

CITY OF HELENA PLANNING DIVISION
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STAFF REPORT

TO: City of Helena/Lewis and Clark County Consolidated Planning Board

FROM: Ellie Ray, City Planning Division
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Sharon Haugen, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Consider a Resolution amending the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy to include the Downtown Master Plan as a neighborhood plan for the Downtown Area as indicated in Exhibit "A".

OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

PUBLIC HEARING DATE:
Consolidated Planning Board -- 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, June 21, 2016

BACKGROUND

The City of Helena, MBAC and the Helena Business Improvement District (HBID) have partnered to develop a Downtown Master Plan, and WGM, Inc. was hired to complete the document. Since 2015, the HBID has conducted numerous meetings and interviews stakeholders and residents of the Downtown area. In addition, the HBID held three (3) charettes to gather input from residents and businesses of the downtown and surrounding area. In April 2016, the HBID finalized the Downtown Master Plan, and asked the City of Helena to incorporate the document into the 2011 Growth Policy as a Neighborhood Plan for the Downtown area.

On Tuesday, May 17, 2016, members of the City of Helena-Lewis and Clark County Consolidated Planning Board conducted a work session with City staff and members of the HBID on the proposal to include the Master Plan as a neighborhood plan for the Downtown area.

Pursuant to Section 76-1-601 (4) (a) and (b), when adopting a neighborhood plan, the plan must be consistent with the Growth Policy and define the jurisdictional area for the neighborhood plan.

To facilitate Planning Board's review and recommendation on the conformance of the Downtown Master Plan with the *2011 Helena Growth Policy*, a copy the Downtown Master Plan has been provided to the Planning Board as an attachment to this staff report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN AREA

Historic development in the downtown is associated with the discovery of gold in the area now known as Last Chance Gulch. Currently, Helena's Downtown is characterized by a mix of modern and historical buildings that contain a mix of residential, commercial and professional service uses located along Last Chance Gulch and Lyndale Avenue. The Downtown Master Plan Area generally encompass an area south of the Carroll College campus and Memorial Park, west of Benton and Park Avenues, east of North Jackson Street and Cruse Avenue, and to the intersection of Park and Cruse Avenues to the south. (See attached map).

REVIEW CRITERIA

There is no specific review criterion for a Planning Board recommendation on the conformance of a Neighborhood Plan with the jurisdiction's Growth Policy.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Background

- 1.** The City of Helena adopted its current Growth Policy on May 09, 2011 through Resolution No. 19828.
- 2.** The City of Helena-Lewis and Clark County Consolidated Planning Board serves as the Planning Board for the City of Helena.
- 3.** The Growth Policy deals with broad land use issues, policies, and designations; it does not identify specific zoning. Zoning is one of the means of implementing the Growth Policy, no specific zoning recommendations are made in the document. Instead, the Growth Policy provides a set of general, community-wide policies and guidelines to assist the general public, local government, and developers in making informed land use decisions.
- 4.** The City of Helena, MBAC, and the Helena Business Improvement District (HBID), are proposing to amend the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy to include the Downtown Master Plan as a Neighborhood Plan for the downtown area, pursuant to Section 76-1-601 (4) (a) and (b) of the MCA.
- 5.** The Downtown Master Plan Area generally encompass an area south of the Carroll College campus and Memorial Park, west of Benton and Park Avenues, east of North Jackson Street and Cruse Avenue, and to the intersection of Park and Cruse Avenues to the south. (See attached map – Exhibit "A").

6. The City of Helena, MBAC and the Helena Business Improvement District (HBID) has contracted with WGM, Inc. to complete the Downtown Master Plan so that the plan can be used to guide and promote future development and redevelopment of the downtown area.
7. In accordance with Sections 76-1-601 (4) (a) and (b) and 76-1-603 MCA, a Neighborhood Plan must be reviewed by the Planning Board for consistency with the local government's growth policy, and the Planning Board must make a recommendation to the local governing body to amend the growth policy with respect to the Neighborhood Plan's conformance.
8. The City of Helena-Lewis and Clark Consolidated Planning Board has the authority under Sections 76-1-601 (4) (a) and (b) and 76-1-603 MCA to determine if the Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy.

Implementation of the Growth Policy

Based upon the City's recent development history and the projected trends, the 2011 Growth Policy identifies goals, objectives, and implementation mechanisms, such as policies, regulations, and other measures for each subject area identified in State law.

The following implementation mechanisms apply to the entire document:

1. The City should consider Chapter objectives when approving ordinances, regulations, public improvements, plans, standards, and budgets.
2. The City should collaborate with other jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations to achieve the objectives.
3. The City should support the objectives through participation in and collaboration with boards, organizations, and citizens groups.
4. The City should develop community outreach and educational programs to achieve the objectives.

GROWTH POLICY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Applicable goals and policies from the Growth Policy, and the evaluation of consistency of the Downtown Master Plan with those goals and policies, are outlined below.

Economic Conditions

The Economic Conditions chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: Promote and sustain economic vitality while maintaining and enhancing the quality of human and natural environments.

Objectives:

- Foster diversification of the economic base.
 - Promote the maintenance and expansion of existing Helena area businesses and recognize the importance of government employment to the Helena economy.
 - Promote development of resources that facilitate sound business development.
 - Promote positive partnerships between public and private sectors within the Helena area to encourage a healthy business community.
 - Maintain and protect cultural resources recognizing that they are an important and irreplaceable asset for the community and tourism.
 - Direct community incentive programs and other financial resources to job development, both to retain and expand existing industries and attract new ones.
 - Support efforts to encourage the creation and expansion of small business and help reduce the rate of failure.
 - Review City zoning requirements to identify and remove unnecessary impediments to commercial and industrial development, while protecting established areas with the appropriate standards and promoting the interests of the greater community.
 - Promote new development while mitigating environmental impacts, protecting established areas, and maintaining the interest of the greater community.
 - Continue to plan for infrastructure expansions and increasing city services to maintain the high quality business environment needed to support our economy.
1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to promote growth and development of the City's economic base through use of joint private-public partnership, the promotion of our natural resources, tourism, incentive programs, business incubators, and improved or enhanced services and infrastructure.
 2. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Economic Conditions because it encourages the use of incentives to improve the infrastructure and further support those city service is needed for redevelopment of the area and further business expansions; it encourages the potential of developing future industries such as tourism and retail opportunities while preserving the historic nature and other cultural resources; it promotes the development of entrepreneurs and business development; and encourages mixed-use development to spur retail and workforce housing growth amongst existing uses.

Housing

The Housing chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: Housing that is safe, available, accessible, and affordable for all sectors of the population.

Objectives:

- Support and expand the supply of housing for all residents, especially lower income, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, homeless, and others with special needs.
 - Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock.
 - Work with nonprofit agencies to maximize housing resources for low- and moderate-income residents
 - Support infill development of additional housing that harmonizes with the character of existing neighborhoods.
 - Conserve and enhance the character, quality, and livability of the community by preserving and improving distinctive neighborhoods that offer diverse housing opportunities.
 - Encourage the development of housing located in proximity to physical, technological, social, and economic infrastructure.
 - Develop and preserve housing to minimize impacts on natural resources and the physical environment and to maximize social resources while meeting emerging needs.
 - Maximize constructive neighborhood involvement in housing development and design.
1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to leverage city-owned properties for redevelopment, particularly in vacant or underutilized lots; to enhance neighborhood vitality by supporting neighborhood schools and establishing businesses and services that satisfy everyday needs; and to promote infill and mixed-use opportunities in the Downtown.
 2. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Housing because it actively supports the expansion of the housing supply, the preservation and restoration of existing housing stock and its historic character, and the development of housing in proximity to necessary infrastructure and services.

Public Facilities and Services

The Public Facilities and Services chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goals:

- Protect and enhance the natural environment; promote efficient use of community infrastructure, services, and transportation networks; and conserve resources.
- Promote conservation, workplace safety and other community values by investing in buildings, vehicles and programs encompassed in facilities and services that support green building design, workplace ergonomics and energy efficiency.

Objectives:

- Address public safety issues and potential hazards for areas located adjacent to and in the City.
 - Encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized land and full utilization of properties currently served by, or in close proximity to, infrastructure with a scale and quality that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
 - Apply development requirements equally to public agencies and private entities.
 - Create a public-works funding system that will divide the the cost of providing infrastructure and protecting the environment between the public and those developing land.
 - Implement the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
 - Maintain safety as people travel in the community.
 - Develop and maintain disaster, mitigation, emergency, and recovery plans.
 - Support joint planning efforts to provide coordinated infrastructure in the future.
1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to encourage the planning and prioritization of needed improvements for both motorized and non-motorized transportation, as identified in both the Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan and the Five Year Transit Development Plan; and by encouraging needed upgrades to water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure for the area.
 2. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Public Facilities and Services because it encourages the use of prioritization for the Downtown’s roadways, water, sanitation, and stormwater infrastructure to accommodate current and anticipated growth. It also supports coordination with private developers and utilities to achieve these goals.

Transportation

The Transportation chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: A multimodal transportation system that:

- A. Meets the current and future transportation needs of the greater Helena area including, but not limited to, travel by automobile;
- B. Minimizes demand for petroleum products and emissions of green-house gases by promoting transportation choices and efficient land use patterns;
- C. Promotes public health by facilitating non-motorized transportation;

- D. Meets the unique transportation needs of the area's elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged populations;
- E. Respects the area's natural and historic context and minimizes adverse impacts to the environment and existing neighborhoods;
- F. Provides for transportation choices in the community to allow safe and efficient travel;
- G. Minimizes vehicle miles traveled;
- H. Promotes a development pattern that is more compact and less dispersed;
- I. Connects to regional transit.

Objectives:

- Plan a logical, long-range arterial system, including interstate access, that promotes a compact, highly interconnected urban land use pattern and can be systematically implemented by right-of-way reservations and advance acquisition procedures.
 - Implement policies and decisions to ensure that bicyclists and pedestrians can use and cross major roadways and highways leading to the surrounding area.
 - Include appropriate facilities that are safe, comfortable, integrated and convenient for travel by persons of all ages and abilities, automobile, foot, bicycle, and public transit in major street improvement projects and developing areas.
 - Prefer transportation improvement that preserve the natural panorama of skylines and sightlines and that are compatible with historic resources, and minimize cut-and-fill on slopes resulting from construction.
1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to encourage the prioritization and implementation of improvements for both motorized and non-motorized transportation, as identified in both the Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan and the Five Year Transit Development Plan, which will increase access and connectivity both within the District and with other parts of the community.
 2. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Transportation because it encourages multi-modal transportation opportunities and identifies potential projects that could enhance the area's transportation system and increase connectivity, thereby furthering existing transit and transportation goals that link the Downtown better to the wider Helena community.

Environment

The Environment chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: Maintain and enhance a healthy, sustainable environment, respect significant natural features when development is permitted, and mitigate development's impacts with the City providing leadership in conservation and resource protection.

Objectives:

- Require an efficient transportation system that accommodates future connectivity and non-motorized transportation to maintain air quality by reducing dust, auto emissions and greenhouse gases.
- Evaluate subdivision impacts to ground and surface waters, water bodies, drainages, floodplains, riparian areas, and wetlands, incorporating adequate buffers or requiring appropriate mitigation, including, but not limited to, stormwater treatment and discharges to improve the viability of wetlands.
- Protect the natural open spaces, skylines, and sightlines on the city's south border, evaluate objects of historic and aesthetic significance, and protect such features or mitigate their loss.
- Minimize environmental degradation in areas with challenging physical and environmental characteristics, such as steep slopes, wildland-urban interface, watercourses, drainage ways and wetlands, and minimize cut-and-fills on slopes resulting from road or building construction.
- Promote energy efficiency and conservation with development standards, land use regulations, public/private partnerships and education, and consider the use of incentives where appropriate.

1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: by promoting the need for enhanced transit and bike-pedestrian opportunities in—and to—the Downtown; by ensuring appropriate compliance and utilization of infrastructural standards that appropriately convey stormwater; by establishing design standards that emphasize low impact and green development; and by promoting development that is both in keeping with and enhances the Downtown's historic and natural assets.
2. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to the Environment because it protects and enhances the cultural, historical, and natural aesthetics of the Downtown, while minimizing adverse environmental impacts and promoting appropriate design and function of the built environment.

Water

The Water chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goals and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goals:

- B. Protect groundwater and surface water quality in the Helena area watershed for all users.
- C. Reduce the per capita demand for water

D. Reduce water and wastewater treatment needs.

Objectives:

- Encourage land-use change and development proposals that promote efficient use of city water infrastructure and resources.
 - Promote reducing impervious surfaces, thus increasing infiltration through the soil which helps regenerate groundwater and remove pollutants.
 - Encourage the use of xeriscape landscaping, grey water, rain barrels, and other mechanisms to reduce demand on potable water and the amount of effluent.
3. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to emphasize the need for green infrastructure and low-impact development practices so as to effectively manage the city's natural resources and avoid adverse impacts to ground and surface waters.
4. The Downtown Master Plan is conformance with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Water because it encourages design and implementation of practices that are both cost-effective in the long-term and effective in mitigating wastewater impacts from the built environment.

Culture

The Culture chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: Strengthen the relationship between Helena's cultural assets and overall economic vitality, social welfare, and quality of life of the community. Helena's diverse cultural life is broadly defined as including the visual and performing arts, history, library, education, recreation, and its people.

Objectives:

- Improve accessibility to cultural opportunities for all the citizens of the community.
- Continue to educate the public about the City's cultural programs and opportunities.
- Continue to explore and increase options to support cultural tourism, enhance economic development, address social and cultural issues in the community, and encourage community pride and aesthetics
- Pursue opportunities for coordination and collaboration of the City's cultural resource programs with other city programs and projects, and with other community organizations.
- Continue to support the City's cultural advisory committees such as the Historic Preservation Commission, Public Art Committee, International Affairs Council, the City-county Parks Board, and the Civic Center Board within budgetary constraints.

- Continue to promote the preservation of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, objects, buildings and historic districts.
- Address historic preservation issues at the local level and integrate them onto planning and decision-making processes by considering how developments affect historic and prehistoric resources.
- Support the economic and social vitality of historic districts by measures such as business improvement districts, tax increment financing districts, zoning, and neighborhood planning.
- Encourage a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Manage recreational use to protect the integrity of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Include the city's recreational facilities as part of an overall expansion and maintenance program with funding to adequately maintain sports fields, trails, and other City recreational facilities.
- Analyze opportunities for increasing City-supported recreation programs and services.

1. The Downtown Master Plan has the following goals and/or projects: to emphasize the Downtown's unique history and cultural importance through the development of an interpretive and wayfinding signage program(s), encouraging design forms that reflect the historic nature of the area, appropriately identifying and listing historical assets, enhancing culturally and environmentally sensitive recreational opportunities for all, and promoting a vibrant and healthy downtown economy and neighborhoods.
2. The Downtown Master Plan is in conformance with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Culture because it emphasizes context-sensitive development of businesses, housing, recreation, and infrastructure in a manner that enhances Downtown cultural assets.

Land Use

The Land Use chapter of the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy has the following goal and policies that relate to the creation of a Neighborhood Plan that are consistent with the actions identified in the Downtown Master Plan:

Goal: Protect and enhance the natural environment; protect cultural and historical assets; preserve and enhance community aesthetics; protect established neighborhoods and address compatibility of uses; and promote efficient use of community infrastructure, services, and transportation networks, energy, and resources.

Objectives:

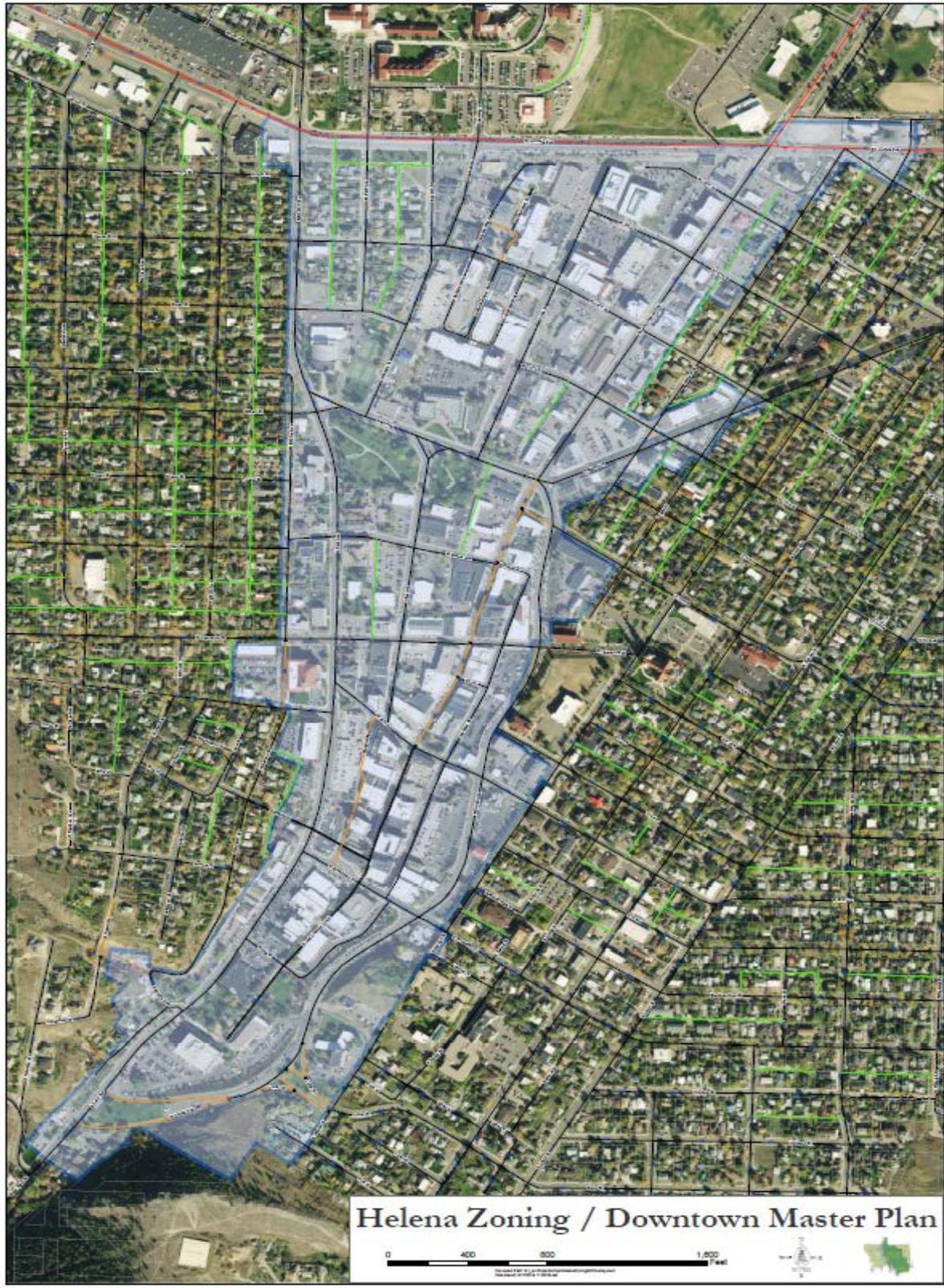
- Address overall development functionality to:
 - Increase energy efficiency, reduce vehicle trips, maintain air quality, and minimize noise;
 - Provide cohesive neighborhoods and pedestrian-friendly environments with connected transportation linkages with walkable block lengths or pedestrian corridors for physical connectivity, and a sense of community.
 - Provide opportunities for mixed-use development and reduce the need for automobiles, encourage walking, and save energy through infill development.
 - Implement the mixed-use areas and urban standards boundary identified on the Future Land Use Map, update the Growth Policy as new issues arise and make the mixed-use areas a priority when developing neighborhood plans.
 - Minimize functional and visual impacts of entry corridors and non-residential development on existing residential neighborhoods
 - Foster open-space connectivity around the city to link parks, open spaces, and water bodies through pedestrian and bicycle trails and minimize development impacts on open space.
 - Promote development of dense and intense land uses both in the city and in close proximity to existing city services to better utilize city infrastructure and encourage the shared use of storm water ponds to ensure efficient expenditure of public funds.
1. The mixed-use designations on the future land use map may create a desire to establish new zoning districts or zoning overlays. The Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Land Use because it encourages the use of incentives, design standards, etc., to encourage mixed-use development and redevelopment of infill areas, and it promotes walkability within the area and provides for enhancements and other public investments that are not standard infrastructure improvements.
 2. The Future Land Use Map in the 2011 Helena Growth Policy reflects the community interest in preserving natural resource values, avoiding environmental degradation, preserving public investments in infrastructure, and providing for efficient, cost-effective expansion of the community.
 3. The Future Land Use Map designed some parts of the City as Mixed-use areas. The Downtown Master Plan includes one such designation. The concept of mixed-use development can be an important growth management policy for the City of Helena. If properly planned and developed, mixed-use areas will mature into quality neighborhoods that enjoy higher densities, a mix of activities, more transportation options, and convenient shopping and services.

4. The mixed-use areas are priority areas for developing neighborhood plans.
5. The Downtown Master Plan area is located in Mixed-use **Area I: Downtown/Carroll College** (See attached map). The 2011 Growth Policy describes Mixed-use Area I as the historic and cultural center of the City. The downtown area generally contains a mixture of commercial, educational, professional services, and residential uses.
6. It is desirable to continue encouraging mixed-use development and redevelopment of the downtown area that promote more intense and higher density uses closer to Last Chance Gulch and Lyndale Avenue, more residential uses in and around the Great Northern Town Center, as well as a mix of lower intensity services and commercial uses between Benton and Davis Street. It seeks to do this while preserving the historic character of the area. In addition, better connectivity from the downtown with all areas within the City should continue to be encouraged.
7. The Downtown Master plan is consistent with the 2011 Growth Policy Goals and Objectives related to Land Use because it promotes mixed-uses in the Downtown Neighborhood plan area, encouraging infill development and using existing infrastructure to guide development projects. It identifies the need for pedestrian facilities to encourage a more cohesive neighborhood.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

The City of Helena-Lewis and Clark County Consolidated Planning Board, based on its review and findings, recommends to the Helena City Commission that the Downtown Master Plan is consistent with the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy, and recommends an amendment to the 2011 City of Helena Growth Policy to include the Downtown Master Plan as the Downtown Neighborhood Plan.

EXHIBIT A



FUTURE LAND USE MAP MIXED-USE AREA I – DOWNTOWN

