

Chapter 9: Historic Downtown and Core Area

Kalispell's downtown and Core Area both developed in the late 1800's and early 1900's, and have played a prominent role in the City's history and development. The downtown and core area serve as important economic contributors in the City as a tourism destination and as a home to a number of local businesses, banks and local government offices. In addition to the economic benefits of the downtown and Core Area, they serve as the epicenter of arts, culture and historic conservation. The downtown and Core Area are the historic and cultural identity of the community with the Central School Museum, Hockaday Museum of Art, Imagine If Library and numerous historic buildings. These buildings play an important role in defining the rich historical and cultural character of the community.

Issues:

1. Excessive through traffic in the downtown and core area detracts from the preservation and maintenance of the historical and cultural character and undermines pedestrian and bicycle safety and access.
2. While the downtown hosts a variety of healthy cultural institutions including the Central School Museum, Imagine IF Library and the Hockaday Museum of Art that draw residents and visitors, there could be a stronger cultural presence in the district, i.e. – new larger library, performing arts center, etc.
3. Water mains are absent on the west side of Main Street making it challenging to install fire suppression systems to meet current fire safety codes.
4. Retrofitting existing buildings in the downtown to meet City building code requirements can be cost prohibitive.
5. Parking within the downtown and Core Area is perceived as inconvenient.
6. Development and other changes in the downtown can be incompatible with the scale, patterns, landmarks, and architecture of its surroundings.

GOALS:

1. DIVERT HEAVY TRUCK TRAFFIC FROM THE DOWNTOWN AND SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.

2. ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORE AREA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN.
3. NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE AND ITS ATTRACTIVENESS AS A RETIREMENT AND TOURISM DESTINATION.
4. STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN AS A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY AND A VIABLE COMMERCIAL CENTER FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS.
5. PROVIDE YEAR AROUND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES BY MAINTAINING OUTDOOR VENUES AND GOOD ACCESS TO EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY, MUSEUMS AND OTHER CIVIC SPACES.
6. PRESERVE AND ENHANCE KALISPELL TRADITIONAL TOWNSCAPE OF MAIN STREET AND NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS DESIGNED FOR SLOWER VEHICLE TRAFFIC, WALKING, BICYCLING AND HISTORIC TOWN ATMOSPHERE.
7. FOSTER PUBLIC/PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRANTS, LOANS, ETC.
8. DOCUMENT AND CONSERVE OUR HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Policies:

1. Work to create and support a prosperous core of retailers, restaurants and entertainment uses that keeps the downtown and Core Area active and vibrant.
2. Reinforce and take advantage of downtown's strengths including its higher concentration of people, investment in buildings and infrastructure, intricate mix of land uses, historic and architectural character, pedestrian orientation, and visitor attraction.
3. Recognize that there are special parking considerations downtown which differ from other areas. Encourage innovative parking management, effective regulation of on-street parking, shared parking provisions, parking standards that encourage reuse of upper floors, and provision of public parking lots and structures.
4. Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of existing downtown buildings.

5. Redevelopment in the downtown should consider the downtown's historic character and be compatible with the existing built environment.
6. Discourage the demolition of historically or culturally significant structures and sites.
7. Support redevelopment by improving infrastructure to assist the development community.
8. Encourage development and redevelopment by creating incentives for developers to off-set infrastructure and other site costs.
9. Redevelopment is encouraged to integrate a variety of residential housing types to accommodate people of different age groups and income levels.
10. Support and encourage the concentration of community events, civic functions, and activities in the downtown.
11. Promote a mix of uses in downtown buildings emphasizing retail uses on the main floor and offices or residential uses on upper floors.
12. Encourage the design of urban streets to provide for convenient circulation, safe pedestrian and bicycle access and avoid excess road width that encourages speeding and makes roadway crossings difficult.
13. Support the preservation, expansion and creation of cultural institutions.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to implement the Core Area Plan, including its goals, strategies and policies.
2. Undertake a study and develop a Downtown Plan that identifies concerns associated with parking, utilities, traffic flow, pedestrian access, building reuse and economic vitality.
3. Establish a local heritage commission to identify local landmarks, review alterations of these landmarks, expand public outreach and education and further historical and cultural conservation goals.

4. Review and update as necessary the City of Kalispell Architectural Design Standards in relation to reflect the best management practices for historic and cultural preservation.

Chapter 11: Parks and Recreation

The Kalispell park system consists of both active and passive recreational areas, including a variety of park types, pathways, and facilities. The City of Kalispell manages approximately 406 acres of parkland, including 138 acres under permanent easement from the State of Montana for the Kalispell Youth Athletic Complex (Kidsports). The parkland inventory includes 321 acres of active parkland and 73 acres of natural open space. Kalispell also owns 12 acres of undeveloped land.

In 2006, the City of Kalispell published the “Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan” in response to the rapid growth occurring in Kalispell and the Flathead Valley in the first five years of the new millennium. The Master Plan addresses the Kalispell’s anticipated parks and recreation needs until the year 2020. Much of the content for the Growth Policy was taken from the master plan.

Issues:

1. Park system renovations have been historically under-funded and the deferred maintenance is leading to an overall decline in recreation assets.
2. Trails consistently rank high in community surveys, yet the city lacks a comprehensive network of trails, sidewalks and bike lanes.
3. Although wetlands, creeks and, river corridors create barriers to development, they can provide ideal locations for regional greenways and trail systems.
4. The city lacks public indoor recreation spaces, a performing arts center, and public meeting spaces.
5. As of 2013, more than 15 percent of the city’s population is over the age of 65, and this age group has increased by over 70 percent since 1980. This trend is expected to continue.
6. Based on National Recreation and Parks Association standards, the city is currently under-serving the needs of its citizens relative to parklands and recreation facilities. The deficit becomes more pronounced as the city boundary and population expand.

GOALS:

1. COMPLETE PARK RENOVATIONS IN A TIMELY MANNER.
2. ENSURE THE PARK SYSTEM IS SAFE, USABLE, AND ATTRACTIVE IN ALL SEASONS.
3. CREATE A PARK VOLUNTEER PROGRAM THAT LEVERAGES DEPARTMENT RESOURCES AND ACCOMPLISHES NEEDED PARK IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS THE SYSTEM.
4. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT A MULTI-FUNCTION COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER EITHER THROUGH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE INVESTMENT.
5. PLAN FOR AND INVEST IN THE CONNECTIVITY OF PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ROUTES.
6. ESTABLISH A PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT THAT CREATES A STABLE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MECHANISM FOR PARK MAINTENANCE AND FUTURE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT.
7. PROVIDE CONVENIENT AND SAFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND INCOME LEVELS.
8. IMPROVE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT (ADA) ACCESS AT PARK SITES AND FACILITIES, AS WELL AS THROUGH RECREATION PROGRAMS.

Policies:

1. Enhance and develop public/private partnerships with non-profits, private organization and other governmental agencies to provide necessary park and recreation services to the community.
2. Demographic and economic information should inform and support the development of current and future park facility plans.
3. Commercial and residential developments should provide parks and recreation amenities as a condition of approval. Planned unit developments (PUDs) should provide both land and park improvements to mitigate the impacts of increased density. Cash-in-lieu is an acceptable substitute for direct improvements when a neighborhood's park needs are already met.

4. Greenways and trails should be supported for their social, economic, environmental, and public health benefits.
5. Parks, recreation, and dedicated open spaces are essential to the quality of life in Kalispell and should be professionally administered and managed.
6. The city should keep pace with industry trends in Parks and Recreation programs; exploring and adapting to the changing culture of active adults, using social media, and other technical opportunities to enhance our community.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a park renovation fund that ensures park renovations are conducted so as to prevent major deterioration of park assets that would necessitate complete replacement.
2. Enhance and develop a park and recreation volunteer program that leverages community assets and improves residents' understanding and appreciation for the park system and its programs.
3. Plan for and invest in the current and future park needs in the community.
4. Update the Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan.

Chapter 12: Transportation

This chapter is based on the findings and recommendations contained within the 2006 Kalispell Area Transportation Plan, updated in 2008. The Kalispell Area Transportation Plan was a major update to the city's 1993 Transportation Plan. The Plan was written in direct response to the rapid growth Kalispell experienced in the years from 2000 to 2006, and includes the US Highway 93 Bypass in the modeling of future traffic impacts for the growth policy area. The Plan contains a comprehensive inventory of the transportation system, along with a discussion of travel demand, traffic calming, system management, and recommended street network improvements. The issues, goals, policies, and recommendations below are summarized from the Kalispell Area Transportation Plan.

Issues:

1. Overall traffic volumes in Kalispell have grown considerably over the last 10 years and are forecasted to continue to increase over the next 20 years.
2. A number of local, collector, and, arterial streets lack pedestrian and bicycle facilities and pose significant safety problems.
3. Some areas both inside and outside of the city lack a gridded, interconnected street system, which limits route options for local residents and business, and concentrates traffic onto one or two access roads.
4. A significant amount of traffic, including truck traffic and seasonal tourist traffic, passes through the city on US Hwy 93 without making a stop and contributes to traffic congestion in key areas.
5. At times, traffic volumes overwhelm the capacity of the transportation system and associated traffic control devices to adequately maintain system performance.
6. The local climate and snow and ice removal operations cause lane markings to rapidly degrade.
7. Pedestrian safety issues are especially problematic the further one travels from the core of the community, especially in the older and middle-aged neighborhoods, due to the almost total lack of sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails.

8. The community lacks an overall pedestrian and bicycle travel plan connecting schools, parks, shopping areas, and community facilities with neighborhoods.
9. The narrow two-lane segment of Whitefish Stage Road between Oregon Street and West Reserve Drive is substandard with volumes of traffic expected to nearly double in the next 15 years.
10. There is no east / west connection between Highway 93 and Whitefish Stage Road north of Oregon Street and south of West Reserve Drive, which inhibits free flowing access between Kidsports, Flathead Valley Community College, the Highway 93 North retail area, and Fire Station #62 with the Edgerton School neighborhood and Evergreen.
11. No funding program is in place to upgrade substandard existing or newly annexed streets to urban standards.
12. Excess traffic along Third Avenue East and Fourth Avenue East degrades the residential character of the East Side Neighborhood.
13. Congestion from commuter traffic and on-street parking in and around the Flathead High School degrades the residential character of the West Side Neighborhood.
14. Public transportation is limited.
15. Woodland Avenue and Seventh Avenue East do not connect.
16. Funding and construction of roadway improvement projects is time consuming, expensive, and subject to delays.
17. The railroad tracks running east-west through core area significantly restricts north-south vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and emergency responder access.
18. There are approximately 120 miles of roadway within the city. Of the 120 miles approximately 6.7 miles is rated poor based on the city's Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) System.

GOALS:

1. PROVIDE A SAFE, EFFICIENT, ACCESSIBLE, AND COST EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT OFFERS VIABLE CHOICES FOR MOVING PEOPLE AND GOODS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.
2. ADOPT A COMPLETE STREETS APPROACH TO RIGHT-OF-WAY DEVELOPMENT THAT BALANCES VEHICLE USAGE WITH TRANSIT AND NON-MOTORIZED MODES OF TRANSPORTATION, SO THEY MAYBE SEEN AS VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO AUTOMOBILE TRAVEL IN AND AROUND THE COMMUNITY.
3. PROVIDE AN OPEN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS WHERE COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND VALUES, SUCH AS AESTHETICS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION, ARE INCORPORATED.
4. PROVIDE A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN THAT IS ACTIVELY USED TO GUIDE TRANSPORTATION DECISION-MAKING THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE NEXT 20 YEARS.
5. IDENTIFY AND PROTECT FUTURE ROAD CORRIDORS THAT WILL SERVE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND PUBLIC LANDS.
6. PROVIDE AN ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTION BETWEEN KIDSPORTS AND WHITEFISH STAGE ROAD.

Policies:

1. Use a complete streets approach to the planning and development of capital improvements in the public right-of-way and in the review of development proposals that include dedication of transportation improvements.
2. Coordinate land use and transportation so higher-intensity development is located in well-established areas near arterial and collector streets.
3. Discourage routing heavy traffic and through-traffic in residential areas by creating a more thorough grid system when possible.

4. Utilize and reserve principal and minor arterials for through-traffic.
5. Provide access to individual lots by way of local streets to the maximum extent feasible and avoid granting individual access onto collectors and arterials.
6. Reserve adequate right-of-way for designated arterial and collector roads on lands proposed for new development.
7. Support the expansion of public transit services to meet the mobility needs of seniors, disabled persons, and the general public.
8. Develop a pedestrian-bicycle system to supplement the auto-oriented street system and to meet local transportation and recreation needs.
9. Recognize the need to maintain and protect the residential and pedestrian character and integrity of the Woodland Avenue area by avoiding the construction of a roadway connection to 7th Ave East and developing a bike and pedestrian trail instead.
10. Support the development of either a motorized or non-motorized bridge over the Stillwater River to connect the Flathead Valley Community College to the neighborhood surrounding Edgerton School.
11. Coordinate major capital improvement projects on the transportation system and other public infrastructure to minimize “throw-away” costs and make the most efficient use of public resources.
12. Support the acquisition of grants to study and improve traffic system performance.
13. The 2006 Kalispell Area Transportation Plan identifies a major street network classification system. Each functional classification is defined below. The classifications are listed in a hierarchy intended to describe the function and traffic-carrying capacities of each road, relative to other roads in the system.
 - a. **Principal Arterials:** The purpose of principle arterials is to serve the major activity centers, the highest traffic volume corridors, and the longest trip distances in an urbanized area. Significant intra-area travel, such as between central business districts and outlying residential areas. Principal arterials generally connect to other principal arterials, minor arterials and some collector

streets. Speeds can vary between 25 and 65 miles per hour (MPH), depending on the setting. Traffic volumes would carry between 10,000 and 35,000 vehicles per day (VPD). Principal arterials in the planning area include:

- i. US Highway 2 (including Idaho Street and LaSalle Road)
- ii. US Highway 93 (including Main Street and Sunset Boulevard)
- iii. Alternate US Highway 93 (new bypass road west of City)
- iv. MT Highway 35
- v. Reserve Drive, from US 93 to LaSalle Road (US 2)

b. **Minor Arterials:** Minor arterials interconnect with and augment the principal arterials. They accommodate moderate length trips and distribute traffic to smaller geographic areas. Speeds typically range from 25 to 55 MPH. Traffic volumes carry between 5,000 to 15,000 VPD.

c. **Collector streets:** Collectors serve a joint purpose of traffic movement and access to residential, commercial and industrial areas. These roads may traverse residential neighborhoods and distribute trips from arterials to ultimate destinations or local streets. Traffic is slower, with speeds of 25 to 45 MPH. Collector streets typically serve a defined neighborhood and carry 2,000 to 10,000 VPD.

d. **Local:** The local street system includes all other roadways not included in the higher levels. They provide direct access to abutting lots and buildings and higher level roads. Speeds are usually 25 MPH. Volumes are expected to be less than 2,000 VPD.

Recommendations:

1. Review and update the Kalispell Area Transportation Plan in 2016 with an emphasis on identifying and updating important components, rather than a comprehensive update.
2. Study and consider alternatives to using Third Avenue East and Fourth Avenue East as minor arterials north of 14th Street East to Second Street East in order to protect the integrity of the residential areas.
3. Explore alternative funding sources and methods for developing alternative modes of transportation.

4. Develop alternative funding sources and expanded programs for transportation upgrades.
5. Develop a comprehensive pedestrian / bike plan for the community.
6. Develop and support a comprehensive pavement management system that ensures roadway conditions are inventoried periodically, and repairs and maintenance of the pavement surface and lane markings are performed in a timely manner to avoid costly replacement projects.
7. Connect Woodland Avenue and Seventh Avenue East with a bike and pedestrian trail.
8. Develop a capital improvement program that provides a plan for implementing the Transportation System Management and Major Street Network improvements presented in the 2006 Kalispell Area Transportation Plan with 2008 update.
9. Apply for and obtain grants to study and improve the traffic control system performance