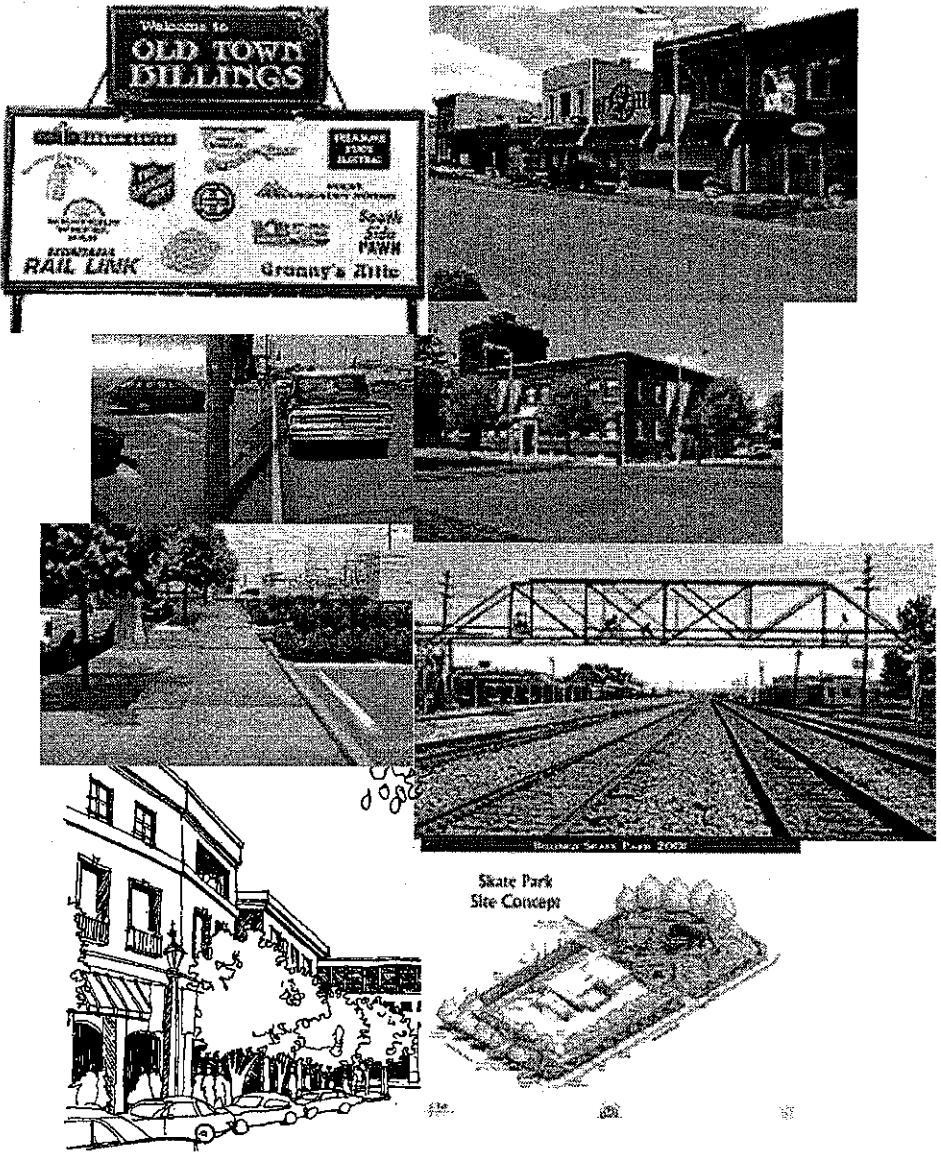


MINNESOTA AVENUE MASTER PLAN



PREPARED BY



FISCHER & ASSOCIATES
MASTER PLANNERS • COMMUNITY PLANNERS

AND



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- Executive Summary of "Downtown Billings Urban Design Sketchbook"
- Dated: 2000
- Prepared by: Seven Billings Architectural Firms

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT HISTORY

The Community Development Board at the request of several of the Minnesota Avenue property owners funded the planning study. Informal door-to-door surveys of owners and businesses indicated there was support for developing a streetscape improvement plan. Fischer & Associates was retained to facilitate neighborhood discussions. The process and approach were similar to the process other downtown neighborhoods had followed to accomplish revitalization.

PROJECT SCOPE

Initially the planning area was limited to Minnesota Avenue between 27th and 30th Streets. The initial grant request proposed a planning process consisting of a series of meetings with the property owners in this area to determine needs, priorities and funding strategies for a streetscape project. The study area was expanded to include the corridor east of 27th Street because several new projects were being planned including:

- Gateway Project proposed by Downtown Billings Partnership
- Skateboard Park east of 27th Street between First Avenue South and Minnesota Avenue
- Pedestrian Bridge and Monument over the railroad tracks at 25th Street
- New Parking lots at 25th and 27th Streets
- Extension of BikeNet along 25th Street and Minnesota Avenue
- Conoco Triangle Redevelopment
- Landscape Improvements at the Conoco Refinery
- Redevelopment of an office building on 28th Street and Minnesota Avenue
- Expansion of the Western Heritage Center

PROJECT GOALS

The neighborhood hired facilitators with community planning expertise, to help determine needs, priorities and funding strategies for improvements to the neighborhood. The process included neighborhood meetings, education and technical analysis. The products include:

- A brief report on the outcomes of the planning process including a summary of issues, recommendations and priorities.
- Sketch plan of proposed and recommended improvements.
- Budget level cost estimates for proposed projects and improvements.
- Funding strategies for implementing improvements. Strategies address approaching implementation as a single project or as a series of smaller projects.
- Providing assistance to property owners with prioritization of projects.

ISSUES AND NEW PROJECTS

IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF MINNESOTA AVENUE

ISSUE

Minnesota Avenue business and property owners have expressed interest in improving the overall appearance and attractiveness of the street. They recognize a need to improve the curb appeal to attract customers, new businesses and redevelopment. Property Owners have expressed a concern that the recommendations be achievable and affordable. A few have expressed concern that the streetscape improvement north of the tracks have "over gentrified" the neighborhood and suggest the development of Minnesota Avenue should be less elaborate.

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

A planned streetscape will improve the appearance of the neighborhood. Continuity of design elements will increase the recognition of Minnesota Avenue/Old Town as a distinct district and a part of downtown. A series of recommendations, structured as three alternatives, have been developed to respond to property owner requests and concerns. Digital photo simulations illustrate how the retail section of the neighborhood would look if the recommendations were implemented.

ALTERNATIVE 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative 1 responds to property owner concerns regarding limited funds and the need to avoid "expensive and elaborate" proposals. The recommendation should be viewed as a first step in the revitalization of Minnesota Avenue. None of the actions recommended preclude additional enhancements or a more comprehensive streetscape project in the future.

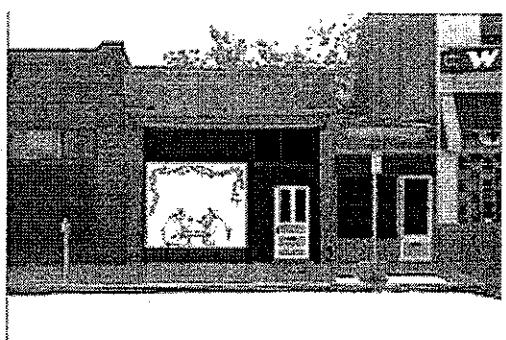


Photo simulation illustrates facade touched up with paint and broken windows replaced with black plywood. The windows could also be filled in with murals of interior scenes.

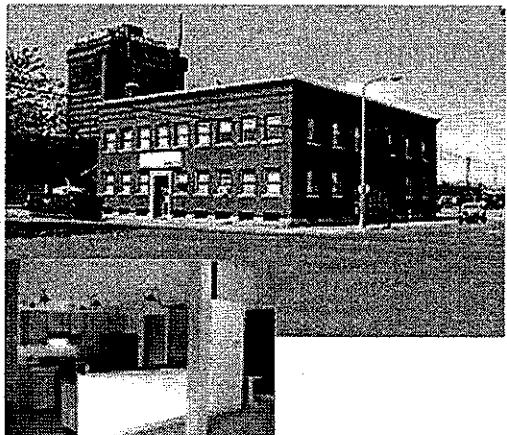
SMALL SCALE ENHANCEMENTS

Small scale enhancements consisting of freestanding planters, hanging flower baskets and banners on light poles could be implemented at a relatively low cost with property owner sponsorship.

IMPROVED MAINTENANCE & BUILDING STABILIZATION

Improved maintenance would immediately improve the attractiveness of the neighborhood. Removing weeds, reducing trash, repairing sidewalks and stabilizing the existing structures would convey a sense of ownership and care.





PROPERTY OWNER IMPROVEMENTS

Several property owners have and continue to make improvements. Examples include the Kuchera Furniture Building renovation into an architectural office with loft housing, the pocket park and upper level housing developed by Stephens Law Office, building facade renovations undertaken by Marshall Joinery and new signs and awnings on a number of properties. This type of initiative should continue. Business and property owners should be made aware of the assistance programs that are available to them.



NEIGHBORHOOD PROMOTIONS

Community awareness of the Old Town Neighborhood is increased when promotions and events involve several businesses. Participation of the galleries in the Art Walk event has succeeded in inviting new people into the neighborhood. Business owners should consider joint sponsorship of events and promotions. The Artists' and Farmers Market are examples of successful Montana Avenue events. Flea markets, book sales, craft fairs, historical events or noontime BBQ's could be considered for Minnesota Avenue. Perhaps events such as the Western Heritage Center Transportation Days could be jointly sponsored and located on Minnesota Avenue.



DOWNTOWN EVENT

Transportation Days sponsored annually by The Western Heritage Center.

ALTERNATIVE 2 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative 2 responds to property owners expressing interest in repairing and replacing deteriorated streets and walks to city standards, exploring parking alternatives and improving the overall appearance of the neighborhood. Alternative 2 can be accomplished through a series of small projects without reliance on a special improvement district.

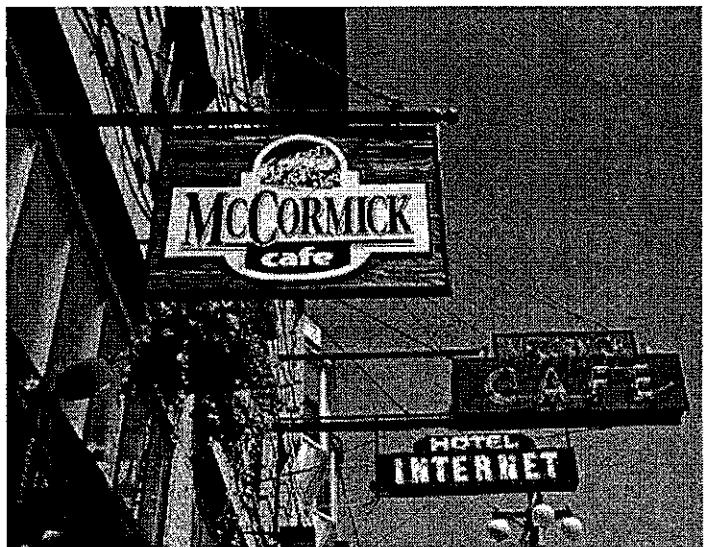
DESIGN GUIDELINES

Prior to embarking upon a costly construction project, property owners are encouraged to reach consensus on the vision for the neighborhood. A shared vision can be implemented through a series of small projects by individual property owners or tenants, or by a larger communal project where the cost of district-wide improvements are shared by all property owners. The urban design guidelines included in the "Urban Design Study" dated 1999 are included as an appendix to this document. Property owners are encouraged to review, edit and adopt these recommendations. The guidelines will become requirements if the neighborhood decides to pursue amending of current regulations.

Recommended guidelines for the neighborhood address:

- Organizing Elements
- Land Use Patterns & Housing Potential
- Buildings, Significant Historic Structures or Large
- Footprint Size Structures
- Building Mass, Transparency, Scale, Setback, Density
- Architectural Details: Style, Age, Roofline, Window Patterns, Materials, Color
- Streetscape, Green Space and Alleys
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Parking
- Circulation, Connections and Traffic (including cars, emergency and delivery vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian connections)

It is recommended that Minnesota property owners adopt landscape and signage ordinances.



Example of historic signs now allowed in the Historic District as a result of the new sign ordinance.

UPGRADE SIDEWALKS, CURBS & GUTTERS



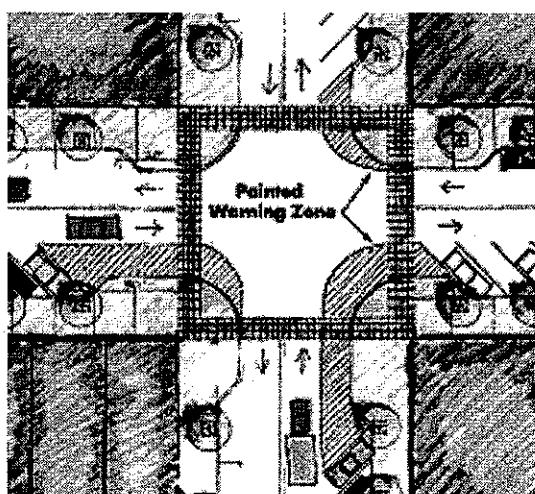
Existing conditions.



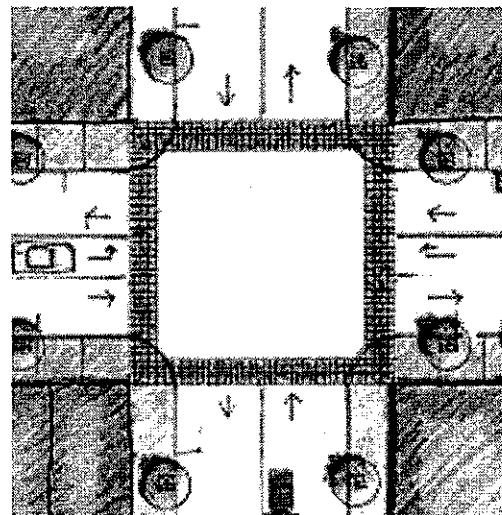
Photo simulation illustrating improved visual quality associated with improved maintenance.

City Code requires property owners to maintain improvements within the public right-of-way adjacent to properties. The city has the authority to require property owners to replace curb, gutter and sidewalks when they become unsafe or do not meet standards. There are a number of walks along Minnesota Avenue that are substandard and do not meet code. Soon property owners may be faced with the expense of replacement. The neighborhood may find it is more cost effective to do an area-wide project rather than a series of spot improvement projects.

Some property owners have requested curb extensions similar to those installed along Montana Avenue and North Broadway Street, but without the decorative paving. This type of improvement will require participation of a group of property owners. For safety, the curb extensions need to be constructed in pairs. Curb extensions are expensive, as they require reconstruction of curbs, gutters and sidewalks and relocation of storm drains. This alternative is described in Alternative 3.



Example of intersection enhancements with curb extensions.



Example of intersection enhancements without curb extensions.

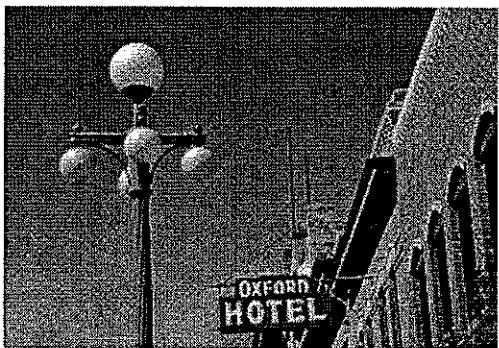
IMPROVE STREETS AND STORM DRAINAGE

STREETS

The City of Billings Public Works Engineering Division oversees the street maintenance program, which is funded annually. The Engineering Department identifies priority projects for overlay and chipseal.

STORM DRAINAGE

The City of Billings Public Works Engineering Division oversees the storm drainage program. Storm lines in Minnesota Avenue have recently been checked by video camera. In addition to being old, several problems have been identified. Repair or replacement west of 27th Street is not scheduled. East of 27th Street, a Conoco Triangle S.I.D. is currently under consideration. If property owners were supportive, it might be possible to include Minnesota Avenue in the Improvement District. The City Planning Office is coordinating the project.



Example of historic street lights used on Montana Avenue

ALTERNATIVE 3 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative 3 was developed in response to a few property owners' request for a comprehensive approach to the streetscape. These individuals recognize that individuals cannot accomplish certain improvements as a series of small projects.

For example:

- Street lights need to be engineered and designed for a district.
- Although property owners can plant individual trees, creating a tree-lined street requires the participation of many property owners.
- Urban tree planting benefit from an automatic watering system which is more cost effective when it is designed to water several trees.
- Curb extensions are expensive and require participation in costs from mid block property owners.
- Crosswalks benefit the entire neighborhood. They are unlikely to be installed without participation of the entire neighborhood. Minnesota Avenue property owners have requested a simple solution without color texture.



Illustration of decorative crosswalk on Montana Avenue

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

ALTERNATIVE 1 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- The recommendation associated with Alternative 1 can be achieved with individual property owners assuming responsibility. While a property owners' association is recommended it is not a requirement.
- Work with the City Code Enforcement Officer to insure properties are properly maintained.
- Form a Minnesota Avenue Property Owners Group and seek representation of the Downtown Billing Partnership.
- Join the Downtown Billings Association and take advantage of their marketing, promotion and event planning expertise.
- Seek technical planning assistance regarding building preservation and facade restoration from the Architect's bank associated with the Downtown Billings Partnership.
- Partner with other groups and projects such as the Conoco Triangle S.I.D.

ALTERNATIVE 2 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Successful implementation of the recommendation associated with Alternative 2 will require a commitment to act collectively and reach consensus on the long-term vision for the neighborhood. If a high degree of commitment and consensus is achieved, design guidelines can be formulated as regulations. With a lesser degree of consensus, the recommendations will remain as guidelines. Montana Avenue property owners were successful in working together to have guidelines on signs adopted as an ordinance revision.
- The recommendations included in Alternative 2 do not require property owner participation in improvement and maintenance districts. Were property owners to support this approach, the end result is likely to be better designed and more cohesive. Without an improvement district, the street infrastructure will slowly be brought to standards using city ordinances and established process for building permits.

ALTERNATIVE 3 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Implementing recommendations of Alternative 3 will require a high degree of consensus and commitment to a communal project. Creation of a Special Improvement and Maintenance District is the most likely means of paying for improvements. Property owners will need to invest in neighborhood improvements rather than improvements focused solely on their individual properties. One advantage of this approach may be the availability of matching and grant funds. As examples, property owners on Montana Avenue paid 50% of the overall cost of streetscape improvements. Property owners on North Broadway Street are paying less than 25% of the costs.
- If the neighborhood were to undertake a larger project, planning of surface improvements needs to be closely coordinated with underground improvements. Because of the age of the infrastructure, the condition of the street and current codes related to

ADA compliance, it is anticipated that a full street reconstruction will be required. At this point in time, it is unlikely property owners have the resources to commit to this scale of project, however a comprehensive streetscape project is a realistic long-term goal.

COSTS & FUNDING STRATEGIES

ALTERNATIVE 1 - COSTS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

COSTS

Improved maintenance	Varies - Owner Responsibility
Building stabilization	Varies
Spot repair and replacement of sidewalks	\$7.50/SF
Spot replacement of curbs and gutters	\$25.00/LF

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Technical assistance with code enforcement is available through the City of Billings Development Service Division.

New curbs and walks assistance with financing is available through the Spot Improvement program, administered by the City Engineers' Office.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE - Take advantage of programs and organizational support described in the Property Owner Assistance Section of this report.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION - Improve visitation and awareness of the neighborhood by participating or cosponsoring events. A few are listed below:

Transportation Days - Western Heritage Center
Artists Market - Montana Avenue Property Owners
Art Walk - Gallery Association
Farmers Market - Yellowstone Valley Farmers and the Downtown Billings Association
Directory of Downtown Billings - Downtown Billings Association
Christmas Decorations - Downtown Billings Association

ALTERNATIVE 2 - COSTS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

COSTS

Remove and replace city walks	\$7.50/SF or \$35,500/Block Face
Remove and replace city curb & gutter	\$25.00/SF or \$ 8,200/Block Face
Urban tree planting - 7 block with irrigation	\$1,600/EA or \$11,200/Block Face
Banners - 6 block face	\$ 125/EA or \$ 750/Block Face
Hanging flower baskets - 6 block face	<u>\$ 100/EA or \$ 600/Block Face</u>
Total Per Block Face	\$56,250/Block Face

ALTERNATIVE 3 - COSTS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

COSTS

As described in Alternative 2 plus...	\$ 56,250
Curb extensions and intersections	\$ 50,000
Storm drain modifications	\$ 4,500
Decorative crosswalks - grey	\$ 4,000
Decorative Pavement (25%) add \$2.00/SF	\$ 2,500
Furniture Budget	
4 benches/block	\$1,000/EA
2 bike racks	\$ 600/EA
7 tree guards	\$ 700/EA
7 tree grates	\$1,000/EA
Total Per Block Face	\$134,350

SAFE, ATTRACTIVE AND CONVENIENT PARKING

ISSUE

Property owners and businesses desire safe, attractive and convenient parking. Much of the parking near Minnesota Avenue is located on railroad land. The Western Heritage Center, downtown employees and downtown visitors use this parking. Many of the parking lots on the north side of Minnesota Avenue are privately operated under lease agreements with the railroad. It should not be presumed that this parking would remain available to the public in perpetuity. The railroad is increasingly selling and leasing downtown lands to private owners. As downtown redevelops, it is likely some of these lots will become development sites. Shortage of parking is not an immediate issue because there are several vacant buildings. Most business owners have requested more convenient, attractive and safer parking. This neighborhood has not been involved in the development of downtown parking plans. Current plans for conversion to angled parking do not address streets south of the tracks.

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

- PLAN TO ASSURE THE LONG TERM AVAILABILITY OF SAFE, CONVENIENT AND ATTRACTIVE PARKING.**

Neighborhood representatives should work with the city and the railroad to assure parking needs are met. A comprehensive parking plan should be developed; inventoring what exists and addressing immediate and long term parking needs. The City of Billing Parking Committee headed by the Director of Finance is the entity responsible for determining where city-managed public parking (both on and off street and including structures) will be located and how they are operated. A Public Advisory Board meets monthly to review requests and make recommendations. Citizens desiring a seat on the board should direct their inquiry to the Mayor, who is responsible for the appointments.

- IMPROVE CONVENIENCE OF PARKING BY REMOVING METERS, ADJUSTING DURATION AND COORDINATED PLANNING OF LOADING, NO PARKING AND OTHER SPECIAL PARKING ZONES.**

Parking in the neighborhood should be looked at comprehensively in coordination with the downtown parking commission. Removing unnecessary loading and no parking zones and discouraging employees from parking on streets can often gain more spaces. ADA compliant handicap parking spaces should be introduced, particularly in the retail area.

Property owners along Minnesota Avenue have petitioned the parking commission to remove parking meters along Minnesota Avenue west of 2th Street. A trial run using bags is recommended to determine if this approach is preferable. Some neighborhoods experience blatant disregard for parking limits when meters are removed.

- IMPROVE AVAILABILITY OF PARKING BY INTRODUCING OFF-STREET PARKING LOTS.**

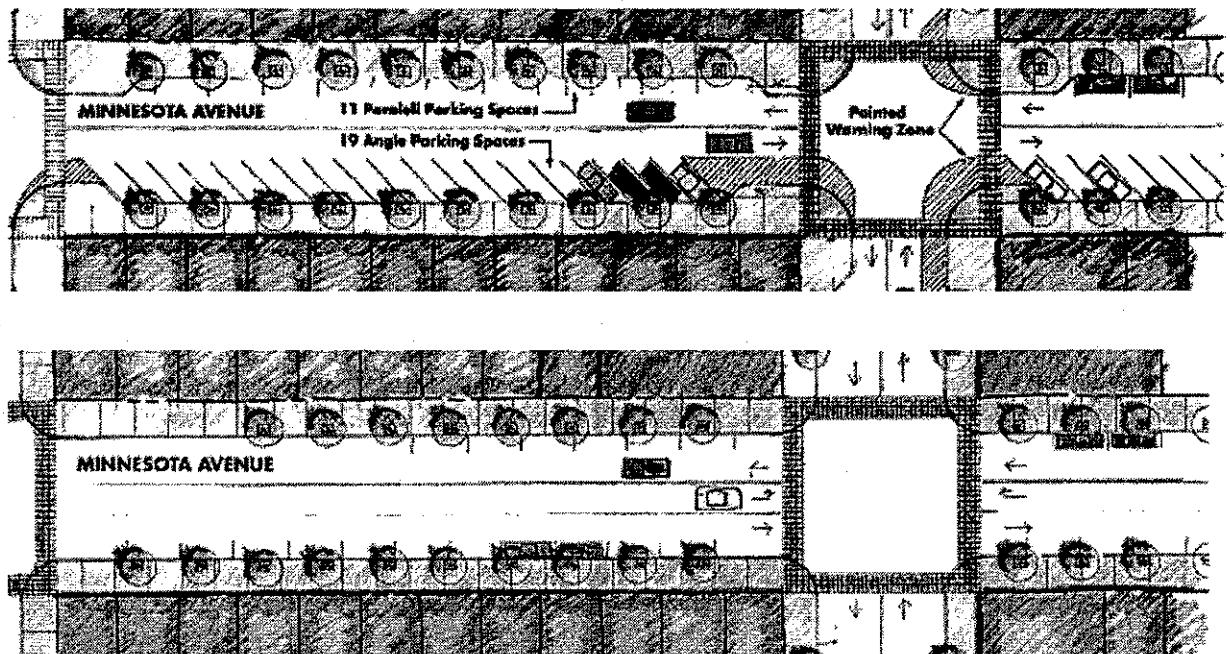
A city owned and operated parking lot is currently under construction on the southeast intersection of 27th Street and Minnesota Avenue. The lot is designed to provide 66 new car parking spaces, as well as 8 RV spaces and 4 ADA spaces. The original design was not consistent with recommendations in the Urban Design Sketchbook. Property owners

should become involved in monitoring new development proposals through participation on City Boards and participation on Downtown Partnership Committees. Refer to the Master Plan for details of design.

A second parking lot is proposed between the railroad and Minnesota Avenue just north of 25th Street. The proposal includes parking for cars and oversized vehicles. A proposed pedestrian bridge will link Minnesota Avenue to Montana Avenue near the Depot. Refer

- **INCREASE ON-STREET PARKING THROUGH INTRODUCTION OF DIAGONAL PARKING.**

The sketches illustrate two alternative on-street parking configurations. A recent study by Marvin and Associates for downtown north of the tracks concluded that there would be a 20%-25% net gain of spaces if on-street angled parking were introduced. Currently, there are approximately 14 parallel parking spaces per 300' block. On a block with alley approaches and no drive approaches, five additional spaces are gained in diagonal parking is introduced on one side of the street. Diagonal parking is recommended near-term along Minnesota Avenue in the retail core (27th to 30th) and along 28th Street and 29th Street from Montana Avenue to Minnesota Avenue. As the neighborhood develops, other locations for diagonal parking should be explored. A comprehensive assessment similar to the plan prepared by Marvin and Associates should be prepared for the Old Town neighborhood.



If diagonal parking is implemented it should be carefully coordinated with the placement of streetscape improvements. Care should be taken to avoid conflicts of car bumpers with signs, trees and furnishings.

- **REDUCE THE VISUAL IMPACT OF PARKING THROUGH SITING AND LANDSCAPING OF NEW AND EXISTING LOTS.**

A city owned and operated parking lot is currently under construction on the southeast intersection of 27th and Minnesota. As part of this planning effort the Minnesota Avenue property owners' request to include landscaping within the project was granted. Street trees will be planted along the perimeter of the lot and the islands leading into the lot will be landscaped rather than paint striped. In the future the street wall might be reinforced through the introduction of low walls or railings along the perimeter.

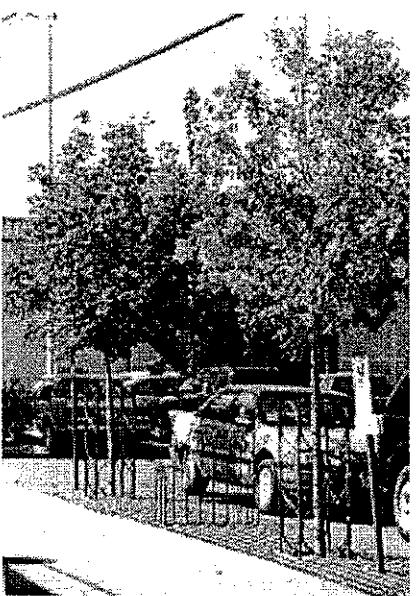
To avoid confusion and inconsistency in the future, the property owners should develop site design and landscape recommendations for parking lots in the neighborhood. The current City Landscape Ordinance does not require any landscaping within the CBD. Landscaping is required in the 27th Street Corridor Permit-zoning District. If the recommendations are adopted as part of the City Landscape Ordinance, they can be enforced as part of the building permit process. Guidelines are less formal and do not require compliance. If the neighborhood cannot reach consensus on regulation, guidelines are recommended. Many owners and builders are willing to comply with a plan if one exists.

The appearance of existing parking lots could be improved through the introduction of landscaping, architectural and signage improvements.



INTRODUCE NEW SMALL SCALE LOTS

The parking lots that have been developed behind buildings located on the north side of Montana Avenue are a good example of how small infill lots can be attractively integrated into the neighborhood.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Minnesota Avenue Property Owners should be represented on the City Parking Board. This group is responsible for constructing and operating all city-owned and on-street parking. Recommendations on Capital Improvement projects related to parking are initiated here.
- Develop a long-term plan for on and off-street parking. The availability of adequate parking is critical to attracting new development. Seek assistance from the parking committee and the finance department.
- Achieve neighborhood consensus on preferred parking options. Seek assistance from the property owners and the parking commission with implementation. Strive to get preferred solutions included in the city's five year Capital Improvement Plan.
- Work with parking commission on a "green meter" program for this neighborhood. A portion of the revenue from each of the green parking meters is directed to downtown redevelopment as opposed to the city general fund.
- Develop draft regulations for landscaping and site design of off-street parking facilities.
- Support proposals for the pedestrian bridge and new parking lot near 25th Street.

COSTS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

For budgeting purposes the following assumptions can be made regarding costs of recommended improvements:

Surface Parking Lot with Landscaping	\$ 1,000/space
Conversion to Angled Parking	\$ 3,200/300' block
Parking Garage Construction	\$ 4,000/space
Land Acquisition for Future Parking Development	\$ 300/SF purchase

Parking Inventory & Plan - Ask for assistance from Parking Board

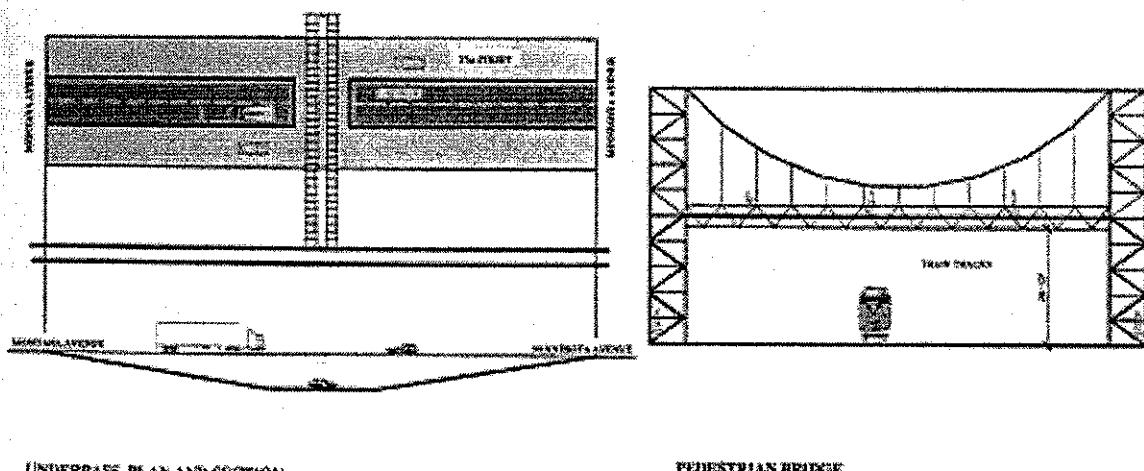
Remove Meters - City Finance/Parking Division

Site Development and Landscape Standards

- Ask for assistance from Downtown Billings Partnership and the City Planning Department

IMPROVE VEHICULAR CONNECTIONS

- A citizen's group, "Over, Under and Around", is seeking funding and support for a planning study to look at ways to reduce conflicts and delays between vehicles and trains. This group proposes to look at relocating the tracks, constructing an overpass and an underpass.
- The Urban Design Guidelines prepared by High Plains Architects includes a recommendation for a non-standard intersection design at 27th Street and the rail that would allow two lanes to pass under and two lanes at grade. The feasibility of this alternative should be explored with MDT and the City Public Works and Engineering Departments. If this cannot be achieved at 27th Street, perhaps it should be explored at North Broadway or 29th Streets, which are streets that are not on the state system.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Undertake a phased approach to neighborhood revitalization. Initial efforts will be focused on planning and consensus building. Early projects will emphasize pride of ownership expressed through improved maintenance and simple improvement by property owners to their properties. In addition some communal small scale, low cost enhancements should be pursued.

As consensus emerges on long-term vision for the neighborhood, larger scale projects emphasizing public/private partnerships may be pursued. The larger projects have the advantage of cost sharing and grant funds. The success of a larger project requires a cohesive neighborhood, and a strong commitment to a shared vision.

COSTS AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

Construction of Pedestrian Bridge	\$528,000
Over Under and Around Planning Study	\$100,000
Downtown Connector Bike Path	Funded

Visual Continuity (Phase 1)

Banners

Planters

Flower Baskets

See Page 8 for estimates

Sidewalks

Tree Planting

Streetscape Enhancements – Similar to Montana Avenue or North Broadway

Architectural Street Lights

Trees and Irrigation

Furniture

Kiosks/ Directional Signs

See Page 9 for estimates

Concrete Crosswalks

Curb Extensions

FUNDING SOURCES

STANDARD CITY SIDEWALK, CURB AND GUTTER REPLACEMENT AND REPAIRS

Spot Improvement Program

Special Improvement District

SIMPLE ENHANCEMENTS FOR VISUAL CONTINUITY

BANNER PROGRAM: The banners seen north of the tracks were purchased and installed by the Downtown Billings Association. Property owners along Minnesota Avenue could participate in the program or initiate their own.

FLOWER BASKET PROGRAM: The Downtown Billings Association manages The Flower Basket Program. It is funded through donations of property owners and the public. The Minnesota Avenue property owners might become involved by agreeing to sponsor a series of baskets along the street.

TREE PLANTING PROGRAM: Ideally trees are planted as part of a larger streetscape improvement project. This allows for the installation of an automatic watering system. Individual property owners could plant and maintain individual trees. Trees may be available through the City's Trash for Trees programs.

COMPREHENSIVE STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The two previous streetscape improvement projects on Montana Avenue and North Broadway Street represent a partnership between several groups. Property Owner contributions funded through a special improvement district account for 25% to 50% of the project cost.

Additional funding may be available from the following sources for the described items.

Montana Department of Transportation CTEP Program

Walks, lights, furniture, ADA improvement, irrigation landscape

Tax Increment Funds administered by the Downtown Billing Partnership

Planning and match for CTEP Grant

City Storm Drain Funds

Replacement of main storm line and inlets

Parking Board Funds

Angled parking and meter replacement

Public Utility Department Funds

Water line replacement, hydrants water services

Federal TSEP Grant.

Street lights, furniture, defining element, signage

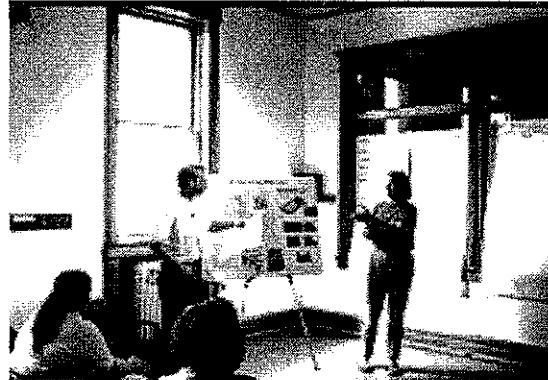
Community Development Block Grant Funds

ADA ramp and sidewalk improvements

IMPROVE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Neighborhoods become stronger through increased social interaction. There are a number of task forces and special interest groups operating in this neighborhood and Downtown. Business and property owners should be encouraged to participate in and be represented in the following groups:

- South Park Task Force
- Downtown Billing Association
- Downtown Billing Partnership
- Yellowstone County Preservation Board
- City of Billings Board
- Conoco Citizen's task Force
- BSEDA Efforts to Develop the Conoco Triangle
- Over Under and Around
- BikeNet



The purpose and contacts for each of the above are described in The Property Owner Assistance section of this report.

FUNDING

CITY PARKING FACILITY CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

City operated parking including on-street, off-street and garages are constructed, operated and maintained by the city. The City Finance Director is responsible for recommending capital improvement projects. The "Green Meter" program has been implemented up town. Certain meters are identified as locations where the revenue generated by these spaces is targeted to downtown projects.

PARKING ON RAILROAD LANDS

Private individuals who have entered into lease agreements with the railroad operate a number of parking lots on railroad lands. Parking spaces in these lots cost approximate \$15.00 per month.

LAND ACQUISITION

Minnesota Avenue falls within the Tax Increment District. Tax Increment Funds can be used for land acquisition in this neighborhood. Historically the city has used these funds to acquire several properties for redevelopment along 27th Street. The Downtown Partnership administers the Tax Increments Funds.

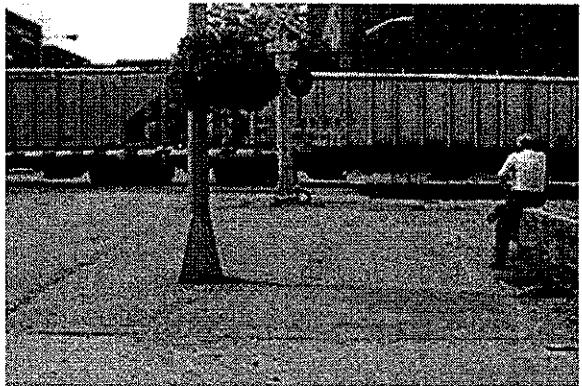
SITE DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE ORDINANCES

Site Development and Landscape Ordinances are administered by the City Planning Department and the Public Works Departments. They may be modified through a public process that will eventually require approval of the City Council. The neighborhood should request assistance from the Planning or Development Services Division. The South Park Task Force receives some planning assistance funds annually. The Partnership provided some assistance to other downtown neighborhoods for developing regulations. The Urban Design Committee of the Downtown Billings Partnership may also provide technical assistance.

IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIVITY

ISSUE

Residents, property owners and businesses south of the tracks continue to express concern about the lack of connectivity. The limited number of crossings, the lack of a grade separated crossing for pedestrians and vehicles, combined with frequent interruptions by trains being switched, are problems. In addition to the physical obstructions, the area lacks visual continuity and social connections



ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHEN NON-MOTORIZED CONNECTIONS

- The pedestrian connections between the two sides of the tracks and within the neighborhood could be improved through the continuity of sidewalks. There are several locations where sidewalks do not exist or have deteriorated. Where walks do exist they have been constructed to inconsistent standards including a mix of 5' to 15' widths, boulevard and curbside walks and the placement of handicap ramps is sporadic and inconsistent.
- Construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting two sides of the tracks is proposed north of 25th Street. This project is being promoted by a citizens group in Billings. The bridge will provide connection to the sidewalks, proposed bike path and parking.
- The next phase of the bike trail in Billings is planned to connect Coulson Park to Downtown Billings. The path will pass under Interstate 90 north of the wastewater treatment plant, travel past the Post Office connecting to 25th Street and the proposed pedestrian bridge. Neighborhood assistance may be needed to acquire private easements and retain continued support by city administration. This project is beginning to lose the support of the city administration because private property owners have been unwilling to provide easements.

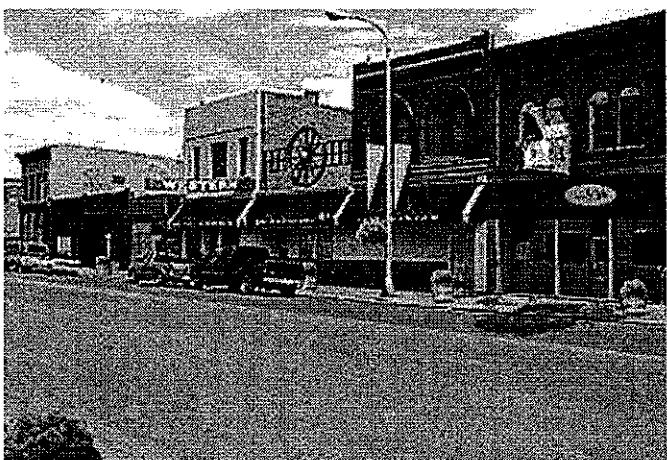


STRENGTHEN VISUAL CONNECTIONS

- With neighborhood support the pedestrian experience could be further enhanced if streetscape amenities were introduced. Amenities might include tree planting, landscaping, lighting, furniture, banners and facade improvements. Visual continuity between neighborhoods on either side of the tracks would be improved if some of the elements continued. Property owners have expressed concern that the Minnesota Avenue neighborhood not be "over gentrified". Continuing trees, flowerpots, furnishing and banners could provide the visual continuity. Historic street lights, brick details, curb extensions and cross walks are optional. Some of the details used on the North Broadway Street and Montana Avenue Streetscapes could be simplified. For instance, standard grey concrete might be used to delineate crosswalks and landscaping at corners might consist of a few free standing planters.



Photo of existing street



Digital simulation illustrates how visual connections are improved through introduction of banners and planters.



Digital simulation illustrates how visual connections are further improved by introducing street trees and streetscape improvements.

PRESERVE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF OLD TOWN

ISSUE

The building scale, streetscape, architectural styles and land uses contribute to the overall character of the district. Old Town is where the town was originally settled. Today it houses a broad mix of land uses and is the site of the oldest structure in Billings. Ghost signs and historic facades remind visitors of the past. This neighborhood serves as the southern gateway to downtown Billings.

The deterioration and lack of maintenance of many of the structures, streets and sidewalks detracts from the overall character. Lacking funds for improvements, property owners and the city should be encouraged to stabilize and maintain the existing assets.

ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Preserve, stabilize and restore historic structures.

Brick Building

2704 Minnesota Avenue

Following a fire which burned down the original wood frame building, there was nothing on this site until this two-story brick building was constructed between 1893-1896. Lung Kong purchased the property in 1896; thereafter, it housed a Chinese restaurant on the first floor and lodgings on the second. Despite the addition of stucco over the brickwork, this building is a strong example of end of the century design. The cast iron storefront by Mesker Brothers of St. Louis is a treasure. At one time, there were many buildings in downtown that featured cast iron framing and decoration on the facades; this is one of the few that remain.



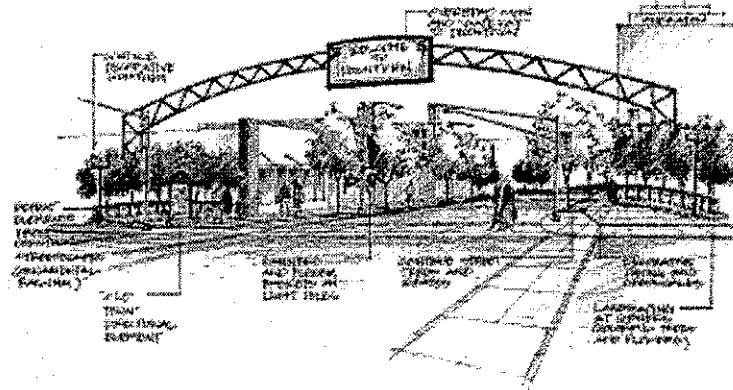
Preserve Ghost Signs and historic buildings. Develop Interpretive programs and events as a means of inviting new people into the neighborhood.

Encourage Restoration and Adaptive Re-Use of Existing Buildings.

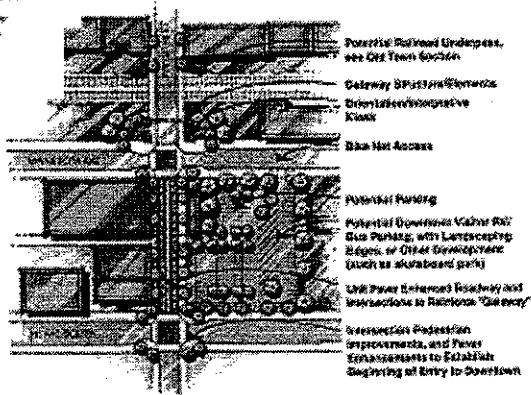


Enhance the Historic Character of the District through sensitive facade restoration signs and awnings.

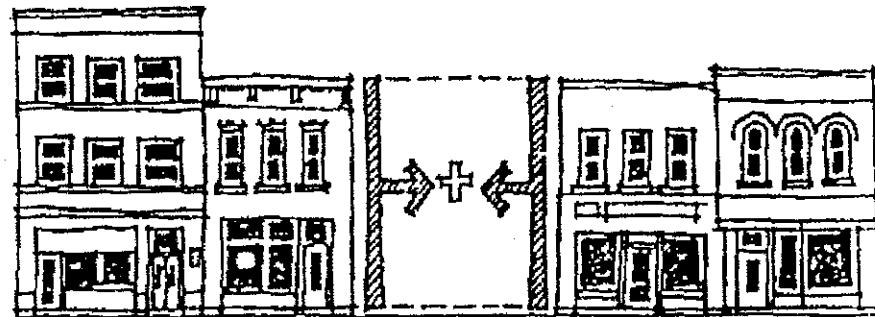
Celebrate the gateway to downtown. Emphasize this through the physical design of the street landscape and signage. Coordinate closely with the Downtown Billing Partnership on development of signage and the gateway.



Sketches illustrate two alternative gateway proposals. Gateway proposals must be coordinated with Over, Under and Around Plans and Montana Department of Transportation Standards.

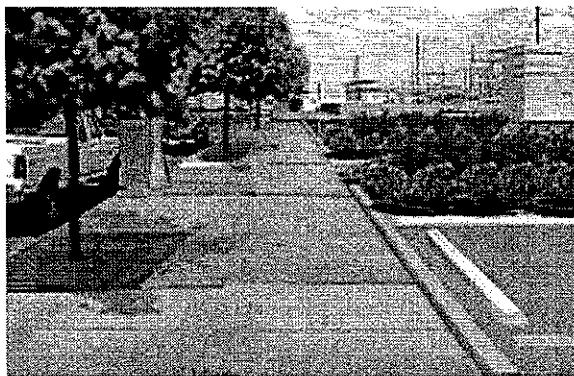


Encourage infill development that is compatible in scale, mass, materials and use. Develop site and landscape guidelines that are consistent with the character of the Historic District.



This approach strikes a proper balance between the existing architecture and good contemporary design. The modern designer is allowed the freedom of individual talent - within limits.

Where lots are vacant, reinforce the street wall with tree planting, railings and uniform sidewalk treatment.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Property Owner initiative to stabilize historic structure
- Request assistance from Architectural Bank
- Encourage property owners to participate in the Facade Improvement Program administered by The Downtown Billings Partnership.
- Partnering with Historic Preservation Groups, such as the Yellowstone County Historic Preservation Board
- Western Heritage Center
- Urban Design Committee of the Downtown Billings Partnership
- Document Ghost Signs. Seek grants for preservation of Ghost Signs. Possible funding sources are historic preservation or cultural granting agencies.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

FUNDING

Historic Preservation Tax Credit

Facade Improvement Program

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

ISSUE

Residents, property owners and business owners recognize the importance of quality infrastructure in encouraging redevelopment. They have expressed concern about the age and condition of existing utilities. The neighborhood should plan for logical sequencing of upgrades and improvements. This will require coordinating between the property owners and the Public Works and Public Utilities Departments. Private utility upgrades such as electrical, fiber optics, gas and telecommunications should be planned for concurrently.

ACTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

An inventory to determine the location and condition of underground public and private utilities has been requested from the City Engineer.

A schedule of utility and street improvement projects in this area has been requested from City PUD and Public Works Departments.

Become familiar with City Policy on maintaining and replacement responsibility for public sewer, water and storm drains.

Reach neighborhood consensus on priorities and work to have these included in the City's Five year Capital Improvement Plan which is updated each fall and is adopted at the end of the year.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Initiate a special improvement district to reconstruct aging infrastructure. Explore the feasibility of expanding the Conoco Triangle proposal to include Minnesota Avenue. Special Improvement Districts (SID's) can be used to generate revenue to make infrastructure improvements. Generally property owners are assessed on a square foot basis for the cost of improvements. Improvements are paid for through the sale of bonds.

Property owners have the option of paying off the improvements at the time of creation or financing at a fairly low interest rate over a period of 15 years. Storm drain, street, sidewalk and street lighting improvements are most commonly paid for through SID's.

Water and sanitary improvements are paid for through Public Utilities Enterprise Funds. There are no scheduled improvements on Minnesota Avenue west of 27th Street. The Public Utilities Department expects to improve lines on South 28th, 29th and 30th Streets in upcoming years. If the Conoco Triangle S.I.D. moves forward, all streets and utilities east of 27th Street will be reconstructed.

Neighborhoods do have the ability to request that the Street Maintenance Division provides a higher level of maintenance. Similar to improvements, this extra level of service is paid for by

the property owners through property owner assessments.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

- Street, Walk & Utility Reconstruction – City Standards SID
- Remove & Replace Sidewalks, Curbs and Gutters SID
- Street Lighting SID
- UG Utility Replacement, Water PUD ENTERPRISE FORD
- UG Utility Replacement, Sanitary Sewer PUD ENTERPRISE FORD
- UG Utility Replacement, Storm Sewer SID
- Street Reconstruction SID

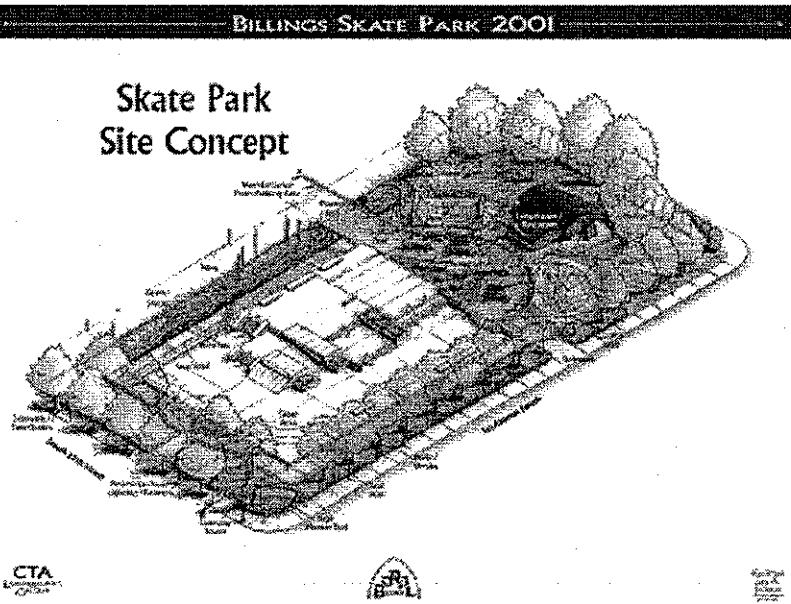
GREENSPACE & OPEN SPACE

ISSUE

Neighborhood business and property owners have expressed concern that there is not enough green and open space in the neighborhood. Several private property owners have constructed or plan to construct small parks as part of their individual developments. These open spaces are important visual green spaces but are not accessible to the public. A Skateboard park is proposed near the northeast intersection of First South and 27th.

ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a skate board park as a attractively landscaped community activity space.
- Construct bike paths as planned along 25th with connection to the pedestrian bridge. Promote attractive landscaping of these features.
- Encourage private property owners to landscape their properties.
- Develop landscape requirements and regulations for the neighborhood that are at least as restrictive as the South 27th Street corridor landscape requirements.
- Work with Conoco Triangle developers on codes, covenants and restrictions that address landscaping in the development, particularly along the 25th Street and Minnesota Avenue Corridors.
- Encourage the sub station to landscape similar to South 24th Street substation.
- Encourage private property owners to locate private green spaces where they can be visible to the public. Encourage use of attractive fencing where fencing is required.
- Explore the feasibility of landscape greenway/pathway along the railroad tracks.
- Explore the possibility of acquiring a lot to create a pocket park.
- Encourage development of streetscape



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Private/Public Partnerships similar to skateboard park funding strategy
- Common greenspace could be developed as a component of the streetscape. Improvement and maintenance districts could be used for funding. The city would need to acquire land as long-term lease or by purchase. They would expect the neighborhood to fund maintenance through the creation of a park maintenance district. There does not appear to be strong neighborhood support for a common green space funded by property owners.



LAND USE PLANNING

ISSUE

Neighborhood residents have expressed concern that there are existing and planned incongruities in land use. The adult bookstore located adjacent to the skateboard park is less than ideal. Neighborhood business owners prefer to see the industrial zone begin at 25th street rather than 27th, as is being promoted by the Conoco Triangle Industrial Park project.

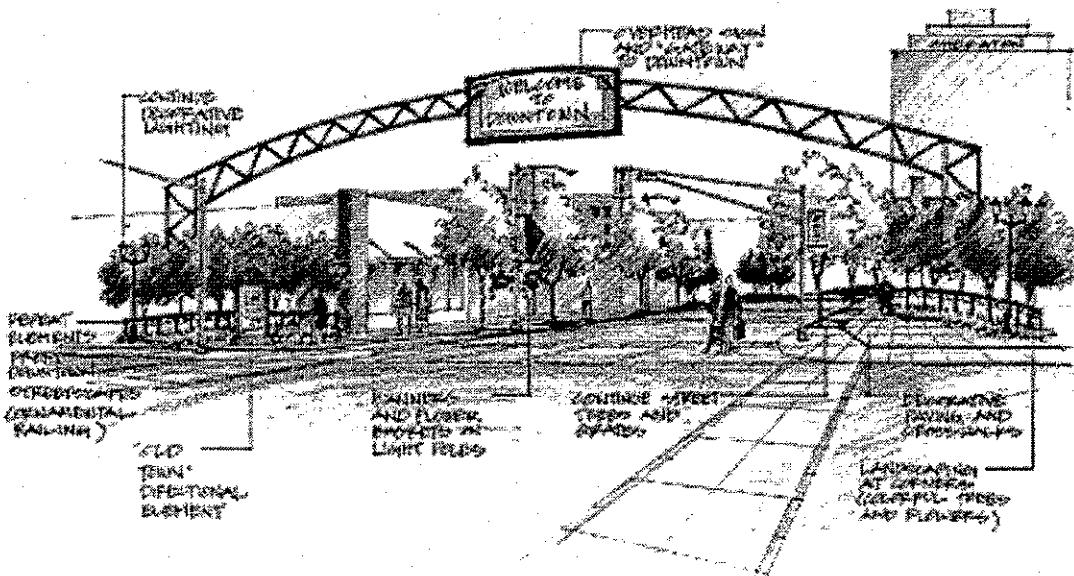
ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Land use along the 27th Street Corridor is largely institutional. Maintaining a similar use from 27th to 25th is recommended along this important Gateway to the community. A greenway with the proposed bike path located in this corridor would be an attractive buffer between mixed use and industrial zones.

Improve coordination between the Conoco Triangle Planning Committee and Minnesota Avenue Property Owners

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Work with the Planning Department to develop a more comprehensive land use and zoning plan for the neighborhood that will provide comfortable transitions between uses and an attractive entry corridor into the City.



PROPERTY OWNER ASSISTANCE

ISSUE:

Property Owners have expressed a desire to become more informed about the planning and funding assistance that is available to them. They recognize that property values are low and public infrastructure improvements are expensive. Some property owners have expressed concern that without financial assistance it is unlikely properties will be improved. In response to this request we have researched and compiled summaries of programs, organizations, and policies and related plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Property owners are encouraged to commit to improving the neighborhood and pursue assistance with individual and communal projects. A benefit that increases understanding of city processes and other projects is the opportunity to collaborate and conceive larger projects that accomplish multiple objectives. As an example, property owners have requested that the alley between 1st Avenue South and Minnesota Avenue be paved. They may not be aware that the sanitary sewer is located in the alley and it is old and in poor condition. It is short sighted to pave the alley prior to reconstructing the sewer. A more comprehensive project should be included in the City's Capitol Improvement Plan Update.

PROGRAMS

BILLINGS DOWNTOWN REVOLVING LOAN FUND

DESCRIPTION: Funded with Tax Increment District Funds, this program is designed to:

- Provide financial assistance in the form of loans to projects in the central business district that are consistent with the Downtown Billings Improvement Plan (Framework Plan) that will:
- Assist in the economic revitalization and stabilization of the district;
- Attract and retain a stable clientele population within the district;
- Stimulate private investment within the district;
- Generate additional property tax revenues within the district; and
- Encourage and facilitate in the remodeling and restoration of historically significant structures within the district.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Downtown Billings Partnership, Inc.

Mr. Art Scibelli, Executive Director

P.O. Box 2117

2906 Third Avenue North

Billings, MT 59103-2117

Phone: 406-294-5060

Fax: 406-294-5061

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

There is \$250,000 available for building acquisition and renovation. Applications can be submitted anytime to the Partnership offices.

DOWNTOWN FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANTS PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: The goal of this program is to provide technical assistance and financial incentives to maintain and reuse our older buildings. In addition compatible infill projects will be encouraged. An example of monies available would be the Billings Times, where they received approximately \$42,000 to renovate their building.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Downtown Billings Partnership, Inc.
Mr. Art Scibelli, Executive Director
P.O. Box 2117
2906 Third Avenue North
Billings, MT 59103-2117
Phone: 406-294-5060
Fax: 406-294-5061

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Funds will be matched on a one to one ratio up to \$35,000. Applications can be submitted anytime to the Partnership offices.

SIGN AND AWNING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: The Downtown Billings Partnership has adopted a Sign and Awning Improvement Program for Montana Avenue. A similar program is being developed for the city center to encourage well-designed attractive signs and awnings.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Downtown Billings Partnership, Inc.
Mr. Art Scibelli, Executive Director
P.O. Box 2117
2906 Third Avenue North
Billings, MT 59103-2117
Phone: 406-294-5060
Fax: 406-294-5061

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

There is a fund of \$3,500 available for signs and \$1,500 available for awnings. This program is facilitated through Lisa Bower. Applications are available through the Partnership offices.

ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES BANK

DESCRIPTION: The Downtown Billings Partnership has created a technical assistance bank to assist downtown property owners and businesses with preliminary design and feasibility studies. The technical assistance bank is comprised of the architects who were initially involved in developing the Urban Design Plan.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Downtown Billings Partnership, Inc.
Mr. Art Scibelli, Executive Director
P.O. Box 2117
2906 Third Avenue North
Billings, MT 59103-2117
Phone: 406-294-5060
Fax: 406-294-5061

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Grants are limited to a total of 50 hours of work or approximately \$ 3000 maximum.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

DESCRIPTION: The Development Services Department of the City of Billings administers Community Development grant funds. These are federal funds with a high level of local control. Eligible planning and improvement projects must fall into one of three broad categories.

The categories include:

- Planning activities that benefit low to moderate income groups
- Planning of programs that eliminate slums and blighted conditions. Maintenance or Improvement of vacant buildings may be eligible for this program
- Plans or projects that address ADA (American Disability Act) issues

ADMINISTERED BY:

Development Services Division
John Walsh, Director
City of Billings
510 North Broadway
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103
Phone: 406-657-8281
Fax: 406-657-8252

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Applications are accepted and reviewed twice a year by the Community Development Board. Funding levels are quite variable. Contact John Walsh to review specific proposals.

WEED AND SEED PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: The weed and seed program is a federal program, which the City of Billings has been determined to be eligible.

ADMINISTERED BY:

US Attorneys Office
David Moralez
406-657-6101

FUNDING CYCLE AND LEVELS

Details on the program have been requested

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE GRANTS

DESCRIPTION: Economic Development Initiative Grants are requested by the congressional delegation. The funds are added onto appropriation bills in the senate and the house.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Once funds are appropriated they are administered by a variety of state and local agencies. Recommended projects must a benefit to public and non-profit organizations.

Senator Max Baucus

Senator Conrad Burns

Congressman Dennis Rehberg

FUNDING CYCLE AND LEVELS

Funds are applied for through Montana Congressman or Senators.

TAX INCREMENT FUNDS

DESCRIPTION: A Tax Increment District was created to encourage redevelopment within the Downtown District. The Minnesota Avenue Neighborhood is included in the district. As property taxes increase the increase is reinvested within the district. Presently most of the funds are spent on projects that the Downtown Billings Partnership recommends to the city council. In recent years there has been a small amount of money set aside for streetscape, street and alley improvements.

ADMINISTERED BY:

City Finance Department

Bob Keefe, Director of Finances & Admin. Services

City of Billings

510 N. Broadway

P.O. Box 1178

Billings, MT 59103

Phone: 406-657-8222

Fax: 406-657-8390

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

The annual budget for the city is prepared in the fall and adopted at year end. Five Year Capital Improvement Plans for the city are updated in the fall of each year. The public is encouraged to add recommend projects.

CURB, GUTTER AND SIDEWALK REPAIR PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: At the request of a neighborhood, a comprehensive project of curb, gutter or sidewalk repair can be initiated. It will take a strong showing of the neighborhood for this type

of a project to proceed. An example of a current comprehensive project is the Broadwater Avenue Subdivision curb and gutter replacement between 8th Street West and 16th Street West from Broadwater Avenue to Central Avenue. To initiate this process contact: John Nowak at the City Engineer's Office at 406-657-8252.

ADMINISTERED BY:

City of Billings Engineering Department
John Nowak, City Engineer
510 North Broadway
P.O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103
Phone: 406-657-8252

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

After a formal contract has been entered with the city and the project is complete a property owner can opt to pay their assessment within 30 days or through a tax assessment over a 12 year period.

20% FEDERAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT INCOME PRODUCING PROPERTIES

DESCRIPTION: This tax incentive program is for the restoration and renovation of certified historically significant buildings.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Herb Dawson
State Historic Preservation Officer
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59602-1202
Phone: 406-444-7718

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

A building that qualifies can return a 20% personal tax credit to the property owner. For example, a \$100,000 renovation would qualify the property owner to a \$20,000 tax credit. Along with the 20% federal tax credit, a 5% state tax credit would automatically be included.

TAX REDUCTION FOR BUILDING REMODEL, EXPANSION OR RECONSTRUCTION

DESCRIPTION: This program authorized by the State of Montana and adopted by Yellowstone County was to encourage building remodeling or expansion by inviting use of tax incentives for remodeling, reconstruction or expansion of commercial structures. Tax reductions are

provided for a period of five years if the activity increases the taxable value by 2 1/2%.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Big Sky Economic Development Authority
Scott Langman
222 North 32nd Street
Billings Montana 59101-1911
Phone: 406-256-6871
Fax: 406 256-6877

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Funding levels are variable. The application must be made prior to construction. To apply, submit the application, site and building plans to BSEDA. Applications are accepted on a continuing basis.

TAX REDUCTION FOR NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION& EXPANDING INDUSTRY PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: This program is authorized by the State of Montana, adopted by resolution #9492 by Yellowstone County Commissioners to encourage business expansion. Tax reductions are provided for a period of 10 years if the activity fits into one of 4 sector categories including:

- 1.) Manufacturing
- 2.) Chemical transformers
- 3.) Value added processes or
- 4.) Distribution or warehousing facilities with 50% of revenue generated out of state.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Big Sky Economic Development Authority
Scott Langman
222 North 32nd Street
Billings Montana 59101-1911
Phone: 406-256-6871
Fax: 406 256-6877

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Funding levels are variable. The application must be made prior to construction. To apply, submit the application, site and building plans to BSEDA. Applications are accepted on a continuing basis

STREET MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: The City of Billings Public Works Engineering Division oversees the Street Maintenance Program. This program is funded annually. The engineering department identi-

fies priority projects for overlay and chip seal.

ADMINISTERED BY:

City Engineers Office
Chris Hertz
510 North Broadway
P. O. Box 1178
Billings, MT 59103
Phone: 406-657-3095
Fax: 406-657-8252

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

The program is funded annually at the City Councils discretion. Property owners do not pay an extra assessment for this work. Streets receive an overlay on a 12 to 15 year cycle. The portion of Minnesota Avenue west of 27th Street was last overlaid in 1993. The portion east is TENTATIVELY scheduled for preventive maintenance in 2005.

PUBLIC UTILITIES ENTERPRISE FUND

DESCRIPTION: Water and sewer mains are upgraded and maintained by the Public Utilities Department. The water line in Minnesota Avenue between 27th and 30th was replaced in 1991. The sewer is located in the alley. It is old, however, the city has no immediate plans to replace it.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Al Tolerton
Public Utilities Department
2251 Belknap Drive
P.O. Box 30958
Billings, MT 59101
Phone: 406-657-8315

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

This program is funded by property owners and users through an enterprise fund. A portion of each water bill goes to fund the program

MONTANA BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

DESCRIPTION: Several programs including SB504.

ADMINISTERED BY:

Al Jones
Department of Commerce
Jeff Leuthold
Montana Board of investments

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Contact Department of Commerce or Yellowstone Board of Investment

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

DESCRIPTION: Consulting services to assist small businesses with starting or expanding a business.

ADMINISTERED BY:

BSEDA

FUNDING LEVELS AND CYCLES

Applications are accepted year round.

ORGANIZATIONS

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ASSOCIATION

DESCRIPTIONS: The Downtown Billings Association is an organized strong voice representing your concerns and hopes for the on-going development of Downtown Billings. This Association works together with the three other entities that comprise the Downtown Billings Partnership; the Downtown Development Corp., the Property Owner Advisory Board Corp., and the parking Advisory Board. Visit their website at www.downtownbillings.com

PROMOTIONS & EVENTS — The DBA is in the forefront in development and implementation of events that bring traffic (people — not just cars) to the downtown area. Events like the Strawberry Festival, the Downtown Food Fair, Burn the Point and the Farmer's Market make Downtown Billings *Everyone's Neighborhood! Downtown Billings, the Heart of the Magic City!*

ADMINISTERED BY:

Greg Krueger, Director
The Downtown Billings Association
2906 3rd Avenue North
Billings, MT 59101
Phone: 406-259-5454
Fax: 406-247-5061

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS PARTNERSHIP

DESCRIPTIONS: The Downtown Billings Partnership was established to utilize tax increment funds for the development or redevelopment of downtown Billings. Membership consists of:

City of Billings
Yellowstone County
School District #2
A Member of the Parking Board
A Member of the Downtown Property Owners Committee
A Member of the Billings Downtown Association
A Member of BSEDA and
4 Members at Large from the downtown community who serve 3 year terms. Advertisements are posted when terms become available.

SOUTH PARK TASK FORCE

Rodney Garcia, Chair
4141 Arden Avenue
Billings, MT 59101
406-259-7812

OVER UNDER AND AROUND COMMITTEE

Marion Dozier, Chair
3923 3rd Avenue South
Billings, MT 59101

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

John Walsh, Director 406-657-8281

BIG SKY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Joe McClure, Director 406-256-6871

25TH STREET BRIDGE COMMITTEE

Terry Z. Lee, Chair 406-254-1122

CITY OF BILLINGS PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

David Mumford, Director 406-657-8232

CITY OF BILLINGS PUBLIC UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

Carl Christiansen, Director 406-657-8309

CITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Stephen Bradley - bradleys@magiccity.org

Shirley McDermott - mcdermotts@ci.billings.mt.us

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Karen Timchek 406-256-5780

RELATED PLANS

DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK PLAN

Date: 1998

Prepared By: Kimley Horn, Fischer & Associates, A & E Architects

For more information or to review the plan contact:

Art Scibelli - Downtown Billings Partnership - 406-294-5060

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS URBAN DESIGN SKETCHBOOK

Date: 2000

Prepared By: Seven local architect firms

For more information or to review the plan contact:

Art Scibelli - Downtown Billings Partnership - 406-294-5060

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Date: 1990

Prepared By: City/County Planning Department

For more information or to review the plan contact:

Ramona Mattix - City County Planning Office - 652-8246

CITY OF BILLINGS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Date: Adopted annually by the City Council

Prepared By: City Finance Department

For more information or to review the plan contact: Bob Keefe, City Finance Director

406-657-8222

SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Date: 1994

Prepared By: Southside Neighborhood Task Force

For more information contact: John Walsh City Development Services Division

406-657-8281

BIKE NET

Date: 1999

Prepared By: Scott Walker, City County Planning Office

For more information contact: Scott Walker, City County Planning Office - 406-652-8246

BILLINGS URBAN AREA TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Date: 1999

Prepared By: Transystems

For more information contact: Scott Walker, City County Planning Office - 406-652-8246

CURRENT PROJECTS

CONOCO TRIANGLE MASTER PLAN

For more information contact:

Scott Langman - BSEDA - 406-256-6871

SKATEBOARD PARK

For more information contact:

Mary Westwood, Chairperson 406-259-3756

25TH STREET BRIDGE

For more information contact:

Terry Z. Lee 406-254-1122

NEW CITY PARKING LOT

For more information contact:

Bob Keefe, City Finance Director - 406-657-8222

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

WHY SHOULD WE PLAN DOWNTOWN?

Downtown Billings is redefining itself as an urban neighborhood. We are an exciting, eclectic downtown that is different from a mall or big box store. Our planning focus looks at what we have been in the past and where we need to be in the future. Our desire is to capitalize on our historic assets without remaining frozen in time. We hope to build our future through thoughtful and gradual development without looking for "quick fixes" or the "design trend of the moment". We will work with what the community values, for these values are the building blocks that will entice pedestrians and accommodate vehicular traffic to the Downtown. Our plan for revitalization starts with our strengths and grows them through considering both old and modern buildings and a streetscape that includes sidewalks, streets, furnishings and public spaces that are an attractive enhancement to downtown. Working with the Downtown Partnership, the Downtown Billings Association, and the Downtown merchants and property owners, we will continue to explore alternative retailing practices, downtown management, and development with sensitivity to changes in the market place. We believe revitalization plans and projects should build upon current values and past designs that have made us the "Magic City" in Montana. Our plan builds upon what is uniquely Downtown Billings.



PLANNING PROCESS

To achieve these goals, the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Committee through a series of workshops developed long and short-term recommendations and projects in the Downtown's seven districts. During the workshops the architectural design community of Billings, the Downtown Partnership, and the Downtown property owners, tenants, interest groups, and City staff and ministration worked in collaboration to develop recommendations for seven districts in Downtown Billings. The districts approximate those described in the Downtown Framework Plan: a planning document adopted in 1998, which currently serves to guide Downtown redevelopment efforts.

Keith Swenson, an urban design and historic preservation consultant, facilitated three public meetings and at least one workshop with each district. Sandy Fischer and Jessica Kramer of Fischer & Associates in Billings assisted his efforts, managed the project and coordinated the recommendations of the various groups, particularly in the area of traffic and parking. The Downtown Billings Partnership and the National Trust for Historic Preservation provided funding for this plan. The business and property owners, the Downtown Billings Partnership committee members, and the Downtown Billings Association, greatly contributed to

the process with generous donation of time. Likewise, the Architects participating in the process deserve special thanks for their generous donation of time. They include Olsen Architecture, DG Architects, A&E Architects, Myhre Atwood Architects, CTA Architects and Engineers, High Plains Architects, HGFA Architects and Planners, and Fischer & Associates. Recommendations for Old Town were prepared by High Plains Architects.

Goals of the overall Urban Design Plan are summarized below:

- Raise the level of urban design
- Work toward consensus on appropriate design and development models in the various districts of Downtown
- Foster collaboration between the City's Design professionals, property owners and Downtown businesses, and the Downtown Billings Partnership
- Provide design guidance to the Downtown Billings Partnership, potential developers, as well as property and business owners

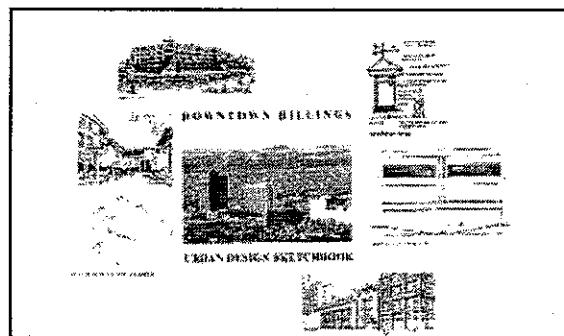
BENEFITS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PLAN

The benefits of the planning process are many including the following:

- The inclusive and participatory process expanded and diversified citizen participation
- The leadership base in Downtown has been expanded
- Together we have created a shared, cohesive vision for Downtown
- The collaborative process strengthened relationships between the design community and property and business owners
- There has been increased involvement of citizenry in committees responsible for stewarding the plan
- The process has increased community and leadership awareness of urban design and historic preservation
- The process has contributed to a shared understanding and vision

The "Urban Design Sketchbook" is one product of the Downtown Billings Urban design and Preservation Workshops. Preservation, redevelopment and conservation of resources are addressed in the plan. The 120-page sketchbook is the product of a series of workshops, sponsored by the Downtown Billings Partnership.

The workshops occurred in late 1999, culminating in an Open House attended by over 200 people in February of 2000. The Sketchbook provides a future vision of Downtown Billings.



- Organizing Elements
- Land Use Patterns and Housing Potential
- Buildings, Significant Historic Structures or Large Footprint Size Structures
- Building Mass, Transparency, Scale, Setback, Density
- Architectural Details: Style, Age, Roofline, Window Patterns, Materials, Color
- Streetscape, Green Space and Alleys
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Parking
- Circulation, Connections and Traffic (including cars, emergency and delivery vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian connections)

The Urban Design Sketchbook builds upon existing plans and compliments the work of several other community organizations. The plan was developed through a participatory process. Events that preceded this effort include:

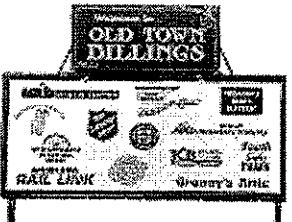
- Development of the Downtown Framework Plan, adopted 1997
- Historic Building Survey, complete 1999
- Montana State University Bozeman Urban Design Studio in Billings, Summer 1999
- Historic Montana Avenue Revitalization

The Sketchbook is the most tangible product of the planning effort, however the benefits of the process extend beyond this document. The Revitalization of Downtown Billings is underway! Very soon, visitors will experience the difference and appreciate the preservation of our unique resources!

OLD TOWN DISTRICT

LAND USE PATTERNS AND HOUSING POTENTIAL

The Old Town District can be divided into two areas: the historic commercial area and the industrial district. Infill development is encouraged along Minnesota Avenue, North 26th and North 30th Streets. The south-east corner of the district should remain focused on industrial uses and the provision of an attractive buffer. Loft-style housing is appropriate in upper levels of existing buildings within the historic commercial district.



BUILDINGS, SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Historic and other brick buildings should be preserved. Sensitive infill should be encouraged.

BUILDING MASS TRANSPARENCY SCALE SETBACK DENSITY

Two to four story buildings are predominant in the historic commercial district. The new construction should conform to the scale and rhythm of the existing buildings. Many opportunities exist for infill along the streetscape. Too often old buildings have been removed to accommodate surface parking. The rhythm of the original 25" wide lots should be continued. Buildings in the industrial district are "industrial in character." Buildings should be set on property lines with the requirement for clear vision zones waived.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS: STYLE AGE, ROOFLINE, WINDOW PATTERNS, MATERIALS, AND COLOR

Predominantly the buildings are early 1900's, constructed of brick on a 25' module with flat roofs. The use of standard modular brick as exterior cladding should be encouraged. Large glass storefronts in retail buildings should respect existing patterns. Transparent windows are generally located 12" to 30" above the sidewalk. Transom windows are common. Buildings that are currently empty should have black plywood inserts made to block undesirable views of the inside of buildings until such time as a tenant is found to renovate the building. Another possibility would be to have a community school project where students design a series of artistic plaques that would be used for the window inserts instead of the black inserts. Awnings and signs are an integral part of the overall design and success of the streetscape project in that they continue the visual uniformity of the design to the visitor and continues the linkages to the rest of the historic district. A sign and awning ordinance is recommended similar to that of the Montana Ave. Sign and Awning Ordinance.

STREETSCAPE GREENSPACE AND ALLEYS

The Broadway and Montana Avenue Streetscapes should be continued across the tracks into the commercial district of Minnesota Avenue. Street trees and crosswalk development should be provided for the length of Minnesota Avenue. Street trees should be planted along First Avenue South from 22nd to South 30th Street. Gateways should be developed at North 27th Street and 1st Avenue South. A public greenspace/walkway along the tracks from South 25th Street to South 29th Street should be developed. The alley development between North 25th Street and

North 26th Street represents a comfortable blending of pedestrian amenities, secondary entrances and surface parking. This type of development should be encouraged throughout the district.

PARKING

Surface parking should be accommodated on-street, integrated into buildings, or located behind the storefronts. Surface parking could be improved through addition of diagonal parking on local streets. Surface parking lots along streetfronts should be discouraged. Where it exists, the building edge should be reinforced with screen walls and landscaping. The development of parking for oversized vehicles is encouraged in this neighborhood.

CIRCULATION, CONNECTION AND TRAFFIC

The main organizing elements of Old Town are the rail corridor, 27th Street and the east-west streets, Montana Avenue and First Avenue South. The development of First Avenue South as the major crosstown route should be encouraged to reduce traffic impacts on Montana Avenue and First Avenue North. These streets are rapidly redeveloping as active pedestrian corridors with conflicts between traffic and pedestrians increasing. A pedestrian bridge over the tracks at North 30th and North 25th would improve neighborhood connections and provide a "pedestrian loop." Currently a plan is in the works to place a pedestrian bridge at 25th street, connecting downtown to the Coulson Park Bike Trail which is slated for construction in 2002.

To review complete document, contact :

The Downtown Billings Partnership - 406-294-5062

or

High Plains Architects - 406-896-0250

MINNESOTA AVENUE MASTER PLAN

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN
COMPLETED IN 2001**

Prepared By:

**HIGH PLAINS
ARCHITECTS, P.C.**

RANDY HAFER, A.I.A.

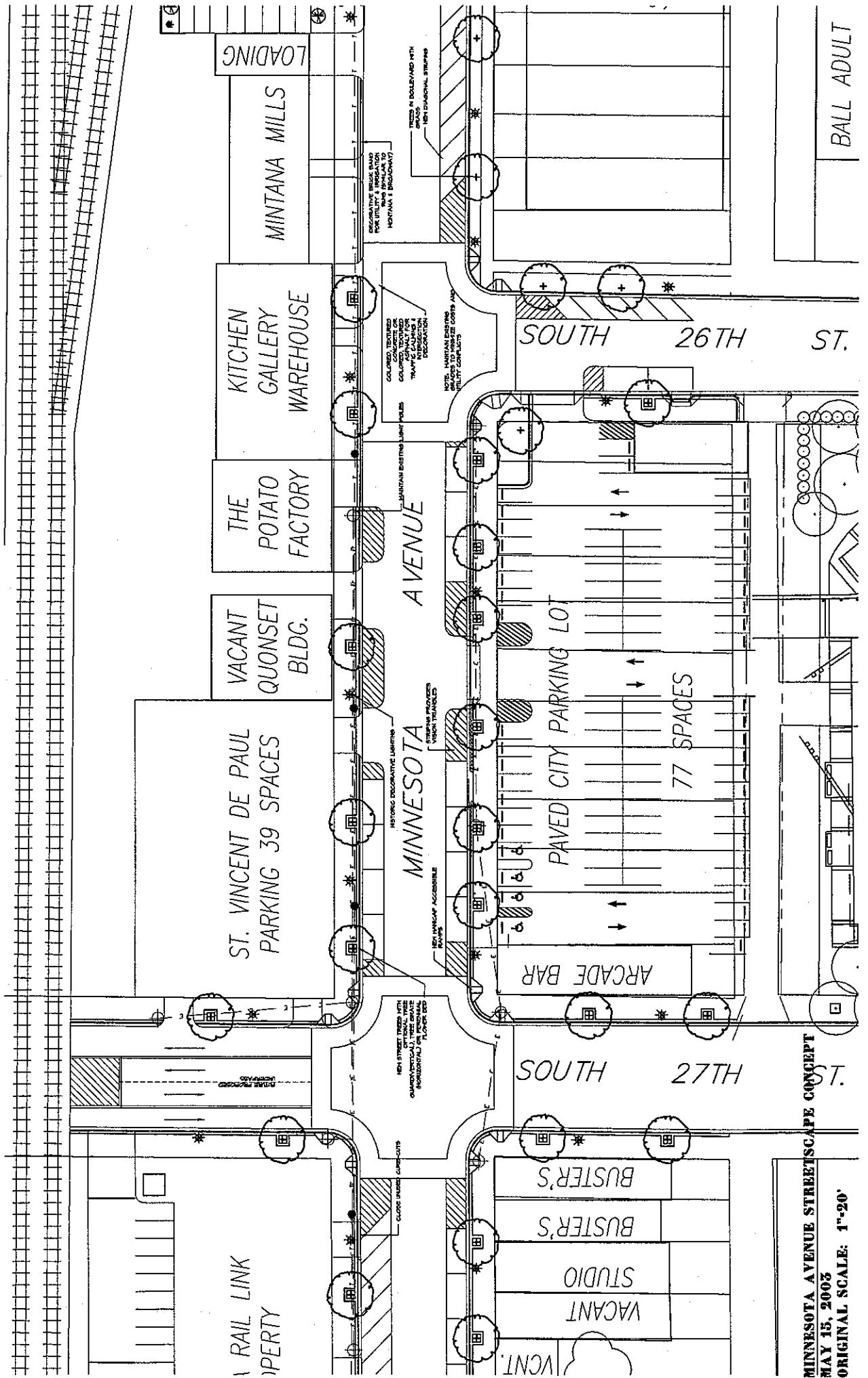
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Peaks to Plains Design

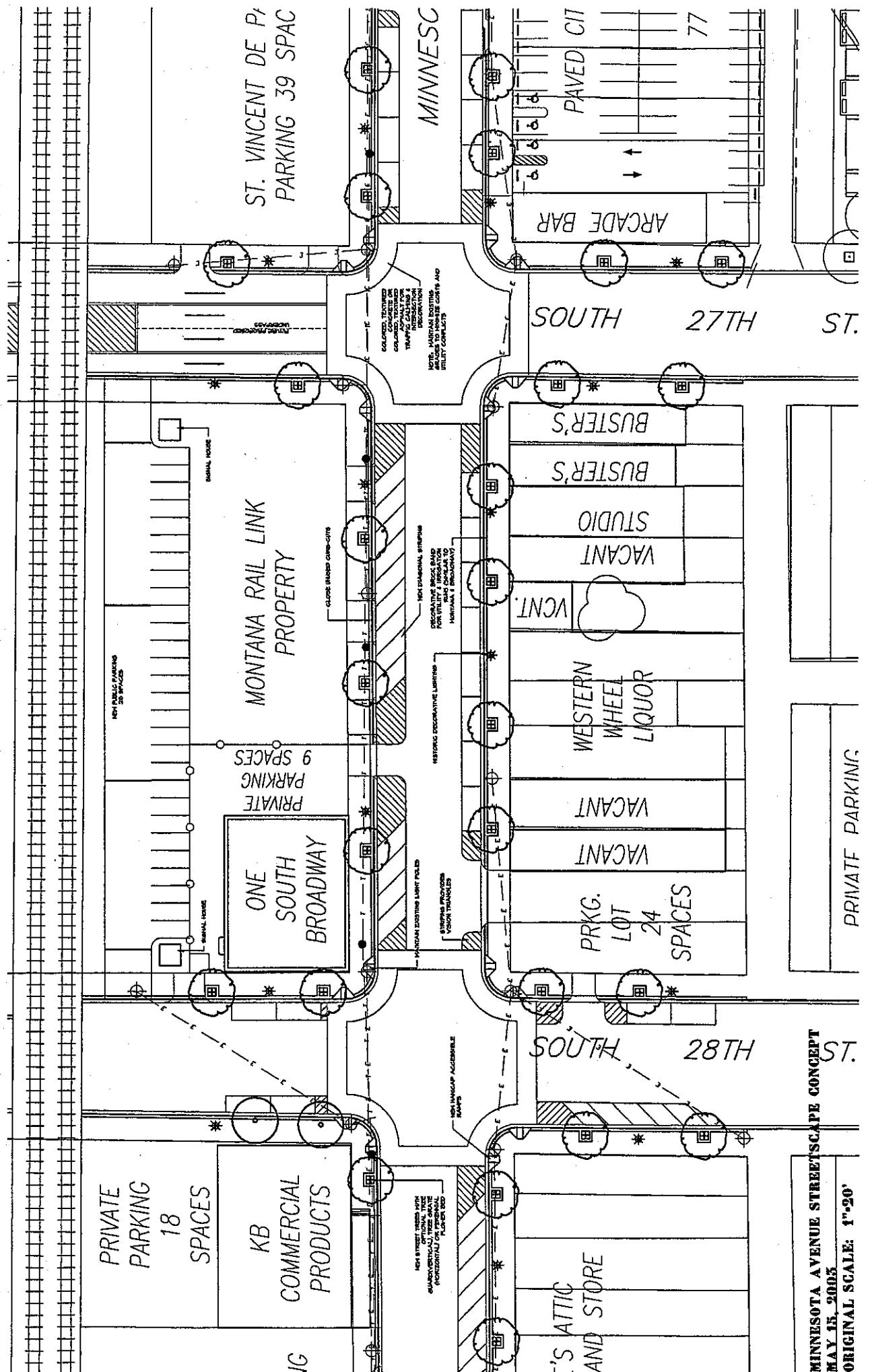
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE/PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

FISCHER & ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / COMMUNITY PLANNING

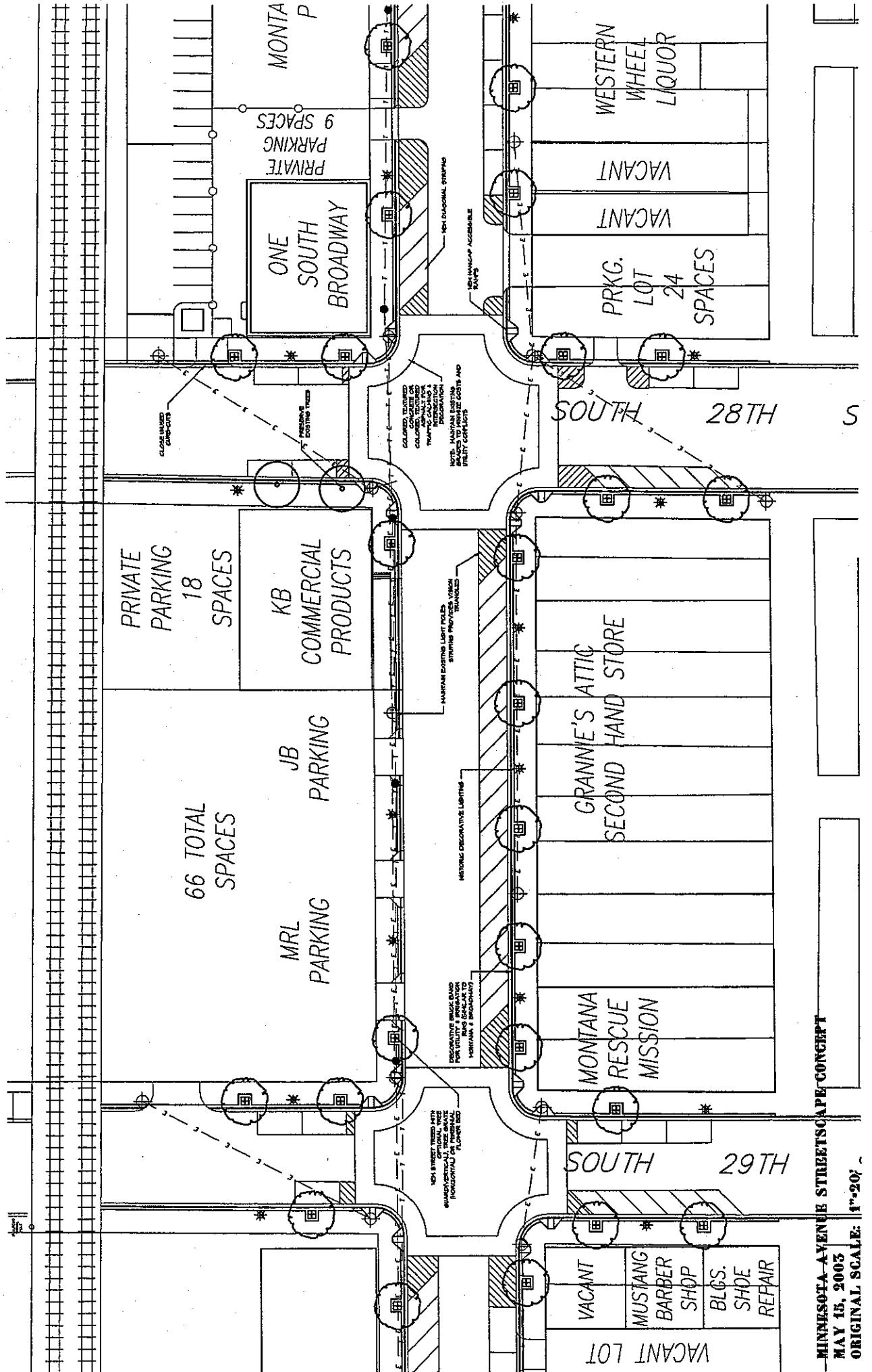
July 2003

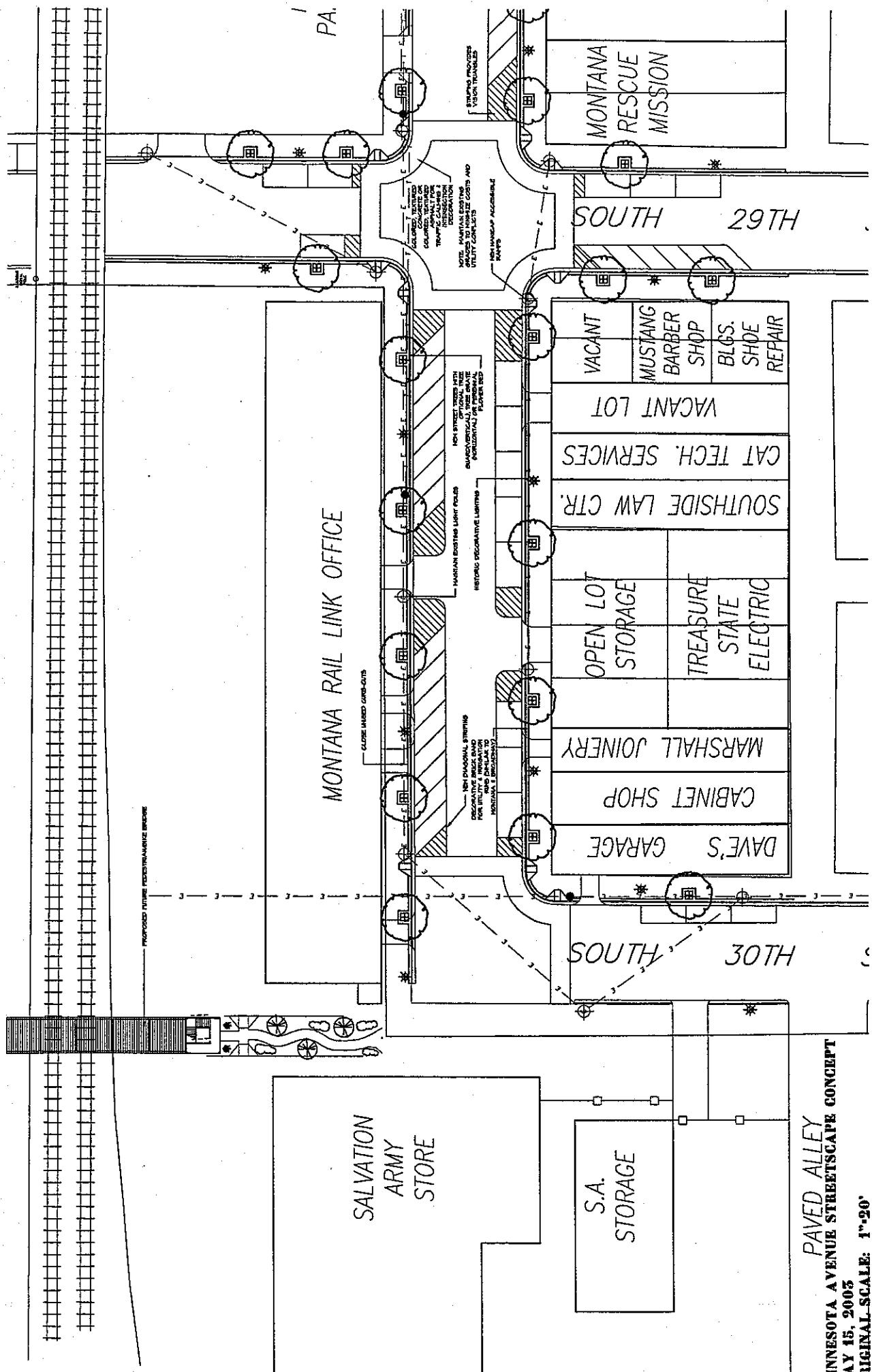


MINNESOTA AVENUE STREETSCAPE CONCEPT
MAY 15, 2003



MINNESOTA AVENUE STREETSCAPE CONCEPT
MAY 15, 2005
ORIGINAL SCALE: 1"=20'





PAVED ALLEY
MINNESOTA AVENUE STREETSCAPE CONCEPT
MAY 15, 2005
ORIGINAL SCALE: 1"=20'