

CHAPTER 9

CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Helena’s many cultural assets, including a rich local history, architecture, visual and performing arts, libraries, education and recreational opportunities. These assets are City-wide, for all age groups, abilities, and income levels, and consist of City and private ventures. All contribute to the attractiveness of the City and its economic vitality, community pride, and identity. It is important to know how Helena’s history shaped the Helena of today.

This section provides a detailed description for each of these areas, including programs, facilities, and issues.

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

A variety of cultural facilities are located throughout the Helena area. Some are owned by the City of Helena such as the Civic Center, the Grand Street Theater building and multiple parks and recreation facilities. The Library and Fairgrounds are owned by Lewis and Clark County in addition to other recreational sites. The Montana Historical Society, the Capitol Building, and the local junior college are owned by the State of Montana. Numerous properties located in the historic districts are privately owned in addition to public buildings. All of these facilities contribute to the community’s cultural assets.

The Cultural Assets map shows the locations of the larger cultural sites throughout the Helena area. See [Cultural Assets Map](#) (electronic link or map at the end of this Chapter)

HELENA'S HISTORIC ASSETS

Cities find part of their identity in their architecture—especially their historic architecture—their people, social organizations, parks, educational facilities, and other cultural amenities. Helena is no exception, and to a considerable degree the community's history contributes to its sense of place. Visitors are encouraged to appreciate Helena's past and the physical setting created by older neighborhoods and commercial areas that serve as an inducement to shopping, dining, and entertainment.

Helena is fortunate to have many historic assets that tell the story of the area, beginning with its earlier indigenous peoples and Native American heritage to the multi-cultural City of today. This story continues today with museums and the arts, and the preservation of numerous designated historic buildings and historic districts, as well as other potentially historic neighborhoods.



Helena 1910, looking over south-central Helena

See [Appendix](#) of this document for an account of Helena's history. This detailed description, *Helena: A Historical Perspective* (as described in Helena's historic district nominations to the National Register of Historic Places), contains information up to the present about the people, social organizations, economic history, architecture, transportation, County Courthouse and the State Capitol, water, parks, earthquakes, Urban Renewal and Model Cities programs, and 1970s to present.

FACILITIES

Helena's historic downtown serves as an outdoor facility for the many concerts, festivals, and craft fairs that take place throughout the year and a Farmers Market that occurs for five months.

Cultural facilities are concentrated in the downtown area with the Library and the Neighborhood Center at the south end and the Civic Center, Grand Street Theater, Holter Art Museum, and Myrna Loy Center in the middle, in addition to several small private art galleries. Historic public structures downtown include the "Guardian of the Gulch" Fire Tower, the City-County Building, and the County Courthouse. The Helena Indian Alliance, a private organization dedicated to the education, cultural preservation, and health care of Native Americans, is located at the north end of downtown.

The City promotes the use of the Civic Center, coordinates all capital improvements, works with the Civic Center Board of Directors for fund raising and grant applications, and manages the facility as a community cultural asset. Marketing activities include an on-going program to recruit in-state and out-of-state organizations to bring conventions, expositions, and conferences to the Helena Civic Center, and to encourage local clubs and organizations to use the Civic Center ballroom and auditorium for community events. In addition, a coordinated effort with performing arts organizations has been successful in bringing additional performances to the Civic Center auditorium facility. A variety of public and private funding sources has been utilized by the Civic Center to address various repair, improvement, safety, and accessibility issues.

Helena is also home to seven museums that represent local and statewide history, science, and art: Montana Military Museum, Montana State Historical Society, Original Governor's Mansion, Pioneer Cabin, ExplorationWorks, and the Holter Museum of Art. Although the Lewis and Clark County Heritage Center currently has a small exhibit space, it does not have a means to hold collections and therefore does not constitute a local history museum.

PROGRAMS TO ASSIST HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic areas are important cultural assets, resulting in economic benefits to the community through tourism, community reinvestment, and recognized workmanship in wood, brick, and stone. Preserving historic areas also represents a wise utilization of resources (i.e., materials used for building construction), which provides a sense of place for residents and results in economic benefits from cultural tourism. Properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places also qualify for a variety of benefits to the property owner.

In 1989 the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County created a combined historic preservation program and established the nine-member, volunteer Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to advise them on historic preservation issues. The HPC works to preserve and develop the unique historical, governmental, and environmental qualities of the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County; to integrate historic preservation into local, state, and federal planning and decision-making processes; and to identify, evaluate, and protect historic resources within the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County.

In addition to providing traditional educational activities, the HPC is working with Capital High School teachers and students to restore Trolley Car # 3, built in 1909, as an interactive learning project. The classes are building skills in historic research, woodworking, photography, and business as they study, create artistic renderings, and restore the car. Additionally, the HPC is encouraging local protection of historic places through ordinance, improved archival protection of valuable local documents, and the establishment of traditional heritage offerings such as local museum displays not currently present in the area. Heritage tourism initiatives are also an aspect of HPC work. The HPC's educational outreach includes promoting the preservation of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, object, buildings, and historic districts.

National Register of Historic Places

The City owns the Civic Center, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Grand Street Theater building, which is a cornerstone of the Helena Historic District. The City-County Building, the home of many local government functions, is also individually listed on the National Register. The Myrna Loy Center, owned by Lewis and Clark County and located across from the county courthouse in the historic former county jail, presents a wide variety of performing and other arts in an educational context that may not otherwise appear in Helena.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's roster of properties important in the history, architectural history, archeology, engineering, and culture of the United States, its states and regions, and its communities. The National Register includes buildings and structures, sites, objects, and districts (groups of buildings, structures, or sites that make up a coherent whole such as a neighborhood or industrial complex). Listing on the National Register does not provide any protection for the property unless such protection is adopted locally, as the City of Helena has done with its demolition review process.

Prompted by requirements linked to Federal Urban Renewal and other programs, the City inventoried its threatened historic architecture, registering it with the National Register of Historic Places as a basis for future management and care. Since the 1970s, large segments of the downtown and southern historic neighborhoods have been similarly listed, and many individual property owners also took this course.

Historic Districts (whole neighborhoods or even communities) may be listed if their historic properties are densely focused. Much of central Helena is eligible for such listing, although only a portion of the area is currently recognized. (For more information about listing a historic property on the National Register, contact the Helena/Lewis and Clark County historic preservation commission or the state historic preservation office.)

Listing once implied grant assistance, but this is not presently the case. Commercial buildings could enjoy a 20% Investment Tax Credit on major improvements given when Rehabilitation Standards are met. There are fees for filing for the credit. Property owners can also benefit with the historic sign program, federal and state income tax credits, and the locally-adopted tax abatement program.

State Historic Sign Program

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has a historic sign program for properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located within a historic district and contributing to the district. For a nominal fee, property owners can get a metal sign describing the history of their building to be installed on the structure or in the yard. These signs describe the building's history and greatly benefit tourists and residents alike by providing information about the community.

“Bricks and Mortar” Grants

At increasingly rare times, the SHPO has had funds to assist property owners with rehabilitating their historic buildings. Some funding was offered for barn rehabilitation in 2009. To qualify for these funds, the property must either be individually listed on the National Register or be a contributing building in a historic district. The work must be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Federal and State Income Tax Credits

The most significant federal historic preservation assistance is available to commercial rehabilitation. As with the tax abatement program, properties must either be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or be located within a historic district and contribute to the character of the district. Design review of the proposed rehabilitation, restoration, expansion, or (even) new construction is required. Building modifications must be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Tax act applications are reviewed through the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Tax Abatement Program

Helena has adopted a tax abatement program for the rehabilitation of historic structures. To qualify for abatement, properties must either be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or be located within a declared historic district and contribute to the character of the district. Design review of the proposed rehabilitation, restoration, expansion, or (even) new construction is required, either from a state or locally appointed board. The construction must be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. After abatement, alterations that detract from historic elements of the design can trigger repayment and penalties. With this tax abatement the owner is allowed a tax abatement for up to six years on property taxes on qualifying improvements (including one year of construction). The tax abatement is limited to 100% of the increase in taxable value caused by the rehabilitation, restoration, expansion, or new construction. Current City requirements for tax abatements for historic properties are set forth in Resolution 10256 (11/5/90).

Annual Historic Preservation Awards

Each year during National Historic Preservation Week (the second week in May), the Helena/Lewis and Clark Historic Preservation Commission recognizes property owners who have maintained the historic integrity of their property or have appropriately rehabilitated their historic building(s). The award winners are publicly recognized at the annual awards luncheon and through the media.

Demolition Review

Historic districts consist of many individual structures that essentially tell a community's interwoven story. The fabric of historic districts can be delicately held together by the context of the development. A historic district is no longer viable and can be delisted if too many alterations occur and the context and historic integrity are destroyed.

Inclusion in a historic district provides many benefits to property owners, including tax abatements, income tax credits, and signage. The loss of a historic district designation can negatively affect the owners of contributing buildings that may not be a primary building. Recognizing the importance of maintaining the historic districts, the City has adopted a demolition review process for historic buildings and districts.

DESIGNATED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Historic districts contain a grouping of structures that relate to each other within a certain historic context. Development occurred in a similar timeframe and with a similar series of events that is shared by other properties in the district. Historic districts include structures that may have unique architectural features, exhibit the work of a master architect or builder, or are associated with certain events in history. They also may include other structures that are not of the same era and significance.

Helena's six historic districts are shown on the Historic District Map:

1. *Helena Historic District*, originally established in 1972, includes a portion of the Upper Westside in separate areas: the first area is adjacent to the commercial downtown and is bordered on the west by Howie Street and on the north by Lawrence Street; the eastern boundary is generally Ewing Street, and Lawrence Street on the north. The second area is generally bordered by Monroe Avenue on the west, Stuart Street on the north, Dearborn Avenue on the east and Power Street on the south. The commercial portion of the *Helena Historic District* was resurveyed in 1989 and contains 25 primary properties, 57 contributing properties, and 39 noncontributing properties. General boundaries are Neill Avenue on the north, Wong Street on the south, Park Avenue on the west, and Cruse Avenue on the east. The *Courthouse Square & Rodney Street Neighborhood* portion of the district includes the 1993 addendum containing 9 primary properties, 49 contributing, and 17 noncontributing properties. This portion of the Helena Historic District is bordered by the commercial portion of the Helena Historic District on the west, 6th Avenue on the north, Broadway on the south, and Davis Street on the east.
2. *South-Central Historic District*, established in 1986, contains 168 contributing properties and 52 noncontributing properties. This district is bordered by Broadway on the north, the City limits on the south, the Helena Historic District on the west, and generally by Davis Street on the east.
3. *West Main Historic District*, containing one primary property, 20 contributing, and 16 noncontributing properties, was listed in 1996. This district is bordered by the commercial portion of the Helena Historic District on the north, and parallels West Main Street; the southern boundary on the west side of the street extends to the lime kilns on Grizzly Gulch.

4. *House of the Good Shepherd Historic District* is a small district listed in 1993, containing 4 properties, located south of Ninth Avenue on both sides of Hoback Street.
5. *Mount Helena Historic District* was listed in 1997 as Helena’s first cultural landscape. This district follows the original boundaries of Mount Helena Park and contains 680 acres.
6. *Helena Depot Historic District* was listed in 2004 and consists of the commercial area adjacent to and including the former Northern Pacific depot.

Two new historic areas are located adjacent to the City’s north side:

1. *Lewis and Clark County Hospital Historic District*, established in 2002
2. *Montana State Fairgrounds Racetrack Historic Site*, established in 2006



Helena's
Historic
Districts

Helena Historic District, established 1972, amended 1990, Rodney Street boundary increase, 1993
South Central Historic District, est. 1986
House of the Good Shepherd, est. 1993
Mount Helena Historic District, est. 1996
West Main Historic District, est. 1996
Lewis and Clark Co. Hospital District, est. 2002
Depot Historic District, established 2004

All boundaries are approximations.

PROPERTIES INDIVIDUALLY LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Forty Helena area properties are also individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see [Appendix](#)). This list includes three cemeteries (Benton Avenue, Home of Peace, and Forestvale), one bridge (Williams Street which was removed in 2009), plus residential, commercial, and public buildings. Additional nominations are pending, and many more places, such as Helena’s elementary schools, are eligible for listing.

HISTORIC AREAS NOT ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

While not yet listed on the National Register, other historic neighborhoods of the City include the area generally located east of Davis Street and west of Montana Avenue, from the southern City limits northward to Prospect Avenue; the area located south of Lyndale Avenue between Rodney Street and Last Chance Gulch; the area generally

located north of the railroad tracks between Montana Avenue and Lamborn; and a larger portion of the upper west side, south of Knight Street and east of Garfield Street. These areas all have the potential to become designated as historic districts in the future.

PUBLICATIONS

The City of Helena has printed two walking tour brochures and several publications about Helena's early development and design:

Design Guidelines for Improvements in the Downtown Helena Historic District

Design Guidelines for Helena's Historic Neighborhoods

The Heart of Helena: A Historical Overview

The Heart of Helena: A Historical Tour (Walking tour brochure)

A Walking Tour of Helena's Historic Courthouse Square and Central Neighborhood (Walking tour brochure)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ISSUES

Prehistoric and historic resources affect our understanding of, and connection to, the land. Protection of historic and prehistoric resources should be encouraged by reasonable mitigation, including education, identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment.

Inventories of historic and prehistoric resources can be used to carefully consider the effects that developments have on historic and prehistoric resources. Motorized and non-motorized transportation improvements can be compatible with cultural resources. Existing housing stock can be preserved, rehabilitated, and redeveloped with special attention to historic structures and historic areas. Protected historic areas can present an economic opportunity through heritage or cultural tourism and can aid economic development.

Potential solutions include education and economic, regulatory, restoration, and public support. The Historic Preservation Commission and other similar organizations can provide beneficial assistance.

While the existing historic preservation programs are important as initial actions, more could be done to include considerations on the part of citizens and local government to maintain the integrity of the City's cultural resources. Demolition has taken its toll on historic places outside of recognized historic districts; alterations and new construction have also affected the appearance of historic areas. Because National Register listing is complex and expensive, linking protection solely to Register sites constrains swift action. State legislation supporting local recognition and protection of "heritage tourism resources" offers accelerated means of listing properties and a rationale for establishing some form of design review for historic areas. Expansion of areas protected by review is desirable and this source of authority should be examined.

The City has ownership in several historic buildings that are individually listed on the

National Register, including the Civic Center, Grand Street Theater building, and the City-County Building. Each contributes substantially to downtown's historic integrity. As with ownership of any property, ongoing maintenance has been required, and the City has continued to maintain these historic structures using a variety of funding sources.

If Helena is to retain its considerable historic reserves, they must be protected and maintained. Demolition, sometimes with new development, has taken its toll on hundreds of historic Helena buildings—particularly during the Urban Renewal program of the 1960s and 1970s and prior to the 1992 adoption of the City's demolition review ordinance. Linking the statute to the National Register is limiting, with gaps in the coverage on the west side and a large area of historic homes not yet recognized east of downtown and the courthouse area. This ordinance could be revisited to help it become more effective; some efficiencies in process could be examined; and replacement designs could be addressed if demolition is approved.

It continues to be beneficial to the community to promote the preservation of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, objects, buildings, and historic districts by addressing historic preservation issues at the local level and integrating them into local, state, and federal planning and decision-making processes. State legislation supporting local recognition and protection of "heritage tourism resources" offers accelerated means of listing properties and a rationale for establishing some form of design review for historic areas.

Options to address some of these issues include:

- continuing public outreach by providing information, advice, and guidance to property owners for restoration, rehabilitation, landscaping, or maintenance of historic and potentially historic buildings or structures;
- providing design criteria for historic properties, historic districts, and potentially eligible historic districts prior to strengthening and implementing the existing voluntary design guidelines;
- developing additional incentives to support the use and reuse of existing historic structures through maintenance, conservation, and rehabilitation which may include measures such as business improvement districts, tax increment financing districts, zoning, and neighborhood planning.
- preserving, rehabilitating, and developing the existing housing stock with special attention to historic structures and historic areas;
- continuing to maintain City-owned historic public buildings as part of an overall maintenance program in a manner consistent with retaining the buildings' historic integrity; and,
- adopting a more effective demolition review ordinance. See [Appendix](#) of this document for more information on demolition review.

Some historic preservation issues and programs that could address them are also included in a table in [Appendix](#) of this document.

THE ARTS

HELENA'S VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS HISTORY

Entertainment on the frontier ranged from the raucous and bawdy to the elevated classics; from globally recognized operatic productions to the saloon follies. Helena's arts offerings followed the pattern, but the community's wealth and intellectual intensity allowed for good quality participation in the arts throughout the decades. Since Helena's gold-camp era, several theaters were usually in simultaneous operation, offering vaudeville and other popular professional productions as well as community theater, where various organizations provided an outlet for amateur thespians almost continuously.

Intellectual and enthusiast clubs abounded. For example, the Current Topics Club, a women's organization, endured for more than 50 years as a public provider of opinions and facts on current events. Mark Twain and Sarah Bernhardt were among the most remembered celebrities featured by Ming's Opera House, a long-standing establishment, the stage of which still exists in a building on Jackson Street. The Ming's successor in prominence was the Marlow Theater, a Gibraltar-like edifice downtown that maneuvered through entertainment's transitions only to fall to Urban Renewal in later years.

The advent of moving pictures and, to a greater degree, television changed the theater's role forever. Myrna Loy, born in nearby Radersburg, had her stage debut at the age of twelve at Helena's Marlow Theater before becoming a famous screen actor in more than 130 films. Gary Cooper, born in Helena in 1901, went on to star in more than 100 movies and won two Oscars for his work. John Philip Sousa and his marching band performed here in 1921, as did cowboy actor Gene Autry (date unknown).

The City's rail line brought many acts through on tour, including not only entertainment, but also lectures on topics of the day. Local theatric productions established roots that ultimately sustained the current Myrna Loy Center for the Performing Arts, the Grand Street Community Theater, and the active Civic Center programs. Helena supports a rich variety of productions including children's theater, national touring groups, a symphony, and innovative and provocative stage plays. Also active are the educational theater programs of Carroll College and the local elementary and secondary schools.

The list of musical venues and productions referenced in early accounts is extensive, ranging from small enthusiast groups to City-wide bands, among them the Capital Band, still performing today. Local instructors, whether in piano, violin, or boys' band, enjoyed special recognition in the community and were sustained by an eager patronage. Beginning in 1930, the Helena Symphony has enraptured audiences with classical pieces, often joined by community choral and other vocal groups exhibiting the best in musical performances, which are joined, in turn, by church-sponsored performances of high quality.

Helena has a multitude of performing arts with five theater companies (including Carroll College) and five dance companies providing variety for audiences. Numerous music organizations host live performances ranging from classical to folk, jazz, bluegrass, blues, rock and roll, and punk. Musical events, such as the Mount Helena Music festival, Symphony Under the Stars, and dance performances are long-standing, regular features of Helena's cultural scene. The Symphony under the Stars concert alone attracts about 10,000 people.

Artists such as Charlie Russell worked in Helena in the early years, and a strong visual tradition developed in the City in the mid-twentieth century. The Archie Bray Foundation, built on the grounds of a historic brickyard, became internationally known for the production of ceramic arts. A large number of painters of regional and national reputation have studios in the City, and a major national arts event, the *Western Rendezvous of Art*, takes place here annually. A popular *Artwalk* event highlights the offerings of artists in Helena's downtown, a venue for many artistic productions.

The Helena area is home to seven museums featuring history and a strong community of artists. The fall and spring art walks each bring several thousand people to downtown galleries and businesses. Many annual events are significant fundraisers for the nonprofit organizations that host them, such as the Western Rendezvous of Art and Festival of Trees. Attendance information should be documented to more accurately verify the economic benefit to the community.

Montana Arts Council's study, *The Role of the Nonprofit Arts in Montana's Economy: Executive Summary and Key Findings*, concluded that the multiple impacts of the arts are a critical component of Montana's economy. The study indicates Helena's economic impact from the arts is a close second to Billings' in terms of total impact while generating the same amount of tax revenue. The nonprofit arts in Helena have a \$15.7 million dollar impact, generating \$2.5 million in tax revenue, 361 jobs, \$4.0 million in operating budgets, and 4,300 volunteer hours.

The Montana Arts Council recently printed the results of an economic impact study of artists' sales throughout the state. Lewis and Clark County is the fifth highest Montana county for economic impact contributed by artists, following (in order) Gallatin, Missoula, Flathead, and Park Counties, showing the important potential of cultural tourism.

Total Economic Impacts of Artists' Sales

County	Sales	Output	Jobs
Broadwater	\$335,489	\$436,807	13.7
Jefferson	\$1,340,873	\$1,773,975	34.3
Lewis and Clark	\$9,924,003	\$13,546,265	254.7
Montana Total	\$164,368,792	\$233,403,685	4,273

Source: "Montana the Land of Creativity" Highlights from The Economic Impact of Montana Artists Study, released March 2005; Research conducted by The Center for Economic Research, Montana State University - Billings; Commissioned by the State of Montana Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity and the Montana Arts Council

The Helena area receives significant economic benefits from the arts. Although the table above does not specifically identify Helena, the City itself has a substantial artist population that contributes economically to the total economic figures for Lewis and Clark County. The role the arts play in the local economy continues to come to the forefront with the recent branding discussions.

The Travel Industry Association of America states that cultural tourists spend 45% more than other tourists. Reaffirming the value the arts have with the economy, Helena has recently taken the moniker of the “The Best Little Art Town.” (Helena received national recognition in the 2005 book by John Villani, *The 100 Best Art Towns in America*,” along with such notable art towns as Park City, Utah; Aspen and Telluride, Colorado; and Taos and Santa Fe; New Mexico. Other towns in Montana included Big Fork, Bozeman, Missoula, and Red Lodge.) In 2007 the City began a process to clarify Helena’s unique identity that would set the community apart from the many other arts locations (“branding”). Helena’s celebration of the arts is displayed in the biannual “Best Little Arts Town” publication that began in 2005.

PUBLIC ART

Programs

The City established its public art program in 1998, affirming that public art contributes directly to the quality of life in Helena by enhancing the image of the community and instilling a concern for beauty and good design. The Helena Public Art Committee (HPAC) is responsible for any visual work of art displayed on an on-going basis on the interior or exterior of any City-owned facility; on any City-owned property; and on non-City property if the work of art is installed or financed, either wholly or in part, with City funds, City-received donations, or grants procured by the City.

The HPAC is responsible for acquiring and placing publicly-owned or financed public art; securing additional funding for art acquisition, and maintenance of existing works; and documenting the location and history of public art pieces in the Helena area. Committee members are chosen for three-year terms based on their experience and their ability to represent artists and/or arts organizations, City staff, and the City Commission.

The public art program has begun to expand from art pieces at specific locations to include programs. The successful family-oriented *Chalk Up Helena!* (sidewalk chalk art) began in 2008 with plans to continue annually. An annual *Open Studios Tour* program, giving the public an opportunity to visit artists in their studios, began in 2009. A community-wide art show and mural program are being explored. The expansion of the City’s outdoor public art program is intended to increase public awareness, support sense of place, and recognize the economic benefits derived from these ventures.

Mural and Sculpture Installations

In 2000, a City-wide inventory and assessment of the seven City-owned sculptures determined their condition and future maintenance needs. Downtown sculptures

include *The Bullwacker*, *The Prospectors*, *Extra! Extra! Helena Gateway*, *Confederate Fountain*, and the *Bison* at the Library. The *Standing Stones of Lazy Green* is located on Helena Avenue by Helena Middle School. The assessment revealed the sculptures ranged in condition from poor to good, which resulted in establishing an annual maintenance endowment fund for the sculptures.

Since then, important maintenance has been completed for *The Prospectors*, *Bullwacker*, and *Bison*. *The Womens Mural* has been refurbished, and the *George Washington* sculpture was repaired and reinstalled inside the County Courthouse as a cooperative project with the County. In 2007, the Public Art Committee commissioned the installation of a new piece, *All of the Above, None of the Above*, located in Pioneer-Heritage Park downtown. Paintings by Bob Morgan and John W. Beauchamp are located in the City-County Building, and a mural is located in the 6th Ave. parking garage.

In 2010 *Take It Easy* (photo below) was installed in Helena's first traffic circle, and a new mural with Helena icons was installed in the Memorial Park Bandshell.



The 2009-2010 *Guide to the Arts in Helena, Montana* publication, originally named the “Best Little Art Town” publication, identifies 53 pieces of public art located throughout the City. These locations are shown on the public art maps in this booklet.

Public Art Issues

Helena has long had the nick name *Queen City of the Rockies*, which could direct attention to how the community looks for the future. Certainly public art and even

building design can be considered to be visual art. Helena's public art is currently limited to three murals and several sculptures, but these offerings could be greatly expanded. Expansion would be consistent with being "The Best Little Art Town," which implies the City would have a significant public art element and would lend support to its arts identity.

Public art should be actively integrated into the internal and external built environment through the City's Capital Improvement Program and other building activities. Options for new public art installations include, but are not limited to, installations in traffic circles, murals, and other art forms in and around public buildings. Art can be infrastructure-oriented, functional, realistic, abstract, or whimsical. Community art projects can be developed by community members and can address social issues for a diverse public.

Public art considerations may also be incorporated in subdivision and zoning requirements. For example, public art could be installed at an entrance to a subdivision or designed into landscaped areas. The Public Art Committee's recommendations can encourage the use of public art to create and define civic and public spaces.

In addition to benefits related to cultural tourism and economic development, public art opportunities can also help address social and cultural issues in the community. As with many community amenities, funding sources for new installations and their long-term maintenance should be identified and obtained. Potential new public art locations have been identified, and additional installations can be pursued in the future as funding becomes available. Additional funding could be pursued, including establishing a percent for art program similar to Missoula, the State of Montana, and other cities across the nation. Provisions for long-term maintenance should also be included with new installations.

RECREATION

In addition to its history and arts offerings, Helena is surrounded by forested mountains ideal for many recreational uses such as hiking, mountain biking, camping, hunting, skiing, archery, trap shooting, and bird watching. It is located close to rivers and lakes for active water activities, such as fishing, boating, and ice skating and is home to many sports tournaments throughout the year. The many recreational offerings contribute not only to the quality of life but also to the local economy, with approximately \$130.00/day per person for food, lodging, and miscellaneous purchases (Helena Chamber of Commerce estimate).

The Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds is home to the Last Chance Stampede and Rodeo, featuring a variety of exhibits including animals raised by Helena area youth, art, photography, baking, flower arrangements, and locally grown vegetables. A new 36,000 square-foot exhibit hall was recently constructed at the County Fairgrounds and is available for a variety of cultural venues.

At more than 400 miles, the Race to the Sky sled-dog race is the longest in the lower 48 states and an annual Helena event. Other annual events include the high schools' Vigilante Day parade, Memorial Day weekend old car parade, and the Last Chance Stampede parade, among others. The yearly Governors Cup race through Helena and others have been increasing numbers of participants each year and attract City, state, U.S., and international runners. These events are just a few of the many offerings that provide opportunities for the Helena community to gather and celebrate its history and culture.

Farmers Market is located downtown from May-October providing a venue for local farmers, gardeners, and craftspersons to display and sell their wares. Some City recreational locations are also used for the performing arts, serving visitors and residents alike. The downtown walking mall is home to craft fairs and music festivals, including Alive at Five from May-September. The summer Trolley-to-Trails program provides transportation from downtown to various trailheads around town.

FACILITIES

The City partners with community organizations to help provide a variety of recreational opportunities, through facilities and programs for all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. There are outdoor recreational facilities for baseball, golf, ice skating, skateboarding, soccer, softball, swimming, and tennis, and approximately 50 miles of hiking trails, which include some trails that can also be used for mountain biking.

In addition to the City's Bill Roberts golf course, two other golf courses are also located in the vicinity. Statewide tournaments are hosted here, including baseball, basketball, golf, gymnastics, softball, soccer, swimming, and tennis. Minor league baseball and hockey teams also call Helena home.

The municipal swimming pool has recently been renovated, and a new water park has been constructed. The facility has been renamed *Last Chance Splash* Water Park and Pool.

Centennial Park is being rebuilt. Phase I construction includes necessary infrastructure improvements along with a softball complex, expanded skate park, trails and green space, and increased parking. Future phases (dependent upon funding) will include a climbing area, BMX track, dog park, playground, picnic shelter, and basketball courts.

Construction for the development of six neighborhood parks began in 2009 and will be completed in the spring of 2010. As part of development, earthwork and irrigation systems were installed in Beltview Park and in parks located in the Northgate, Pioneer Village, Reber, Skelton, and Sleeping Giant subdivisions. Phase II amenities will be developed in the future with assistance from the respective neighborhoods.

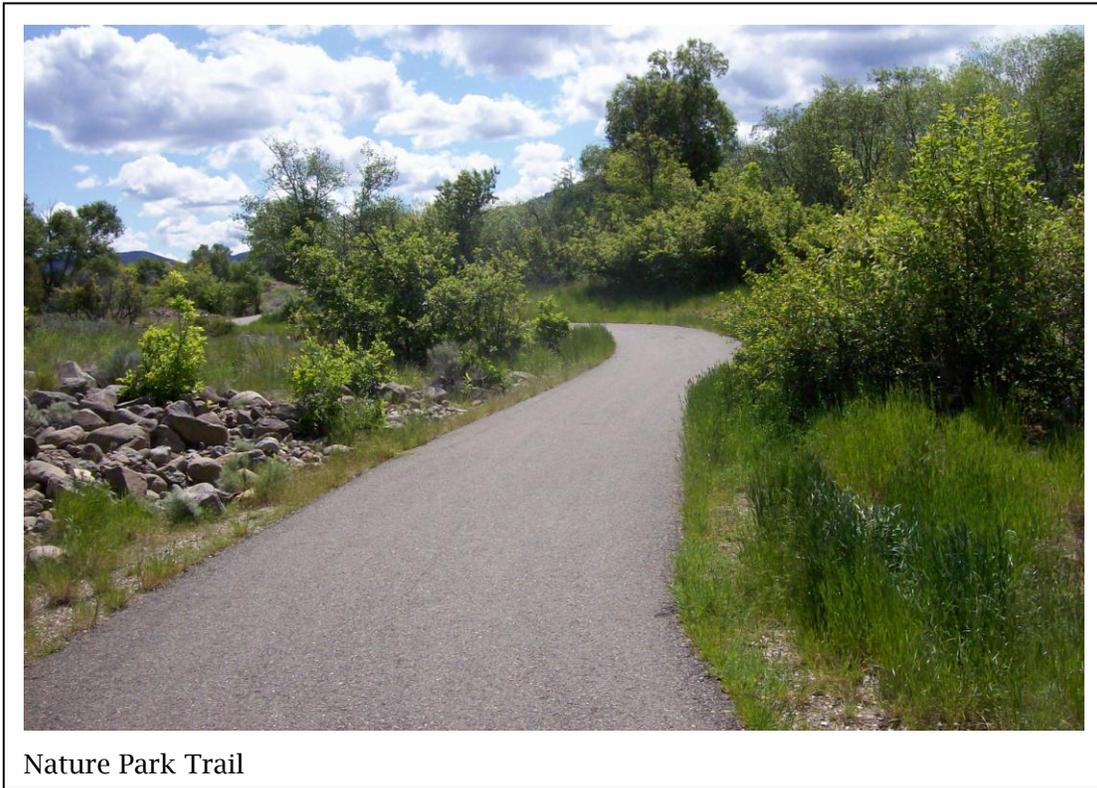
An update of the 1998 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan will be completed in 2010. The updated plan will assess community recreational needs for various sectors of the population. That update will also provide an opportunity to document cultural

resources on open-space lands and identify preservation options, mitigation measures, and interpretive opportunities.

PROGRAMS

The City currently provides a limited number of public recreational programs for children and adults: tennis, swimming, and golf lessons; and the Kay's Kids summer recreation program at some of the City parks.

A multitude of organizations carries out a variety of recreational and cultural activities. The City's parks are used for special events, fundraising activities, community gardens, and races. In addition to the City's programs, many private organizations also provide youth recreation programs. See [Appendix](#) of this document for some of these recreational programs.



The location of the various recreation facilities, including trails, is shown on the parks and trails map.

RECREATION ISSUES

At the present time, the City offers some recreational programs that are supplemented by other organizations in the community. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Update identifies some of the gaps and potential services and opportunities in providing a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

It continues to be a challenge to find the necessary funds to maintain the public's ever-expanding desire for more recreational services and facilities. However, providing sufficient maintenance affects the City's ability to attract the facility users (particularly sports), which then affects the local economy as a form of cultural tourism. Partnering with community organizations can help share the cost of maintaining playing and practice fields, trails, and other recreational facilities.

Although there are economic benefits from encouraging use of Helena's recreational resources, increased use could also be detrimental to those very resources. Protecting the natural areas, such as Helena's open spaces and surrounding mountains and water ways and even some wetlands, will also be important to retain their recreational value through proper management. Therefore, management decisions should also consider the appropriate use of environmentally sensitive areas to protect their integrity. It would be beneficial to develop and implement an overall formal management strategy that includes a prioritized urban forestry program.

The health of the surrounding forests has recently come to the forefront with concerns related to fire danger and pine beetle-killed trees in the wildland-urban interface. As a result, managing the surrounding forests has become a multi-jurisdictional issue affecting more than just recreational values.

Additional recreation information is included in the [PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES](#) chapter.

EDUCATION

A wealth of classes is offered to the community in music, theater, dance, general technical education, literature, martial arts, sports, arts and crafts, specialized business and industry training, professional and personal development, and many other subjects related to the area's recreational opportunities.

Helena's Central School, initially constructed in 1875, was rebuilt with its current building in 1915 and expanded six years later as Montana's first elementary school. In addition to the K-12 public school system with an alternative high school and several private schools, the City also has two higher education facilities: Carroll College, a four-year, private, liberal arts college with music, theater, and visual art programs; and the University of Montana—Helena, with one-, two- and four-year degree and certificate programs, which has recently begun to expand its art offerings to the community.

Education opportunities for visual arts are available through the Helena School District's adult learning center, the Holter Museum of Art, the Archie Bray Foundation, the Clay Arts Guild, the Creation Arts Center, ExplorationWorks, and the Lewis and Clark County Library. Instruction for the performing arts is available through ten different dance companies, five music organizations plus individual instructors, and Grand Street Theater's summer program.

History education is provided by the Montana Historical Society, the Helena/Lewis and Clark County Historic Preservation program, and the Lewis and Clark County Historical Society. Recreational instruction is provided for archery, baseball, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, and tennis.

The Lewis and Clark County Library, the oldest library in Montana, was established in Helena in 1868 and has been in several locations over time. In 1974, the voters of Lewis and Clark County approved a \$1.8 million bond issue to construct a new building, which became a joint City/County library. The new facility, completed in 1976, was the first building specifically built to house a library and was designed with growth and expansion in mind. Today, the Lewis and Clark Library has more than 115,000 volumes, including books, records, magazines, and video and audio materials. Nearly 50,000 people are served through the main library in Helena and the branches in East Helena, Augusta, and Lincoln.

The newly created Helena Institute will establish a new educational element by featuring hands-on learning opportunities through coordination and marketing for a variety of organizations. The Institute is intended to show a direct cultural relationship to the tourism industry as a form of economic development through cultural tourism.

The Helena Indian Alliance, a private organization dedicated to the education, cultural preservation, and health care of Native Americans, also organizes an annual Pow Wow to celebrate Indian heritage.

CULTURAL ISSUES

Communities often showcase their cultural heritage with a local historical society or museum. Although the Montana Historical Society Museum is located in Helena, there is a fledgling local historical society, but no local historical museum. There are local historical programs conducted by the state at their buildings and collections of local history there, but only occasional local history displays. Without these basic institutions, prospects for a complete cultural heritage program continue to be limited.

From 1991 to 1994 the City participated in a cultural planning process that identified numerous community cultural organizations that contribute to the cultural fabric of the City, including live theater, music, dance, visual arts and galleries, recreation, unique Helena events, libraries, museums, and historic organizations. Helena is a culturally vibrant city with more than 35 arts, cultural, and recreation organizations. That vibrancy is supported as nonprofit organizations work with City departments and local businesses.

Community priorities and recommendations identified with the earlier cultural planning process continue to be relevant today: publicity, promotion, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Issues continue to focus on competition for resources—funds, facilities, audience and volunteers. With numerous organizations using many of the same facilities, developing a community calendar for scheduling events could be beneficial.

Discussions with the 2008 Cultural focus group identified some groups who are not currently served in the community, including those on a low income; fixed-income retirees; minority cultural and ethnic groups; and children. This focus group noted the current offerings should be reviewed for ways to improve the availability and opportunities for participation. Cultural and social diversity is an essential element of a healthy, pluralistic community, can strengthen the City's cultural life, and can provide new opportunities for multi-generational interaction.

This infusion of the richness of diversity into the City's cultural work could be a means for strengthening Helena's cultural life.

A strong cultural and artistic community is a magnet for economic growth and stability. The economic benefits derived from Helena's many cultural activities are acknowledged, but have not been fully evaluated. Conducting an impact study of the community's widely-defined culture could provide a benefit for future funding opportunities and could assist the City in the area of economic development. Individual artists are important producers of goods and services in every cultural economy. Cultural goods are produced, small businesses are started, and innovative design ideas enter into the market place through the work of individual artists.

Governmental actions can protect and enhance Helena's cultural life, thereby enabling citizens to explore our cultural heritage and institutions. Informing and educating the public about public art and historic preservation can encourage community pride and quality design. Dynamic public policy, supportive funding, and organizational framework are needed to build a healthy environment for Helena's cultural growth. Some options that have been identified to address these issues include: continuing public outreach, expanding existing programs, and exploring and pursuing mutually beneficial efforts for coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

CULTURAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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:

1. Improve accessibility to cultural opportunities for all the citizens of the community.
2. Continue to educate the public about the City's cultural programs and opportunities.
3. 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.

4. Pursue opportunities for coordination and collaboration of the City's cultural resource programs with other City programs and projects, and with other community organizations.
5. 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.
6. Continue to promote the preservation of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, objects, buildings and historic districts.
7. Address historic preservation issues at the local level and integrate them into planning and decision-making processes by considering how developments affect historic and prehistoric resources.
8. Support the economic and social vitality of historic districts by measures such as business improvement districts, tax increment financing districts, zoning, and neighborhood planning.
9. Expand and maintain the City's existing public art collection so that it supports its identity as "The Best Little Art Town."
10. Actively coordinate with the City's Capital Improvement Program and other building activities to ensure that works of art are installed and maintained to create and define civic and public spaces.
11. Encourage a variety of recreational opportunities for all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.
12. Manage recreational use to protect the integrity of environmentally sensitive areas.
13. 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.
14. Analyze opportunities for increasing City-supported recreation programs and services.