

00. Executive Summary & Contents

THE VISION

Imagine living, working, and recreating in downtown Billings in the revitalized EBURD urban neighborhood – an economically vibrant place that attracts diverse residents and businesses and receives national notoriety for sustainable products and practices. Just east of the City of Billings, Montana's vibrant Central Business District is a new Rail Spur Village. Here students mix with seniors on a small but vibrant urban campus and a new Downtown green space. This large park is active year round, hosting markets and performances in the summer and skating in the winter. Throughout the day, the parks and surrounding streets are active with people of all ages convening at diners, attending classes, conducting business, working in community gardens, collecting children from childcare, or meeting at the new library. The green space is surrounded by diverse housing designed for students, singles, retirees, families, and seniors.

Most classrooms are located on upper floors of new mixed-use buildings where students attend business classes, elder hostel programs, and tech-ed classes. There are programs to train youth and displaced workers in new fields of wind technology, weatherization, solar installation, medical technology, and infomatics. Many retrained workers and graduates find work in downtown Billings. Some decide to start their own business with support of the nearby businesses and a business incubator located in the Green Workforce Center District. Eventually, these retrained workers and business owners become first-time home buyers. They find they can live downtown without owning a car.



Neighborhood services are nearby, and the MET transit buses carry them across town and to the medical district, malls, and golf courses.

Nearby, in the Central Works Neighborhood District, is an auto service center that repairs transmissions, distributes tires, changes oil, and does auto body work. Rental cars make it possible to escape to the mountains and nearby national parks for a weekend of skiing, horseback riding, fishing, or hiking. Traversing the neighborhood, visitors and residents encounter unique, new, and long-established local businesses that manufacture and distribute a range of products, including luggage, western hats, cowboy boots, construction materials, solar panels, and agricultural and office supplies.

The City of Billings and EBURD are nationally recognized for their stellar waste management, which includes both a local and a regional byproducts exchange network that relies on the

district's rail for transport. As an example, there is a small plant in the Central Works Neighborhood District that manufactures medical gloves used by both local hospitals. Scraps from the processes are reprocessed to create tire stops purchased by local contractors. Similar to today, millions of dollars worth of recycled steel and industrial byproducts and materials are shipped by rail to larger cities and overseas.

Visitors attending trade shows, business expositions, or the County Fair park their vehicles once, yet are able to enjoy the event at MetraPark as well as trips downtown to a jazz festival on Montana Avenue, a show at the Alberta Bair Theater, a festival at the new city green space, the Saturday Farmers Market on Broadway, and retail shopping on 2nd Avenue N. A circulating street car collects them at the stop near their hotel in the Exposition Gateway District. Returning to their hotel, they discover that the walk along 2nd Avenue N is only a mile and a half long. The variety of businesses they encounter along the way makes the walk entertaining and worthwhile. Dining in a new restaurant in the Exposition Gateway District, they learn that bicycles can be rented near the streetcar station, and the visitors cycle west and discover the 5-mile long trail that runs parallel to the Yellowstone River, under Main Street and across the top of the Rims, past Yellowstone Kelly's gravesite and several other scenic and historic sites. Bicyclists and pedestrians then gather to watch the sunset over the scenic Yellowstone River Valley. The bright lights of the fairground midway at MetraPark draw them back to town and an evening of entertainment.

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The previous narrative captures a vision for the properties east of downtown known as EBURD, the East Billings Urban Renewal District. This document,



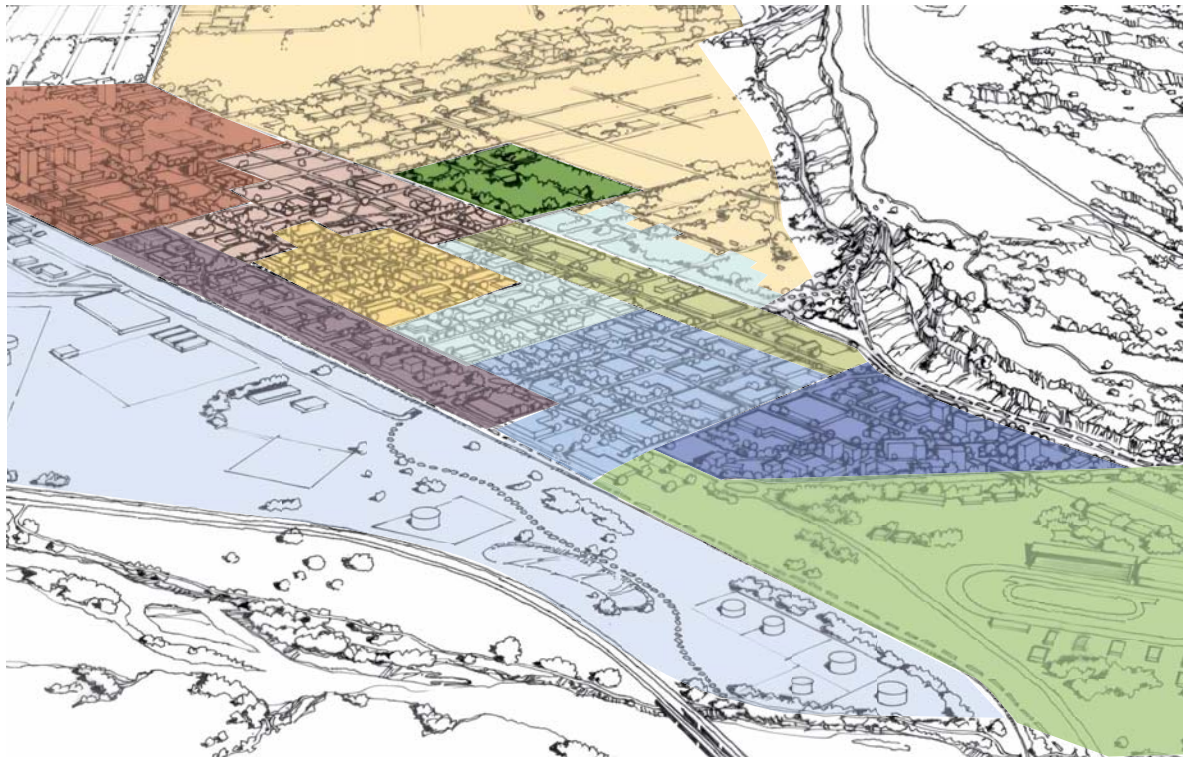
the East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan, was prepared by EDAW AECOM and guided by several spirited, engaged Steering Committee and community members who see the opportunities. These stakeholders and the Steering Committee, comprised of property owners, community members, representatives of Billings Industrial Revitalization District (BIRD), the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and the Big Sky Economic Development Authority (BSEDA), also understand the challenges. This already-developed district of downtown Billings can continue as it has, with limited growth and modest investment and no clear direction. Or:

The neighborhood and community leaders can continue their efforts and leverage momentum to position this area as the region's top-tier opportunity for clean industry, urban revitalization, and eclectic urban renewal.

Renewal efforts can focus on implementing the necessary infrastructure improvements comparable to other regenerating industrial and mixed-use urban centers in the region. Alternatively, revitalization efforts can stretch and strive to achieve regional or national stature by creating a distinct place and a model of sustainable and green practices. Trends suggest there will be federal and state grants to communities that strive for the latter alternative and include alternative and renewable energy, housing affordability, job creation and workforce training, materials recycling, environmental remediation, and multimodal transportation solutions in their plans.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The revitalization planning process was initiated by property owners in 2006. Assisted by the BSEDA and the City of Billings, a tax increment finance (TIF) district was formed. BSEDA secured federal funds from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for economic development and environmental remediation studies. This East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan was funded by EDA, BSEDA, BSEDC, the City, and downtown business and property owners. Leveraging the past federal commitment, a solid plan, and the community's demonstrated commitment to downtown revitalization makes it possible to realize the far-reaching vision described in this planning report.



Axonometric Sketch of Development Districts

Chapter 1, Neighborhood Vision, describes the genesis of this study, the plan development and stakeholder engagement process, and most importantly the guiding principles that have shaped the vision. Guiding principles address economic growth, vibrant centers, housing affordability, choice and diversity, environmental stewardship, quality of life, sense of place, and connections to parks, trails, the Yellowstone River, and Rims.

Chapter 2, Opportunities and Constraints, describes existing conditions, market forces, demographics, employment, land use, and environmental assets and challenges. The chapter summarizes the challenges and highlights the opportunities, concluding that with reinvestment, this area will be poised to capture a fair

share of the city's and region's growth over the next 20 to 30 years.

Chapter 3, Development Framework, lays out the neighborhood framework and describes opportunities to improve the vitality, connectivity, character, identity, and servicing. The following eight distinct districts are proposed:

East Montana Avenue ■

The district extends the vibrancy and character of Montana Avenue, incorporating an enhanced streetscape and encouraging infill and rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of warehouse and industrial structures.

East Downtown ■

Continuing the pattern of mixed-use infill with an emphasis on office and employment is recommended.

Rail Spur Village ■

A catalyst project that will assemble land and develop a site master plan for a mixed-use residential village associated with a major downtown park and campus is recommended for this largely underutilized area.

The 6th Avenue Find ■

This district will capture auto-oriented commercial, home improvement businesses, construction supply, or industrial retail activity benefiting from the high traffic volumes. An enhanced streetscape with well-defined and safe pedestrian crossings at 4th and 6th Avenues N will connect this district to others in the neighborhood.

The Green Workforce Center ■

This mixed-use neighborhood will retain existing light industrial, manufacturing, and wholesale uses and be marketed and further developed as an employment center. Potentially, this area could include a business incubator associated with training centers in or near the Rail Spur Village.

Central Works Neighborhood

This district is home to many significant commercial and industrial businesses including agricultural and ranch supply, saddle production, scrap yards, and auto services. Many of these uses will continue or evolve; others will adapt, innovate, and capture new markets. A large amount of underutilized land is allocated for used car sales.

Rail Recycling Hub

The rail will be maintained with the existing recycling hub remaining and perhaps evolving into a regional recycling hub and center of local and regional byproduct exchange network.

Exposition Gateway

Annexation and coordinated development of this important gateway to the city and the neighborhood is recommended as a prime location for hospitality, indoor sports, and entertainment uses to capitalize on and complement MetraPark events and visitation.

Implementation

The East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan provides a framework that will guide decision-making related to public and private investment in the area. The plan will be realized over time through policy changes, programs, and catalyst public and private projects. Partnerships facilitated by a strong organization responsible for stewardship of the plan as well as organizational alliances with other downtown community economic development are crucial to the successful implementation of the plan.

This report includes several Implementation chapters, organized to provide both long-term and short-term guidance related to the successful implementation of the EBURD Master Plan.

Chapter 4, Implementation Strategies, provides an overview of plan implementation, highlighting key revitalization principles and providing general long-term guidance. BIRD, BSEDA, and City leaders and staff are encouraged to realize the potential of the district to provide a mix of uses (diverse housing, employment, job, and training opportunities), green and sustainable infrastructure, and community amenities. The opportunities to partner with industry, government, businesses, and the rail and transport industries are highlighted.

Chapter 5, Institutional Organization and Funding, focuses on organizational structure, capacity building and funding strategies, emphasizing that successful implementation will require strong and sustained organization, individual leadership, and successful partnerships among the property and business owners, public agencies, local government, and downtown and economic development interests.

Chapter 6, Spatial and Regulatory Framework, describes the spatial and regulatory frameworks in greater detail, providing guidance on creative regulatory tools including form code, green and complete street policies, shared parking policy, distinct street classifications, and design standards.

Chapter 7, Action Plan, provides a detailed action plan, describing the policy, programs, and priority projects to be initiated and in many cases completed within a 3-year timeframe. The Rail Spur Village and the Exposition Gateway District are highlighted as areas where site master plans and detailed redevelopment strategies should be developed in close consultation with property owners and other stakeholders.

Chapter 8, Sustainable Strategies, Opportunities, and Policy Options, describes in detail the range of sustainable planning, design, and management

strategies that are possible in this district including potential certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) project. If several of the strategies described are embraced, EBURD could become a distinct and a global model of eco-industrial ecology and a demonstration project for material recycling, water reuse, and water sensitive urban design, as well as creative and renewable energy systems.

Appendices A and B include additional information on funding sources, case studies, and economic market analysis, and proposed code revisions.

NEXT STEPS

The vision is well formed, the framework is documented, and the action plan defined. This flexible master plan will guide decisions, and the vision will be realized over time by strong and consistent leadership, and through creative partnerships and alliances. Building upon the momentum and successes to date, leaders are encouraged to take small steps, calculated risks, and bold actions. Along the way, celebrate and publicize small and large successes. Collective efforts and sustained commitment and leadership will build this distinct neighborhood. East Billings in a remarkable place. EBURD will better serve the existing community and sustain future generations who live, work, learn, and play in the Yellowstone Valley.



Artist's Sketch of Revitalized District

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