

NORTH MERIDIAN NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

AN AMENDMENT TO THE KALISPELL CITY-COUNTY MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED BY

**City Council
City of Kalispell
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**Flathead County
Board of Commissioners
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INTRODUCTION

This document is an amendment to the adopted Kalispell City/County Master Plan. As an amendment, it serves as a supplement to the Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Map contained in the overall Master Plan. The North Meridian Neighborhood Plan will serve as a guide for the most appropriate action to take when a request for a change in zoning or major development is proposed for the area. In addition, it looks at the needs of the neighborhood regarding infra-structure, such as roads, pedestrian access, water, sewer, and storm drainage and sets general policies towards supplying those services.

The North Meridian Neighborhood Plan covers an area bounded by US Highway 2 on the south; US Highway 93 and Wedgewood Lane on the north; 7th Avenue WN on the east; and Hawthorne Avenue and Northern Lights Boulevard on the west. The area contains approximately 314 acres within the City limits of Kalispell.

There are many reasons to look at this area for a change to the Master Plan. The land immediately adjacent to Meridian Road generally has a haphazard organization to its zoning and land use pattern. This situation makes it difficult for property owners to predict what will happen regarding land use in their neighborhood. The amount of automobile and truck traffic has made it dangerous for pedestrians and vehicles. A transportation plan for Kalispell has been adopted indicating North Meridian Road be upgraded to a three and four lane road. The possibility of the fairgrounds relocating has been discussed and what will happen to the property if it does relocate. These reasons and the many inquiries for rezoning and changes in land use have indicated the need to address the existing Master Plan for the area and create a more cohesive and consistent neighborhood plan. This Plan allows the residents and property owners to know what to expect in the area and that the Plan can be followed.

BACKGROUND DATA

The initial step was to gather basic information concerning the existing conditions of the area. The method by which the information was gathered included: the study of the infrastructure maps provided by the City; field work; and the use of aerial photographs. This included information on land use, master plan, water, sewer, roads, and pedestrian access.

Land Use:

The following information is a comparison of the acreage of existing land use to existing Master plan designation.

M.PLAN DESIG- NATION	LAND USE TYPE	EXISTING LAND USE ACRES	EXISTING MASTER PLAN ACRES
UR	Single-family	54	46
HDR	Multi-family	16	49
COM	Commercial	35	63
IND	Industrial	21	0
PUB	Public/Park	97	97
TRANSITION			*59
	Vacant Streets	53 * 38	
TOTAL ACRES		314	314

Date 3-94, Source FRDO

Storm Sewer:

Two 24 inch storm sewers exist at the south end of the study area. One is located in Meridian Road and extends north as far as Husky Street and the other in Kinnshella Avenue to just north of Husky Street. All drainage flows generally from north to south using mainly the streets.

Sanitary Sewer:

The City supplies sewer to most of the Plan area. An 18 inch sewer main at the southern end of Meridian Road tapers to an 8 inch main at the north end. All sewage is treated by the City sewerage treatment plant south of town. Smaller sewer mains; 6, 8, and 12 inch lines, service the developments as you move away from Meridian Road. A 12 inch line exists in Liberty Street to Hawthorne Avenue north to Three Mile Drive to Northern Lights Boulevard. Most of the rest of the area is served by 8 inch lines. Three smaller areas generally do not have immediate access to sewer mains. These three areas include the property: north of Three Mile Drive between Northwest Lane and Meridian Road; north of West Wyoming Street to Colorado Street from Meridian road to 7th Avenue WN extended; and the area north of the Underhill Subdivision. Development or redevelopment of the

Plan area is entirely dependant on the availability of sewer service. It is possible to serve each of these areas, however, current City policy dictates that such extension would be at the request of the property served and fully paid for the property requesting service.

Water:

Water is also supplied by the City to most of the area. A 16 inch water main enters the study area from the northeast and runs under Meridian Road from Three Mile Drive south across Idaho Street and out of the study area. Feeder mains range in size from 4, 6, 8, and 12 inches. Two additional lines feed this area from the north. A 6 inch line comes down Northern Lights Boulevard, and an 8 inch line feeds Wedgewood Road, Parkway Drive, and the northern end of Meridian road. These two northern service lines are not looped into the main water lines feeding the southern three quarters of the study area. The largest area not served by city water in this area is located north of Three Mile Drive between Northwest Lane and Meridian Road.

Streets:

The road system/pattern is well established since most of the land has been developed. The neighborhood is bordered by US Highway 2 (Idaho Street) on the south, and US Highway 93 on the north. Two minor arterials are included in the area, they are Meridian Road and Three Mile Drive. One collector street is in the Plan area and that is Two Mile Drive. All other roads in the Plan area are considered local roads. The roads in the Plan area are paved with two travel lanes, one in each direction.

This neighborhood in one sense is well served by the major street system. However, there are several concerns. For example Meridian Road is extremely undersized for the traffic volumes it handles. In the Kalispell Area Transportation Plan, the 1991 traffic counts showed 10,130 vehicles per day and the year 2000 projection is for 12,100 vehicles per day. The transportation Plan recommends that Meridian Road be upgraded to a 4 lane road from Idaho Street to Three Mile Drive and 3 lanes from there to Highway 93. As it is now and with this upgrade it is and will be more difficult for traffic to enter and exit properties.

In addition, Two Mile Drive is very congested and is projected to carry even more traffic as new developments are approved. There is also no adequate north-south link for Two Mile Drive, and lacks a good flow across Meridian Road to the east.

Pedestrian Access:

There is no effective system of pedestrian walkways or bicycle trails in the area. For the most part individuals will use the roads. A school crossing guard is provided for on Meridian Road at Liberty Street for children going to and from Russell School. Russell School is located on West Wyoming Street just west of US Highway 93. Sidewalks are located on the north side of Liberty street; there are no other sidewalks in the neighborhood. This situation forces the very young or old to use the streets which are very congested.

Through a series of neighborhood meetings, conversations with property owners and City staff, a more uniform development pattern for growth was developed. In November, 1993 the first neighborhood public meeting was held for the North Meridian Neighborhood Plan at the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Office on North Meridian Road. At this meeting issues were identified and information was gathered that served as the starting point for the Plan. In addition, maps were displayed indicating existing land use, existing zoning, the existing Master Plan, and existing infrastructure.

A second meeting was held at the same location in January, 1994. At this meeting additional information was gathered relative to land use and the issues that are prevalent in the area. A preliminary land use map and a transportation map were displayed and discussed.

Presentations to the City Council and County Commissioners kept them informed and gave them an opportunity for input during the process. In addition to these meetings, City staff, including: the City Manager; the Police and Fire Chiefs; the Public Works, Parks, and Community Development Departments, were involved and made comments and suggestions.

ISSUES

Out of the neighborhood meetings, meetings with staff, and meetings with the Kalispell City-County Planning Board, issues were refined. Those issues were identified as follows:

- the incompatibility of land uses and zoning in the area;
- the need for a plan that would be followed;
- the uncertainty about the future of the fairgrounds, if it leaves what will the property be used for;
- the lack of safety for bicycles and pedestrians, especially children;
- the increased volume of traffic and the safety and interaction of cars and trucks;
- the lack of City services in some parts of the neighborhood.

The land use issue is perhaps the most visible. With the land uses ranging from industrial uses, to commercial, to multi-family, to single family, to mobile homes, to the fairgrounds it is relatively easy to see why the noise, dust, traffic, and uncertainty of what is happening can be an issue. The feeling that property owners are helpless in the process of maintaining a cohesive plan for the future came out very strongly at these meetings. It appears this stems from the lack of input to the land use decisions in the past.

The Fairgrounds issue is, on the surface, very simple, should it stay or should it move and while the immediate impact of the fairgrounds is on this area it can be much farther reaching. Out of the public meetings there was no clear consensus as to whether or not the fairgrounds should move. If it stays upgrades and expansion could be expensive and difficult given the age of the buildings and infra-structure, limited area, and parking requirements of some of the activities that occur on the property. If it moves, where would it move to and then what would be the activity on the existing site? The question of where it would move to is beyond the scope of this plan since it would relocate out of this planning area. What should the property be used for if the fairgrounds were to move was discussed with a general consensus that it should be used for a variety of uses, including; commercial, residential, and parks.

Pedestrian safety appeared to be the most pressing issue. With the existing traffic volumes; road conditions; the upgrade of North Meridian Road; no sidewalks or safe place off the road to walk; and only one place that has a crossing guard for school children, safety was a repeated concern. Truck traffic and speeding cars was also brought up as a safety concern. Construction of Alternate US Highway 93, additional traffic control devices, police to enforce speed limits, and crossing guards were felt needed because of inadequate control of traffic.

The area north of Three Mile Drive between Northwest Lane and Meridian does not currently have City services such as water and sewer; in addition, this area takes direct

vehicular access from Meridian Road on the hill. The majority of individuals owning property in this area indicated their desire to see those services installed. Any new development in this area would be required to hookup to those services. The problem facing this area revolves around the expense of infrastructure; because a developer is required to install the main line extensions, it becomes cost prohibitive unless the project is of sufficient scale and intensity to absorb the cost. To alleviate some of the inherent traffic problems associated with driveways, an alternative access arrangement should be provided for.

There is essentially no storm sewer system servicing the Plan area. While major flooding does not appear to be a widespread problem and no floodplain exists in the area, isolated occurrences of flooding have caused short term problems.

THE PLAN

This Plan, the issues, goals, policies, and maps include six (6) categories of land use along with policies to help resolve the issues. These land use categories include Urban Residential (2-8 dwelling units per acre), High Density Residential (8-40 dwelling units per acre), Commercial, Neighborhood/Buffer Commercial, Multi-use, Public and Park. Two (2) categories that exist in this document are new, those are; the Neighborhood Commercial and Multi-use categories.

The following information is a comparison of the acreage of existing land use to existing Master plan designation to the proposed Neighborhood Plan.

M.PLAN DESIG- NATION	LAND USE TYPE	EXISTING LAND USE ACRES	EXISTING MASTER PLAN	PROPOSED MASTER PLAN
UR	SFR	54	46	33
HDR	Multi-family	16	49	85
COM	Lt. Commercial	3	0	9
COM	Commercial	32	63	52
IND	Industrial	21	0	0
PUB	Public/Park	97	97	43
	Vacant	53	-	-
MULTI-USE TRANSITION	---	-	-	54
	Streets	*38	*59	*38
	TOTAL ACRES	314	314	314

Date 3-94, Source FRDO

* NOTE: The acreage for the transition areas and the streets will not correspond with each column because the Existing Master Plan has large "transition areas" and the Proposed plan does not. In addition, any proposed streets are of unknown configuration and precise location so no calculation was assumed.

Land Use:

This Plan is an amendment to the existing Master Plan and utilizes the existing plan for any information not contained in this amendment. Therefore, the Kalispell City-County Master Plan document should be referred to for information on such categories as Urban Residential, High Density Residential, Commercial, Public and Park.

Neighborhood/Buffer Commercial

The Neighborhood/Buffer Commercial land use category is intended to be compatible with the lowest of intensity characteristics included in the B-1 zoning district. This will help to facilitate the compatibility between the roads, residential uses, and non-residential uses.

Multi-use

The Multi-use category has been selected for the Fairgrounds property because of its size, location, and concerns of the public. The property being primarily on the northeast corner of Meridian Road and US Highway 2 makes it a prime location for a combination of commercial, residential, and open space uses. In discussions with staff it is felt that a ratio of 60% commercial, 30% residential, and 10% park/open space is an economically viable ratio of land uses.

The Multi-use commercial development should occur along Meridian Road and Highway 2, and primarily west of the extension of Two Mile Drive. This 60% would dedicate a maximum of approximately 32 Acres to commercial development prior to road dedication. The commercial development that is envisioned would be an anchor store with support retail on one or more pads.

The 30% residential would allow approximately 16 acres of residential development. This residential development could be attached single family or apartment type of dwellings to buffer the commercial development from the single family development to the east.

Park land development would be exclusive of roads, building setbacks, or other open space requirements of development. This 10% would equate to approximately 5 acres of improved park for use by the general public. It is not intended for the exclusive use of the residential development and should be in addition to any required by subdivision.

Streets:

The extension of 7th Avenue WN from Wyoming Street to Colorado Street should be considered when the property to the north is considered for development. This extension would facilitate the north-south movement of traffic without significantly impacting the residential character of the area.

The three major roads that influence the Plan area include Meridian Road, Three Mile Drive, and Two Mile Drive. Meridian Road has been designated to be upgraded to a four lane, minor arterial road from US Highway 2 to Three Mile Drive and north from there as a three lane arterial. Three Mile Drive is designated as a minor arterial currently constructed for two lanes of traffic and does not stop as it turns southbound on Meridian Road. The reconstruction of the intersection of Three Mile and Meridian would include a "T" type intersection and should include a three way stop.

An extension of Two Mile Drive has been proposed to cross the Fairgrounds property and connect to Washington Street. The specific location would be determined by the type and location of commercial and residential activity that would occur on the fairgrounds property should the County Fairgrounds move. A connection from Meridian Road to US Highway 93 was perceived as an advantage to the movement of east-west traffic through the area. Washington Street seems to be the logical connection for a number of reasons. First is that it connects to Whitefish Stage Road; second, that it is the road that backs up

against the commercial strip along Idaho Street; and third, that it might reduce the amount of traffic on Wyoming Street. Wyoming Street had been originally looked at for the connection due the traffic light at US Highway 93. Problems arose when one considered the elementary school (Russell School) in the fact that the play fields are across Wyoming from the school itself. In addition, Wyoming Street is not a through road past the highway, it basically terminates into the neighborhood immediately east of Highway 93.

Access to Meridian Road should be limited. There are a number of ways in which this could be accomplished: combined access driveways; or service roads accessing lots and parcels. Both of these alternatives act in a similar manor by reducing the access points along a busy arterial and routing this traffic to control points. This concept already exists in this area, that is on Parkway Drive where commercial enterprises dependant on Meridian frontage take access from what amounts to a service road.

All streets and alleys should be paved to City standards to reduce the dust and noise associated with unimproved roads. A Redevelopment District, or Special Improvements District, or other funding mechanism should be created to allow money to be used to assist in these types of improvements.

Infrastructure:

While infrastructure such as water, sewer, and storm drains exist in the area these improvements are discontinuous. The prime areas for development do not contain the necessary improvements for development. Storm drains, sewer mains and water mains should be extended into those areas not served by such improvements. The City should assist in the construction of those improvements by creating assessment districts, a redevelopment district, an urban renewal district or the like.

Pedestrians:

Many school children are required to cross Meridian Road on their way to and from Russell School. Currently a school crossing guard exists at Meridians' intersection with Liberty Street, this is the only controlled crossing on Meridian Road. Additional crossing guards should be considered for Wyoming Street, Two Mile Drive, and Three Mile Drive. Requiring vehicles to stop at intersections would facilitate safe crossing for pedestrians.

The area has few sidewalks for pedestrian safety, the City should continue to require sidewalks for new developments even if they may be discontinuous. This would allow, in the future, the connection of those sections of sidewalks impacting fewer of the property owners at the time sidewalks are ordered in. The City should assist in the construction of those improvements by creating assessment districts, a redevelopment district, an urban renewal district or the like.

POLICY SECTION

The following are the Goal statements and Policies that are incorporated into the Kalispell City/County Master Plan amendment, as part of the North Meridian Neighborhood Plan.

ISSUE 1:

The present urbanized land use pattern incorporates a haphazard and incompatible mix of uses.

GOAL 1:

To set a pattern of land use that incorporates sensitivity to neighboring uses.

POLICIES:

1. Create and maintain a land use pattern that is consistent with the North Meridian Neighborhood Plan and Plan maps.
2. The areas identified on the Plan Map as Multi-family Residential category along Meridian Road should encourage a mix of professional office and high density residential development.
3. Where proposed non-residential, multi-family, and single family uses abut each other, encourage the use of extensive landscape buffers.
4. Single family homes be developed along Colorado Street.
5. Within the Neighborhood/Buffer Commercial designation allow uses that are compatible with the neighboring residential areas.
6. Within the Plan area encourage inside storage of materials and conversion of non-conforming uses to permitted uses.
7. Encourage the City's Community Development Department to develop and adopt a Redevelopment Plan for the area to facilitate the relocation of uses not compatible or of high impacts to areas of the City that are more appropriate for high impact uses.
8. If the Fairgrounds remain, the Multi-use category would allow the expansion/modification to the facility.

9. Within the fairgrounds property utilize a ratio of 60% commercial, 30% residential, and 10% for parks, encouraging intensive landscape buffer for the residential properties.
10. The 10% for parks should be exclusive of roads, setbacks, etc. and for the benefit of the general public and improved as such.
11. Within the entire plan area encourage uses that promote pedestrian friendly developments and a sense of place.

ISSUE 2:

The interaction of pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles can create dangerous situations.

GOAL 2:

Create a circulation pattern that maintains a separation of incompatible systems.

POLICIES:

1. Promote sidewalks and boulevards along all streets.
2. Encourage the bicycle routes that are on collector and arterial streets to be separate from the travel lanes of vehicles. Those streets would be Meridian Road, Three Mile Drive, and Two Mile Drive.
3. Maintain and encourage additional traffic control features at collector and arterial intersections for pedestrian safety. Those intersections are identified on the Transportation Map. In addition, they are identified as the intersections with North Meridian Road and: Two Mile Drive, West Wyoming, Liberty Street, and Three Mile Drive.
4. To reduce the potential for pedestrian-vehicle accidents maintain a reduced speed limit on Meridian Road.
5. Encourage additional crossing guards along Meridian Road at the times children are going to and from school.
6. Encourage parents to volunteer time to become crossing guards.
7. Develop and adopt a Redevelopment Plan for the area that will facilitate the construction of a safe circulation pattern.

ISSUE 3:

As the City grows additional traffic will strain the existing system making it more dangerous.

GOAL 3:

Create a street system that can accommodate increases in traffic safely.

POLICIES:

1. Promote an extension of Two Mile Drive to connect to 7th Avenue WN. The location of which would be determined by the development of the fairground property.
2. The extension of 7th Avenue WN may be extended north to Colorado Street.
3. To provide alternate access to the Junior High School, Northwest Lane should be constructed to the east to connect with Meridian Road.
4. To reduce traffic on Meridian Road, encourage the construction of an alternate Highway 93 west of town.
5. Encourage the use of combined access easements and service roads for developments along Meridian Road.
6. Develop and adopt a Redevelopment Plan that facilitates the convenient flow of residential and commercial traffic.
7. Colorado Street and Arizona Street not be extended west to connect with Meridian Road
8. Colorado Street be upgraded with a cul-de-sac at its termination.

ISSUE 4:

City services are not yet available to parts of the North Meridian Area.

GOAL 4:

Provide a full range of services to the area.

POLICIES:

1. Adopt a development strategy that promotes the installation of sanitary sewers, water mains, and storm sewers.
2. Promote the retaining of storm water runoff onsite.
3. Ensure an adequate water supply for domestic and emergency needs.
4. Maintain a quick response time by emergency service providers.
5. Ensure sufficient infrastructure is constructed and maintained for wastewater treatment.
6. Encourage the City to develop and adopt a Redevelopment Plan that facilitates the extension of a full range of services.