

## Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

August 5, 2021

**1. Day-Time Watering** – There are times that watering during the day cannot be avoided, here are just a couple scenarios:

- Within the City of Billings Park inventory, there are several manually irrigated parks that require staff to install and remove the sprinklers. These systems can only operate during the day when staff is present. Examples would be Millice, Grandview and Ponderosa. This is also the case on some other city owned properties where underground sprinklers do not exist.
- When parks are being established or repaired either from sod or seed irrigation during the heat of the day is crucial to properly establish the turf.
- When staff is performing a check of the irrigation system to either adjust sprinkler head rotation, repair a broken head, or change a clogged nozzle.

**2. BUILD Grant Update** - The City of Billings was awarded a BUILD grant in September of 2020. To keep the City Council updated on activities and milestones, this update will be provided monthly. Information will be provided by the Public Works Engineering Division, Planning Division and City Administration. To provide as much information on the BUILD grant process, staff has developed a website to house information. This website is still in development and information will be continually added as available if please check back for updated material. [BUILD Grant](#)

- The draft agreement template has been received by the city. This agreement will be developed with input from the City and FHWA in the next few months. Note: The agreement cannot be submitted until the construction documents are ready. This means the city will need to complete the right-of-way purchase, environmental documents and final construction documents before the agreement is sent to Federal Highways (FHWA) for its review. It is anticipated that the FHWA review and signing could take up to 6-months. This tentatively puts an executed agreement to April 2022; however, staff is doing everything possible to expedite any requirement. Once the city receives the executed agreement, the project can be bid. These tentative dates do not take in account the potential for some back and forth between the city and FHWA on the final agreement.
- There are three active Engineering items occurring.
  - o Draft environmental document and resource reports were submitted to FHWA on 6/22/21. The report consisted of the noise determination memo, biological resources review, cultural resources review, air quality review, indirect and cumulative effects analysis, and aquatic resources report. FHWA comments were received 7/6/21. Our consultant is currently working through the edits and revising the resource reports based on FHWA comments. The City is in the process of providing additional documentation to the consultant to address comments related to MS4 compliance,

Section 4(f) recreational properties, potential wetland impacts, and adjacent developments.

- o Geotechnical borings were completed on the Skyline Trail portion of the project the week of July 19th. The geotechnical engineer is analyzing the borings and recommendations will be incorporated into the final design of the Skyline Trail.
- o One of the property owners along the Inner Belt Loop recently modified property lines with a new Certificate of Survey. These changes are being addressed in the final appraisals for the project and City Staff is working with the appraiser to make the required changes. The third-party ROW review appraisals are mostly complete but are being updated to incorporate the new parcel boundary changes before final completion.
- o Related to the road design; the consultant has added the federal requirements into the bidding documents that will be sent to FHWA for a cursory review for compliance.
- o City staff met with several of the individual landowners to discuss the project and potential development of their property and is reaching out to other property owners to schedule meetings.
- Planning continues to work on setting up the numerous progress reports that will be required FHWA to administer the grant.
- City staff and staff from FHWA and MDT continue to meet regularly or stay in contact as the grant process moves forward.

Next steps: Continue initial review of the agreement, continue right-of-way procurement and environmental work. Staff will continue with regular meetings and correspondence with our FHWA representative. BUILD website will be continually updated with information as it is available.

- 3. Certified Taxable Value** - The City of Billings received its Certified Taxable Value this week from the Department of Revenue. The Certified Value amount drives tax revenue for the City of Billings and its three Tax Increment Districts. For the FY22 budget we assumed an increase of 4.5%. The actual increase in Certified Value for FY22 is 4.84%. This means the City should receive \$59,600 more in its tax supported funds over what was budgeted (General, Public Safety, Library, and Transit). The City's three Tax Increment Districts also saw increases in value, which will mean greater tax revenue within those districts compared to what was budgeted. The following chart depicts the changes in value:

|  | <b>FY2021<br/>Taxable<br/>Value</b> | <b>FY2022<br/>Taxable<br/>Value</b> | <b>Percentage<br/>Increase</b> | <b>Additional Tax<br/>Revenue Over<br/>Budgeted<br/>Amount</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>City of Billings (less increment)</b> | 207,822,943                         | 217,874,388                         | 4.84%                          | \$ 59,600  |
| <b>Downtown Tax Increment</b>            | 3,551,399                           | 4,080,439                           | 14.90%                         | \$ 264,000   |
| <b>East Tax Increment</b>                | 1,079,150                           | 1,125,784                           | 4.32%                          | \$ 50,000  |
| <b>South Tax Increment</b>               | 5,237,974                           | 5,554,628                           | 6.05%                          | \$ 247,000   |

- 4. Marijuana Regulations** – Tuesday, the Yellowstone County Commissioners voted to place the 3% local option marijuana retail tax on this fall's ballot. If a simple majority of county residents say yes – the city is expected to receive between \$250k - \$350k annually by 2025 (this estimate is based on the State of Montana assumptions of marijuana sales across Montana and an assumption that Yellowstone County would represent between 15%-20% of all sales). Though the revenue will be appreciated, we do not believe it will cover the increased costs we expect to experience throughout the criminal justice, mental health, social services the city supports.

The Commissioners voted down (1-1) an opportunity for citizens to reconsider recreational marijuana legalization.

Last night our Marijuana Regulation Working Group, along with representatives from Substance Abuse Connect spent two (2) hours discussing effective local government regulations with Ben Cort. Ben is an expert in this field from CO. Ben will be meeting this afternoon with approximately 75 community leaders at the Library Community Room.

- 5. Wading Pool Closures** – Due to a shortage of lifeguards in August, the wading pools at Pioneer and Hawthorne will be open through Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup> and will close for the season on the 13<sup>th</sup>. We plan to keep the spray grounds at South, Terry, Highlands, Castle Rock and North open through the Labor Day weekend. The spray grounds are open from 10 am to 8 pm.
- 6. American Rescue Plan Act** – Please see the attached Introduction of the American Rescue Plan Act. This is the presentation we presented to the Council last month. As questions continue to grow in the community regarding ARPA – I thought the slide deck is a good refresher. Nothing substantial has changed.
- 7. Semi-Annual Reports** – The semi-annual reports for Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, Planning & Community Services and Public Works are attached. As we continue to analyze priorities and maximize resources, I have shifted away from quarterly reports to two, semi-annual reports.
- 8. Public Safety Mill Levy Presentations**
- Chief St John and Chief Valdez presented to the Democratic Study Group Wednesday.

**Have a wonderful weekend!**

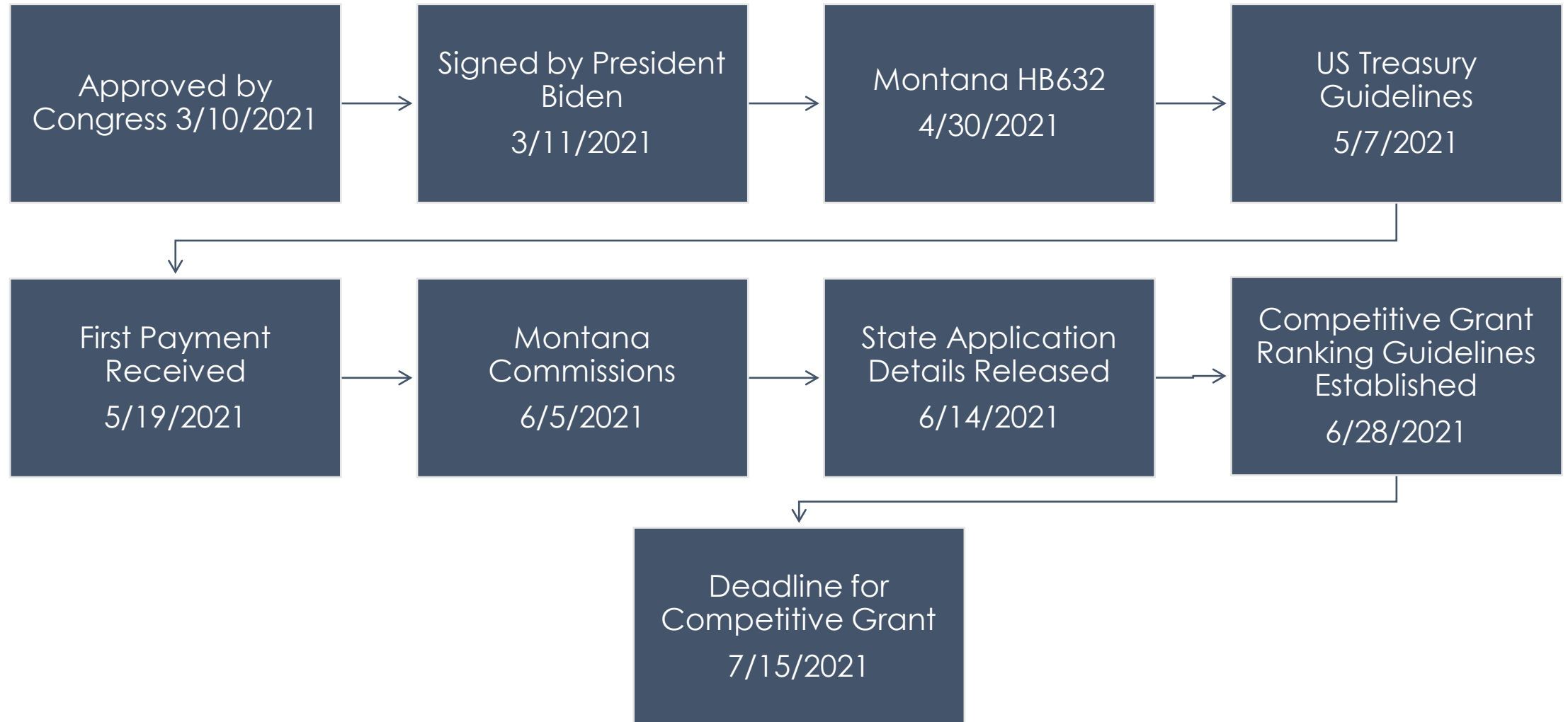




American Rescue Plan Act



# ARPA Timeline



# Funding Sources



## Federal Allocation

Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

\$15,940,314

## State Grants

Minimum Allocation Grant

\$15,607,145

Competitive Grant

Up to \$25M per project





# American Rescue Plan Act

\$15,940,314

Revenue Loss  
Replacement

Infrastructure

Public Health  
Expenditures

Economic  
Impact  
Programs

Premium Pay  
for Essential  
Workers



# Revenue Loss Calculation

\$7,394,678

- ✓ Calendar Year 2020 Amount
- ✓ Growth Rate per calculation: 4.1%
- ✓ Revenue Loss due to COVID19: 3.6%
- ✓ No Federal Grants, Bonds, Utilities





# Eligible Uses for Revenue Loss Funds



# Funding Sources



| Federal Allocation          | State Grants             |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Local Fiscal Recovery Funds | Minimum Allocation Grant |
| \$15,940,314                | \$15,607,145             |
|                             | Competitive Grant        |
|                             | Up to \$25M per project  |



# Minimum Allocation Grant



\$15,607,145



Fund match requirement

- Lesser of \$3.9M or a one-to-one match per application



Application opens July 15th



Final Deadline January 1, 2023

# Funding Sources

## Competitive State Grant



| Federal Allocation   | State Grants   |
|--|--|
| <p data-bbox="308 1115 843 1243">Local Fiscal Recovery Funds</p> <p data-bbox="410 1279 741 1343">\$15,940,314</p> | <p data-bbox="978 1115 1640 1165">Minimum Allocation Grant</p> <p data-bbox="1156 1279 1488 1343">\$15,607,145</p> <p data-bbox="1778 1115 2262 1165">Competitive Grant</p> <p data-bbox="1709 1279 2321 1343">Up to \$25M per project</p> |



# Eligible Water & Sewer Infrastructure Projects



## Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

**Building/upgrading facilities**

**Transmission & distribution system**

**Storage systems**

**Replacement of lead service lines**

## Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

**Wastewater treatment**

**Wastewater collection system**

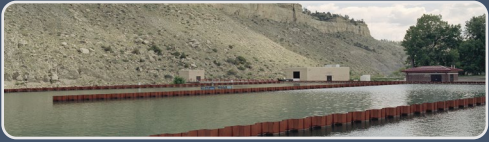
**Water conservation**

**Managing & Treating stormwater**

# Competitive State Grant



Applications due by 7/15/21 for first round



Covered period 3/3/21 – 12/31/26



Obligated by 12/31/24



| Ranking Categories | Points Available |
|--------------------|------------------|
| DWSRF or CWSRF     | 420              |
| Readiness          | 80               |
| Affordability      | 50               |
| Match              | 50               |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>600</b>       |



# Competitive State Grant Water Project Rankings



| Water Project Ranking                            | Points     |
|--|------------|
| <b>Documented health risks</b>                   | <b>180</b> |
| Acute health risks                               | 120        |
| Non-acute health risks                           | 60         |
| <b>Potential health risks</b>                    | <b>80</b>  |
| Microbiological & nitrate health risks           | 50         |
| Chemical contaminant health risks                | 30         |
| <b>Compliance</b>                                | <b>50</b>  |
| Proactive Compliance Measures                    | 50         |
| Project addresses a formal enforcement action    | 25         |
| <b>Consolidation or creation of a new system</b> | <b>30</b>  |
| <b>Conservation</b>                              | <b>80</b>  |
| Water use efficiency                             | 30         |
| Water meters                                     | 20         |
| Energy efficiency                                | 30         |
| <b>Total Points in DWSRF</b>                     | <b>420</b> |



# Competitive State Grant Sewer Project Rankings



| Sewer Project Ranking  | Points     |
|--|------------|
| <b>Public health and water quality</b>                           | <b>250</b> |
| Project protects public health                                   | 75         |
| Project reduces toxic effects                                    | 25         |
| Project reduces sediment   | 25         |
| Project reduces nutrients  | 25         |
| Project complies with secondary standards                        | 25         |
| Project helps meet a TMDL  | 50         |
| Project addresses formal enforcement action                      | 25         |
| <b>Effectiveness in improving water quality or public health</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Eliminate health hazards or restore beneficial uses              | 100        |
| Improve but not fully restore                                    | 50         |
| May or may not improve water quality                             | 25         |
| <b>Point source projects OR</b>                                  | <b>70</b>  |
| Capacity   | 10         |
| Reliability or obsolescence                                      | 20         |
| Beneficial use   | 20         |
| Water conservation   | 10         |
| Energy Conservation  | 10         |
| <b>Total Points in CWSRF</b>                                     | <b>420</b> |

# Competitive Grants Other Ranking Criteria

| City Match                               | Points |
|--|--------|
| < of 1:1 Match or % of the Local ARPA \$ | 50     |
| 25% = \$7,886,865                        |        |
| 50% = \$15,773,730                       |        |
| Max Points                               | 50     |

| Readiness to Proceed                                     | Points |
|--|--------|
| Engineer has been formally hired for planning and design | 10     |
| In planning document                                     | 10     |
| All other project funding in place                       | 10     |
| Final plan and specs have been approved                  | 20     |
| Construction will begin within next 24 months            | 30     |
| Max Points   | 80     |



| Affordability: Expected average household combined water & sewer rates, including debt retirement and O&M are: | Points |
|--|--------|
| > 3.5% of MHI  | 50     |
| 2.6% and 3.5% of MHI   | 25     |
| 1.1% and 2.5% of MHI   | 15     |
| < 1.1% of MHI  | 10     |
| Max Points   | 50     |

# Competitive Grant Projects - \$42.3M

| Expense Types      | West End Plant | West End Distribution | 2021 Water Rehab | 2022 Water Rehab | Staples Reservoir | Water Storage Improvements Zone 1 | Zone 6 Reservoir and Redundant Line | Influent Lift Station |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Project Costs      | \$72,000,000   | \$ 5,000,000          | \$ 4,000,000     | \$ 3,600,000     | \$ 4,000,000      | \$ 3,600,000                      | \$ 9,000,000                        | \$ 5,400,000          |
| Application Amount | \$25,000,000   | \$ 2,500,000          | \$ 2,000,000     | \$ 1,800,000     | \$ 2,000,000      | \$ 1,800,000                      | \$ 4,500,000                        | \$ 2,700,000          |
| City Match         | \$47,000,000   | \$ 2,500,000          | \$ 2,000,000     | \$ 1,800,000     | \$ 2,000,000      | \$ 1,800,000                      | \$ 4,000,000                        | \$ 2,700,000          |
| Points             | 170            | 160                   | 240              | 210              | 180               | 210                               | 210                                 | 365                   |





# Next Steps



7/12/21 - Authorize City to apply for State Competitive Grants



7/15/21 - Competitive Grant Applications due



8/15/21 - DNRC rankings to Commission



1/31/23 -Minimum Allocation Grant applications



Council prioritization of U.S. Treasury Local Fiscal Recovery Funds





Questions?





**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**CC:** Chris Kukulski, City Administrator  
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator  
**From:** Michael Whitaker, Director  
**Date:** July 30th, 2021  
**Re:** 2021 Semi-annual Report

## Recreation Division



### 2021 Summer Activity Guide

Distribution of the 80-page Summer Activity Guide included direct mail to over 9,000 households who have recently utilized the services provided by the Department. In addition to the direct mail, the brochure was inserted in the April issue of Simply Local Magazine. This magazine, which focuses on all things local, delivers over 13,000 copies to local businesses and organizations. Furthermore, we delivered the brochures to all elementary schools in the Billings area. The new Activity Guide features recreation programs that are offered during the months of May through November. Parents were able to register online beginning April 1<sup>st</sup> for all summer activities including our Adventure Camp Series, Pioneer Playhouse, Magic City Summer Camp, our Sports Camp Series, Tennis Instruction, Learn to Swim Instruction, Aquatic Day Camps, and many Special Interest programs. With the momentum we achieve through our summer activities, this summer guide also includes popular programming for the fall including NFL Flag Football, Adult Coed Volleyball, Girls 4-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Basketball, and

Adult Tennis Under the Lights, just to name a few.

## Parks and Recreation Mobile App Launched April 1st

In an effort to enhance and expand our ability to communicate with our current and future customers, the Recreation Division has developed a new mobile app. Having the ability to send notifications to our customers' smartphones will provide a new medium for our staff to communicate in areas such as program updates, registration deadlines, new program development, pool closures, facility and project updates, public events, full-time and temporary employment opportunities, etc. Our ability to bring information directly to our customers' smartphones will only enhance our ability to grow and connect with our community.



## Spring and Summer Recreation Programs

The Recreation Division has finished wrapping up a successful spring recreation season and are halfway through the Summer season. Our Men's and Women's Adult City League Basketball was the main focus for the first quarter of 2021, with 56 teams coming out this year and more than 500 individual players participating. All teams are separated into the appropriate divisions to ensure competitive fairness for everyone. Teams are guaranteed nine regular-season games, so the challenge of scheduling 28 games per week at the local middle schools takes some time.



The Recreation Division tries to make this league as enjoyable as possible by taking on all other facilitation tasks for the participants. Each team's schedule is molded around their personal



preferences with no more than two games in a week. Through our cooperative partnership with School District #2, we are able to utilize all six middle schools on evenings and weekends after all youth sports have completed their programming. Each middle school site is provided a gym supervisor, two scorekeepers, and two qualified referees. All of which are hired by the Recreation Division, with the management, paperwork, scheduling, and timesheets all done by the Recreation Specialists. City League Basketball remains one of the most popular, longest-lasting adult programs that we have at the Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Adult Coed Volleyball League**



The Adult Coed Volleyball League included 24 teams and over 225 participants. Temporary employees who love the game of volleyball (referees, scorekeepers, facility supervisors) assist in helping us provide a quality experience for adults. Through our cooperative partnership with School District #2, this league utilizes Castle Rock Middle School on Sunday afternoons. These teams play in a nine-week regular season and a two-week post-season tournament concluding in May.



### **Youth Tennis Programs**

Our Tennis is Elementary program, offered in conjunction with the United States Tennis Association of Montana, started in 2018 as a new program to introduce children to tennis and keep them active during the offseason. The program was available after-school in three elementary schools (Alkali Creek, Orchard, and Meadowlark) and included a Try Tennis for Free Session at Orchard in January leading up to the start of the program. Three of four class offerings filled to capacity with 65 kids' total. This

program allows elementary students of any grade to learn and experience the fun Tennis has to offer all within an elementary school gym. All equipment needed is provided in partnership with the U.S.T.A. of Montana.



### **Boys 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Basketball**

Due to School District #2 and the Montana High School Association's decision to delay the start of the Boys 4-8th Grade Basketball seasons, we began our season about a month later than normal with the first practice on January 11th. New to the program this year was the opportunity for 6th-8th graders to join our instructional program. With the additional participants, gym space for practices and games became a premium and made it challenging to facilitate week to week. Games kicked off at

Orchard Elementary (4th-6th) and Riverside Middle Schools (7th-8th) on January 30th and included 5 games for each team with the season concluding on February 20th. In total, we had 179 participants that were separated into 26 teams comprised of all 6-area middle schools. 10 teams in the 4th/5th division, 8 in the 6th grade, and 8 in the 7th/8th-grade class. A team of 20 coaches helped with skill instruction and development this year, with an additional staff of 11 people for games that included referees, scorekeepers, gym supervisors, and recreation specialists.

### **Girls 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Volleyball**

Similar to Boys Basketball, the Girls 3-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Volleyball, the season was delayed until February 22<sup>nd</sup> with practice hitting into action at Will James, Castle Rock, and Lewis and Clark middle schools. Once again, 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>-grade instruction was added and provided a logistical challenge with gym space and practice time. After the middle schools made cuts for their teams, the participation numbers grew in great quantities at the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade levels. In all, we have 256 participants led by the instruction of 12 coaches at the three middle schools. On game days, we employ a staff of six people to assist as referees, gym supervisors, and scorekeepers. We currently have 34 teams playing games at Orchard and Riverside on Saturdays. The Girls Volleyball season concluded on April 24<sup>th</sup> with the fifth and final weekend.



### **Adult Soccer**

We ran a successful spring co-ed season from April to the beginning of June. We had 7 teams compete at Amend Park on Sundays for this season. After this season most teams roll right into the summer season which goes through August.



### **American Red Cross First Aid & Babysitter Class**

For the first time, American Red Cross launched their blended learning modules in 2021 for Babysitters Training, First Aid/CPR/AED, and a Lifeguard Certification Class. The blended learning content is done exclusively on a virtual basis using real-life video scenarios, instruction, and missions to safely help people in an emergency situation. After completion of the blended learning content and missions, participants are required to attend a virtual skills classroom session with our American Red Cross certified instructor and complete more real-life scenarios. To earn their certifications, they practiced and demonstrated the skills they had learned with both an in-person and online test. Our Babysitters Training Class had three participants earn their certifications. This blended learning module was used in May when our seasonal staff (lifeguards and camp counselors) become certificated before the start of our 2021 summer camps and the opening of our pools.



### **Adult Keyboarding Class**

This winter we were able to continue offering adult music programming with our Adult Keyboarding class. This six-week class was composed of two sections both tailored around introducing keyboarding skills. This program is successful through our collaboration with the Billings Music Teachers Association who assists in providing enough keyboards to accommodate the class. We will continue to expand our offerings of this class into the spring.

### **Cross Country Ski Trips**

Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup> marked our Cross Country Ski Trip at the Nordic Center in Red Lodge. Eight participants were bussed from our office parking lot at 9:00 am up to Red Lodge for a few hours of skiing. They are provided a short tutorial if they are new to the activity. The group skis for a couple of hours have lunch and then hit the course for a couple more hours before heading back to Billings. The Recreation Division works closely with The Base Camp in Billings for all ski rentals for this program.





## **Summer Camps**

### **Adventure Camp**

Adventure Camp has been maxed out at 40 kids per week since the end of April, with exceptional early registration numbers. This camp is for 10-14 year old kids who spend the 11 weeks of summer with us traveling around our region of the state. Not only do they get to experience all of the parks and local recreation that Billings has to offer; they also travel outside the city limits to historical sites, hiking areas, and whitewater rafting excursions.

### **Magic City Camp**

Magic City Camp has also been maxed out at 24 since the end of April. This camp is run out of Veteran's Park, and is home site for kids aged 8-11. These kids spend the summer doing similar activities to adventure camp with travel limited to the Billings City limits. We have seen a big jump in popularity with this camp the last couple years, maxing out enrollment in all weeks for the first time this year.

### **Pioneer Playhouse**

Pioneer Playhouse is for the little kids aged 5-8. This a very energetic group of kids that are always looking to have fun. Our camp fills there day with tons of physical activities, along with a themed educational aspect that changes week to week. Playhouse is a very affordable option for kids this age, so we are always full of kids at Playhouse. We are maxed 45 for all 11 weeks at Playhouse as well.

### **Babysitters Camp**

Babysitters Camp has had two weeks of offerings out at Rose Park Swimming Pool. With a similar setup to our above mentioned camps, this camp was maxed out at 15 participants both weeks. These kids learn safety, entertainment, and communication skills to help them be an exceptional babysitter.

### **ePact Network**

This is the second year of implementing this safety network. We have had 100% of household's complete registration at all of the above camps. This network setup allows us to run all admin aspects of the camp through a dedicated camp tablet. This tablet securely contains contacts, allergies, and emergency info for each camper. It also tracks and archives all check in and check out times for all kids at our camps.

### **Summer Seasonal Employment**

Staffing our camps has been the one tricky part of our summer so far. As with so many industries, we have been short staffed so far this year. We currently have 25 full time seasonals and 2 interns working for us. We would like to have 35-40 and 2 interns to handle all of this programming. We are of course still hiring and taking applications through the summer. We also have 5 bus drivers on staff to help move our camps around the city.

### **Junior Varsity Tennis**

During the high school tennis season (March-May) we partnered with School District II to provide a Junior Varsity tennis program. This program aimed at helping high school coaches keep more players

on their teams in hopes of growing participants and the strength of these programs in the future. We used tennis instructors already involved in our programs to organize the program and activity funds through the school district were used to pay for the program. In keeping more players from being “cut” from high school tennis, we hope to see more of these players in our instructional programs throughout the summer.

### **Summer Youth and Adult Tennis Instruction**

On June 7<sup>th</sup> the City of Billings Tennis Academy kicked off its first summer session of instructional programming throughout the City. Junior Lessons at Pioneer, Rose, and Castle Rock all saw record enrollment encompassing over 125 individual participants. This year we have two program lead instructors along with 8 site instructors to accommodate all of the lessons. Our first session of Adult lessons has also remained popular with over 20 players participating on Monday and Wednesday evenings. As the first session of summer tennis ends June 30<sup>th</sup>, we anticipate equally good numbers going into the second session beginning July 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Adult Table Tennis**

In association with the Yellowstone Table Tennis Association, year-round Adult Table Tennis at North Park Center kicked off in our inaugural season on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The sessions run on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings or afternoons. The open play format is open to anyone 18 years or older and offers a wide range of opportunities for different types of matches including; singles, doubles, practice matches, challenge matches, and friendly matches.

Session 2 of Table Tennis began April 6<sup>th</sup> at the North Park Center with a small constituency of people from the Yellowstone Table Tennis Association. The groups plays every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00pm-9:00pm and on Saturdays mornings or afternoons (depending on the availability of the center). This is a year round program with the third session starting July 6<sup>th</sup> and wrapping up September 25<sup>th</sup>. The 4<sup>th</sup> session will begin the first Tuesday in October and finish December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Martial Arts Camp**

The first introduction of Tae Kwon Do took place June 21-25<sup>th</sup> at North Park Center under the leadership and guidance of the Martial Arts Academy of Billings. The camp ran two sessions for ages 5-7 and 8-13, respectively. The instructors focused on the tenants of respect, etiquette, loyalty, modesty, patience, and indomitable spirit. In total we had 17 martial art experts by the time they performed what they had learned for their parents on Friday afternoon.

## Pickleball

In the month of May, we offered our second Pickleball Bootcamp at the new Lillis Park Pickleball courts. This adult bootcamp, designed to teach adults the basics fundamentals and scoring of Pickleball, filled quickly and has become one of the more sought after adult classes we offer. We are offering these bootcamps once a month throughout the summer into fall.

On Saturday May 14<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our first ever Pickleball doubles tournament at the new courts. We had over thirty individual teams through three different divisions. Each team was guaranteed 6-8 pool play matches with a single elimination bracket played at the end of the day. Overall, the tournament was a success and helped provide a connection between Billings Parks and Recreation and the Pickleball community. We hope to offer more tournaments and provide league play by fall 2021.



## Future Stars Super Saturday

In addition to the Tennis is Elementary Program, we added a special tennis event in partnership with the Elks Tennis Center (ETC). Future Stars Super Saturday, hosted at the ETC, allowed youth players ages 5-12 to compete in a round-robin, non-elimination format using appropriate court sizes and tennis ball types. The event saw 23 individual participants filling all four courts at the ETC with different ages and formats of play. Currently, we are also running a 10 & Under tennis program at North Park Center on Saturdays. This program is similar to Tennis is Elementary and introduces children to the game within a smaller indoor format. Currently, we have 12 participants in this Saturday morning program.



## Rock Band Camp

Billings Parks and Recreation's fourth annual Rock Band Camp took place June 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. This year's camp saw it's largest enrollment thus far with 15 total participants. Campers learned and rehearsed during the week at Ben Steele middle school and preformed a 40-minute concert to over 150 patrons on Friday.



## Outdoor Recreation

### **Learn to Fly Fish**

Our Outdoor Recreation programs saw great interest from the community this spring and summer, evident with Learn to Fly Fish (LTFF) and Family & Group Whitewater Rafting. Annually, we offer two Fly Fishing classes, one in April, and one in June. We experienced our first ever wait list with LTFF for both sessions with 15 people enrolled in each class and 5 interested parties on the wait list. Our instructor, who has led the class for the past 8 years, continues to bring with him a lifelong passion for teaching and guiding. He structures the class as a build up throughout the two week class from learning where to find fish and how to read the water to tying on your own flies/tippet and casting practice. Unfortunately, due to a close connection with Covid through contact tracing, we had to postpone the June session to September. We are excited to offer our first fall session in six years and expect a great deal of interest just in time for Fall Fly Fishing.

### **Family & Group Whitewater Raft Trips**

Similar to LTFF, our Family & Group Whitewater Rafting trip with Absarokee River Outfitters experienced a lot of interest as both sessions have been sold out. Our first trip kicked off the summer on June 19<sup>th</sup> with 15 participants joining us on the Stillwater River for the day. The second trip is also sold out with 26 water enthusiasts headed out on July 17<sup>th</sup> for a day on the river.



### **Sand Volleyball**

Fresh off of a year hiatus and back by popular demand, Adult Coed Sand Volleyball aced its way on to the court May 19<sup>th</sup>. The seven week league consists of 10 teams this year with games played on Wednesday evenings at Rose Park. Additionally, brand new nets were purchased in May and put up by Parks and Rec staff. The summer league is designed for fun, recreation, exercise and will conclude on July 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> with two days of playoffs.

### **Rocket Camp**

One of our most popular camps, Rocket Camp, launched on Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup> with 10 participants. The week long camp focuses on the intricacies of how rockets work, and the physics of motion/aerodynamics. All of the engineers' hard work and labor will pay off when they get to "launch" their rockets on the last day of camp at Amend Park. Our instructor does a great job with Rocket Camp and details that go into the camp and providing the materials and expertise of the week and launch day.



### **Lacrosse Camp**

In partnership with the Billings Scorpion Lacrosse, seven participants enjoyed learning from some of the top programs in the Yellowstone area. The focus for the camp was on ground balls, cradling, passing/catching, and encompassed playing in the high speed game in a more controlled environment. The camp was held at Optimist Park June 22-24 for 7-11 year olds.

### **Club Baseball**

Club Baseball has enjoyed much success this year with 5 club teams playing games and practicing at North Park in the 13U division, while 4 teams played at Central at the 15U level. The Recreation Division has a staff of 14 umpires that work in 2-man crews to cover about 70-80 games from April to July. Our club teams have been utilizing practice opportunities at Poly Vista, sharing fields with 10 softball/baseball teams. Additionally, the 13U teams hosted a round robin tournament in May at North and Poly with teams coming to the Magic City from Gillette and Cody. In total, 12 games were played in the two day tournament. Furthermore, we hosted a 12U one day tournament in May with 6 teams playing 9 total games on the day. The 2021 season will wrap up in the middle of July.





## Summer Aquatics Operations

The start of the aquatic season is off to a blazing start in the month of June. At Rose pool, we saw an average daily attendance of 813. That is an increase of 73% from 2019 and a 40% increase from 2020. Currently, we have 48 lifeguards hired to supervise both the community and wading pools. We will be running an additional Red Cross certification class in early July to reinforce our staff through the rest of the summer.



## Strike Zone Batting Cages

The Strike Zone Batting Cages opened up on April 1st. A staff of 10 seasonal workers have been hired to work the cages and cover the hours needed to stay open Monday-Sunday until August 1<sup>st</sup>. Earlier in the spring, the Parks staff helped the Rec staff with some net repairs and putting up lights to ensure the safety for all participants and spectators. The hours of operation from month to month change from 4:00-9:00pm weekdays in April/May while school is still in session, to 12:00pm-10:00pm on weekdays in June. Saturday and Sunday times remain the same at 10:00am to 8:00pm and 12:00pm to 6:00pm, respectively. During the dog days of July and early August, the hours turn back to 4:00pm-9:00pm weekdays and 12:00pm-8:00pm on Saturdays and 12:00pm to 6:00pm on Sundays. The cages will wrap up another season in early August as we turn the calendar to Football and most of our staff returning to school.

## **Senior Services at the Billings Community Center**

The Billings Community and Senior Center (BCC) is continuing to see an increase in participation of Senior Programs since the beginning of 2021. With precautions in place, the BCC was able to offer safe programming to help the seniors in the early spring by allowing them stay connected socially with their peers, stay fit and strong no matter what circumstances arise. We have made their health a top priority and strive to provide an outlet for our seniors to continue to stay healthy and strong. Billings Community and Senior Center began the transition of starting programs and services offered prior to Covid-19 in April.

As previously reported, the only programs for seniors that were allowed during this previous year were fitness and wellness programs, with limited numbers. As seniors have been vaccinated, we have been working closely with the Adult Resource Alliance to start providing senior meal programs. We also worked on a plan on how to safely reintroduce social activities such as games and clubs. Starting the last week of March through April, meals were offered Monday, Wednesday and Friday, which gave us the opportunity to see how we could safely transition from fitness classes to meal site participation. Our staff showed that they could clean & transition between programs & services allowing us to safely



provide meals. We started back with a full, 5 day a week meal site the first week of May. We started out with an average of 2 to 3 meals being served to now serving upwards of 15 meals daily. These are either done with the grab and go or sit down meals. We have seen an increase in June of the to-go meals from our fitness program participants with the introduction of salad in place of the entree.



## Senior Fitness Classes

### **Strong and Fit**

Strong and Fit is one of the most popular women-only class, focusing on strength training for women 55 and older. These women use weights ranging from 3 - 12 pounds and over the last year, we continue to see them increase the weights they use. This truly shows with a strong community, dedicated instructors, and seniors who look at their health as a priority can get stronger as you age. This class has increased participation by 24%.

### **Fitness by Design**

This class focuses on aerobics, strength, and endurance muscle training, and balance while providing a variety of workouts that put the fun back into fit! This class has seen a 35% increase in participation. Other programs such as Discovering Nutrition and Sit & Get Fit are seeing similar trends. Discovering Nutrition provides a fun approach to creating a positive relationship with food and teaches parents how to enjoy cooking foods that are health-filled, has doubled in size.



### **Sit and Get Fit**

Sit and Get Fit is a 30-minute workout that focuses on joint-friendly, range of motion, strength, muscle endurance, and aerobics class while adding laughter and fun. As more seniors receive the COVID-19 vaccine, we have seen an increase in seniors looking for joint-friendly classes to get back into focusing on their health. With a focus on fun and safe ways to exercise, our participants have built a community amongst themselves.



### **Chair and Gentle Yoga**

Our Chair and Gentle Yoga classes have doubled in size and upcoming sessions show a continued increase. The Gentle Yoga class has nearly tripled in size, which was more than we had before the pandemic. As classes are slowly nearing capacity, we are moving beyond our walls and into the community. It has been amazing to see our seniors take a focus on their health and their community. They have really taken an uncertain situation into something good, truly taking lemons and making lemonade.

### **Adult Resource Alliance Partnership**

Prior to Covid-19, we were working on a partnership with Adult Resource Alliance (ARA) to provide fitness, nutrition and wellness education programming at their locations. We resumed this partnership in June, allowing us to provide more programs outside the walls of the BCC. We have started with 3 offerings, 2 yoga classes and a Fitness by Design class. We now have programs offered in the heights and west end allowing us to bridge any barriers seniors may have to participation due to where they live. While the offerings are limited at this time, we are continuing to work with the ARA to offer more programs at their two locations.

### **Instructor Training**

As the need increases to expand programming for our ever-growing senior population, the need to hire more instructors has also increased. While there are many individuals that are trained in overall fitness, nutrition, and wellness, there is a gap in those who have the specialized training to provide programs for seniors. This has created an opportunity to create training that provides senior-related competencies. Over the next year, we will be creating a senior fitness, wellness, and nutrition courses and trainings to meet this need. It will focus on helping increase the knowledge of instructors we hire to provide safe, effective, and fun programs that engage this population.

### **Resuming Programming**

In the month of June, we began offering clubs, games, and access to computers. We started with a soft opening by advertising through word of mouth and encouraging those who know to tell their

friends about the activities. We are seeing a slow increase with some card games getting back to pre-Covid 19 participation and others building at a steady pace. In July, we will resume the Senior Scoop newsletter for August through November allowing us to let more seniors know that our social activities have resumed. We have made some changes in days that they are offered to ensure we can continue to clean in-between activities.

During the fall of 2020 and extending into the spring of 2021 we started offering a Zumba Gold class in the evening in order to give seniors that are 55-65 an opportunity to have an exercise that is joint friendly. We have been told by our younger seniors who are currently still in the workforce, that there are very limited opportunities that fit their needs to participate in fitness classes within our community. This shows there is a need to continue to provide programming that is specifically designed for seniors prior to retiring. Many of these participants took part in our summer Aqua Zumba program 2 months out of the year, but had little opportunities to stay fit in the other 10 months. In the end of June, we phased into the Aqua Zumba from Zumba Gold. This year we doubled our Aqua Zumba and nearly maxing out the 1st session's capacity. The Cardio Water Fitness has a strong attendance also and is expected to increase in the second session as well.

As we see more of our seniors 60-65 retire, we are seeing a significant shift in the types of programs they want to participate in. This trend is going towards fitness and wellness education that focus on staying healthy and fit as they age. The BCC has continued to meet both seniors who want social activities and those who are wanting to stay active. In July, we will increase the social activities as we have seen many seniors wanting to get out more to socialize. The programming created at the Billings Community and Senior Center focuses on helping seniors age with grace and in place.

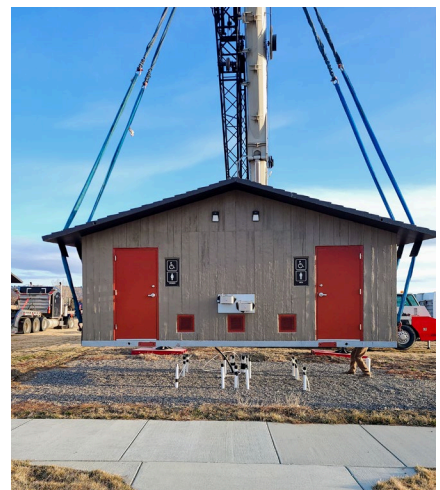
## Park Planning and Development

### Centennial Park Development

The first Community Park to be developed since 1982 was officially opened to the public on June 5, 2021. This 23 acre park features many amenities for the citizens of Billings to enjoy including 5 baseball fields, 2 large multi-use open spaces, a 6 acre dog park which includes 2 doggie drinking fountains, 4 shade structures, 10 benches and a small dog area. The Park also offers over 80 parking stalls to ease access and a year round restroom facility. Centennial Park is designated as an arboretum. Over the next 5 to 7 years, parks staff will plant some 300 trees and provide citizens an opportunity to see unique trees that grow in the Billings area. There are still additional amenities planned for the park and will be installed as funding becomes available. These include a playground, splash pad, 2 picnic shelters, basketball and pickleball courts and additional parking. Come and enjoy the park and watch it grow and develop in the coming months and years.

**Budgeted Amount: \$2,716,204**

**Payments through June 30: \$2,606,192**





### Coulson Park Development

Staff is currently working on the first phase of development at Coulson Park. This work will include the location of an ADA-accessible modular concrete restroom structure, a boat ramp, parking, and a picnic area. Plans and specifications are complete and as soon as we receive the final permit from the Army Corps of Engineers we can put this project out for bids.



**Budgeted Amount: \$110,000**

**Payments through June 30: \$3,550.55**

### Central Park Tennis Court Replacement

The tennis court at Central Park has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. Along with \$500,000 awarded by city council, the department was also awarded an LWCF grant to the sum of \$147,420 for the replacement of the aging tennis court facility and ADA improvements to the interior sidewalks. PRPL staff is partnering with Public Works staff to define the scope of work and bring a consultant on board to prepare the construction documents for a January 2022 bid. This project is scheduled to be completed summer 2022.

**Budgeted Amount: \$647,420**

### Terry Park Playground Replacement and Picnic Shelter

Terry Park will soon be getting new playground equipment and a picnic shelter. The shelter has been ordered with an anticipated installation fall of this year. Concepts of the new play equipment were put on facebook for Billings citizens to vote for their preferred playground layout. There were over 1200 votes cast. The equipment will be ordered this month with an anticipated installation this coming fall/winter.

**Playground Budgeted Amount: \$300,000**

**Picnic Shelter Budgeted Amount: \$80,000**

### Lillis Park Playground Replacement

The playground at Lillis Park will also be replaced this coming fall/winter. Concepts of new playground equipment were voted on by over 1200 people in the same way Terry Park playground equipment was selected. This will be a welcome upgrade to this busy neighborhood park.

**Playground Budgeted Amount: \$300,000**

### Rose Park Playground Replacement

The new playground at Rose Park has been installed. Come check out the giant towers, the spiral slides, climbers, spinners and swing. There is plenty of fun for children of all ages and abilities. Even a special section for children 2 to 5 years of age with a nearby shelter for parents to relax and supervise their children.

**Budgeted Amount: \$420,000**

**Payments through June 30: \$399,300**



### Castle Rock Park Playground Improvements

The master plan was completed and adopted by the Council in January of 2021. Design of the play pod is finished and will go out for bid in July. Staff is now turning their attention to the playground equipment. Working with the Heights Task Force, several concepts will be developed for the playground and will be showcased online for citizens to view and vote for their favorite play features. Look for these concepts this summer. The goal is to have the playground completed this coming fall/winter.

**Budgeted Amount: \$400,000**

**Payments through June 30: \$6,100**

### Optimist Park Picnic Shelter

Work is underway to build a new picnic shelter at Optimist Park. A contractor was selected and the shelter materials are being ordered. It is anticipated site work will begin this fall/winter. The South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SBURA) is partnering with the Parks and Recreation Department to fund this project.

**Budgeted Amount: \$304,978**

**Payments through June 30: \$19,510**



## Poly Vista Park Phase 1 Development

The Parks and Recreation Department is partnering with the Landon's Legacy Foundation to develop the first phase of Poly Vista Park, which will include several amenities including a Miracle League Baseball Field, a restroom facility, mass grading, parking and sidewalks, and replacement of the irrigation system at the existing four-play baseball fields. Plans and specifications are now out for bid with an anticipated contract award in August. Work will begin shortly after that and continue into winter, depending on the weather. Completion of this first phase of park development will likely be summer 2022.

**Budgeted Amount: \$1,000,000 (city funds)**

**Payments through June 30: \$72,798**



## Country Manor Park Sidewalk Development

Country Manor is a neighborhood park just east of Shiloh Road. Many senior citizens live near by and enjoy being outdoors and in the park. However the park needs additional interior sidewalks so the area seniors can get exercise by walking on these sidewalk loops. Request for quotes are being sought with an anticipated construction this fall.

**Budgeted Amount: \$15,000 (private donation)**

# Volunteer Programs and Community Outreach

## Volunteer Programs

With the change in the weather, we have seen an increased interest from individuals and groups of volunteers wanting to get outside and help in the parks. This year, we have 112 volunteers contribute 635 hours of volunteer time in our parks. We anticipate that we will continue to see a large rebound in volunteer numbers from 2020. We have had several groups help with projects including students from St. Mary's Occupational Therapy program help with a project at Mountview Cemetery. These students helped edge the Veterans Section headstones by removing turf that was encroaching onto the curbing in which the headstones are placed. This helps honor those who have served our country by keeping their resting places looking sharp.



Volunteers from St. Mary's Occupational Therapy School help edge and cleanup the veterans section at Mountview Cemetery



A scout troop helps cleanup the Alkali Creek Natural area in the Heights

### Just Serve Day

The Parks and Recreation Department partnered with JustServe for their annual day of service. We had two projects that day, one at the Amend Park Community Garden and another at Mountview Cemetery. The Amend Garden Project consisted of re-measuring and resizing the garden plots and other general maintenance to prepare for the season.



The project at Mountview Cemetery involved raising headstones at the cemetery that have sunken and become overgrown. In many of our older sections of the cemetery, flat grave markers have sunk over time as soil settles and turf grows up and over, making it difficult to find and recognize those who are buried in the plot. Many of the members in these areas were buried long enough ago that the interred may no longer have family in the area to care for the headstone. This project helped those resting in the cemetery to be remembered.

### Amend Garden Compost Bin Eagle Scout Project

An Eagle Scout took on the project to replace the compost bins at Amend Park Community Garden. The compost bins that were previously in place are made from old shipping pallets and are deteriorating quickly to the point of becoming unusable for gardeners. The new design increased the size of the compost bins by nearly double and were constructed out of treated lumber to increase longevity. The project was executed in late April just before the start of the gardening season.





**Before**



**After**

### **Pioneer Park Creek Plantings**

The Parks and Recreation Department worked with the Peter Yegen Jr. office on a project at Pioneer Park to help plant wild and region-specific flowers along the creek area of the park to provide a small natural area that will attract pollinators such as butterflies. This will not only enhance the beauty of the creek area, but will also provide a natural area for young kids to explore and discover various insects. The Peter Yegen Jr. office donated \$1,000 to the project which helped pay for flower plug, an ornamental flowering tree and large rocks to create sitting areas.

### **Arbor Day**

The Parks and Recreation Department hosted our Annual Arbor Day Celebration at North Park on May 12th! Our Parks are home to over 10,000 trees and we understand the importance and many benefits that trees provide to our park users and community as a whole. From providing shade to stormwater management, urban temperature regulation to increasing property values, trees have a larger impact on our everyday lives than we often recognize.

This year, due to COVID-19 and SD2 travel restrictions, we will be holding two Arbor Day Celebrations. The Arbor Day planning committee believes the educational booths are an important aspect of our Arbor Day event and we decided to split the event to allow the students to attend in



the fall. Our Spring Arbor Day event provided a significant opportunity to make need improvements to North Park. Spring Arbor Day took place on May 12th and consisted of volunteer-related projects including tree plantings, landscaping projects, painting projects, and other park improvement projects. The forestry activities there began with acquiring a contractor to remove 15 white poplar trees that were old and increasingly decrepit, requiring frequent arboricultural interventions to maintain them in a safe condition. Soon after their removal, we planted 15 new trees as part of the volunteer projects on May 12. Our Spring Arbor Day brought 56 volunteers contributing 170 hours of volunteer time. Our Fall Arbor Day celebration will be held on September 23rd and consist of Educational Booths for around 400 fourth graders, the official Arbor Day Ceremony, and the ceremonial planting of the Arbor Day Tree.



### Centennial Grand Opening

We are excited to celebrate the development of our newest Community Park and Billing's second dedicated Dog Park! The grand opening celebration took place on June 5<sup>th</sup> and included dog demonstrations, food trucks, live music, an inflatable obstacle course and slide, games, and more! The event began at noon with a ribbon-cutting ceremony signifying the official opening, followed by festivities for the whole family. This event was made possible by the members of



the Centennial Park grand opening planning committee and our generous event sponsors, Century 21 Hometown Brokers, Mayor Bill and Anne Cole, SCHEELS, Faith E Church, Dee-O-Gee, Little Horn State Bank, and Gordon and Robin Olson.

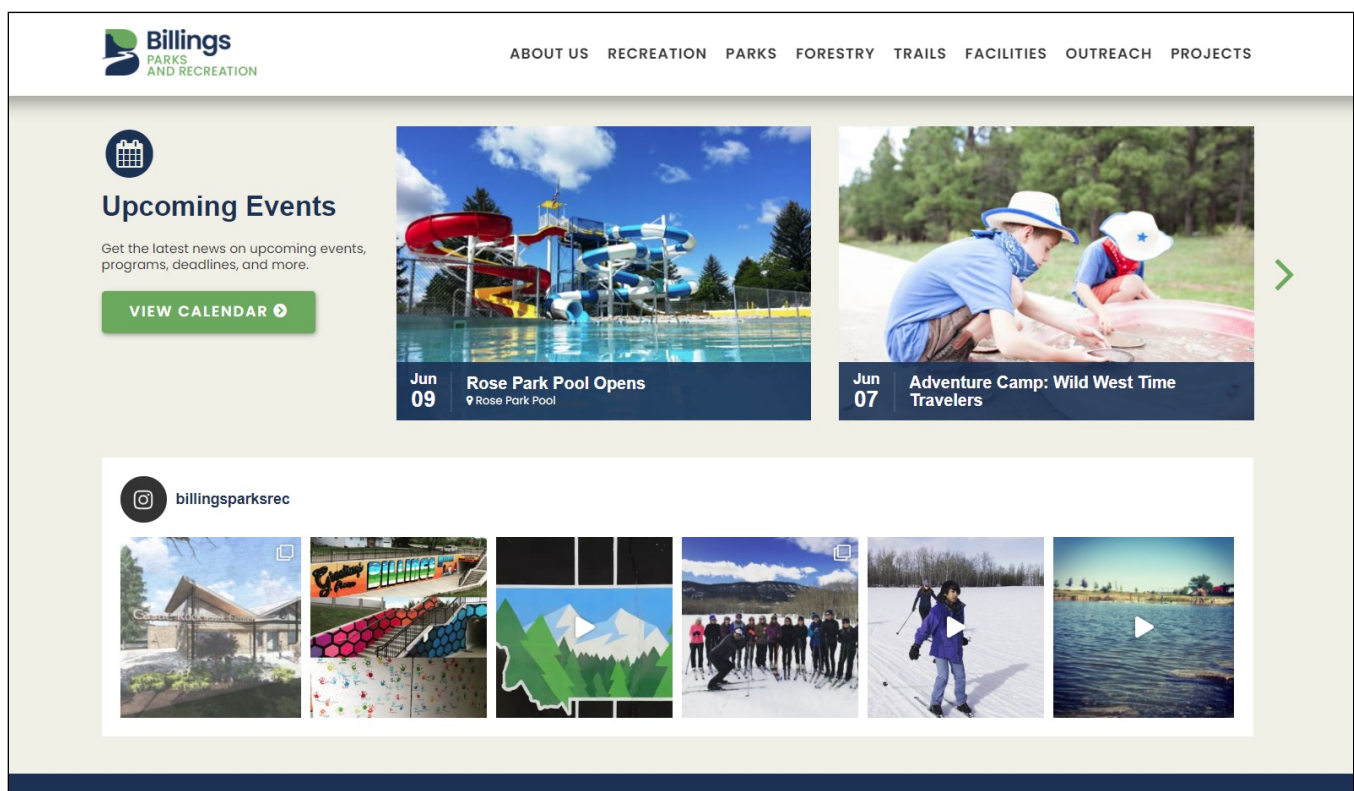


## Amend Park Community Garden

The Amend Park Community garden is in full swing of our 8<sup>th</sup> gardening season. Parks and Recreation staff has been meeting with our volunteer Garden Leadership Team to coordinate planned workshops including a canning workshop, as well as social events such as potlucks and community garden projects. The orientation for the garden took place on Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup> after which, the gardeners were able to begin planting their plots.

## Website Updates

The BillingsParks.org has seen some small updates that will be sure to have a large impact on how we communicate with our community. Our website now includes an “upcoming events” calendar, which will be updated with upcoming events, recreation programs, and other helpful information for community members looking to stay active during the year. Additionally, we have included an Instagram feed on the bottom of our pages so folks can see the latest photos from our programs, projects, and events. We have kept the “news items” section of our website to keep visitors updated on the latest department news. We hope with these updates that all of the most important information will be just a click away from those looking to stay up to date on Parks and Recreation happenings.



# Park Maintenance

## Spring Maintenance Updates

2021 started with some unseasonable weather, January highs were in the 40's, this allowed staff to complete a number of projects in the parks. The projects ranged from installing a wood mulch trail at Centennial Park to repairing irrigation pump intake screens. When it did snow, staff was busy clearing trails and sidewalks throughout the City.

Park use definitely increased as compared to a normal winter. This was evident with the increase in garbage and how often staff needed to operate the trash truck. Staff was also been kept busy picking-up litter in the parks and along the trails. The trail in Swords Park and along the rims continues to be a problem area for trash and litter. The number of trashcans on top of the rims was doubled in an attempt to solve the problem.

The vault toilets at High Sierra, Riverfront, and Norm's island were also busy. Cleaning the restrooms in the winter poses a unique problem, when we use water it freezes to the concrete floors and makes the restroom unusable. Staff has tried a number of different chemicals and methods so we can provide useable restrooms year-round at these locations.

## Summer Maintenance Updates

The Parks Division has struggled attracting seasonal labor all summer. Normally, 50 seasonal employees are added to staff for the summer doing everything from mowing, opening restrooms, applying pesticides and operating the Park's trash truck among numerous other duties. This summer the seasonal number has remained at or below 30, leaving at least 20 open positions and the duties that would be assigned to them unable to be completed, or delayed. This has resulted in fewer services offered, and slower response times to things like overflowing trash cans or clogged restrooms. Without a pesticide applicator the Dandelion population was out of control this spring, and fertilizer applications didn't start until the middle of June. The Restroom Closer position, which is always a difficult position to recruit for, has been filled by full-time staff on overtime. Overtime line item in the fiscal year 2021 budget was over by \$6,347.00, this doesn't account for the hours staff has added to their Comp balance. As the summer progresses seasonal staff continue to move on, college students go back to school and seasonal employees run out of hours they are allowed to work.

## **Summer Park Irrigation**

The BBWA Canal, controlled by Billings Bench Water Association, was turned off twice this spring at the same time Billings was experiencing unusually, record high temperatures. The combination was very hard on the parks. The turf grass was at a vulnerable stage in recovering from the winter, and just flushing with growth. Castlerock, North, Grandview, Pioneer, Veterans, Rose, Lillis, Malice and Stewart are all irrigated using water from the BBWA canal. These are some of the most used parks within our system and are regularly busy with sporting events like baseball, softball, soccer and rugby. Also numerous events take place in these parks like graduation parties, Symphony in the Park, movies in the park and summer camps. Add in family picnics and normal daily use, and there was a large impact on the health of the turf grass.

The parks have greened back up from the drought condition, but there is damage to plants that can't be seen. In the Spring, normally the majority of root growth occurs, but since the plants were without water and the high temperatures, the roots didn't have an opportunity to fully develop. This can be seen by the thinning turf, especially in traffic areas and sports fields, but can't be noticed as easily in the rest of the parks, but the damage is still present. Next year, the weeds will have a competitive advantage requiring more pesticide and fertilizer applications and we might even see some die-back from the winter.



### Centennial Park

The Parks Division staff was busy in May preparing for the Grand Opening of Centennial park. Staff installed 10 benches and plaques, the entrance sign and prepared the park for opening. All the usual amenities that parks require like picnic tables, trash cans and dog waste bag dispensers had to be added.

Managing the irrigation system at Centennial has proven very challenging. To further establish the turf grass, the irrigation required is higher than an established park. The problem comes when a puddle forms in the dog park area, the dogs play and dig in the area which causes a hole. The hole then traps more water and now as the dogs play in it the hole becomes bigger and dogs go home even more muddy. The challenge is to irrigate just enough to encourage the grass, but not enough to cause a puddle. This issue will go away as the grass becomes more established.



### **Removing rock barrier at Centennial Park**

The rock barrier at Centennial dog park was removed due to the barrier creating a swamplike area. This water retention area will be necessary once the parking lot on the North end is built and will be replaced when that parking lot is developed. Removing the rock barrier will create a safer and cleaner place for dogs to play.



## Wood Mulch Trail Install

The trail through the dog park was not included in phase one of Centennial Dog Park, but we knew dog park users would need a path through the off-leash dog area to walk on and avoid creating muddy paths. Wood mulch is a by-product of the Forestry Division which is low cost and has been installed on trails in other locations like the High Sierra disc golf course. Staff built the mulch trail in the same location as the permanent trail in the park's master plan so removal will be easy once a solid surface trail is installed. While not perfect, the mulch trail does provide a usable path through the park.



## Fertilizer at Centennial Park

With the June 5<sup>th</sup> grand opening date for Centennial Park, we knew the turf needs to be forced to be ready. In 2020, approximately 4 tons of fertilizer was spread on the park to force the growth of the turf. The nice weather allowed staff to add more fertilizer this winter. Readily available Nitrogen sources were used so as the turf emerges from dormancy, the fertilizer will be in a useable form.



## Downtown Planters

The Downtown Park Maintenance Districts have proven difficult to establish plant material. The environment is very harsh with all the traffic, heat, pets and events. In the past the Parks Division has tried different plants including yucca, installed large rocks and used signs to help us establish plants. All had minimal effectiveness. This season at Broadway and 2nd staff installed decorative fencing to enhance the protection of the plants. The fence is working to deter pedestrians and pets from the plants. The plants have begun to thrive and have become well established.

### Riverfront Park Paving

Another section of Riverfront road was completed in June of 2021. The City Engineering Division managed this projects for the Parks Division. This is the third section completed, leaving just one more portion to complete the road down at Riverfront. The last section is in the 2022 CIP, so the Riverfront road and parking areas will have all new asphalt.



### Skatepark Murals

Skatepark occupies a very visible corner of Billings. For years, the Parks Division has struggled with unsightly graffiti. The Division has help numerous volunteer events to clear the graffiti using everything from grinders to chemicals and a pressure washer. Gallons of paint have been applied to cover the surfaces, only to get tagged again.

Thanks to a Big Sky Economic Development Association (BSEDA) grant, funding was made available for a more permanent solution. BSEDA provided a grant to Tyson Middle, a local artist, to create an artistic cover for the bowls of the Skatepark. Parks staff cleaned and primed the surfaces, and Tyson went to work with help from the local skaters. The final product is an exciting design that the skate community can take ownership and pride in, and the community can enjoy.





## South Park Splash Pad Extension

The splash pad at South park has always had an issue with mud from the spray features over-spraying into the grass. Mud at a splash pad causes numerous problems the least of which is muddy kids. Park staff extended the concrete pad to eliminate the areas where the over-spray was causing the problem and now no more mud.



## Copper Ridge Playground



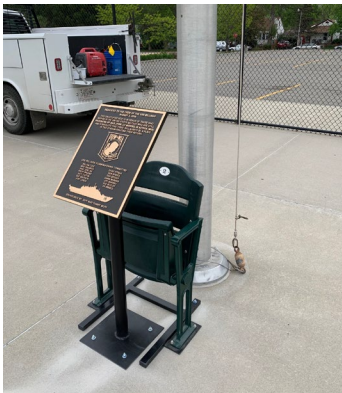
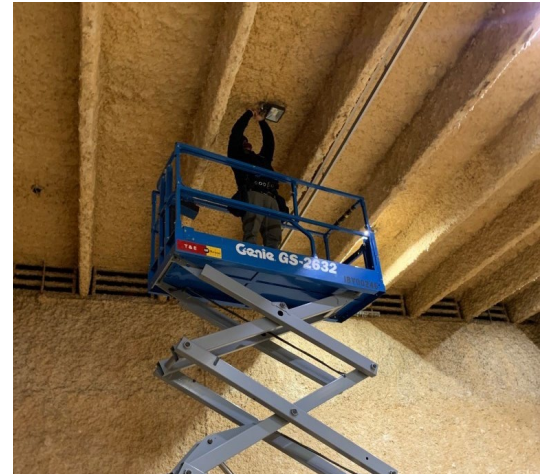
Copper Ridge subdivision has never had a playground since the park was built. As the number of homes has increased, so has the need for a playground. A group from the neighborhood got together and started the process to fund and build a playground back in 2019. By 2020 they had enough funding to purchase the equipment and working with the Parks Division a location for the new playground was established. The group continued to fund raise to construct the pod where the equipment would be housed. On June 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, all the hard work paid off as the new playground at Copper Ridge subdivision held the grand opening for the playground. The site includes equipment for all ages, shade, picnic tables and benches. There is a rock wall perfect to sit on and watch the children have fun.



Parks staff assisted with the fall protection and auditing the equipment to ensure it was safe. All the rest of the project was completed using donated funds and volunteer labor. Thank you to the Copper Ridge neighborhood for adding a much needed playground to the City's inventory.

### Lighting Upgrade at North Park Center

Lighting at the North Park Center has been inadequate for years. The Recreation Division has steadily increased programming the space, most recently for adult table tennis. Staff was able to upgrade the lighting creating a safer better-lit space to program. The adult table tennis users have expressed thanks for how much this lighting upgrade has helped.



### Dehler Park MIA POW Chair

The Parks Division staff facilitated the installation of an empty stadium chair and plaque at Dehler park to commemorate MIA and POW soldiers.

### Early Spring Pump Station Repairs

Irrigation water for Castle Rock Park is transferred from the ditch up to the pond in the middle of the park. From there, it is pumped from the settling pond out to the system. In the last couple of years, the pumps that transfer the water up the hill to the pond have been slowing down and delivering less water. Staff removed the pumps and had them rebuilt over the winter. With the help of Public Works and their crane, the pumps were reinstalled this winter.







### Intake Structure Repairs

Each year staff inspects and repairs the seven intake structures installed in the ditch that allow us to use ditch water to irrigate parks. The nice weather in late winter allowed for a more extensive cleaning and repair of all the structures. One of the biggest problems we encounter with using ditch water to irrigate is with the silt load it carries. The silt wreaks havoc on the irrigation system components causing a range of problems. Common problems we see are plugged zone valves causing them to stick open. Silt also wears out the gears which turn

the irrigation heads. Our systems use a number of methods to minimize the damage from screens on the intake structures to filters to remove the silt. Staff used a loader to move the silt from around the structures in an attempt to keep the silt from entering the structures.



### Canal bank stabilization

The multipurpose trail that goes through Trans Tech and along Hogan's Slough had started to be undermined by the water flowing in the slough. The Parks Division managed a project to armor the bank and stop the erosion

### Graffiti and Vandalism

The increase in park use did bring some negative activity from graffiti to explosives being placed in the restroom at High Sierra Dog Park. Staff is kept busy inspecting for damage and making the necessary repairs.



### New Forestry Chip Truck

Our Forestry Chip Truck was replaced using the 2020 Equipment Replacement Plan but its arrival had been delayed due to a number of delays from the factory and COVID-19. This winter the truck was finally delivered and placed into service. The old chip truck was a 2003 one ton with over 80,000 miles.

# Mountview Cemetery

## Operations

The first quarter of 2021 continued the 2020 trend of above-average seasonal burials and grave sales. The pace slowed down further into 2021. The warm and dry winter allowed cemetery maintenance staff to work with the Forestry Division to prune hundreds of trees. Pruning took place in sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 99N, and 99S.

In addition to the tree pruning, cemetery staff performed various maintenance projects. The maintenance crew removed an abandoned pump house north of the mausoleum, repaired and cleaned a stained glass window in the mausoleum, and did touch-up painting on the mausoleum fixtures. The employee restroom facility received some much-needed improvements that included new gutters, new toilets, and a water line repair. As the weather warmed up, staff also installed new sod on the winter grave locations, began cleaning the grounds with the turf sweeper, and did winter maintenance on sprinkler heads.

Volunteers, along with the Cemetery Supervisor, continued to prepare the cemetery records for a future transition to a new data management software program. This project involves searching for and reconciling discrepancies between the various data sets that exist for interment records. Additionally, cemetery staff worked with the IT Department to update the cemetery maps to accurately capture all the graves in the cemetery. Lastly, the Cemetery Supervisor began research in order to request Veteran's headstones for individuals who did not receive them at the time of burial. Most often these stones were not ordered for the Veterans because they were considered "unaccompanied", meaning the Veteran did not have family support during the time of burial. Therefore, the headstone was never requested from the VA. This work took place in addition to maintaining records for current burials and grave purchases.

The spring of 2021 was filled with preparations for Memorial Day. Maintenance staff began deep cleaning the facility and doing extra projects like pressure washing Veteran's headstones. This year, hiring seasonal employees was a challenge. The cemetery only received a total of four applications for three seasonal positions. In a normal year, the cemetery will receive 20+ applications. Fortunately, the Cemetery Supervisor was able to hire three excellent employees who helped with the preparation for Memorial Day. In mid-June, one seasonal employee accepted a different position and, despite advertising the vacancy, a replacement has not been hired.



Above: Cemetery Staff repairing the mausoleum stained glass window



One of the main operational challenges during the second quarter was with the Billings Bench Water Association irrigation canal that provides water to the cemetery. The ditch was shut down twice early in the season. One of the shutdowns coincided with an unseasonably hot period. This dried out the turf. Even though the water is back on, the recent hot temperatures have made it difficult to keep the cemetery green. This challenge is compounded by the fact that the cemetery has a manual irrigation system so it can only be watered when staff is present. The cemetery typically does not experience these challenges until August.



Due to the slowdown in grass growth, cemetery staff have continued to complete other maintenance priorities since the mowing demands have lessened. In May and June, maintenance staff cleaned Veteran's headstones; pressure washed the exterior of the mausoleum, began a landscaping project in front of the mausoleum and scrubbed the mausoleum floors. Additionally, they worked with forestry staff to plant roughly 35 new trees. Lastly, they worked with two volunteer groups to edge Veteran's grave curbing and raise sunken headstones along half the perimeter of Section 5. All these projects have enhanced the aesthetics of the cemetery grounds.

In keeping with past trends, June was one of the busiest months in terms of interment at the cemetery. There were 20 interments with many taking place on Saturdays. This kept the cemetery staff busy in addition to the regular maintenance and operations.

### Memorial Day

The Memorial Day celebration in 2021 returned to the traditional pre-pandemic format. The event was facilitated by the Friends of the National Cemetery Board. It was very well attended and featured a gun salute, speakers, taps, bagpipes, and a flag presentation. This year, several transitions took place in terms of Veteran flag placement before Memorial Day. The Young Marines joined the Disabled Veterans of America (DAV) for flag placement in Section 1C and 1B. In the future, the Young Marines will take responsibility for that section as the DAV membership declines. Secondly, clubs from



the Riverside Middle school assisted the Vietnam Veterans of America in placing crosses and flags in the Veteran's area of Section 14. They will also assume responsibility for this assignment in the future.

### Vandalism:

Unfortunately, the cemetery has continued to experience vandalism in 2021. In early January, vandals knocked over 10 headstones. Of the stones tipped over, two sustained significant damage. Due to the age of the stones (1917, 1922), cemetery staff was unable to locate living relatives to determine if they wanted to replace the damaged stones. Therefore, cemetery maintenance staff restored the damaged stones as best as possible. In addition to the headstone damage, the cemetery sustained damage to the fence and gates in the southeastern corner of the cemetery. The cemetery staff is working with the IT Department to identify additional security options for the facility.



Above: (left) headstone damaged by vandalism; (right) headstone after maintenance staff restoration

### January –March 2021 Cemetery Statistics

|                     | January | February | March | Totals |
|---------------------|---------|----------|-------|--------|
| Full Burials        | 5       | 4        | 1     | 10     |
| Cremation Burials   | 2       | 1        | 1     | 4      |
| Infant Burial       | 2       | 0        | 0     | 2      |
| Total Burials       | 8       | 5        | 2     | 15     |
| Veterans Grave      | 0       | 0        | 0     | 0      |
| Immediate Use Sales | 2       | 1        | 0     | 3      |



| <b>January - March Stats Continued</b> | <b>January</b> | <b>February</b> | <b>March</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Future Use Sales                       | 5              | 0               | 5            | 10            |
| Contract for Deed                      | 1              | 0               | 0            | 1             |
| Disinterment Full                      | 0              | 0               | 0            | 0             |
| Disinterment Infant                    | 0              | 0               | 0            | 0             |
| Other (cremation disintombment)        | 0              | 0               | 0            | 0             |

### April-June 2021 Cemetery Statistics

|  | <b>April</b> | <b>May</b> | <b>June</b> | <b>Totals</b> |
|--|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
|--|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|

|                   |   |    |    |    |
|-------------------|---|----|----|----|
| Full Burials      | 1 | 3  | 3  | 7  |
| Cremation Burials | 1 | 7  | 17 | 25 |
| Infant Burial     | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| Total Burials     | 2 | 10 | 20 | 32 |

|                                 |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Veterans Grave                  | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Immediate Use Sales             | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Future Use Sales                | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| Contract for Deed               | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Disinterment Full               | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Disinterment Infant             | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other (cremation disintombment) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

# Urban Forestry

## Operations

Forestry stayed busy in the first quarter with pruning, tree removals, and responding to storm damage, all typical activities for this time of year. A particular emphasis this year was pruning trees at Mountview Cemetery which holds more trees than any other single location managed by the Forestry Division (1,095 out of 10,049 trees – 10.9%). While trees in all other Parks are pruned on a 3 or 7 year cycle, because of the large number of trees in the cemetery, portions of the cemetery were pruned on an “as time becomes available basis.” With so many large trees in the cemetery, and with large trees taking longer to prune than smaller trees, this eventually resulted in there being a need to prune sooner than later. A mild winter with favorable weather, combined with the availability of cemetery staff to help allowed for significant work to be done at the cemetery this year. In all 171 trees were pruned and 9 removed from the cemetery this quarter and 2 stumps were grounded. Updating inventory data was another significant endeavor of forestry staff this quarter. A portion of Amend Park was re-inventoried and 49 trees, mainly junipers, were added to the inventory. Annafeld Park will be coming under Forestry Division management soon and trees already present there were added.



## Storm Damage

Storms swept through in both January and March and cleanup of branches and removal or pruning of affected trees followed. Some of the damage included a large ash tree and a small plum tree, respectively, falling and being damaged so badly it had to be removed in Pioneer Park, a large cottonwood branch coming down in the road at Riverfront Park, and the top came out of a large spruce tree at Edgerton Park.





## Buckthorn control

A major focus for the Forestry Division is formulating long-term plans to control buckthorn while also focusing on the next steps for control in areas already cleared. Staff are working with the Yellowstone County Weed District Education Coordinator and Pesticide Applicator on plans to control buckthorn re-invasion of recently cleared areas. The focus of this work is two-pronged; one controlling re-establishing small buckthorn with herbicides and second, re-establishing native vegetation to the site making buckthorn re-emergence more difficult.



Last winter, led by the Parks Division, buckthorn slash at Riverfront Park was piled and burned. This pile resulted from a project that took beginning steps in how best to control the extensive buckthorn infestation that occupies most of the eastern half of Riverfront Park. In October 2019, buckthorn plants were cut using chainsaws and stumps treated with a herbicide over a one acre experimental plot. Slash was piled at the time of cutting and allowed to dry out. In September 2020, the now very dry slash was re-piled using a dozer and the pile burned in February 2021. The area is now being monitored and revegetated with desirable plant species; 20 shrubs, 4 each of 5 native species (chokecherry, red osier dogwood, woods rose, skunkbush sumac and silver buffaloberry) were planted there in May.



Since then we've been monitoring the site and noticing that more native species were returning than we had anticipated from this site that was completely dominated by buckthorn pre-removal. Making their way back to the site are chokecherry, woods rose and golden currant, in particular. This fall, native plants will be identified and marked for retention and the remaining dense carpet of seedling buckthorn will be treated with a herbicide.

## Helping Other Departments

The Forestry Division provides services to other City Departments including putting up and taking down Christmas tree lights and ornaments from the community Christmas tree. This spring Forestry also cut down 6 large cottonwood trees on Norms Island and ground stumps at the MET Transit Station on Monad, helping them to prepare grounds for a spring planting project.

## Yearly Tree Order

Every January, a tree order is placed and in March the mulch beds are prepared for the arrival of the order. By ordering early the best selection is available and the planting schedule can be established.

When the tree order arrives in late April the bare root trees are placed in the mulch beds for an additional season and allowed to further develop and increases their chance of survival. The 85 bare root trees ordered will mainly be set in the mulch bed while the 22 potted trees also on order, along with the 17 trees currently remaining in the mulch bed will be planted in parks this spring at parks throughout the City. Every year the Forestry Division plants more than 200 trees.

## Centennial Park Arboretum

Last year, Forestry staff prepared a detailed map of the Arboretum showing planned tree locations, by tree species, and expected planting date. Tree planting began last year in September at our (delayed due to Covid) Arbor Day Celebration. Planting continued this spring, this time in advance of the official Grand Opening Celebration for Centennial Park on June 5.

Centennial Park has a long history, beginning as an open field in a then-distant part of town that people of that era for the most part thought would be a far-flung and only occasionally used baseball field. While it's history of developing use over time, including establishment of Musberger Field is interesting, it's tree history is tracked here. Trees were first planted there in the vicinity of the north end baseball fields in about 1990. Of the trees planted then, 10 still remain representing 6 species.

In 2013, more trees were planted, this time on the western edge of the park, just north of Musberger Field, a now well-established and popular baseball field with numerous amenities. Of those trees, 11 still survive adding another 7 species to the Park. Over time, a Master Plan was completed for Centennial Park and the





large dusty field that comprised most of this park was turned to green grass, a dog park and not just trees, but a botanical garden for trees, an Arboretum. In 2020, 94 trees representing 49 tree species were added to the park. Some of these trees were moved to the cemetery in 2021, a few died and 18 more trees representing 16 additional tree species were planted. Current numbers for the Arboretum are 93 trees representing 64 tree species or cultivars and plans to add more trees and species continue, as do plans for making educational use of this Arboretum.

### January – June 2021 Forestry Statistics

| Month        | large trees pruned | small trees pruned | large trees removed | small trees removed | Trees Fenced | Trees Planted | Sprayed Herbicide around trees | Watered Trees | Mulched Trees | Trees Inspected |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| January      | 53                 | 0                  | 9                   | 11                  | 0            | 0             | 0                              | 0             | 0             | 0               |
| February     | 59                 | 34                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0            | 0             | 0                              | 0             | 0             | 0               |
| March        | 119                | 0                  | 0                   | 0                   | 0            | 0             | 0                              | 0             | 0             | 0               |
| April        | 66                 | 0                  | 0                   | 0                   | 33           | 0             | 0                              | 0             | 0             | 0               |
| May          | 6                  | 0                  | 6                   | 4                   | 0            | 67            | 450                            | 0             | 0             | 120             |
| June         | 16                 | 7                  | 4                   | 53                  | 0            | 4             | 211                            | 438           | 294           | 84              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>319</b>         | <b>41</b>          | <b>19</b>           | <b>68</b>           | <b>33</b>    | <b>71</b>     | <b>661</b>                     | <b>438</b>    | <b>294</b>    | <b>204</b>      |

### Tree Removals

As part of our ongoing inspection and monitoring program, we identified a cottonwood tree in Gorham Park with increasingly rotten wood at its base in January 2021. This tree was removed before it fell over, or was blown over in the wind, proving the value of routine inspections.

### Tree Planting

Hot weather has significantly affected forestry operations this summer. We've planted 95 trees so far in 2021, 30 less than planned, because the record-breaking June heat brought an early end to our spring tree-planting season. Trees not planted in the spring are being stored in our "mulch bed," and will be planted out in the fall with the return of cooler temperatures and, hopefully, refreshing rains. The thirty trees in our mulch bed (mulch piled around roots in rows, watered occasionally to keep trees cool and moist and tree roots growing) will be added to other trees to be delivered this fall to bring the total we will plant in 2021 to approximately 200.



| Year  | # of trees planted | # of parks | # of tree species |
|-------|--------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 2021* | 95* (240)          | 12* (24)   | 43* (70)          |
| 2020  | 233                | 30         | 82                |
| 2019  | 97                 | 20         | 42                |
| 2018  | 117                | 16         | 42                |
| 2017  | 20                 | 20         | 32                |

\* Data is for only ½ year, numbers in parentheses are the expected annual total

We planted more trees in 2020 and 2021 than in the previous three years because, in addition to normal tree replacement, we are adding trees: 1) to the recently opened Centennial Park 2) a new section (15) of Mountview Cemetery and 3) we have fruit trees in 7 parks across Billings for the “Parkland Gleaning Project” with the goal of increasing access to fresh food by planting trees from which community members can harvest fruit. So far, we’ve added seventy-one trees to Centennial Park, twenty-two trees to Section 15 of Mountview Cemetery, and more than 100 Parkland Gleaning Project fruit trees. Centennial Park accounts for a great increase in diversity as it is being established as an arboretum – a botanical garden devoted to trees – and we are planting a wide variety of trees there.



### Tree Mulching

Every year we mulch trees to retain soil moisture and establish a perimeter around trees that helps keep lawnmowers from coming too close and damaging trees. Over the years as trees die and branches fall in storm events, we chip up this down wood, save it and re-use it as mulch. Because we’ve planted more trees over the past two years, we have more trees to mulch than in other recent summers. Because the weather has been so hot, the urgency to get mulch in place and help trees better control water loss from the ground that otherwise occurs, has been much greater.





Normally we only mulch trees that have been planted in the previous 5 years but of the extreme hot weather we are mulching trees planted as far back as seven years ago. We have so far mulched 295 trees at 26 parks.

### Tree Watering

We have been watering trees since hot weather first broke in early June. Every one of the 425 trees that were planted in the last three years has by now been watered at least three times. There are 20 trees planted in spots that do not get irrigation. Being species that are well-adapted to drought conditions, these trees normally do fine without supplemental water but given the extreme conditions of this year, we've watered these trees also at least once and in some cases twice. In all we've watered trees at 45 parks so far this year.



### Memorial Tree Program

Billings' Memorial Tree Program was established in 2010 and since that time, 86 Memorial Trees have been planted in Billings including 3 so far this year. We've planted as many as 14 in a year with the overall average been just under 8 per year. Friends, families and co-workers and lots of combinations of these have purchased memorial trees for special loved ones. If you are interested in planting a memorial tree, information is available for how to do this at the Billings Parks and Recreation website by navigating to Forestry, then Programs and then clicking on the link to access the brochure. People purchasing a memorial tree can select what kind of tree to plant from a list provided and which park they want the tree to go in (almost always, some parks have as many trees as they can handle all ready). Forestry staff will plant the tree in good tree-planting season of either the spring or fall and guarantee the tree for ten years. Tree purchasers can choose to be present when the tree is planted – many purchasers help plant the tree and many choose to do a ceremony, a song or other recognition of the passed loved one for whom the tree provides remembrance. Trees have been planted in 21 different parks and are comprised of 33 different tree species, adding beauty and diversity to our parks and a long-lasting, ever-changing memorial to special people in our lives.

*AT A GLANCE*

**PCSD SHIFTS BOARD AND  
COMMISSION MEETINGS  
TO IN PERSON IN JULY**



**AMERICORPS VISTA'S  
SERVING WITH THE B-MVP  
ATTENDED AN IN-SERVICE  
TRAINING**



**COUNCIL PASSES NEW  
MASSAGE FACILITY  
LICENSING ORDINANCE  
IN APRIL**



**9 ANNEXATION PETITIONS  
SUBMITTED SINCE  
JANUARY 2021**



## First Wayfinding Sign Installed



In July 2021, Billings Parks and Recreation staff installed the first wayfinding sign from the Billings Wayfinding Signage Plan. This first sign is located at the Meyers Trail trailhead. Completed in early 2020, the Wayfinding Signage Plan standardizes wayfinding signage for people walking, biking, and rolling in Billings. During plan development, the consultant, Alta Planning and Design, engaged stakeholders to develop visually appealing signs that fit well in Billings and display information to passersby quickly and efficiently. Alta developed sign designs for both trails and on-street bike routes. As part of the plan, they created design drawings for the signs so that very little further design work is needed when it comes time to print the signs.

The Planning Division is excited to see this plan come to life! While this sign is the first one to be installed, it will not be the last. This summer, Billings is getting its first neighborhood bikeway (formerly bicycle boulevard). The goal of neighborhood bikeways is to provide routes along local streets where people of all ages and abilities feel comfortable bicycling due to low volumes and low speeds of motorized vehicles. Billings' first neighborhood bikeway will connect no less than 7 schools, 3 community parks, 2 hospitals, and healthy food outlets to residents of all income levels. Wayfinding signs will be a key component of the neighborhood bikeway. The signs will be placed along the route to direct residents to key destinations around town.

View the wayfinding signage plan by clicking [here](#)!

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## Planning Division Update

### NEIGHBORHOOD: N PND



PND Example from Project Re:Code

The first half of 2021 has proven to be a busy year and we are feeling it in the Planning Division. There have been several published articles as of late that focus on the attractiveness of Billings for new residents. These articles can be found in notable sources like the Wall Street Journal and Time Magazine. It seems many people are discovering what many of us already know, Billings is a community with a lot to offer! We can tell there are housing market pressures based on many of our land use applications including, annexations, zone changes, and subdivisions and site plan reviews. The Planning Staff is working on its first review of a Planned Neighborhood Development, a new tool adopted as part of Project Re:Code.

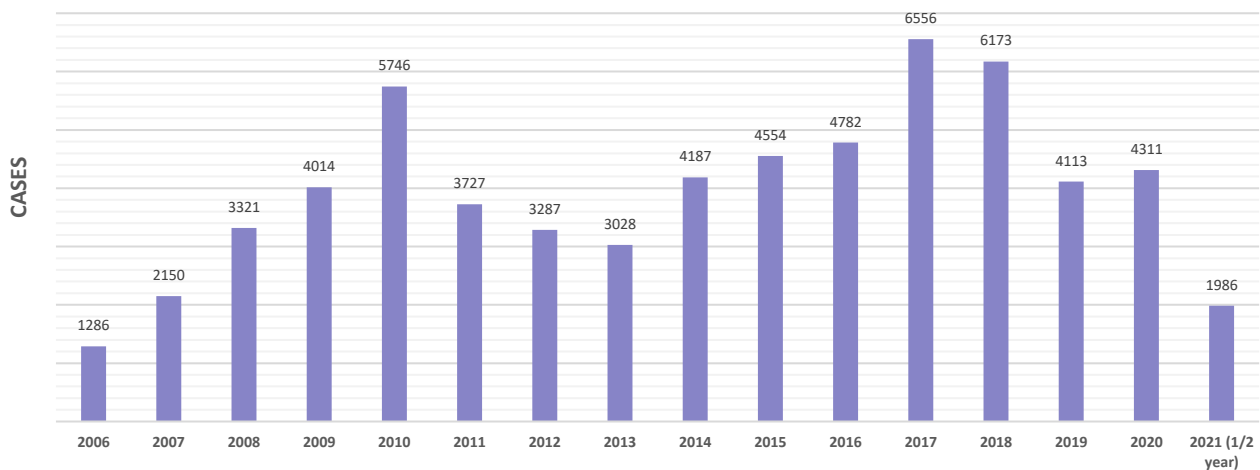
Aside from the day-to-day Planning continues to be busy with a variety of transportation projects – some wrapping up and some kicking off! Our transportation projects staff is actively working on include the North Bypass Corridor Study, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor Feasibility Study and the Safe Routes to School Plan Update.



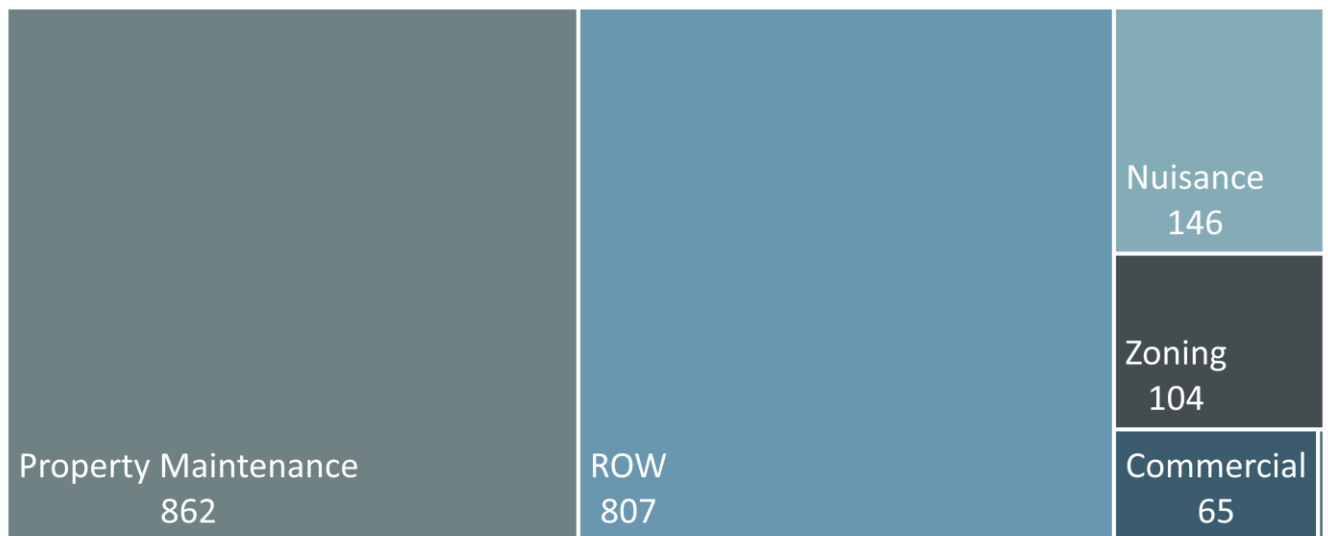
## Code Enforcement Improving Neighborhoods

Each year Code Enforcement Officers write 100's of parking tickets in neighborhoods throughout Billings. Our most popular ticket is for storing an un-attached boat or camper trailer on the street. The current fine for this ticket is \$10. Our second most popular parking ticket is for parking on or over a public sidewalk. This ticket costs \$25. Since the CE Division started writing parking tickets in November 2016, over 3,000 parking tickets have been issued, assessing over \$57,000 in fines – but more importantly, helping people solve parking issues in their neighborhoods.

### CE Cases Year to Year



### 1st Half 2021 - CE Types of Cases







## City Council awards CDBG-CV Funding to local organizations

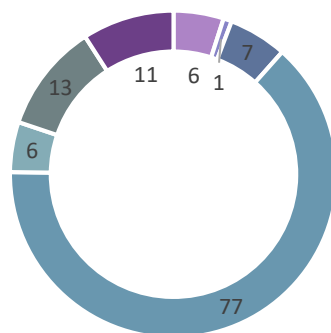
The City of Billings was awarded Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding (**CDBG-CV**) to support coronavirus response for low-income individuals and families in Billings. Following a couple of community assessments to gather feedback from community members and social services agencies, AmeriCorps VISTA members analyzed survey data and published a detailed [Coronavirus Response Initiative Report](#). The Community Development Board then established funding priorities and City staff developed an online application process. Two local organizations responded with [grant applications](#) and the City Council reviewed and awarded grant funds during their June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Awardees include, The Salvation Army: \$55,000 for Food Delivery, Food Boxes, Meal Distribution, and Food Pantries, and The Downtown Billings Business Improvement District: \$117,715 for a new downtown public restroom.

## Billings Metro VISTA Project Members recognized by U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development!

AmeriCorps VISTA members, Amber Nichols & Blake Matthews, recently partnered with HUD's Helena Field Office, RiverStone Health, and HomeFront to promote vaccination opportunities for Billings residents. As a result of these partnerships and VISTA member efforts, they organized successful clinics where at least 35 individuals were vaccinated! In a recent HUD Happenings newsletter, Amber and Blake were celebrated for their outstanding outreach and networking abilities including their work to secure incentives for community members and their prioritization of relevant vaccine information for the public. Great work, Amber and Blake!

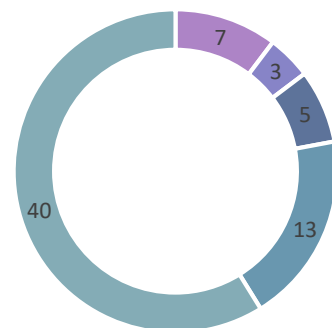


### Subdivision Submittals of 2021



- Annexation
- Master Site Plan
- Expedited Subdivision
- Major Subdivision
- BLR
- Exempt Plat
- Minor Subdivision

### Zoning Submittals of 2021

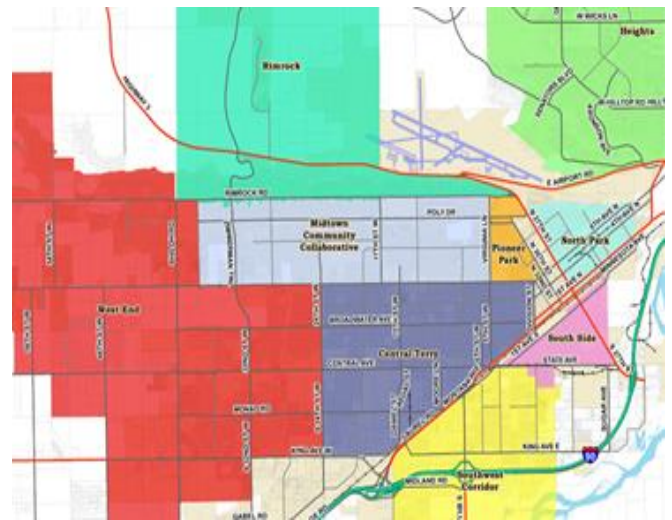


- Variance
- Special Review
- Zone Change
- Zoning Compliance
- Zoning Clarification

## An Update from the Planning & Community Services Director

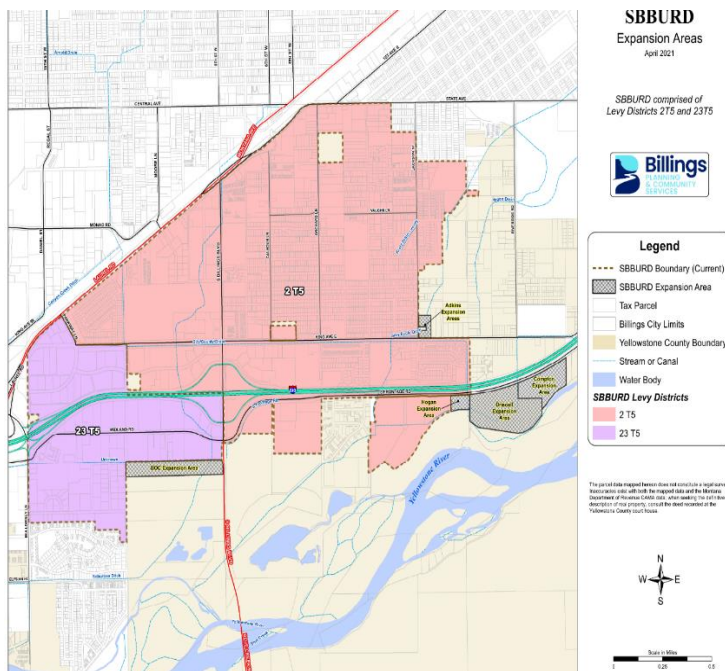
### New Neighborhood Task Force Forming

A new neighborhood task force is forming in central Billings. This task force joins 7 other active neighborhood task forces across Billings and fills in a significant gap in task force representation in the middle part of the City. Calling itself the Midtown Community Collaborative, the effort is being led by resident Neil Beyer, who is conducting outreach with residents and business owners to develop a planning committee to prepare for a kick-off meeting later this year. A Facebook group is also being set up and more information will be provided on the City of Billings Task Force Webpage. For more information about the Midtown Community Collaborative, please contact Neil at 406-272-6568.



*New Neighborhood Task Force boundaries*

### City Expands South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District



*Expansion areas shown in gray*

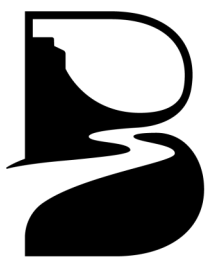
The City Council has approved adding five properties to the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District (SBBURD). The purpose of an urban renewal and tax increment district like SBBURD is for the public to invest in infrastructure and thereby encourage private investment that increases the taxable value.

South Billings Urban Renewal Association Coordinator Jim Tevlin, working with PCSD staff, made contact in early 2020 with property owners and agents interested in having property included in the SBBURD. Several of these properties face significant hurdles to development with property conditions and cleanups, and public infrastructure needs that align with the goals and purpose of urban renewal efforts in South Billings. The total acreage of the property included is about 80 acres. Most properties had to be annexed and re-zoned prior to the Council formally expanding the SBBURD. These annexations and zone changes were approved by the Council on July 12.





## AUGUST 2021 DEPARTMENT REPORT



**Billings**  
PUBLIC  
WORKS

*"Exceed expectations through  
innovation, integrity, and  
service to the community."*

**DEPARTMENT VISION STATEMENT**



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**DEBI MELING, PE**  
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

*The first half of 2021 has had it's share of challenges. Primarily due to staff shortages, we have taken a hard look at the services we provide and prioritized those services from those we absolutely must continue to provide to those that we probably never should have provided in the first place. This is a review we were planning to do at some point but the shortage of staff accelerated the process. Public*

*Works takes great pride in the work we do and the amazing service we provide for a very good value so reducing services in any way goes against the grain for most of us. That being said, we believe it is time to focus on providing the services that we should be doing and ending those services that we should not. The biggest change to the entire city will be the reduction of the solid waste pickup. There is a description of the new plan included later in this report but generally, we are moving from weekly pickup to monthly pickup of extras. Most solid waste collection companies do not provide this service at all and if they do, it is for a fee. At this time, even with a fee, we cannot continue to pick up weekly due to lack of drivers. When and if we move to a "pay as you throw" system similar to what most cities have, this schedule may change again. The next change is a reduction of areas that the city currently mows. The city code puts the requirement to maintain landscaping of the boulevards and alley areas onto adjacent property owner. The vast majority of the city boulevards and alleys are maintained in that manner. However, over time, the city has maintained some areas that fall under the adjacent property owners responsibility. In order to create equity as well as use city crews for work that benefits the entire city, we will discontinue this practice. Another service change, which you have already seen, is the use of potable water. This one is not something we want to do and isn't based on staffing, it's based on a long, hot, dry summer coming on the heels of a very dry winter. The river is low and the demand for water is extremely high. Anything I write here will probably be out of date by the time it's printed, so I will keep the council updated through the council meetings and emails as to this situation. While our tendency it to try to produce as much water as we possibly can for as long as we can, that may not be the best response in this case. This report also shows some of the ...*

*Continue on page 7*



## Now, That's Dandy!

If you live in a newly completed neighborhood, or one that is currently under construction, then you may have seen some bright orange bags in the storm drain inlets.

These bright orange bags are called "Dandy Bags" and they are a last defense to protect the Yellowstone River from sediment and debris that accumulate during construction. When maintained properly they are a good barrier to keep remnants from construction out of the River, but without proper maintenance they are no longer able to function at intended.

The company that developed the neighborhood is responsible for inspecting and cleaning them, however, once plots are sold and other contractors start building houses on-site, these can be overlooked. If you see a Dandy Bag that may be past its prime and could use some attention, please contact the Environmental Affairs office at 406-247-8663, so we can help mitigate the situation.



**NEW DANDY BAG**



**DANDY BAG NEEDING ATTENTION**

## *Ditch Stabilization at BBWA Canal*

*Immediately upon receiving notification of a slope stability issue below the BBWA canal where it enters the tunnel through the Rimrock formation, the Public Works Department sprang into action.*

*Communication played a major role in project success and included coordination with Yellowstone County Emergency and Disaster, City officials, and BBWA officials as well as notification and transparent discussions with adjacent landowners of active slope instability.*

*Steps towards remediation consisted of the Street-Traffic Division performing baseline clean-up and construction of a temporary road allowing contractors access to the slope repair site. Partnering with local geotechnical engineering firm, SK Geotechnical, local contractor, Castlerock Excavating, to removed material at the top of the slope, and national firm Geostabilization International who installed soil nails and a mesh to stabilize the slope. Thank you to all Public Works team members and incident management!*



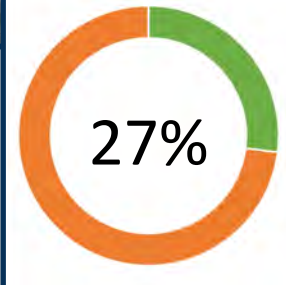
Photos courtesy of Q2 News





# CONSTRUCTION SEASON UPDATES

Follow us on social media for regular updates on our projects and activities, for additional information on any projects, please contact the Engineering Services Division at 406-657-8231.



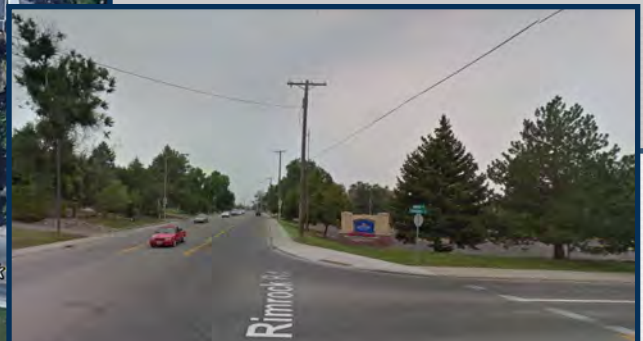
**Neighborhood Bikeway**  
Coming soon! Completion expected by October.

A bikeway is a route that is designed to be on local streets and is a through street for bikes. The goal is to make the bikeway inviting to bikes but not act as a through street for vehicles, thereby keeping the traffic volume and speed low. The bikeways are meant to create transportation routes for bicyclists on non-arterial streets which is beneficial for all commuters.

**Street Projects** around Billings are moving towards completion with an overall wrap-up to the season expected by the end of November.

## Highlights:

- Hallowell Lane  
Expected completion October 15
- 32nd Street West  
Expected completion November 30
- Wicks Lane  
Open by August 10  
Expected completion September 10



A new traffic signal is planned for the intersection of Virginia Lane and Rimrock Road. Construction is scheduled to begin August 2 and be completed by September 10.



# DIRTY JOBS: DIGESTERS

## Primary Digester Cleaning and Improvements

The City of Billings Water Reclamation Facility uses natural biological processes to treat the wastewater that is produced throughout the city. Two critical components in the treatment process are the Primary Digesters, which consist of two 75 ft diameter by 40 feet tall tanks. During the digestion process, microorganisms (“bugs”) break down organic material in a warm environment. The contents are continuously heated to a temperature near 100 °F where the microorganisms thrive. This process decomposes organic solids.

Over time, the digesters accumulate grit, trash, debris, and heavy solids that are not removed by the “bugs” during normal operation. This buildup has a negative impact on the operation of the digester, which reduces the effective treatment capacity and leads to inadequate mixing and digestion. In addition, a crystalline material known as struvite develops on the interior surfaces of the tank and mixing equipment. As a result, these tanks are scheduled to be taken out of service every 5-10 years to remove the grit and heavy solids that remain in the tank and perform a thorough cleaning of the tank interior. While the tank was down for cleaning, other maintenance items were addressed: roof sandblasting and painting, roof perimeter seal replacement, and gas mixing system repairs.



*The current cleaning project is at 70% complete and will wrap up mid-August*



# EXTREME WEATHER



The first Monday of water restrictions marked a huge success!  
The community pulled together and provided an overall  
reduction in treated water use of 40%.

07/23/2021

## MANDATORY STAGE 1 WATER RESTRICTIONS START AUGUST 2

Billings, Mont. – In response to record temperatures and high water demands, the City of Billings has established water use restrictions as allowed by the Billings Municipal Code and the City's Rules and Regulations for Water and Sewer Service. The restrictions include mandatory lawn watering restrictions for properties that use the City's treated water. The City-wide restrictions are effective August 2, 2021, and will remain in effect until September 15, 2021. The City is monitoring water use and restrictions are subject to change as circumstances progress.

### **STAGE 1 WATER RESTRICTIONS:**

No Lawn Watering on Mondays (12:00 am to 11:59 pm) for All Residential, Business, or Government Properties, including Parks within the City limits whether served by the City of Billings or Heights Water District.

**Exceptions:** All properties and parks that are served by a well or irrigation ditch for lawn watering are not subject to the Monday restriction.

While area drought conditions are of concern, the primary reasons for the Stage 1 restrictions are to address equipment capacity, overheating issues, and to allow water tanks to fully fill. The demand for water has been extremely high since the beginning of June necessitating the use of all treatment processes and equipment. Generally, this level of demand is only seen for a couple of weeks in August. This sustained operation at these demands and high ambient temperatures puts equipment at risk of failure. Additionally, low river conditions increase moss and debris scour which can clog treatment processes. To avoid equipment failure, demands need to be reduced to allow for maintenance. Also, with the sustained high demand, the reservoirs cannot be filled each day which results in lowered water pressure and less water available for fire protection.

Please do not over-water on Tuesdays to make up for the Monday restriction. Should Stage 1 measures be effective, further restrictions in Stage 2 or Stage 3 can be averted. These restrictions could include alternate day lawn watering, time of day prohibitions of lawn watering, or ban on lawn watering.

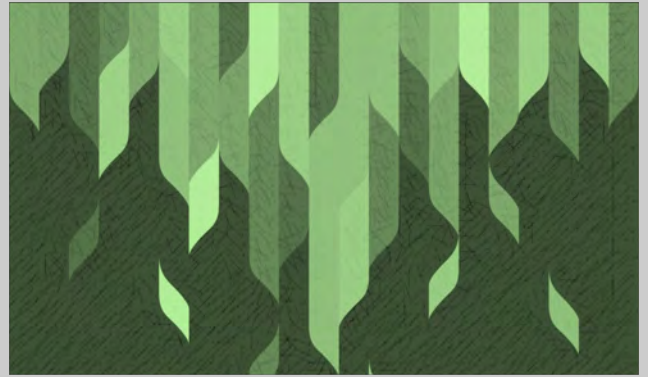
We understand the inconvenience for residents. Please recognize the necessity of these restrictions to ensure that we can deliver water throughout this long, dry summer. Residents can contact the Public Works Department at (406) 657-8230 with questions or concerns.





## DIRECTOR'S LETTER *CONTINUED*

challenges we've seen with the river and the Water Treatment Plant. I realize this all sounds dire, but the good news is that we are continuing to provide great service to this community every day, even with these changes. We have important projects underway including Wicks Lane, Hallowell Lane, 32nd Street West, the downtown conversion, and many more. The staff is also performing above and beyond, day after day. At the Water Treatment Plant, our operators devised a method to improve a process and saved the city over \$10,000. At that lab, one of our chemists saved the city over \$3,000 by re-searching a piece of equipment and fixing it instead of having to purchase a new one. We had two solid waste drivers who stopped to help a lady and her young child who had broken down in the middle of a busy street despite the fact that they had over 1,000 stops scheduled that day. These are just a few examples of things the staff does every day to make the city better and there are many, many more employees that are doing great things day in and day out.



**Please,  
do not dump  
leaves into  
City streets and  
alleys.**



Billings, Montana City Code (BMCC)  
Sec. 21-202. Duty of owner or occupant

## ANNUAL HOLIDAY CLOSURES

City offices are closed for the following holidays, Solid Waste Service closures and delays are listed below:

| HOLIDAY                | DATE                           | COLLECTION      | LANDFILL             |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Labor Day              | Monday, September 6            | Delayed one day | Closed               |
| Veteran's Day          | Thursday, November 11          | On Schedule     | Open                 |
| Thanksgiving           | Thursday, November 25          | Delayed one day | Closed               |
| Day After Thanksgiving | Friday, November 26            | Delayed one day | Open                 |
| Christmas              | Friday, December 24 (observed) | On Schedule     | Closed Sat. 12/25/21 |
| New Year's Day         | Friday, December 31 (observed) | On Schedule     | Closed Sat. 1/1/22   |



**Please, note that yard waste pick-up ends  
the last full week of November, with the final  
route closing on Saturday November 27.**

## DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

Construction is complete and both 29th and 30th streets downtown are open for travel.

Improvement include two-way traffic movement, Shared Lane Markings (SLMs or “sharrows”) and back-in angle parking.

Back-in angle parking may be new to Billings but has been successfully implemented in other cities across the United States.

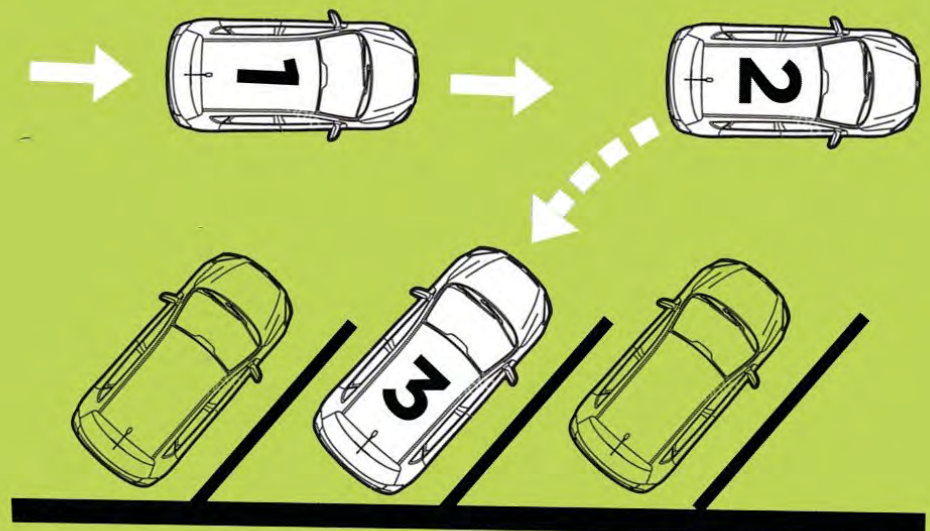
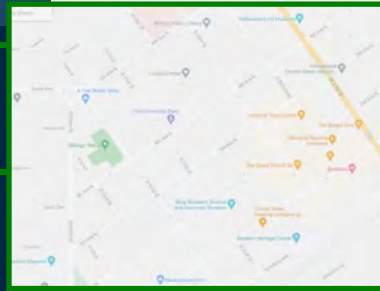
Benefits include:

- Better line of sight for drivers exiting parking spaces to see cyclists, pedestrians and other vehicles.
- Safer position to access vehicle storage to load and unload.
- Best position for exiting parked vehicle, allowing direct movement to the sidewalk– not towards moving traffic.

### It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Use your right turn signal to let other drivers know you are going to park
2. Drive forward just past the space you intend to use and stop
3. Reverse into the parking space, using the pavement markings to guide you

When you are ready to leave, use your signal and yield to oncoming traffic.



1. Signal

2. Stop

3. Reverse



## Right-of-Way Maintenance

The City of Billings Public Works Department regularly reviews policy and procedures to ensure efficiency and equitability in our service to the community. As a result of these efforts, the Street-Traffic Division will be changing mowing and maintenance practices for certain areas to apply the rules set-forth by the adopted City Code consistently.

In areas where service practices will change, the owners of adjacent properties have been notified that those locations are reverting to owner responsibility for maintenance and care.

These measures are expected to save about a week of labor each month, allowing staff the time they need to address outstanding maintenance needs for City properties and to continue overall service standards for all division responsibilities.

Billings, Montana City Code (BMCC), Sec. 25-204, Sec. 25-302, Sec. 25-301.

## ARTERIAL CONSTRUCTION FEES

The City Council passed Ordinance 04-5300 adopting arterial construction fees in 2004. Arterial construction fees are assessed citywide regardless of the parcel's proximity to designated arterial roadways. The arterial construction fee is a community cost, borne by the entire community. While the method of calculating assessments may not be perfect, it is equitable in that fees are based on square footage and zoning to categorize properties with respect to their current or potential ability to contribute traffic to the arterial street system. Arterial construction fees may be used to construct or reconstruct arterial roadways.

Owners of specific properties in Billings can petition for a reduction in their arterial construction fee assessment. The reductions are available for properties that are zoned either commercial, residential manufactured home, or mixed residential and are currently owner-occupied solely as a single family residence.

Arterial construction fees are assessed on annual tax notices that are sent each November. Petitions need to be completed and returned to the Public Works Department by August 31 of each year to provide a reduction of the arterial construction fee for the applicable tax year.

File a petition online at:

<https://www.billingsmtpublicworks.gov/FormCenter/ONLINE-FORMS-5/Petition-for-Reduction-of-Arterial-Const-64>

Will receive proper maintenance

Reverting to property owner

Reverting to property owner

Property owner maintained

Zoning classifications have been updated for equitability, efficiency and future growth.

# WATER & WASTEWATER SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENTS

As part of the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), aging service main lines for both water and sanitary sewer are replaced. Currently crews replace approximately 3,000 feet of each service annually.

In addition to these service main line rehabilitations, which may include increased capacity replacements as needed, any outdated service lines connecting the primary main to a service meter are also replaced under the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) program.

Drinking water quality testing takes place throughout the process and education and resources are provided to customers within the project area.

Public Works is preparing to launch a service line inventory campaign and will start public outreach to any properties that have an unknown or outdated service line material on record. Community participation will be crucial for success. Learn more about your drinking water and service lines at:

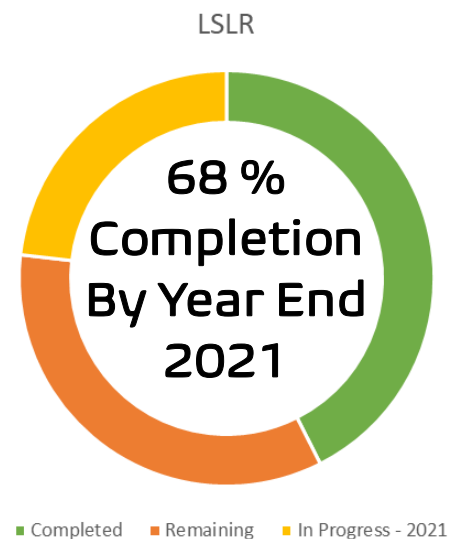
[billingsmtpublicworks.gov](http://billingsmtpublicworks.gov)

Drinking Water



***The City of Billings proactively implemented an aggressive lead service line replacement plan in 2019***

**Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Program**





## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) PROCESS



The CIP is a five-year program that identifies needs for construction of capital projects or improvements to the City's infrastructure. Each update is created with input from the public and direction from the City Council.

A capital project is a project that costs \$25,000 or more and results in a permanent addition to the City's asset through the acquisition of property, new construction, or rehabilitation of an existing facility to a like-new condition.

Public input is an important first step in creating the annual update to the CIP. The public may participate by attending presentations and meetings, or at any time by completing a CIP Project Request form.

Learn more at:

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/2662/Capital-Improvement-Plan-CIP>



## RECOMMENDED ROUTES TO SCHOOL



Believe it or not, the time has come for back to school planning. Traveling to and from school can be a fun and healthy activity for children, and there are a series of designated routes for each area school. These routes provide the safest path for children to travel, including appropriate street crossing areas and crossing guards in many instances.

Learn more at:

[billingsmtpublicworks.gov](http://billingsmtpublicworks.gov)

School Zones & Recommended Routes

# SOLID WASTE SERVICES

**Beginning  
September 6, 2021  
Residential extras  
collection is  
moving from a weekly  
to monthly schedule for  
both 90 gallon and 300  
gallon services**



Be sure to cover your load if  
you are hauling waste to  
Billings Regional Landfill

**Hours of Operation**  
Monday through Saturday  
8:00 AM to 5:30 PM  
Closed Sundays and Holidays



Providing the best, most efficient service possible to our customers is the core of our mission at Public Works. Many times, this means taking a hard look at how things are currently being done and measuring our success against potential improvements.

This has been the case with our residential collection services, which has resulted in program revisions, clarifications to services and limits that will help our staff best serve the community as a whole.

The primary change is the frequency of extras collection. Moving to a reduced schedule will allow staff to focus on maintaining overall service excellence. Additionally, existing services rules will be enforced, establishing greater equity in service for all customers. Guidelines are shown below by service type:

## Residential Extras Program

Includes standard household waste and must be:

- Bagged or boxed
- Less than 75 LBS
- Branches must be bundled and not to exceed:
  - 4 feet in length
  - 75 LBS
  - 2 feet in diameter (individual branches 6" in diameter)

## Residential Bulky Collection

Includes oversized branches, furniture, mattresses, appliances, etc., and must be:

- Scheduled for pick-up
- Assessed a fee for service

## Construction & Demolition Debris

Includes windows, drywall, plywood, lumber, cabinets, flooring etc., and:

- **Not** collected as extras or bulky
- Temporary container rentals are available

Visit our dedicated Garbage Collection page to find the monthly extras pick-up schedule, route maps, detailed information about accepted items and requirements for extra self-owned containers at

[billingsmtpublicworks.gov](http://billingsmtpublicworks.gov)





## IN THE NEWS

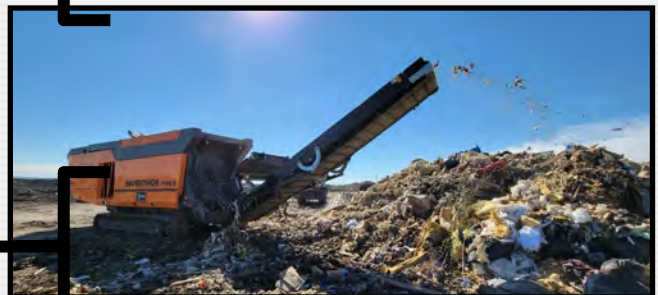
You may have seen Public Works in the news this year, including stories like the ribbon cutting at the new Landfill facilities. Find service updates on our website and social media outlets anytime.

We share televised and digital messaging through our partners at KTVQ-Q2 and their affiliates all year.

## WANT MORE?

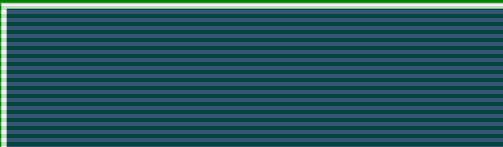
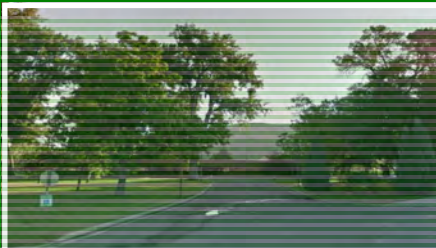
Find detailed information about all aspects of the Public Works Department online at [billingsmtpublicworks.gov](http://billingsmtpublicworks.gov)

Stay informed with frequent updates, alerts and notices on construction projects, utility services, holiday schedules, job opportunities as well as helpful information like water saving tips by following us on your favorite social media outlet:  
**facebook • instagram • twitter**  
**@billingsmtpublicworks**



View current opportunities and apply online at:  
[billingsmt.gov](http://billingsmt.gov)





EXCELLENCE • INNOVATION • INTEGRITY

## CONTACT US

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Administration                           | 406-657-8230 |
| Engineering Services                     | 406-657-8231 |
| Environmental Affairs                    | 406-247-8663 |
| Solid Waste Services                     | 406-657-8285 |
| Street-Traffic Maintenance               | 406-657-8250 |
| Utilities Customer Service               | 406-657-8315 |
| Utility Emergency ( <i>After Hours</i> ) | 406-657-8353 |

| Community Partners              | Phone        |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Billings Heights Water District | 406-252-0539 |
| Montana-Dakota Utilities        | 406-896-4250 |
| Northwestern Energy             | 888-467-2669 |



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT  
ADMINISTRATION  
2224 Montana Ave  
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P 406.657.8230  
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