

It's summertime in the Flathead and much has been happening in downtown Kalispell! In this newsletter we will provide some timely updates on our downtown interviews, provide insight into the progress on improvements to the Courthouse Couplet and close with a status report on the bypass.



As was said in the last newsletter, the city is using the following steps to guide *THE Downtown Plan*:

- 1. Comprehensive inventory of the neighborhood.** We have completed a current count and mapping of parking both on-street and in parking lots. We have also finished a land-use survey of the plan area that identifies residential, commercial retail, office, public ownership and parking areas to better understand how our downtown space is being used. In addition, we are identifying basement and second floor use patterns in downtown Kalispell. We have also completed an interesting study using taxable values per square foot of downtown properties and comparing these to other properties in the city.
- 2. Clarify the issues facing businesses and residents.** By establishing a more comprehensive picture of downtown Kalispell, its most pressing issues can be identified, evaluated, and tackled. Two of the fundamental issues arising from our interviews are traffic (too many trucks, too fast, too noisy and too dusty) and parking (not enough or perception that there is not enough.) There is also much interest in the future of the courthouse couplet and its affects on Main Street. Additionally, there have been several comments regarding downtown's vacant buildings, many of which are not updated and ready for service.
- 3. Develop thoughtful, efficient, and innovative solutions.** Ultimately, a vibrant and vital downtown is a cooperative effort between the city, its residents, and its business community. Anyone with ideas is invited to provide input as we move forward.

A photograph of a large group of people gathered on a grassy lawn for a community event. Many people are sitting on blankets or the grass, and there are trees and a gazebo in the background. The scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a summer day.

Today, by the number, there are 228 land parcels, 163 property owners and 332 separate business/tenants in the 24 square block study area. Our goal is to interview as many as possible. So far we have talked with 90 businesses and property owners (27%) and feedback continues to be positive. If you have not been contacted yet, your patience is appreciated. If you want to reach out to us sooner, please feel free to Tom, Katharine, Krista or Jarod. We can be reached at (406) 758-7940 or planning@kalispell.com.

The Courthouse Couplet

As previously mentioned, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is interested in making “improvements” to the couplet (the pair of roads that encircle the courthouse). This simple project is actually very complex. Many people have asked why any improvements need to be made at all. A little history is important. In



1991 (yes that far back), MDT began a project to provide an improved highway corridor from Somers to Whitefish. The final design gave rise to the four lane highway design we see today as well as the agreement to build a highway bypass around Kalispell (more on that topic below). However, a short stretch of roadway, the five blocks along South Main between 8th and 13th streets, was never completed. MDT had originally planned for this section to be 4-lane (2 north and 2 south bound around the courthouse). The original goal was to accommodate heavy truck traffic and a larger volume of traffic around the

courthouse and through Main Street. The early designs also showed a straightening of the roadway as it went around the courthouse. This plan involved acquisition of some of the immediately adjacent properties for additional right of way. These designs all had complications and with a lack of funding the project has languished.

Fast forward to today, MDT has hired the engineering firm of RPA to begin the process anew. Pam Carbonari and the Kalispell Downtown Association graciously coordinated a meeting with Ed Toavs, Missoula MDT District Administrator, in February for an update on the couplet plan. Toavs explained that the engineers would be gathering data through the fall of 2015 and will report back in late 2015. He also assured the group that MDT would be engaging the community in a very open process to plan for the future of the couplet design and hopefully our downtown. Stay tuned on this one...

Bypass Status

Good News! The remaining portion of the Highway 93 Westside Bypass has been designed and is ready for bidding and construction. The design, pegged at \$35 million, will include expanding 4-lane travel from the Foy's Lake roundabout north to Reserve Loop—Glacier High School and include full interchanges at Glacier High-Reserve Loop, at Four Mile, (Three Mile is already built), and at US Highway 2. Two Mile will go over the top of the bypass but have no access. Unfortunately, timing has slipped a little as funding limitation at the federal level have delayed this project several months. However, as this newsletter goes out, the Bypass is out to bid. MDT is anticipating a contract award in late September and construction could begin in October 2015, with the goal to have traffic on the fully completed bypass in late 2016 or early 2017.

Development Activity

The Toggery has opened it's doors, Trek and Rene Stephens have restored the old Gamble's Store at 327 South Main, including adding a new façade and extending a water main from main street to allow sprinkling of the entire building. Next door, Alpine Lighting, is beginning façade work including a new awning and the new 406 Grille has set up Kalispell's first parklet on 1st Avenue West. Stay tuned for more updates.



“THE Downtown Plan” Study Area

