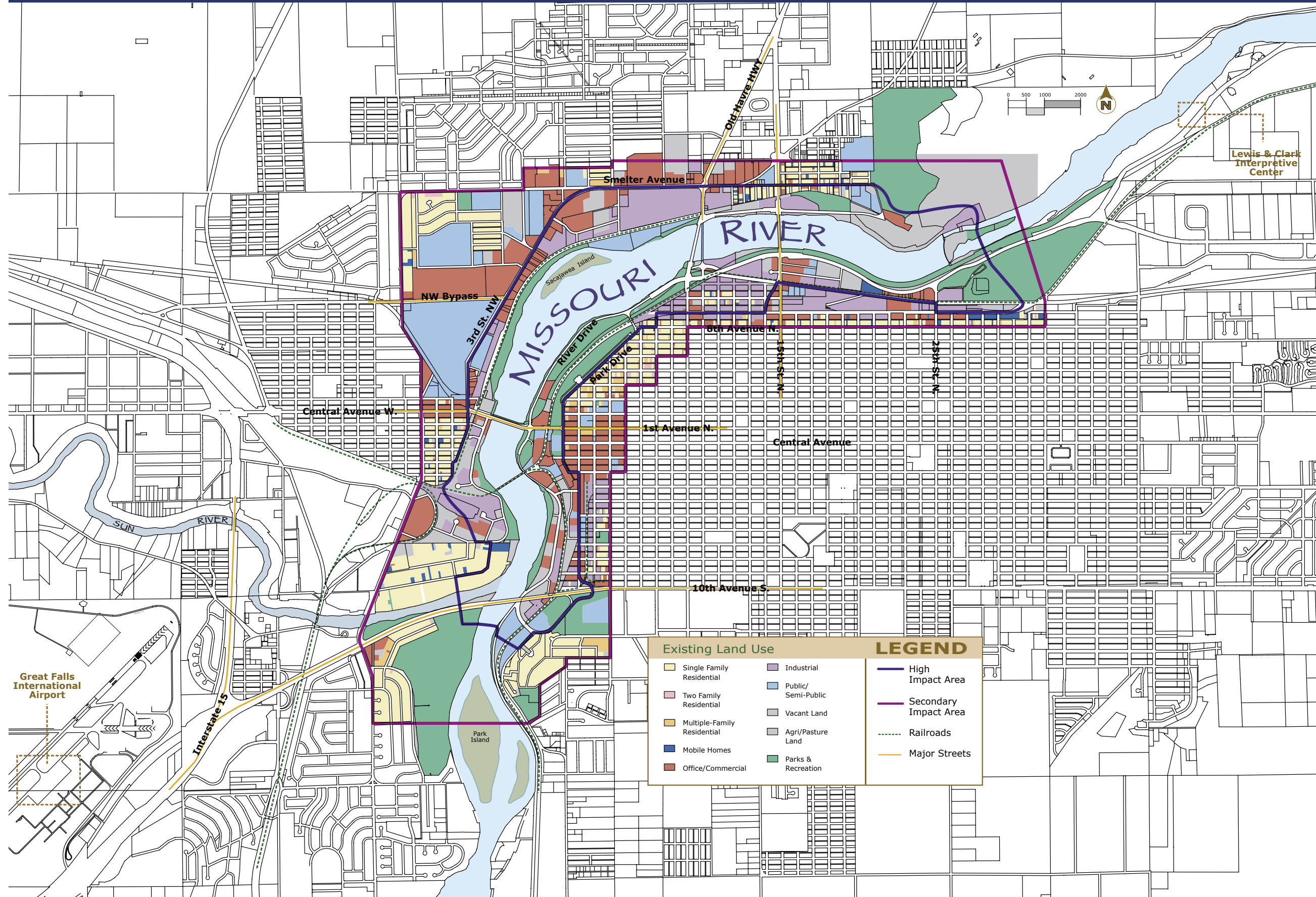
occur along the river, many linked by the River's Edge Trail. Other park and recreation lands are split or girdled by adjacent railroad tracks or major roads, limiting public access and use to some extent.

Vacant parcels are found adjacent to the river within the Primary Impact Area, and also have relationships to industrial, public, and park and recreation land uses. These properties present valuable opportunities to encourage change in predominant land uses along the river, and should be planned and developed carefully.

CONCLUSION

Industrial lands, parks and recreational uses are dominant in the study area. There is also a relatively large amount of vacant land. Although some change in land use has occurred in recent years through redevelopment of former industrial parcels, the prevalence of industrial uses tends to discourage major investment in other, more sustainable and economically beneficial land uses like commercial, residential, and office that would otherwise be attracted to the riverfront. These uses would better fit with the nearby park lands, have a lesser impact on the sensitive river environment and bring more people to the water's edge. This plan will explore ways to encourage other land uses that go hand in hand with expanding the local economic base and also promoting and protecting the health and vitality of the Missouri River Corridor.

EXISTING LAND USE



TRANSPORTATION

OBSERVATIONS

Various transportation systems run through the Missouri River Corridor including rail, auto, truck, bus, bike and pedestrian facilities. Some facilities are shared by multiple modes, while others conflict.

Railroad lines running along both sides of the river are divisive elements that tend to conflict with other modes of transportation and impede access to the riverfront. Permitted at-grade crossings are extremely limited. While grade separated crossings are preferable from a safety standpoint, they require expensive infrastructure and take up a great deal of land. But it is a reality that some rail facilities will remain in the corridor, at least into the



foreseeable future. Therefore, new development initiatives must work with the railroads to limit conflicts with automobile and pedestrian traffic.

Automobile access to the river's edge is greatest along the east bank, with only limited vehicular access on the west. Most of the arterials in the corridor have continuity across town and carry large volumes of peak hour traffic. Some of these roadways, such as 3rd St. NW, Smelter Avenue, and 6th St. SW function as arterials on the National Highway System and have been constructed with multiple, wide driving lanes to accommodate higher volumes of traffic. This has resulted in increased traffic speeds and longer crossing distances that tend to be intimidating for pedestrians and cyclists.

Four **vehicular bridges** cross the river in the corridor, and are important links in the Great Falls area's transportation system. Cross-city traffic is necessarily funneled to the bridges, affecting traffic volumes that, in turn, influence land use and development. These bridges must continue to operate efficiently to ensure a functional transportation system. Similarly, the bridges must continue to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles in a safe and effective manner.

Bus routes are not indicated on the Transportation & Trails map, as they do not generally run along the corridor. Bus lines in Great Falls primarily run east from the Downtown terminal. Routes cross the river at the Central Avenue West and 15th Street North Bridges, then tend to run in more of a spoke pattern.

Truck routes generally run parallel to the river through the corridor. River Drive is a designated truck route, including a segment north of 1st Ave. North that separates Elk's Riverside Park from the river's edge. Between 15th and 25th Streets, River Drive is a relatively narrow two lane roadway wedged between the top of the bluff overlooking the river and a strip of business establishments. The businesses are set very close to the roadway. If River Drive is reconstructed as proposed in the urban area transportation plan, the decision as to the extent of roadway reconstruction and its impact upon the river and the businesses will most likely be a significant community issue.

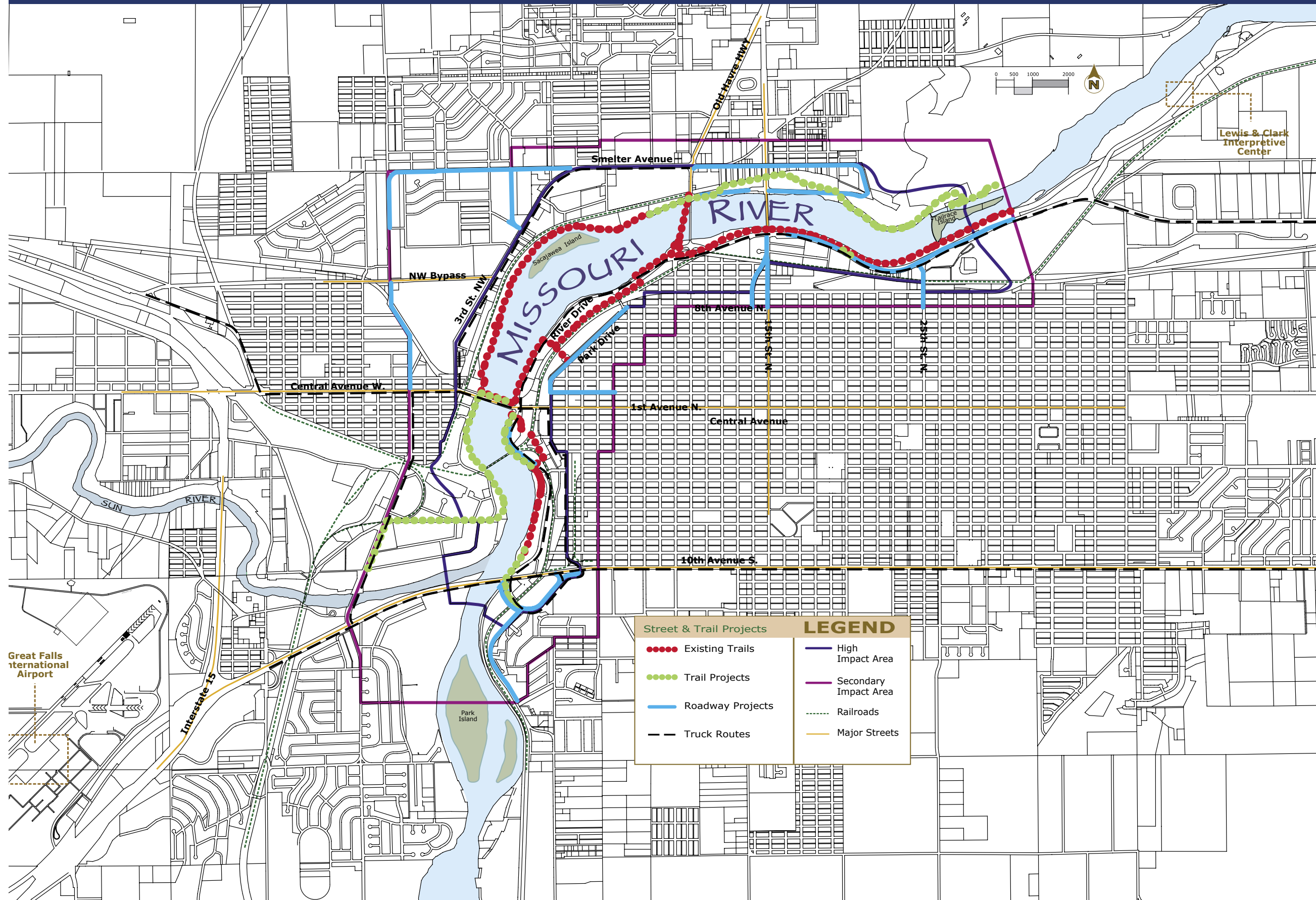
The **River's Edge Trail** runs along the east and south banks of the Missouri through the length of the project area, with stretches of trail on the west and north shores. Plans for future projects will create a continuous trail system along both riverbanks through the City of Great Falls and into the immediate rural surroundings. These expanded trails will provide a variety of recreation experiences at the river's edge, through parklands and open spaces, and along upland natural areas. Current trail configurations provide three river crossings – at the Central Avenue W. Bridge, Weissman Trail Bridge, and the Eagle Falls Memorial Bridge (9th St.). Existing trails, however, are contained mostly within the river corridor and provide few links to downtown or residential neighborhoods. New trails projects must work to overcome barriers created by existing rail corridors and automobile thoroughfares and provide connectivity to all parts of the city.

CONCLUSION

High volumes of traffic flow through and across the corridor daily on a generally efficient roadway system. Although this provides high visibility for businesses, these same volumes restrict access to some adjoining lands whose access is already limited by rail lines and the river. Conversely, increased development usually brings increased traffic, which could impact areas such as bridges that already experience some congestion during peak travel times. Future development must carefully consider potential impacts on the roadways due to additional volume and added points of conflict.

Also, aside from the River's Edge Trail, pedestrians and bicyclists often encounter difficulty moving about the corridor. Although a new citywide project to install sidewalks in some parts of the Secondary Impact Area will help some, new transportation projects must continue to include planning for safe and convenient pedestrian travel. In some cases, such as the Smelter Avenue-3rd St. NW corridor, there may be an opportunity to reconstruct existing roads to "reclaim" a greater portion of the right-of-way for pedestrian use and an enhanced streetscape.

TRANSPORTATION & TRAILS



HISTORIC RESOURCES

OBSERVATIONS

The Original Townsite (1884) of the City of Great Falls nestles in, and was shaped by, a broad curve of the Missouri River where it bends eastward towards Black Eagle Falls. Resources within that curve document the early history of the city and clearly illustrate the rise of Great Falls as the commercial, political, social and economic center of north central Montana.

Included in the Missouri River Corridor study area are three historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (designated NR in the accompanying descriptions). The National Register of Historic Places is a list of the nation's resources considered worthy of preservation. While most of the contributing resources are buildings, also included are sites, objects and structures, such as the stone walls, fountains and other structures that are contained within the extensive system of park lands along the river.

Great Falls Railroad Historic District (NR)

- The parks and structures that comprise this district reflect the community's development into central Montana's trade, service, and cultural center. The advent of the two railroads, whose depot towers are prominent landmarks of the district, made Great Falls the region's primary distribution point. Over 100 acres of parks played an important role in the initial commercial development of the city by creating a visually appealing and physically relaxing atmosphere at the north and west boundaries of the district.*

Northside Residential Historic District (NR)

- This district is historically associated with numerous important early settlers, including Great Falls' founder, Paris Gibson and renowned local architect, George Shanley. The significant periods in the economic, political and social development of Great Falls are reflected in the architectural styles and tree-lined boulevards that characterize the residential district.*

Central Business District - The Great Falls Central Business Historic District is significant as an excellent representative example of the broad patterns of architectural evolution in the Northern Great Plains during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The District features an eclectic architectural mix that documents commercial growth and development in downtown Great Falls. Representative examples from nearly

every period of the city's development display the construction methodologies and architectural details characteristic of those periods.*

Northern Montana State Fairgrounds Historic District (NR)

Developed for the expressed purpose of promoting agriculture in north central Montana, the Fairgrounds contains a collection of flamboyant Deco and Exposition style buildings that reflect a history of "Expo" design and a unity of purpose. Because of their open design, the exhibition buildings have been able to keep pace with the whims of progress with little change and have continued to entice, educate, and entertain fair-goers with exhibits ranging from livestock to the fine arts.*

Tenth Street Bridge (NR) – Completed in 1920, the Tenth Street Bridge was envisioned by the city founder, Paris Gibson, to connect Great Falls with its neighboring community of Black Eagle and beyond. This bridge is touted as the longest open-spandrel, ribbed-arch, concrete bridge in Montana and embodies the "pride and optimism" of the community in its formative years. In the 1980s, there were plans to demolish the old structure and build a new bridge. However, the bridge still stands today due to growing community interest in preserving historic resources. When restored the bridge will be an important contribution to the aesthetics and character of Great Falls.

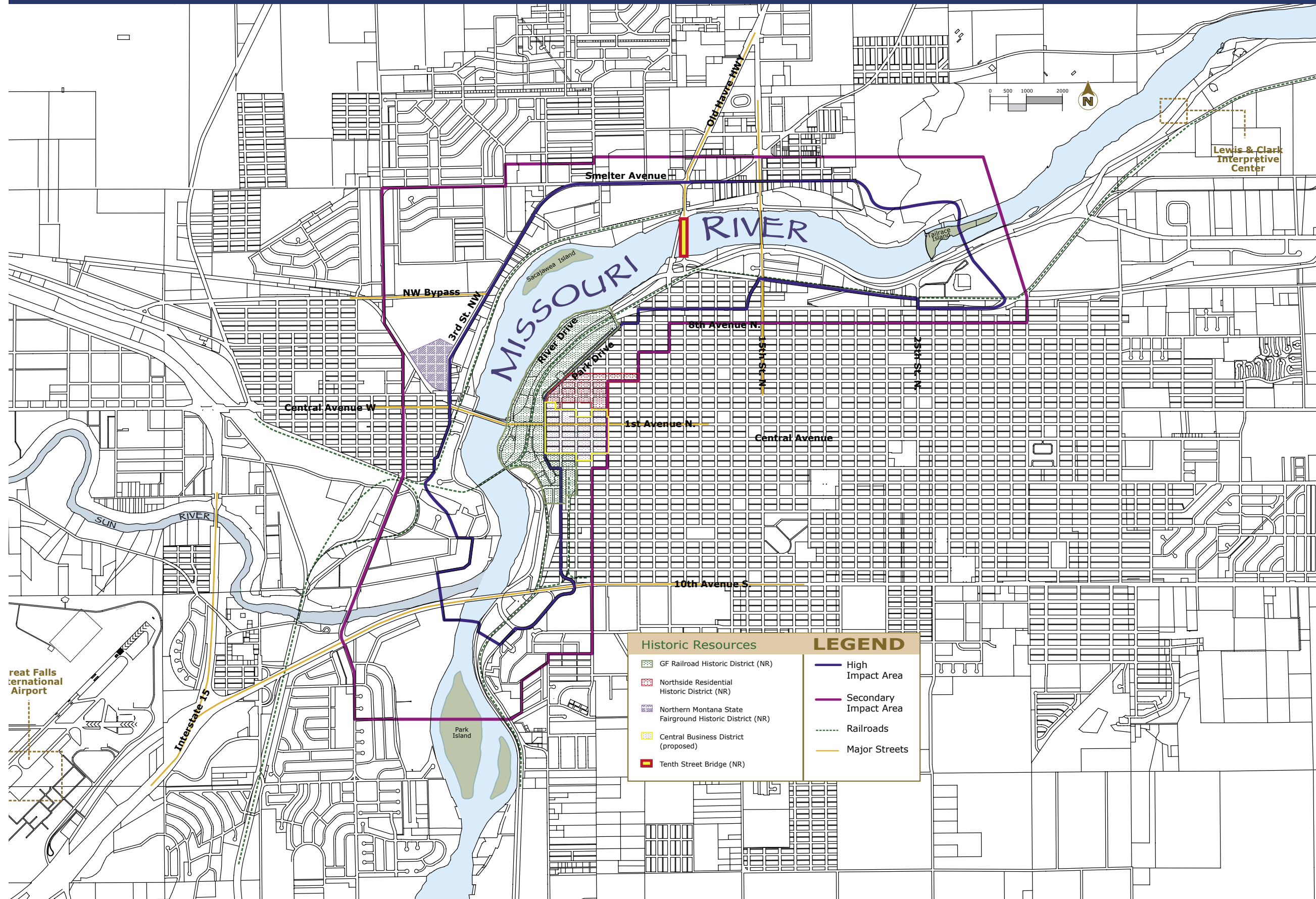
* Information provided by City-County Historic Preservation Officer

CONCLUSION

The three existing and one potential historic districts embody characteristics and qualities that have been valued and preserved over time in the community. Historic Districts can serve as centerpieces for a transition to more economically beneficial development. The value of historic buildings and districts is well-documented and recognized by successful communities all across the country. Like the river itself, historic districts are assets that can be capitalized upon to improve livability and attract new businesses, patrons, workers and residents to the heart of the community.



HISTORIC RESOURCES



Historic Resources	LEGEND
GF Railroad Historic District (NR)	High Impact Area
Northside Residential Historic District (NR)	Secondary Impact Area
Northern Montana State Fairground Historic District (NR)	Railroads
Central Business District (proposed)	Major Streets
Tenth Street Bridge (NR)	

SHORELINE CONDITIONS

OBSERVATIONS

As Great Falls developed, many segments of the urban shoreline were filled in and stabilized with rip-rap, car bodies, broken concrete, and similar material. Despite an extensive park and trail system, there are few shoreline areas within the city that provide opportunities for people to interact with and experience the water. Improving shoreline conditions and enhancing public access to the water should be a major consideration as the corridor is revitalized through development that will capitalize on the river as an amenity.



EXISTING SHORELINE CONDITIONS

In September 2002, the **Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment** report was produced for the Cascade County Conservation District and the City-County Planning Board by Land & Water Consulting of Missoula, Montana.

This study evaluated over 80 sites along 73,530 linear feet of shoreline between White Bear Island and Black Eagle Dam. Each site was photographed, described, and categorized as to method of bank protection and degree of bank stability. The study also mapped numerous discharge and withdrawal pipes and noted that extensive amounts of litter, dumping, and noxious weeds detract from the aesthetic appeal of the urban corridor.

Sites with extensively rip-rapped banks, with active erosion, or where dumped concrete or other materials are not providing effective stabilization, are prioritized for improvements. Examples of various bio-engineered bank remediation techniques are illustrated, and the appropriate technique is recommended for each priority site. Existing recreational use along the river is documented, and opportunities for new beach areas, decks, docks, and other shoreline recreational amenities noted. Potential funding sources for shoreline restoration and recreational enhancements are also provided in the study.

SHORELINE CONDITIONS

CONCLUSION

The **Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment** provides both a basic understanding of current shoreline conditions and practical, proven measures for shoreline restoration. This study is therefore included as part of the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan* by reference. Recommended restoration and water-based recreational opportunities should be matched with potential funding sources to produce visible enhancements along publicly owned shoreline. Partnership opportunities should be explored and identified to facilitate improvements along privately owned shoreline, and in conjunction with future redevelopment in the corridor. Improving the condition of the urban shoreline and providing additional public access to the water are integral to the overall corridor revitalization effort.



SUPERFUND SITES

OBSERVATIONS

Superfund sites are lands that are determined through criteria in federal and state law as having the potential for significant human health risk and environmental degradation. Such sites are often a deterrent to investment and revitalization as environmental remediation, or “clean up”, is required before they can be redeveloped. The six superfund sites within the study area are all classified as “medium priority”, meaning that on a nationwide basis, they are not high priorities for clean up and probably will not be remediated until such time as they become economically attractive for redevelopment.

The following federal governing acts can be associated with superfund sites: the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) governs the various acts, including the Montana Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA), and the Voluntary Cleanup and Recovery Act (VCRA).



Anaconda Minerals Company (AMC), Great Falls Refinery – Located east of 15th Street in Black Eagle, the “ARCO property”, as it is locally known, is an inactive, roughly 250-acre metals smelter and refinery complex which operated from 1893 to 1980. AMC produced copper, zinc, cadmium, and indium in various forms. Following the closure and dismantling of the smelter in the early 1980s, multiple studies were conducted to evaluate site conditions relative to arsenic, heavy metals, and PCB contamination. In addition, hydro-geologic investigations were undertaken to determine the extent to which groundwater was impacted. In 2000, a VCRA plan was submitted by ARCO, the current owner of the property. However, parts of the plan were rejected by the Montana DEQ for inadequate sampling. Additional information about the site from nearby property owners has prompted involvement by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and sampling by EPA began in the fall of 2002.



Burlington Northern (BN) Fueling Facility - Located between 6th St. SW and the Missouri River, this is an active 21-acre locomotive re-fueling facility which began operations in 1948. In 1987, an interceptor trench was installed to catch fuel heading towards the Missouri River. Presently no free product is observed in the river, but if sediments along the bank are disturbed, a fuel sheen can be observed. In 1994, CECRA became the lead regulatory program in charge of this site, ranking it a medium priority project. BNSF has formulated a voluntary clean-up plan and installed monitoring and recovery wells on site in 2002.



Energy West Gas Manufacturing Plant – Located at 904 9th Street North, this 5-acre former gas manufacturing plant operated from 1909 to 1928. It currently serves as an office/shop complex for Energy West (EW). Leakage from storage tanks and possible on-site disposal of waste tars and sludges have resulted in contamination of soils and groundwater with polynuclear hydrocarbons (PAHs); benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX); low levels of cyanide, and some metals. Groundwater zones indicate contaminate levels exceeding WQB-7 (human health standards). Presently EW is working on a voluntary basis to clean up contaminated soil and water. VCRA is the lead regulatory program for the medium priority site.



Falls Chemical Company – This is an inactive pesticide plant operated from the mid-1970s to 1991. Several investigations have been conducted evaluating metal levels in on-site soils, down-gradient surface water, and groundwater. In December 1996 the site was de-listed from the MDEQ CECRA priority list. It is no longer considered a superfund site.



Montana Refining Company – Located at 1900 10th St. NE in Black Eagle, this active 20-acre oil refinery has operated since at least 1931. During the 1980s, RCRA mandated monitoring showed low levels of petroleum hydrocarbons and naphthalene in on-site shallow groundwater. Later, unrelated work raised concerns about leakage south of the site when contractors observed petroleum contamination in soils and shallow groundwater. RCRA currently regulates the site, but CECRA has ranked the site medium priority.

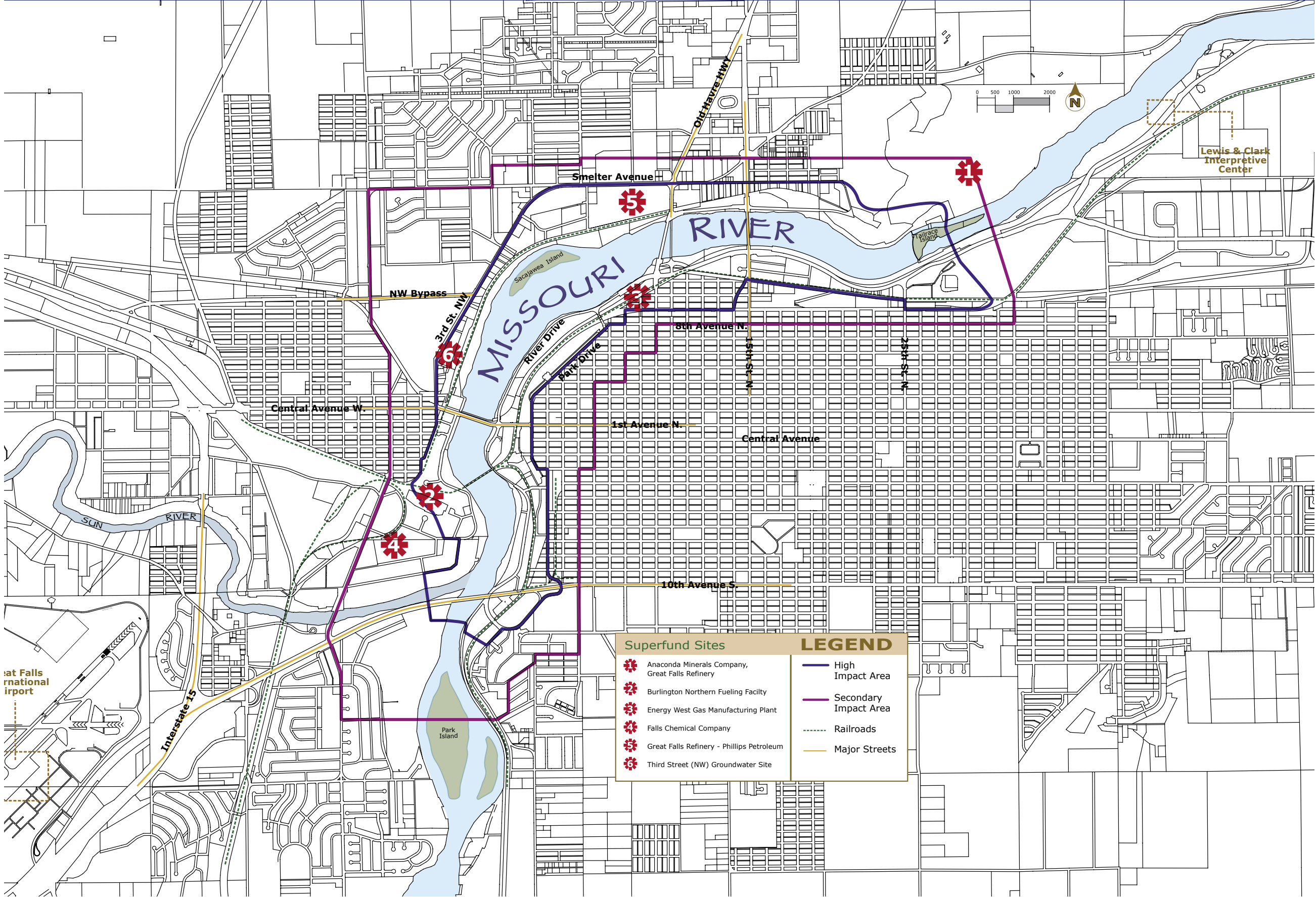


Third Street (NW) Groundwater Site – Located along 3rd Street NW, two active facilities occupy this site where benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX), petroleum hydrocarbons, chlorinated solvents, and phenols have all been found. Presently MDEQ CECRA program is the lead agency for this medium priority site.

CONCLUSION

Superfund sites and other “brownfields” within the study area will continue to be deterrents to future development and redevelopment until they are remediated, because of the environmental risks they pose and also their negative visual impacts. Some of them, however, such as the 3rd Street NW site, are strategically located and prime for some type of public-private partnership to get them cleaned up and redeveloped into beneficial uses. The new Stockman’s Bank is an example of the level and attractiveness of private investment that is possible in the river corridor if these key sites can be reclaimed and redeveloped.

SUPERFUND SITES



Superfund Sites	LEGEND
Anaconda Minerals Company, Great Falls Refinery	High Impact Area
Burlington Northern Fueling Facility	Secondary Impact Area
Energy West Gas Manufacturing Plant	Railroads
Falls Chemical Company	Major Streets
Great Falls Refinery - Phillips Petroleum	
Third Street (NW) Groundwater Site	

Great Falls National Airport

Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center

Interstate 15

Smelter Avenue

Out House Hwy

MISSOURI RIVER

MISSOURI RIVER

NW Bypass

3rd St NW

Central Avenue W

1st Avenue N

Central Avenue

10th Avenue S

Park Island

Fillace Island

River Drive

2nd St N

8th Avenue N

15th St N

25th St N

STUDY AREA SUMMARY

OBSERVATIONS

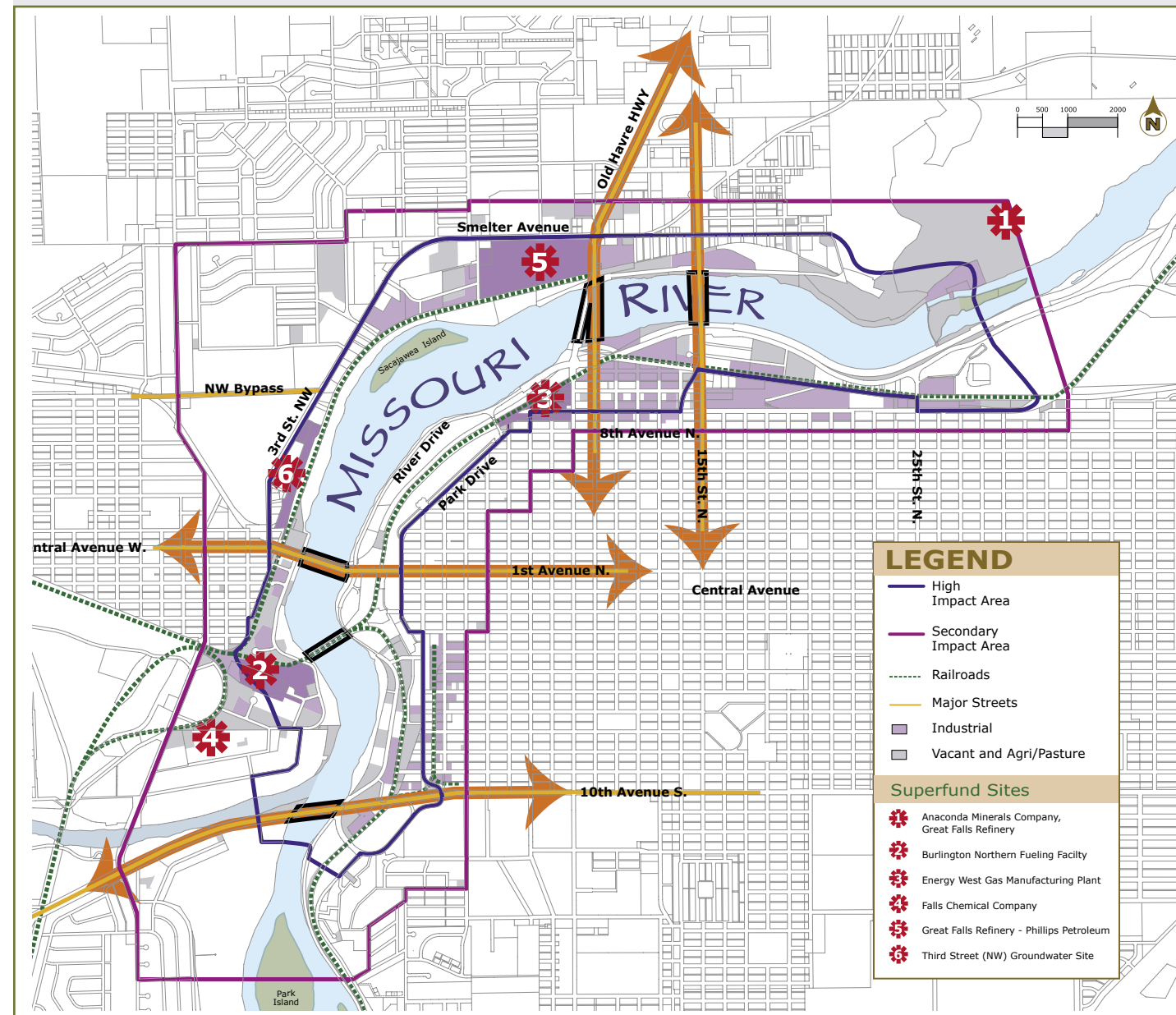
The map on the opposite page shows a composite view of existing conditions in the river corridor.

The Missouri River is a tremendous community asset. Not only is it a center for recreation and activity, but it is part of Great Falls' collective history, playing a key role in the economy and industry of the city. It is a corridor of natural beauty, providing tranquil contrast to the urban activity around it. The river corridor has the potential to be a major focus of activity – central to everyday life, commerce, and community.

The river also presents challenges that must be overcome as opportunities for redevelopment and change in the corridor are explored. The river physically divides the city. It limits the flow of traffic and people from one side of the city to the other, yet at the same time it provides unsurpassed opportunities for revitalization. Heavy commercial and industrial uses

in the corridor have contributed to the damage to the river environment, and have created unattractive development

that has discouraged new investment in more beneficial and sustainable urban land uses.

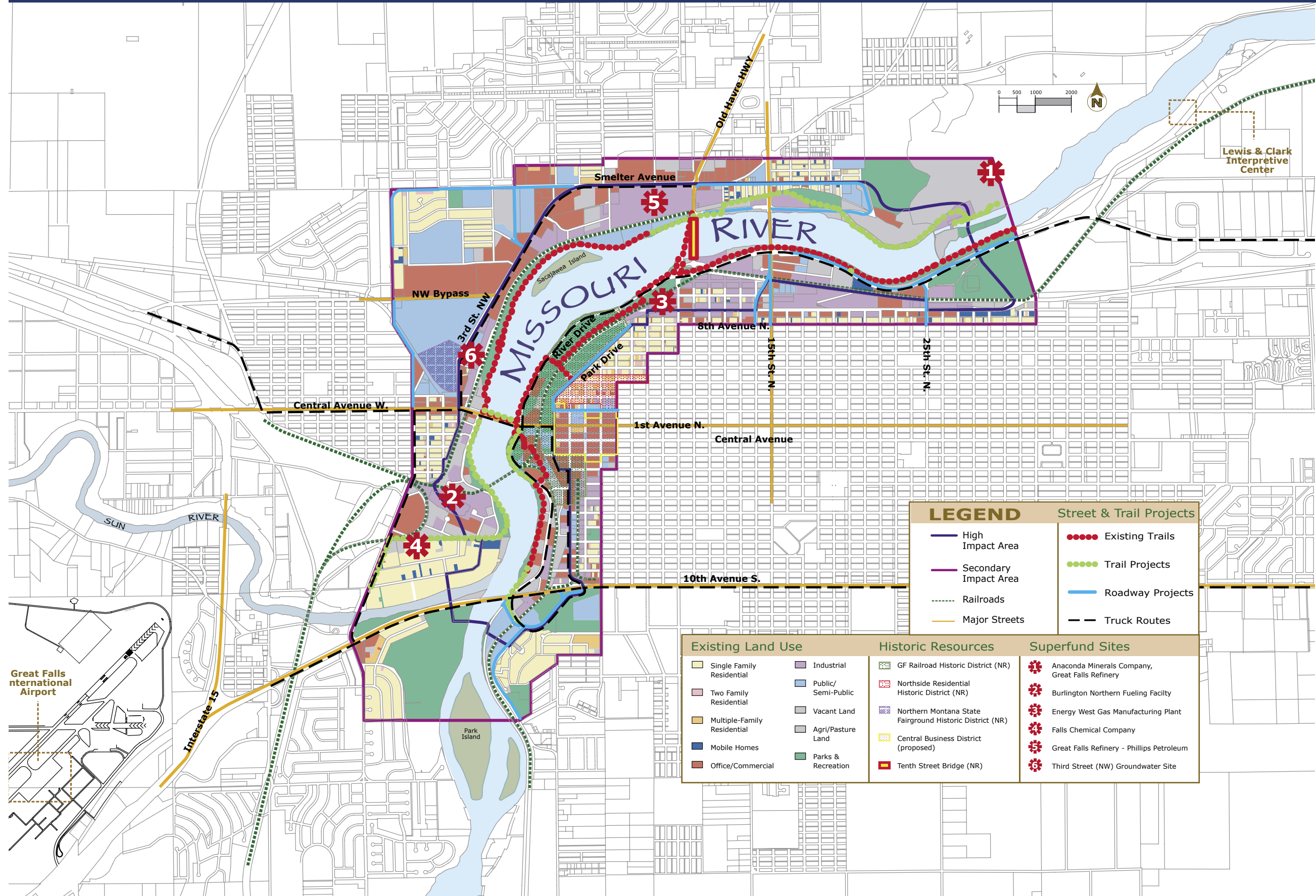


CONCLUSION

This plan envisions a transition for the river corridor from a center of heavy industry to a thoughtful mix of land uses more relevant to the Great Falls of today and more sustainable for the future. It is an emerging vision that will only be realized with the support of many, many stakeholders. As this vision for the corridor begins to take shape, the Great Falls community will be looked to for ideas, resources, and investment.

This plan is intended to be a flexible tool that will guide development in the corridor. It is intended to be visionary yet non-prescriptive, because development opportunities cannot be foretold and community values and needs change over time. The best ideas may be those that rise out of opportunities not yet identified. The following is a general strategy for implementation that is strongly rooted in the community at large. It identifies barriers to be overcome and opportunities to be capitalized upon, and sets forth some potential development scenarios for key parts of the corridor.

COMPOSITE

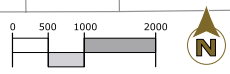


LEGEND	
	High Impact Area
	Secondary Impact Area
	Railroads
	Major Streets
	Existing Trails
	Trail Projects
	Roadway Projects
	Truck Routes

Existing Land Use	Historic Resources	Superfund Sites
Single Family Residential	GF Railroad Historic District (NR)	Anaconda Minerals Company, Great Falls Refinery
Two Family Residential	Northside Residential Historic District (NR)	Burlington Northern Fueling Facility
Multiple-Family Residential	Northern Montana State Fairground Historic District (NR)	Energy West Gas Manufacturing Plant
Mobile Homes	Central Business District (proposed)	Falls Chemical Company
Office/Commercial	Tenth Street Bridge (NR)	Great Falls Refinery - Phillips Petroleum
Industrial		Third Street (NW) Groundwater Site
Public/Semi-Public		
Vacant Land		
Agri/Pasture Land		
Parks & Recreation		

Great Falls International Airport

Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center



IMPLEMENTATION PHILOSOPHY



The success of any plan cannot be measured simply by its adoption by a commission or by the quality of its physical design. Success is measured by actual programs and built projects that combine to change the landscape in ways that conform to the vision. Those changes can only be seen over time—the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan is just the *beginning* of the process, not the end. Therefore, it is critical that a strategy to lay the groundwork and carry out the vision—an Implementation Strategy—be incorporated into the plan.

Successful implementation involves several key components. It requires committed, ongoing leadership and organization, as well as a communications program that broadcasts accomplishments.

Success is much more likely when there are supportive government structures and policies and a supportive media. These are the foundation for effective implementation. And while each implementation strategy must be carefully tailored to individual communities, there are a number of elements that all successful strategies have in common. The following eight "Strategic Components" are recommended to guide implementation of the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan in Great Falls.



STRATEGIC COMPONENTS

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

- Make this Corridor Plan powerful and visionary so that it captures the hearts and imagination of the community and wins its support for many years of hard work to come.

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

- A Great Plan moves many projects forward at the same time – large and small – all in support of the vision.

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

- People who are invested in one or more projects must pull together to make and implement a Great Plan. Win-win for all.

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

- Seeking success for the entire community, devoted to Great Falls, able to lead and motivate.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- Clear and consistent guidelines that communicate the vision of the Great Plan.
- Encourage that which is desired; prohibit that which is not.
- Flexible and dynamic tools.



COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

- Leadership must continually communicate progress and successes.
- Maintain communication among stakeholders, projects proponents, and the community.

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

- The Missouri River is not only an asset to the city and county, but to the entire region as well. Governments at all levels need to work together – a collaboration for success with clear goals, expediting of public projects, and support for needed policy changes.

ONGOING REVIEW

- Dynamic plans require ongoing review that responds to changing conditions – periodic evaluation of the Great Plan with appropriate adjustments.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

....A plan that will recognize **many, many projects**—potential and existing—involve **many, many stakeholders**—and mobilize them with a motivating vision that captures their imagination.

A Great Plan:

- Goes far beyond patching problems with quick-fix solutions or reacting to specific issues.
- Presents a vision strong enough to motivate people to take action.
- Addresses *long-term* possibilities regardless of short-term constraints.

The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan provides a long-term vision for economic revitalization in the corridor through the creation of riverfront communities on both sides of the river. This Corridor Plan also promotes developing riverfront gateways into the downtown and enhancing the river’s relationship to other neighborhoods in the city.

Developing the **Great Plan** includes building the “human infrastructure” for a vision-making process to continue through implementation. The plan defines concrete solutions to specific revitalization challenges and sets a course for attracting new investment.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

MANY, MANY, PROJECTS & ACTIONS

To keep the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan and its vision on track, a variety of projects should be simultaneously underway. It is highly unlikely that a single big project will “save the day.” Rather, through a series of small and mid-size actions, programs, and projects, the public and private sectors working together will achieve the Great Plan. Having **many, many projects** facilitates a diversity of development products along the Riverfront and keeps projects small, allowing involvement from the local financial and development community. The definition of what constitutes a project is broad—regulatory policy, code revisions, development projects, and educational programs are all worthy projects:

- Planning projects – physical plans, specific plans, illustrative plans;
- Policy development, better and more flexible regulatory tools, and design guidelines;
- Public physical projects – parks, recreation, trails, open space, riverfront access;
- Waterfront enhancement – cleanup, environmental restoration, reclamation;
- Public infrastructure improvements – utilities, access, street lighting, furniture;
- Private sector housing development;
- Private sector commercial & lodging development;
- Private sector office and employment development;
- Public sector cultural facility development;
- Economic development programs that feature the riverfront;
- Planning to connect Downtown with the river;
- Events – music and arts festivals at the riverfront;
- Local lending pools for riverfront revitalization;
- Application of varied financial tools for public-private partnerships;



This can (and should) be a lengthy list of dynamic projects and actions—anything that furthers the **Great Plan!**

Make this list available to the community and use it as a tool to track progress and celebrate successes along the road to implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

Implementation requires collaboration and support among stakeholders. A stakeholder is any individual or organization with an interest in the plan's outcome. This includes a wide group of individuals, companies, and public and private organizations, as well as government bodies at all levels. The key to successful implementation of the **Great Plan** will be creating mechanisms for marrying the **many, many stakeholders**—current and potential—with the **many, many projects**—existing and proposed. The Missouri River belongs to everyone – citizens, recreationists, property owners, business interests, environmentalists, and developers.

- Stakeholders provide a broad base of involvement and promote project implementation;
- Stakeholders form the basis of political support for implementation of the strategy;
- A wide stakeholder base leads to a diversity of ideas, projects, and solutions;
- People are often the biggest barriers to success of the plan – let them be part of the solution.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

COMMITTED ONGOING CITY AND PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERSHIP

The plan will have many advocates, but ongoing, committed leaders who see the plan through are essential to its success.

Seek out leaders who:

- Desire success for the entire community;
- Are respected by the community;
- Have the ability to motivate and organize stakeholders; and
- Promote and communicate the vision embodied in the plan.

Early in the process, a “champion” should be designated within the City to advocate for the riverfront and resolve issues quickly. The Corridor Plan will involve multiple city agencies; an internal champion can help motivate and coordinate these agencies as well as quickly resolve issues and act as a liaison to policymakers. From the private sector, an individual, a committee, or an umbrella organization that represents a broad base of special interests should work in partnership with the City to further the **Great Plan**. A high-level partnership of public and private leaders is necessary for successful implementation of the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The **Great Plan** must provide clear and consistent guidelines that communicate the vision. Plans are inherently forward-looking and are more likely to succeed if they offer dynamic and flexible standards that can easily respond to new opportunities as they arise. Successful development standards provide an essential set of tools to guide implementation—without being overly prescriptive. Development standards may include streetscape guidelines, zoning code revisions, building code amendments, Corridor Plan goals, and existing planning standards. Regardless of the existing pattern, it is important for the development standards to be examined to determine if they encourage implementation.

Development standards should:

- Include clear and consistent guidelines that communicate the vision of the plan;
- Encourage that which is desired and strongly prohibit that which is not wanted;
- Offer dynamic and flexible guides—pragmatic standards for change;
- Allow for the vision to be implemented over a period of time; and
- Back up those standards with enforcement, incentives and resources for implementation.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING

With **many, many projects** underway at the same time, there will be many successes to broadcast. There must be a communication and marketing platform to keep people—and the media—informed about those successes. This increases prospects for further successes because investors, developers, and lenders seek out environments with market opportunity. In other words, success breeds success.

It should be clearly understood that:

- Both the organization and the leadership must communicate for successful implementation;
- Marketing means making news out of the continuing projects; and
- Communication on projects is essential at all levels: among implementing agencies, among **the many, many stakeholders**, and among the greater Great Falls community.

The **Committed Leadership** should formalize communication networks so that they become regularly filled with local implementation success stories. These networks also should address internal communication among stakeholders as well as external communication to the Great Falls community at large and potential investors. Creative strategies for promoting the plan and capturing the commitment of these target audiences can be devised as part of a marketing and communication plan.

Communication may take place via a number of formats:

- Local media – newspaper, TV, radio;
- Newsletters;
- Websites;
- Public meetings;
- Brochures and plans;
- Signage; and
- Internal and external e-mail networks.



“Changed Attitudes and Perception Can Change BehaviorTo Produce Desired Results.”

-Dave Leland

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

Government is an essential partner, albeit one that is often misunderstood and under-appreciated by the private sector. After all, there are some things only government can do. As marketer and developer, the City has the responsibility and the authority to remove barriers to implementation. For instance, the City can change outdated and inappropriate codes and offer public financing or bonuses to encourage private investment. Supportive government is essential for the public signage program, streetscape and design standards, traffic synchronization, public arts and entertainment areas, parks and open space planning, pedestrian and bicycle access, and parking planning. All of these efforts require leadership and innovation on the part of government.

To be successful, government must look beyond traditional approaches to problem solving and begin thinking more like an implementer and facilitator and less like a regulator.

Key roles of government may include:

- Address financial barriers by developing funding strategies that capture state and federal dollars for matching private investment;
- Develop good communication between governments and **Committed Ongoing Leadership**;
- Prioritize key strategic actions government will take to support effective implementation;
- Provide support for achieving standards—consultation with property owners or potential developers, code enforcement and assistance; and
- Assess the internal structure to review its practices and identify and change policies in a reasonable timeframe so that private sector investors are encouraged to take an active role in implementation.



As a public entity, the City can foster partnerships with private or public investors to develop key opportunity sites within the corridor that will lead to further implementation of the **Great Plan**.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Strategic Components

MAKE A GREAT PLAN

MANY, MANY PROJECTS

MANY, MANY STAKEHOLDERS

COMMITTED, ONGOING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT

ONGOING REVIEW

ONGOING REVIEW

The plan and its implementation strategy will benefit from establishment of a formal, **ongoing review** process. A review process will evaluate policies and the degree to which the plan is being successfully implemented. In order to remain effective:

- Dynamic plans require **ongoing review** that responds to changing conditions; and
- All aspects must be evaluated—the plan, the projects, communications—and periodic plan adjustments must be made when necessary.

As the Corridor Plan evolves and the organization changes, the need for internal and external review will become increasingly important. Most plans benefit from the opportunity to stop and examine progress so that the means are consistent with the goals. Setting a date for review during the first year and annual review after the first year is appropriate and necessary for Great Falls.



REMOVE BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

As implementation of the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan progresses, there will be a need to overcome or remove barriers that stand in the way. Barriers can be described as anything that block the way between the current situation and implementation of the plan. Barriers can vary widely – some are physical, some political, some are tied to fear or lack of understanding, many relate to timing. Because barriers will either prevent or inhibit implementation of the plan, they must be addressed early in the implementation process. Some barriers have to do with the future – getting ready for new development and investment; others have to do with correcting the problems of the past. The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan addresses the past, the present and the future.

Most barriers fall into one or more of five categories. These categories include:

- Physical barriers
- Financial barriers
- Market barriers
- Regulatory barriers
- Political barriers

PHYSICAL

Providing adequate infrastructure and access, working with topography, effectively integrating public and private development, removing unproductive and inappropriate uses.

Examples:

- 1 Limited access to most redevelopment sites.
- 2 Streets will need to be rerouted and/or vacated; utilities removed and reinstalled.
- 3 Few high quality developments on nearby properties; poor quality streetscapes.
- 4 Lack of connections to adjacent neighborhoods; especially bike/pedestrian connections.
- 5 Weak connections between the riverfront and downtown.
- 6 Railroad rights-of-way constrain access to many redevelopment sites.
- 7 Overhead lines and obsolete street lighting clutter the corridor landscape.
- 8 Eroded, unnatural, and improperly stabilized banks, litter, and noxious weeds create an unattractive shoreline and separate people from the water's edge.

MARKET

Effecting a sustained campaign to bring quality jobs and therefore solid growth to Great Falls. Lack of growth is the single biggest barrier to success– for the community and the riverfront

Examples:

- 1 Slow economic and population growth in Great Falls.
- 2 General lack of experience in local market for mixed-use development.
- 3 Perception that “quality” housing is only desired in outlying areas.
- 4 City not yet active in marketing and promoting infill redevelopment.



REMOVE BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

FINANCIAL

Low rents are barriers to initial riverfront development – a challenge for the private sector to build quality development. Public-private partnering is essential, particularly for those early pioneering projects.

Examples:

- 1 Lack of local access to development capital.
- 2 Local financial organizations inexperienced in alternative financing mechanisms.
- 3 Most redevelopment sites will require assembling multiple properties.
- 4 Not all property owners are developers or are capable of participating in joint development; may prefer to be bought out in cash.
- 5 Most redevelopment will require demolition and disposal of industrial structures, some of which may have environmental problems.

REGULATORY

New regulations will be needed both to guide new development as well as preserve the opportunity for quality development in the future – design guidelines, performance standards, new zoning classifications, other.

Examples:

- 1 River corridor dominated by industrial zoning; discourages desired mixed uses.
- 2 No mixed-use/multi-use zoning districts or options in local regulations appropriate for riverfront redevelopment.
- 3 Incomplete data on prior uses makes environmental assessment difficult.
- 4 No local brownfields redevelopment programs.
- 5 Uneven and fragmented code enforcement.

POLITICAL

Elected officials will need the firm support of interests throughout the community (business, recreation, environmental, etc.) to make those tough decisions that will ensure a great Corridor Plan.

Examples:

- 1 Implementation will require coordination of many agencies – local, regional, and state.
- 2 Currently the City has no public-private partnering models, incentives, programs, or funding mechanisms that are based on their past successes in joint development.
- 3 Non-local railroad management slows decision-making process.
- 4 Insufficient stakeholder interest/involvement.



KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

PULSE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The implementation strategies identified may be best applied by targeting specific areas in the Missouri River Corridor for “pulse development.” The underlying purpose of pulse development is to formulate development concepts for strategic locations, or focal points, within the larger area. The concepts provided for these pulse developments are not meant to be prescriptive nor to preclude other sound development ideas—quite the contrary. They represent a vision of what is possible—a new way

of looking at the redevelopment potential of land in the corridor.

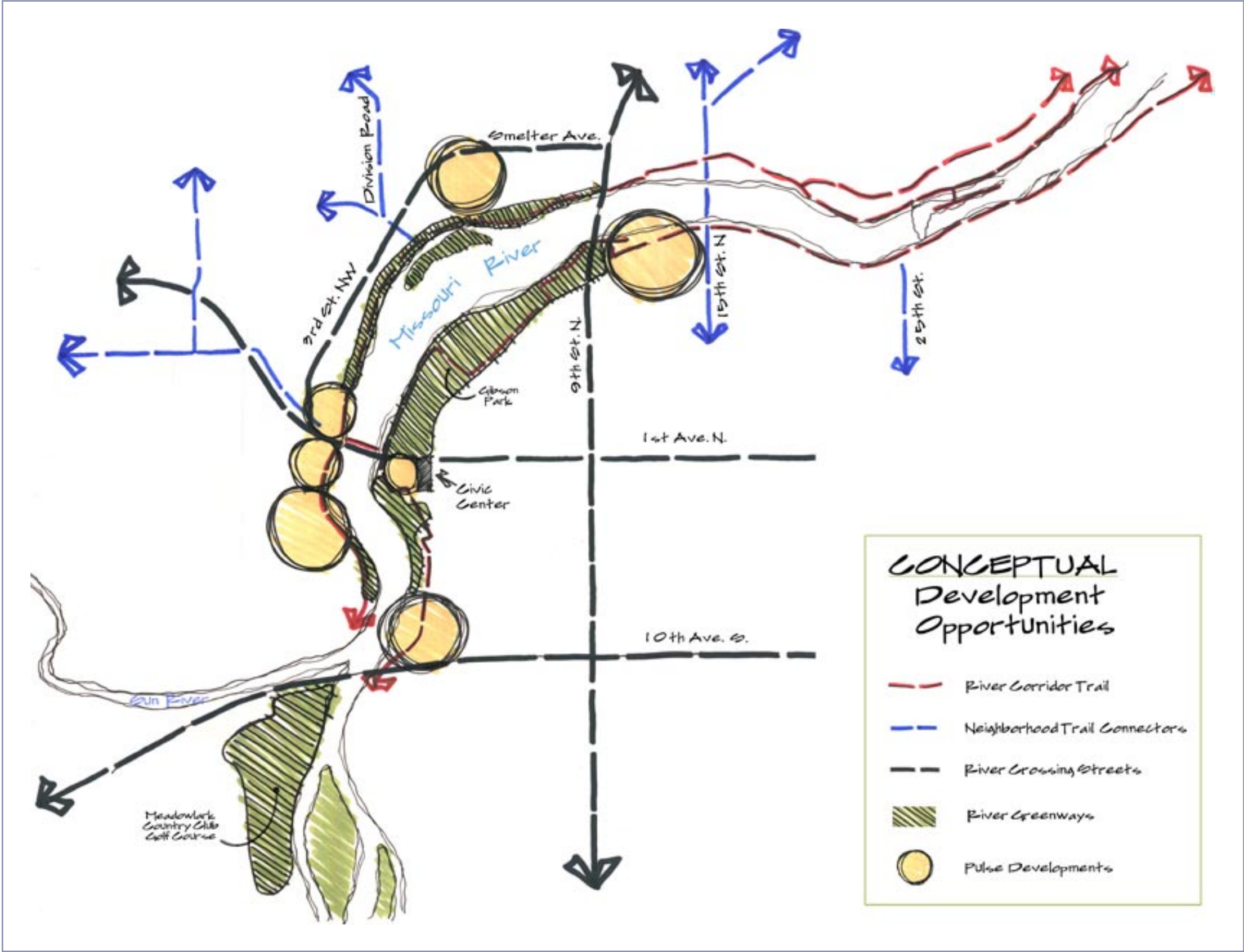
These nodes of high-intensity,

mixed-use residential and commercial development provide a hub for commercial

activity, creating growth and opportunity. All activity nodes are planned to be walkable, safe, and inviting, but differ from one another in character, function and purpose, so that each offers a unique experience. Ideally, pulse developments are interspersed with lower-intensity uses such as community open space that provide amenities and serve as buffers.

Potential locations for pulse developments in the Missouri River Corridor were selected based on a number of criteria. Vacant or undeveloped lands were obvious choices, especially those adjacent to bridges and other major transportation elements. Parcels that capitalized on the scenic quality of the river were also desirable. The diagram on page 41 illustrates locations for pulse development opportunities.





DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The following concepts illustrate exciting possibilities for new development in the Missouri River Urban Corridor. Though these are relatively large-scale projects, they may be viewed as a composite of many smaller projects that will require the actions of many, many stakeholders working together to realize the vision.

These concepts for the Old Brewery Property and the Bay Drive Community are located on the west river bank near the Central Avenue West Bridge. Several overriding development principles were identified that gave rise to these concepts:



DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Existing Commercial

- Incorporate existing commercial developments into new community.
- Focus on existing commercial/restaurant use as an “activity magnet” that activates the street corridor.



Proposed Commercial / Office Development

- Mixed with residential development.
- Provide live-work opportunities with ground level commercial and upper story residential.



Residential

- Orient housing to open space and views.
- Face as many units as possible to amenities.



Community Open Space

- Keep the waterfront open to the public.
- Provide sufficient building and parking setbacks to protect water quality and keep open space functional.
- Provide continuous pedestrian circulation along waterfront.
- Extend green connections from the river’s edge to neighboring communities.
- Incorporate small community parks and open space amenities.
- Create activity nodes and gathering places along pedestrian paths.



Vehicular Access & Parking

- Realign existing roads as necessary to increase and/or reconfigure developable area.
- Use existing railroad crossings where possible.
- New parking located behind residential so it is not visible from river’s edge.
- Parking acts as buffer between railroad tracks and residential.



Commercial/Office Buffer

- Commercial/office development capitalizes on primary street frontage and acts as a buffer, sheltering residential development behind.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

BAY DRIVE COMMUNITY CONCEPT

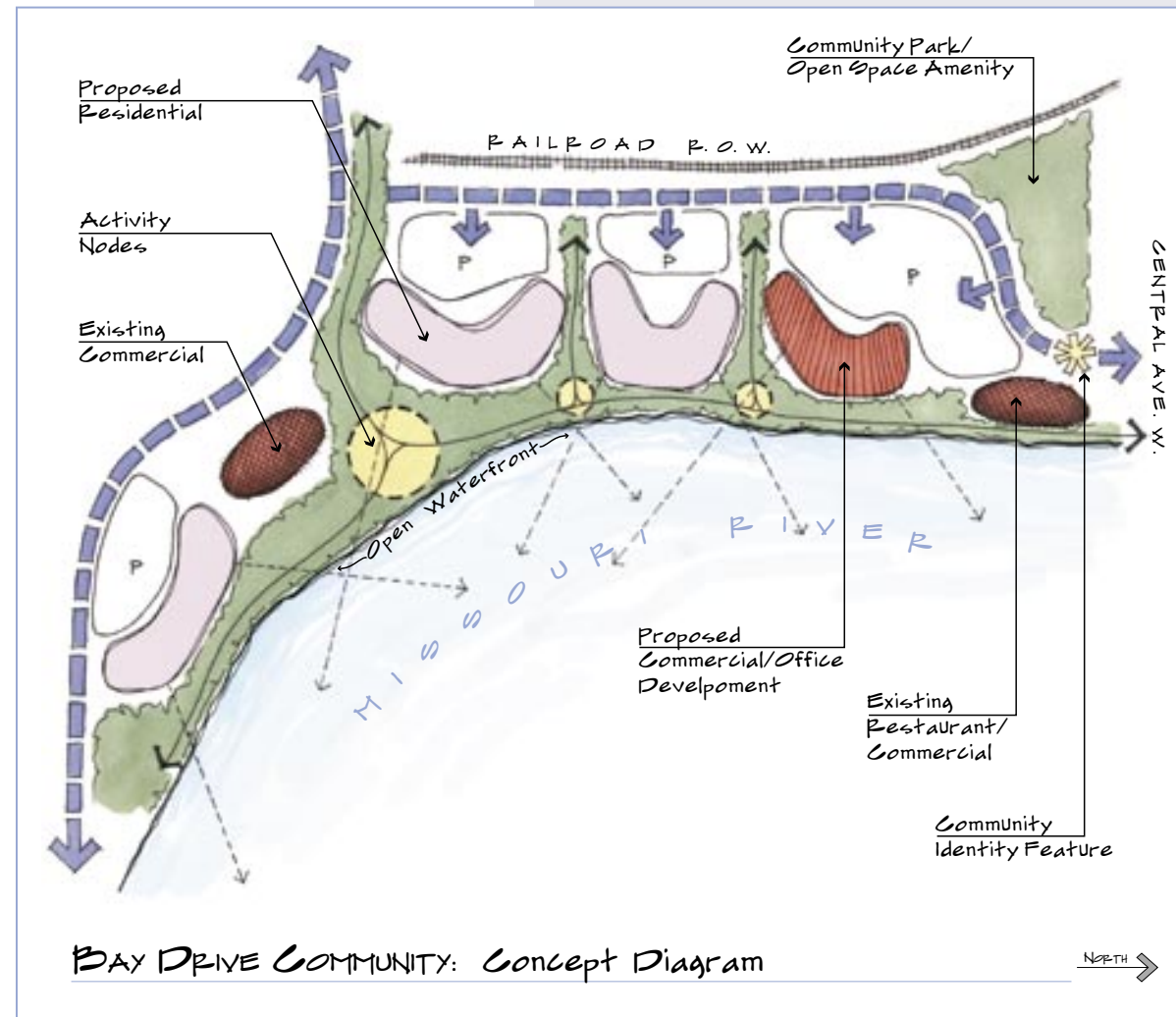


Diagram of Development Principles

CONTEXT

The facing illustration explores more specific ideas for the Bay Drive Community Concept. An estimated 24 acres, the community is oriented toward the river and backed on the west by the railroad corridor and 3rd Street SW. It would require a realignment of Bay

Drive to the west to maximize developable land in the area and provide better connectivity with the river.

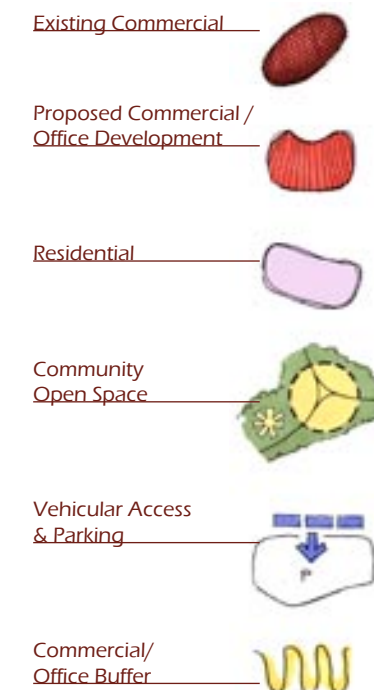
LAND USE

This concept envisions a mix of land uses that includes multi-family residences, restaurants, offices and retail stores. Existing commercial and restaurant uses are integrated with new development and serve to activate the community. They are typically located along major streets and function as a buffer to residential uses.

Residential development offers a number of alternatives including traditional rental apartments, townhomes with attached two-car garages, and live/work studios that provide office space on the ground floor, with living quarters above. All capitalize on views of the river and other amenities of the site.

OPEN SPACE & AMENITIES

The riverfront is open to the public and buildings carefully sited to create corridors of open space for easy pedestrian access to the water's edge. Pedestrian pathways continue through the site, providing linkage to other neighborhoods and adjacent properties. Community open space is punctuated by activity nodes and gathering places, to promote a high level of activity. Green space and image elements are used at the main entry and throughout, creating an aesthetic environment and special sense of place for residents and visitors.





BAY DRIVE COMMUNITY
Concept Plan 1" = 100'-0" NORTH →

CONCEPT SUMMARY

Housing Type	# Units	Density
Apartments	36	18/Acre
Townhomes	24	12/Acre
Live/Work Studios	40	20/Acre
Office	24,000 sf	
Retail/Restaurant	3,000 sf	

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

OLD BREWERY PROPERTY

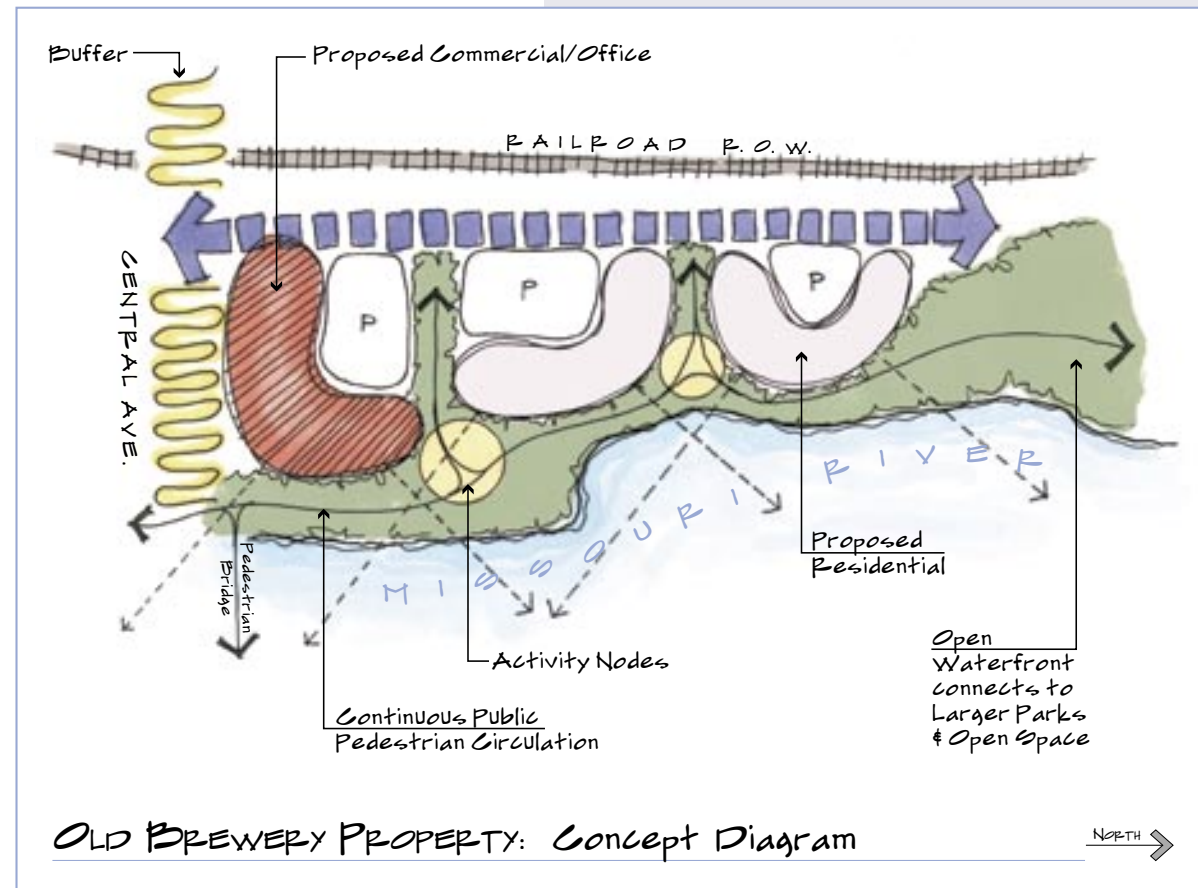


Diagram of Development Principles

CONTEXT

The Old Brewery Property is also located on the west bank of the Missouri River, and is separated from the Bay Drive Community by Central Avenue West. The property is bounded on the north by a public park/natural area and on the west by a railroad

right-of-way. This is a slightly smaller area at just under 6 acres, but it employs the same set of development principles as the Bay Drive Community concept.

LAND USE

Land use in this concept calls primarily for multi-family residential apartments, with a mix of office, retail, and commercial uses. A land swap with the park would "square up" the property creating a more usable configuration. Commercial and office development is oriented to Central Avenue West, which activates the street edge and slows traffic. Commercial uses also act as a buffer to the internal residential apartments. Residential development capitalizes on views of the river and other site open space amenities. Parking behind the residential and commercial structures acts as a buffer to the rail corridor.

OPEN SPACE & AMENITIES

The riverfront remains open to the public. Buildings are carefully sited to create corridors of open space for easy pedestrian access to the water's edge. Pedestrian pathways extend through the site, providing linkage to other neighborhoods and adjacent properties. Community open space is punctuated by recreational and gathering places to encourage a lively, active environment.





OLD BREWERY PROPERTY (NORTH)
 Concept Plan 1" = 100'-0" NORTH →

CONCEPT SUMMARY		
Housing Type	# Units	Density
Apartments	42	20/Acre
Office	24,000 sf	

APPROPRIATE RIVERFRONT USES



The Following is a list of land uses that reinforce the new vision for the Missouri River Corridor. Some of these uses have been incorporated in the concepts for Bay Drive and the Old Brewery Property, or may already exist. Because it is impossible to anticipate future development opportunities, it is important to identify a range of land uses and project types, to allow for the greatest flexibility.

Urban Residential

- Rental apartments 2-4 story
- Owner condominiums 2-4 story
- Urban Lofts
- Row Houses & Town Houses
- Stacked Housing (owner/renter)
- Senior Housing
- Mixed-Use (housing/commercial)

Retail & Commercial Lodging

- Specialty Retail
- Restaurants – Dinner Houses
- Restaurants – Family Dining
- Meeting Facilities
- Recreation Retail
- Entertainment Retail
- Hotels & Motels

Employment

- Corporate Offices
- Technology Offices
- Government Offices
- Speculative Office Buildings

Civic & Cultural Uses

- Museum
- Performing Arts Facilities
- Library
- Information Center

Recreation/Open Space

- Parks, Trails, and Open Space
- Athletic Club
- Boating & Water Activities

This list is not comprehensive. Stakeholders can and should remain open to alternative uses that fall within the overall vision for the River Corridor.



TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS AND CONNECTIVITY

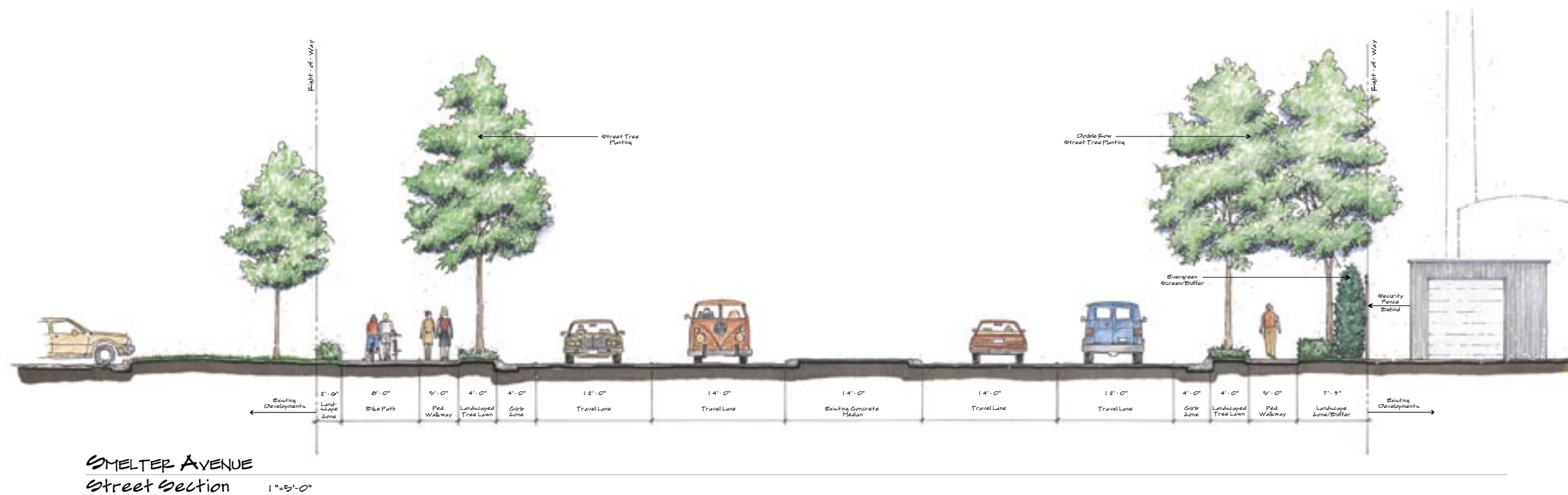
Beyond mixed-use development projects, improvements to key transportation corridors in the study area will have a significant and positive impact. Suggested improvements to Smelter Avenue and River Drive, on the following pages, explore ways to safely integrate pedestrian routes with these corridors so that they become viable pedestrian connections, as opposed to barriers. Landscape enhancements work to separate pedestrians from traffic lanes, and achieve a more positive aesthetic.

SMELTER AVENUE / 3rd St. NW

Currently, Smelter Avenue and 3rd St. NW are major arterial roads that act as barriers between outlying neighborhoods and the river corridor. Traffic speed and volumes are high, creating an intimidating environment for pedestrians. Industrial uses along Smelter Avenue, combined with the absence of strong landscape and site design standards, have created an unattractive thoroughfare.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Below is an illustrative section showing suggested improvements to Smelter Avenue within the existing street right-of-way. They include the addition of a concrete median, curb and gutter, and planting strips with street trees along both sides of the road. Roadside plantings help to separate pedestrian from automobile traffic, and also screen unsightly industrial areas, parking lots, and outdoor storage areas to create a more attractive roadway.



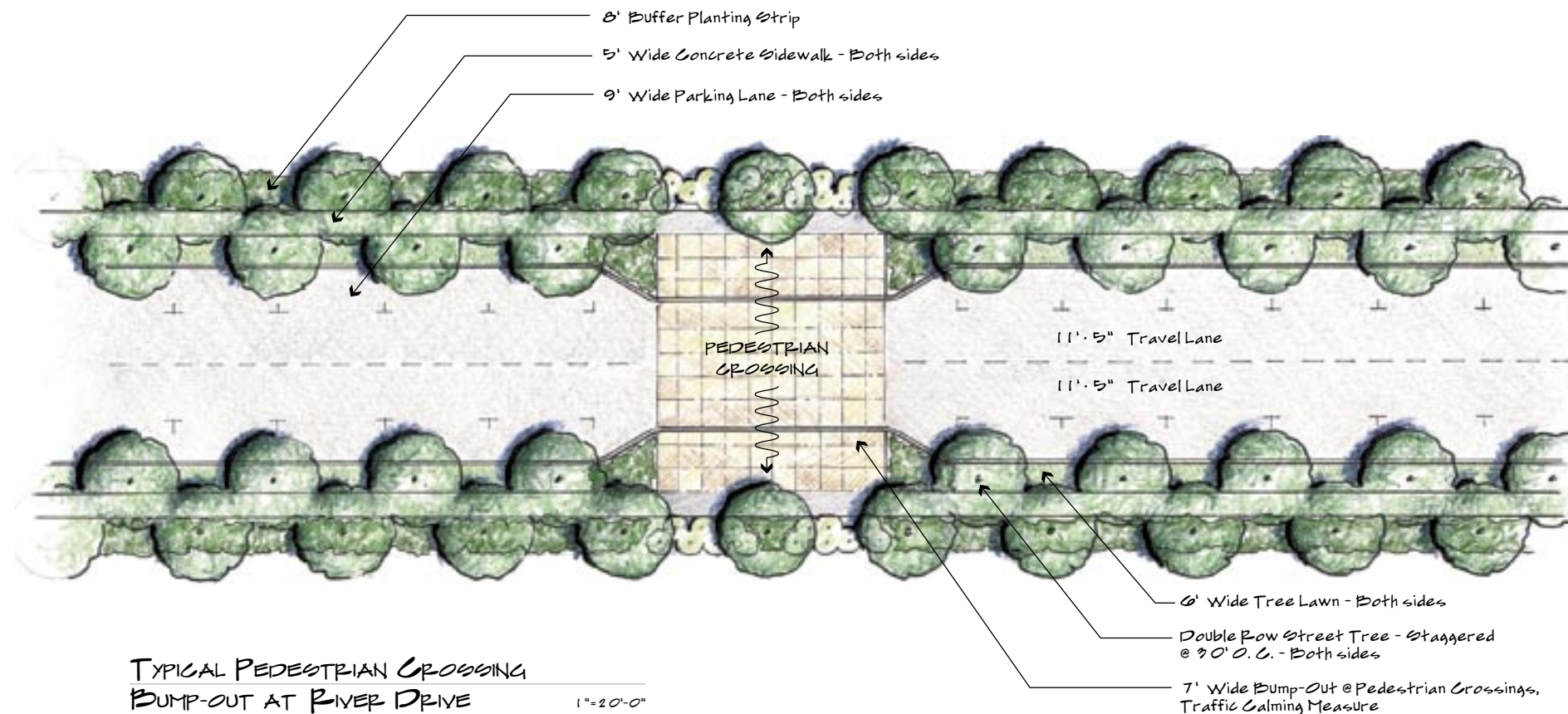
TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS AND CONNECTIVITY

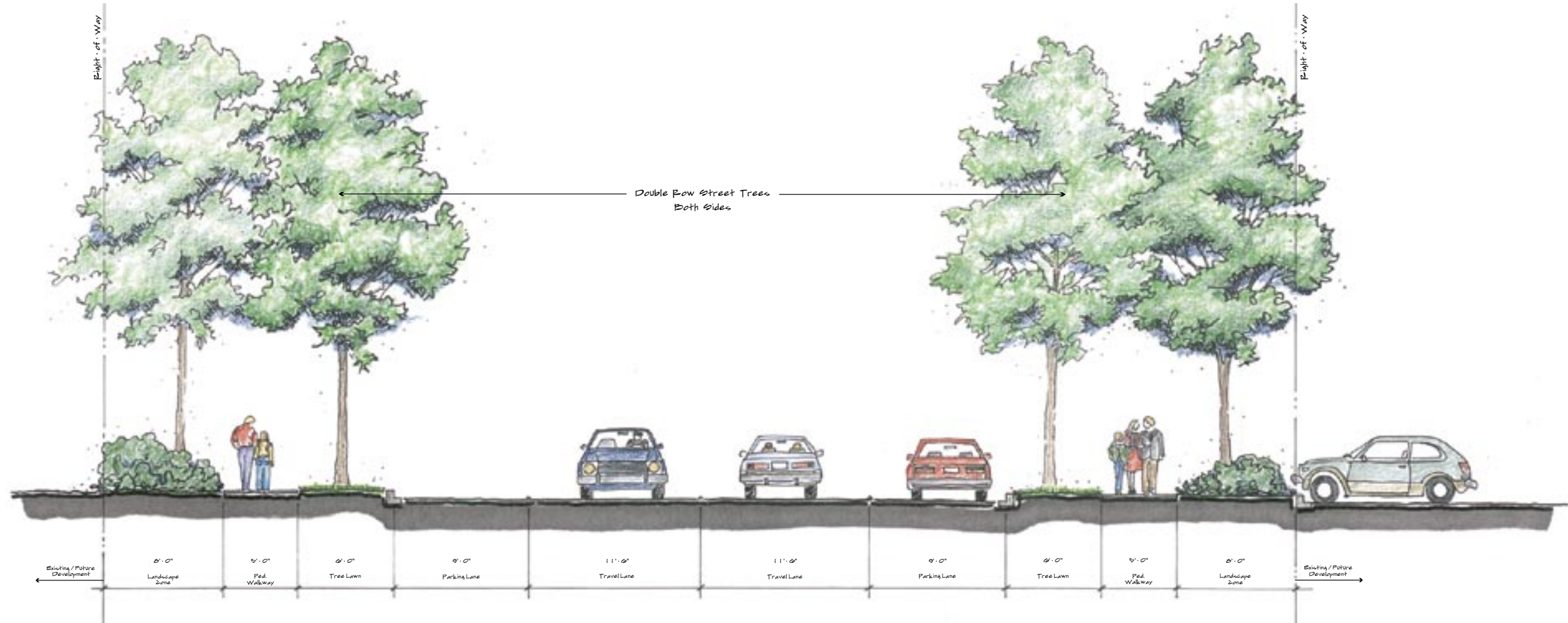
RIVER DRIVE SOUTH

Suggested improvements to River Drive South at Broadwater Bay include landscape enhancements and better articulation of pedestrian traffic. The addition of double rows of street trees on both sides of River Drive create a pleasant walk-through experience for pedestrians and echo the original Paris Gibson plan for the City. Landscaping is further used to create a sense of separation for pedestrians, screen roadside parking areas, and generally improve the aesthetic of River Drive.

Two traffic lanes remain, as do two parallel parking lanes on either side.

Pedestrian crossings are designed for user safety and aesthetics. At crossings, the curb is bumped out and roadside parking discontinued to ensure that pedestrians are easily seen by motorists. A change in paving texture and color helps to create a pedestrian-friendly feeling and alert motorists that they are passing through a designated pedestrian zone.





RIVER DRIVE SOUTH NEAR BROADWATER BAY
 Street section
 1"=5'-0"

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS AND CONNECTIVITY

SCENIC VIEWS AND DRIVES

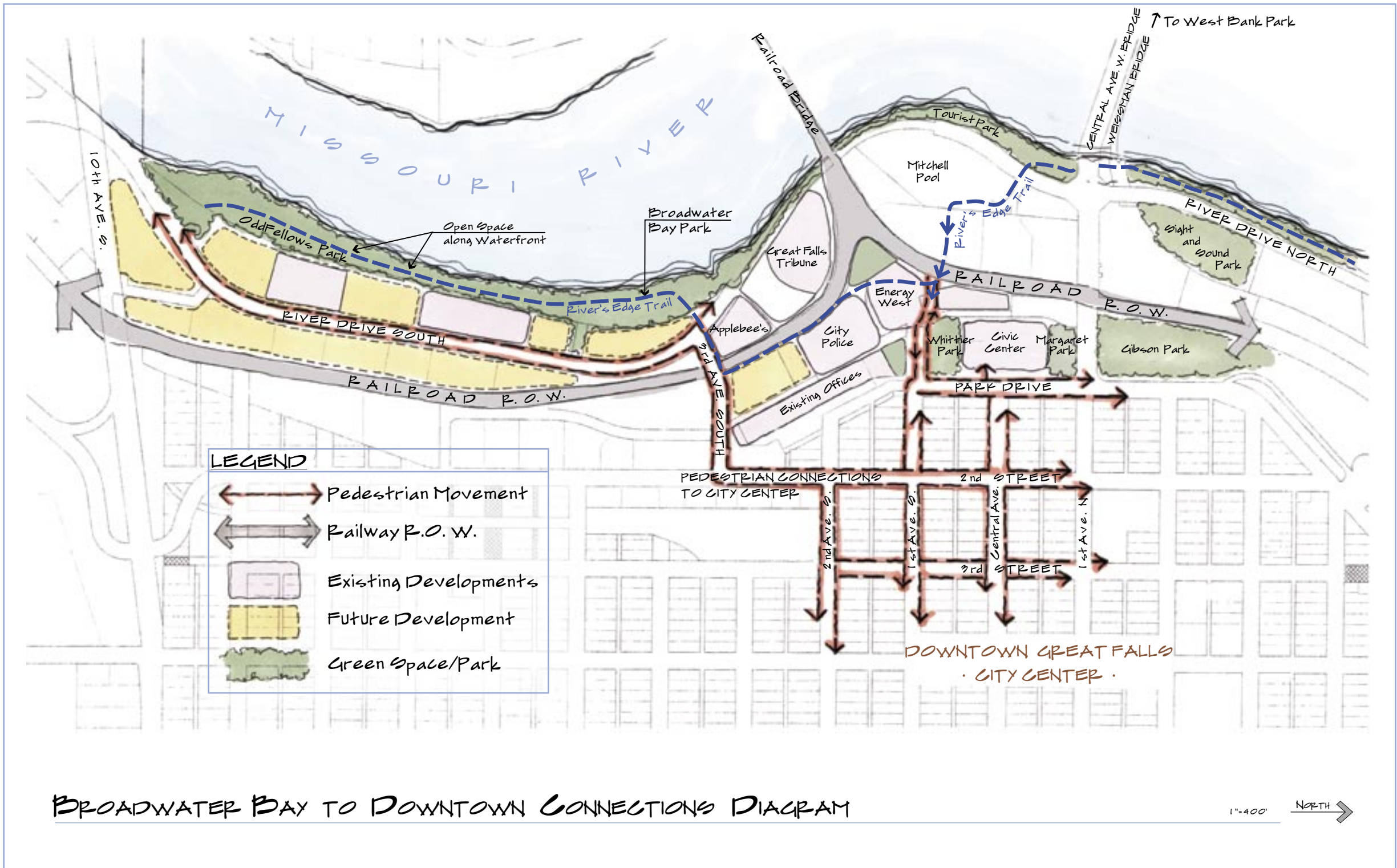
The value of scenic views to the community of is recognized in the Growth Policy, and many citizens treasure scenic drives such as River Drive along the Missouri River through Elks Riverside Park, and near the dams. Scenic views should be preserved and enhanced during the development of lands in the Corridor. Example methods for view preservation include: clustered development; trail, greenway, street or underground utility easements; parkland dedications; stormwater detention basins; and, height restrictions.



CONNECTIVITY

Existing parks and development at Broadwater Bay are a tremendous asset to downtown Great Falls. However, the railroad corridor and the alignment of other existing structures inhibit an easy flow of pedestrian traffic between downtown and the river's edge. The diagram opposite shows opportunities for pedestrian linkage between Broadwater Bay and the downtown business district. The links from the river to downtown should be clearly marked by wayfaring signs, preferably depicting some identifiable logo or "brand identity" for the downtown area.





GETTING STARTED

Long Term Plan --

Short Term Successes

Although full implementation of the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan may take 20 years or more, there are opportunities for short term successes:

- The City of Great Falls has provided, is currently providing, and will continue to provide an environment in the form of parks, trails, and open spaces that attracts people and investment to the riverfront. The City therefore, particularly the Park and Recreation Department, is a logical joint-venture partner with the private sector.
- Design the Great Plan, but start with a pilot project – working with selected major property owners to jointly prepare a specific development program, physical plan and implementation strategy.
- Conduct meetings and workshops with stakeholders, potential developers, and finance professionals to share the vision presented in this plan, brainstorm new ideas for development, implementation, and attracting new investment.
- The City, Conservation District, private groups, and other partners can complete a shoreline and shallows cleanup of the riverfront as recommended in the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment*.
- Further explore some immediate opportunities, verifying with market research:
 - Riverfront lodging, dining, and meeting facilities
 - Riverfront housing – respond to the needs of one and two person households seeking alternative housing (64 percent of all households) – an underserved market.
 - Corporate or speculative offices
- Recognize that the initial project(s) will undoubtedly require public-private partnering and use of some public financing tools such as tax increment and other incentives. Early projects will need more help than later projects. Use a pilot project as an interactive laboratory to test new regulations, design guides, policies, programs, and funding mechanisms.



RECOMMENDED STEPS

Plan implementation can and should begin immediately with the following steps:

1. This Corridor Plan recommends that the designated truck route that runs along River Drive North between Elks Riverside Park and the river be relocated to another route. Furthermore, it is recommended that, if and when River Drive North from 15th St. to 38th St. is reconstructed, no widening be allowed to further encroach upon the high bank above the Missouri River and the River's Edge Trail below. These recommendations shall be immediately forwarded to the Montana Department of Transportation and shall be noted in the updated Urban Area Transportation Plan.

2. The City of Great Falls and the City-County Planning Board shall review the zoning in the corridor and recommend appropriate changes that can be made quickly. This will mostly involve industrial zoning that should be changed to commercial. In conjunction with a new City zoning code, a mixed-use PUD type of district should be

adopted to allow and encourage the type of development and redevelopment envisioned in this plan.

3. The City should immediately develop a list of capital projects which will be needed to support redevelopment and leverage private investment in the corridor. Examples would be re-routing Bay Drive as shown in the Bay Drive Community concept, and opening and improving access to West Bank Park along 4th Ave. NW. Any relevant items already in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) should also be included.

4. A web site should be established to provide information about the Corridor Plan and the "many, many projects", and to provide a continuous communication platform for the stakeholders and the general public. The site should also provide information to prospective developers and brokers about any incentives and the City's general willingness to enter into partnerships to expedite redevelopment and to make it more financially feasible.

5. As many of the key development sites in the corridor have some form of environmental contamination, the City should initiate a "brownfields" program to assist in assessments, clean-up, and environmental insurance. Having an "up and running" local program would make redevelopment of contaminated sites move faster and with less risk, and

have the side benefit putting the City in a position for additional assistance and funding through various federal brown-fields programs.

6. The Park and Recreation Department should identify City-owned land in the corridor that may be of marginal value for park purposes, but may offer good development opportunities. These lands (if they exist) may be able to be sold or leased for development that would be beneficial to the community and to the remaining park facility. Areas suitable for seasonal and special event concessions should also be identified.

7. The City of Great Falls should analyze what financial resources could be directed toward improvements in the corridor. Funds will be needed for the public projects described above, which in turn will leverage private dollars. The City needs to determine what the appropriate programs and funding sources are. For example, tax increment financing (TIF), using CDBG funds under Section 108 (borrowing against future entitlements), Treasure State Endowment Program funding (TSEP), and others may be used when a specific project meets eligibility requirements. However, the City must determine what financial support it is willing to provide and what program(s) it is willing to use so that potential investors have a level of comfort and surety that the City will be a performing partner.

8. The City should adopt a policy (or regulation, as appropriate) requiring that riverfront development involving streambank alteration stabilize the adjacent bank in substantial compliance with the *Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory & Assessment*.

9. The City, with involvement of stakeholders and the general public, should immediately begin to compile a list of riverfront regulatory issues to be addressed in the new land development code, including but not limited to:

- Setbacks from the streambank
- Grading and drainage (for water quality considerations)
- Acquiring easements as part of the development process
- Preserving natural riparian vegetation
- Public access/connectivity
- Viewshed/view corridors

CONCLUSION



This Corridor Plan is only the beginning of a new vision for the Missouri River Corridor.

It is founded on an examination of existing conditions, land use, environmental and shoreline conditions, and infrastructure in the corridor, and how those factors affect future development and potential for change. Local participants in the planning process have been instrumental in sharing Great Falls' identity as a community – what it is today and what it has the promise to become.

Steps for implementation have been identified that will bring success, but that will require

participation from all stakeholders and a commitment to be creative with our collective community resources, in order to accomplish more.

This plan should not be regarded as one giant project, so much as a compilation of great but realistic projects that, when implemented, will work together to achieve an ultimately better whole. As a guiding document, the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan must remain flexible, so it can adapt to opportunities as they arise.

Most importantly, we must celebrate our community successes along the way, to maintain momentum and enthusiasm as we realize our new vision for the Missouri River Corridor.



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