

Downtown Missoula Business Improvement District Newsletter

Promoting the Health, Safety, Prosperity, Security and General Welfare of the Inhabitants of the BID



December 2021

- 2021 Business Activity
- Downtown Housing
- Downtown Policing
- 10 Ways to Give to DT
- Recreational Cannabis

North Riverside Parks & Trail Implementation: Phase 1 in Caras Park

The makeover of Caras Park began in October and with major changes to the grassy hill and amphitheater. There is major digging to install the city's stormwater infiltration gallery. These Phase 1 improvements should be completed next spring, about the same time the Higgins Bridge will be done.

The goals are to improve capacity and safety, flatten the green hill for more play space, increase seating and add ADA access to the seating, widen the trail to 18 feet, and install additional lighting, electrical outlets and trees. The stormwater infiltration gallery will filter stormwater from Downtown streets before it enters the river. The project saved nearly \$100,000 in direct costs by combining the park improvements to the stormwater infiltration project.

The Caras Park improvements are intended to diversify the activities and uses of the park. The park is Missoula's Town Square, an attractive destination for residents and tourists, and is home to A Carousel for Missoula and Brennan's Wave. The pavilion typically hosts 80-100 events per year.

Funding for the project's \$1.4 million cost came from a variety of sources, including the city's Capital Improvement Program, a DNRC Grant and \$650,000 from the Downtown Missoula Partnership. More than 50 local businesses contributed to the project, many of them matching the \$50,000 allocated from the Downtown BID, the Missoula Downtown Association, and the Missoula Downtown Foundation.



Rendering of the Bandshell Area in Caras Park

Next phased improvements include redesigning the Higgins Underbridge into a playground, gateway improvements at Ryman street, the formal riverfront access near Brennan's Wave, and upgrades to the North-Western Energy power substation. Learn more at engagemissoula.com/north-riverside-parks-trails.

Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan

Another study is underway titled the HIGGINS AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN: BROOKS TO BROADWAY. The study is a collaboration of the City of Missoula, The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and Montana Department of Transportation. The Plan will evaluate design options for improved safety and access for all modes of travel: walking, biking, and vehicles, including buses. Public outreach and the public comment period have concluded for the first round of engagement. For more information, go to engagemissoula.org.

Business Activity in Downtown Missoula

To date 18 businesses have opened or are slated to open in Downtown Missoula. Early in the year Sovereign Hope Church kicked off the openings downtown with the dispensary Cookies coming next. In the second quarter of the year Boxcar Bistro, Jivaro, Sunday School, and interior design Birdie Thatcher opened locations. Birdie Thatcher took over the closed Red Rooster retail store, and operated by the same owner.

Toiffer Pet Outfitter took over the Taco Del Sol location on North Higgins when it moved into the old Vietnam Noodle location. Around the corner Thyme Out Café & Local Market opened its doors offering food, beverages, and wares. A. Banks Gallery and Zara Gallery opened offering artworks and vintage pieces. The hip strip Clark Fork Yacht Club brought river floating tubes and busing services for folks floating the Clark Fork. Betty Venom Vintage, Cryo Method, Charles Schwab, a second Cambie Taphouse and Orr McDonnell Law opened locations. On the horizon is The Sawmill Grille to open on Wyoming St. in the Silver Park area.

Closings included The Pearl restaurant, due to retirement of ownership, but it will reopen perhaps before the new year as the Brasserie Porte Rouge, a French inspired eatery offered by our friends at Burns Street Bistro. Another retiring restaurant is the petit Hob Nob Café, great breakfast spot and more. Sorella's Salon & Day Spa announced the sale of its building with the new owner looking to maintain the salon/spa concept. Other closing businesses include Mountain Time Bowls & Buns, Big Sky Breakout, and Carlos' One Night Stand.

Downtown Missoula has seen over \$17 million in commercial investments by existing business with tenant improvements, renovations, and construction. Over \$161 million has been invested by public and private entities, including the University of Montana, Providence St. Patrick's Hospital, Missoula County, and the City of Missoula with similar constructions and renovations.

While we have seen nearly 10 businesses close this year, Downtown Missoula's opening-to-closing ratio remains at 2-to-1, despite the pandemic.



Downtown Holiday Tree, Photo by: Kristen Victoria Photography

Front & Main Conversion

In 2015 a feasibility study was completed by the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) to review the conversion of Front and Main streets back to two-way streets from one-way streets. The goal was, among other considerations, to promote economic vitality, accessibility, safety for pedestrians and vehicular traffic, parking efficiency, and more. In 2021 that study has been revisited in anticipation of availability of federal funding. The Conversion has been and remains a recommendation of Missoula's Downtown Master Plan. The public can access the link <https://www.engagemissoula.com/front-main-two-way-conversion> to learn more, including design options under consideration.

Recreational Cannabis

The Montana State Legislature passed a bill legalizing recreational cannabis in 2020. As a result, the City has received and is expecting more license applications for these businesses. The City is working on local updates regulating the dispensing, manufacturing, and cultivation of recreation cannabis.

Of particular concern is the proliferation of dispensaries and the impact on retail locations in Downtown. At present, certain transaction blocking requirements frequently result in the retail's street view window to be covered. This changes the downtown shopping experience from windows showing products and goods to a closed and hidden environment.

City staff recommendations include requiring a buffer distance between dispensaries, implementing glass transparency standards, prohibiting cultivation as a home occupation, and to align with state law. For more information, visit engagemissoula.com/recreational-cannabis-land-use-regulation-update.

Holidays in Downtown

With a showcase of many different holiday activities, Downtown Missoula was the place to be for the 2021 Holiday Season. The Downtown Missoula Partnership and its member organizations provided a variety of festive experiences for people of all ages.

Holiday experiences included Shop Small Season on November 27 and December 4, the Festival of Trees on Nov. 26 - Dec. 5 which included a community raffle with ten beautifully-decorated trees at various businesses in Downtown, and the Parade of Lights offered a Reverse Parade and Holiday Stroll with floats parked curbside on Higgins Avenue. For more information about the holiday happenings, go to missouladowntown.com/holidays-downtown-2021.

XXXX **TOP 10 WAYS** **TO GIVE IN SUPPORT OF** **DOWNTOWN MISSOULA** 

ONE
Give a gift to the Spirit of Place Campaign 

 **TWO**
Support Implementation of the North Riverside Parks & Trails Plan

THREE
Give to the Caras Park Endowment 

 **FOUR**
Give to the MDF Sustainability Fund

FIVE
Buy the MDF's (406) Montana License Plate 

 **SIX**
Attend the Festival of Trees: design a tree or buy raffle tickets

SEVEN
Take an Unseen Missoula Guided Walking Tour 

 **EIGHT**
Volunteer for the Missoula Downtown Association

NINE
Buy Downtown Gift Cards: at the DMP office or online 

 **TEN**
Shop, Dine & Play in Downtown Missoula

The Changing Dynamics of Downtown Policing

The COVID Pandemic has impacted our community in so many ways – lost wages or lost employment, losing loved ones, struggling to cope with our new normal – and it has greatly impacted our neighbors living on the edge of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. In order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the system that helps our neighbors maintain or obtain housing, food, employment and shelter has changed dramatically. Shelters are operating at reduced bed capacity, non-profits are seeing staff shortages and high turnover rates, and some have had to reduce hours or temporarily stop offering certain types of services (like case management). In turn, we have seen a rise in people sleeping outdoors.

As the Missoula Police Department Designated Downtown Police Officer (DDPO), Jay Gillhouse is immersed in these issues every day and has expanded his efforts to respond to these challenges and provide support needed.



Officer Jay Gillhouse

The City of Missoula is involved in several efforts which makes Officer Gillhouse's job more efficient. When he encounters someone in a mental health crisis, he reaches out directly to the Mobile Support Team or the Crisis Intervention Team.

If someone is experiencing a housing crisis (like sleeping outside), Gillhouse reaches out to partners involved in the Missoula Coordinated Entry System. We are all grateful to have well-coordinated, multi-agency efforts in both the mental health and homelessness crisis fields.

The goals of these coordinated efforts are:

- to improve the health and safety of the community,
- to ensure that people who are experiencing crises are connected to long-term support systems (like housing resources),
- to ensure mental health needs are met,
- to connect to substance use treatment options,
- to ensure medical needs are addressed.

When law enforcement connection is made, Missoula Police Department ensures federal, state and local laws are followed and enforced, while ensuring individuals' rights are not being violated.

For more information or to connect with Officer Gillhouse directly, send an email (jgillhouse@ci.missoula.mt.us) or give him a call (406-830-5218).



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Downtown Housing

There has been much in the news about lack of housing, particularly affordable housing. However, this past year Downtown has seen two projects completed with more on the horizon.

The Clay Street Apartments were completed in August 2021 and are now fully leased. The building is located at 320 Clay Street just off Bess Reed Park and features 22 apartments, including 18 studios and 4 one-bedroom units. The building was developed by University Avenue Developers LLC, designed by Encompass Architecture, and constructed by Ronald Builders LLC.

The classic mid-century Downtown Motel was bought and converted to the Good Habits studio apartments. Located at 502 East Broadway, it is now eleven studio units.

On the horizon is The Reed condos. Situated on 217 South 4th St. East, just off the Hip Strip, the project is proceeding with construction. The project features 48 condos, 12 that are income qualified. The structure has four levels with basement parking and storage.

The Missoulain Building, owned by Lee Enterprises, and listed for \$8.5 million, has been purchased by a group for business and residential use. A rezoning request was submitted and approved for the property. The rezoning asked to change from newspaper publishing only to high density residential and commercial use. The site "will be developed with a parking structure," according to an engineering group representing the developer. No other plans have been submitted to date.



Clay St. Apartments, Photo by Kristen Victoria Photography

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Economic
Vitality

Safe

Clean