October 2016

CONNECT WHITEFISH

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

WGM GROUP

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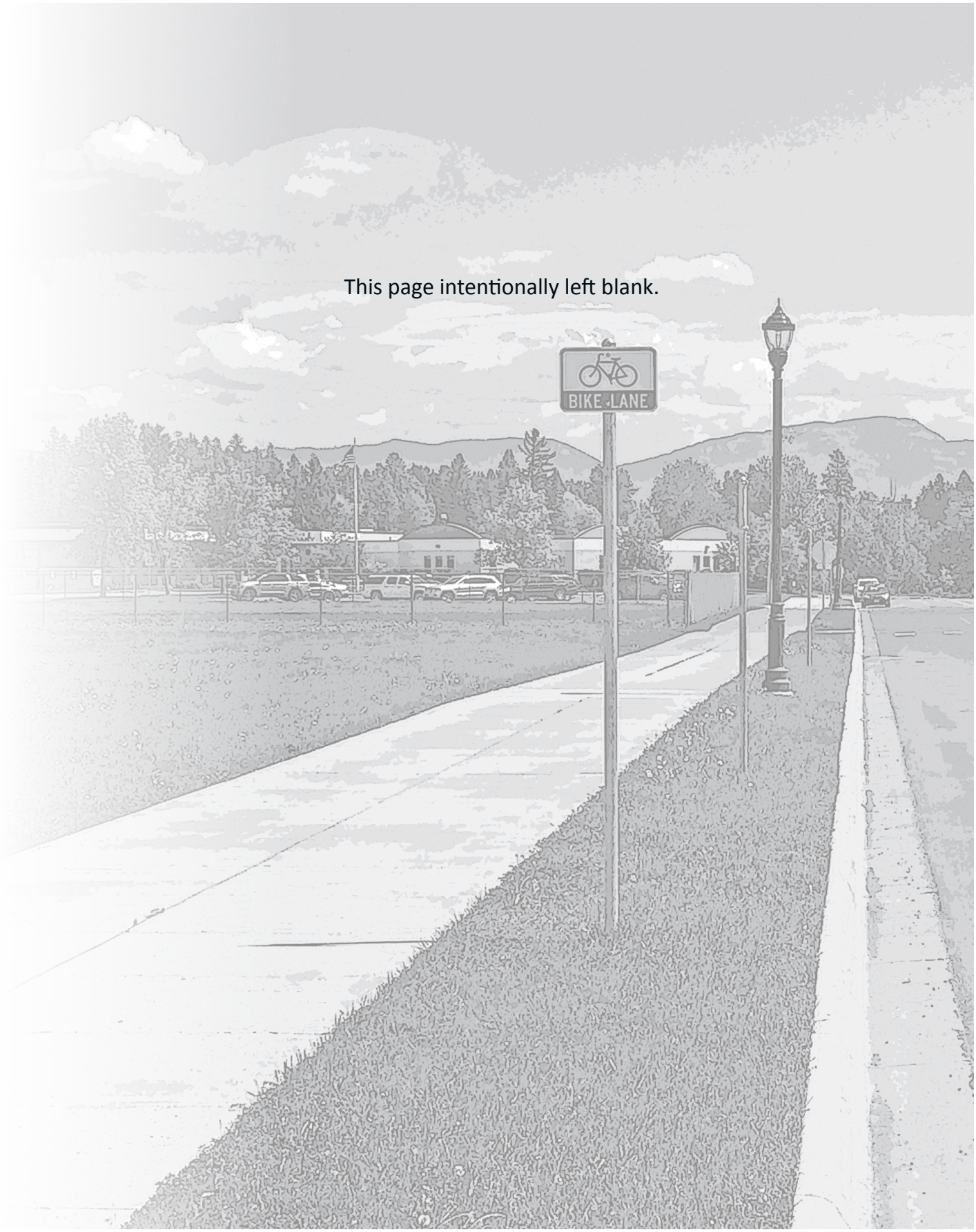

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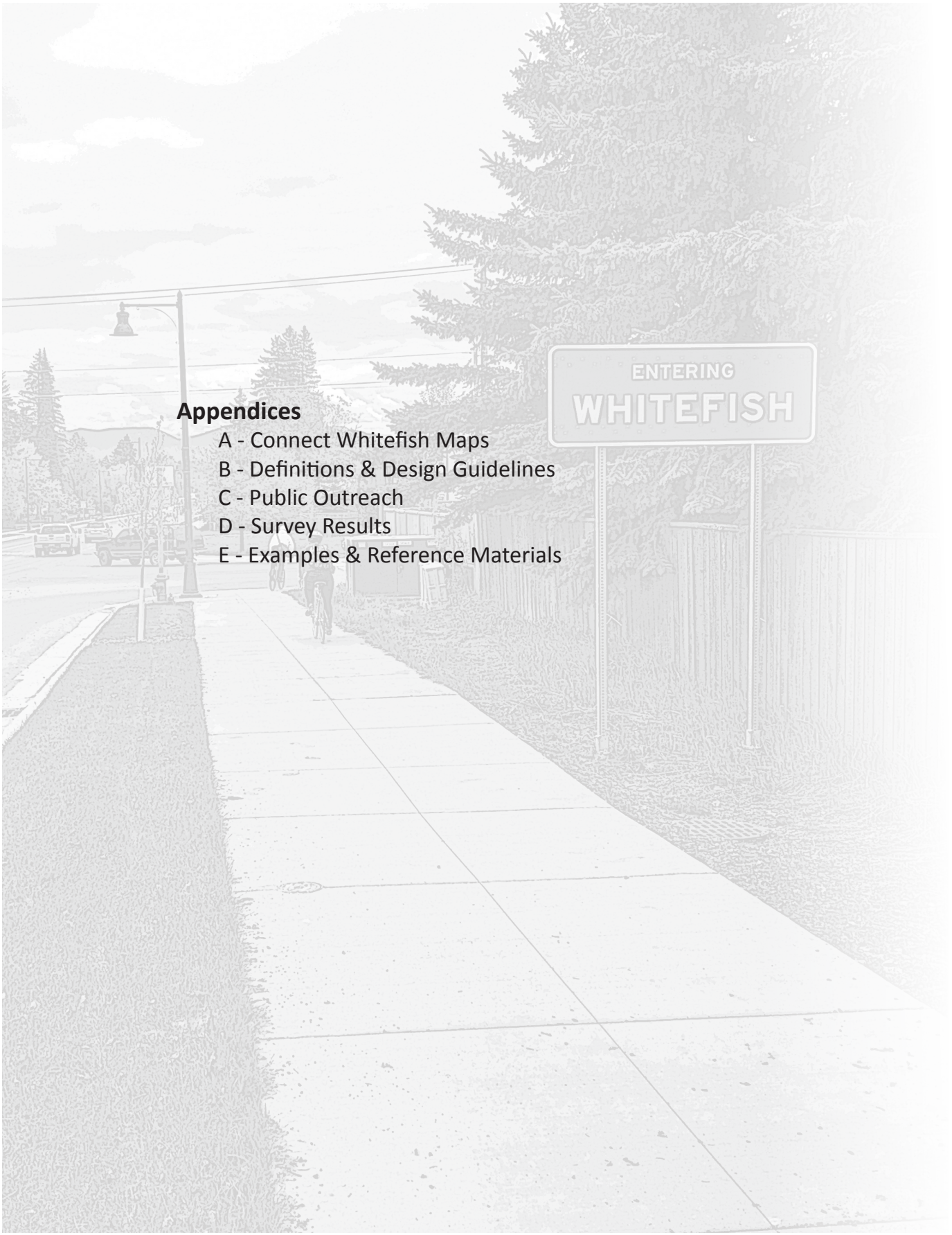

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I. Introduction

A. THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF BICYCLING AND WALKING

"Introducing children to "longer" rides at an early age cements enjoyment and wonderful memories at an early age and creates a bicycling way of life for many years into adulthood. Walkways and bikeways through scenic and natural settings (are) such an enhancement to the quality of life."

-Public comment from May 19, 2016 Community Forum

1. Benefits to Public Health

Transportation decisions affect not only how we get from one location to another but also our health. Poor transportation systems and policies can negatively impact the public's health via higher incidences of obesity and cardiovascular disease, and reduced daily physical activity.[1] This is especially true in Flathead County where 61% of adults are overweight or obese.[2]

The built environment is typically designed with automobiles as the primary transportation method. Designing transportation systems and the built environment to include and encourage active transportation can have a significant impact on lessening the negative health impacts previously discussed.[1] Active transportation includes non-motorized options such as biking and walking, which are ideally linked to public transit networks. Making active transportation the affordable and convenient option for all transportation users would help reduce negative health impacts while promoting physical activity.[1]

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1. American Public Health Association. 2010. *Active Transportation: Benefitting health, safety and equity.* https://www.apha.org/~/media/files/pdf/topics/transport/apha_active_transportation_fact_sheet_2010.ashx
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2012. *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.*

2009 National Household Travel Survey

2. Benefits to Community Livability

A livable community is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services. These resources enhance personal independence, allow residents to age in place, and foster residents' engagement in the community.[3] Livable communities will become more critical over the next ten years as the Montana Department of Commerce projects a 63% increase in the number of Flathead County residents aged 65 or older. However, livable communities are not solely for the benefit of senior residents. Livable community design must also consider the needs of residents too young to drive. In Flathead County, there are 17,000 young people who are not old enough to drive.[4] Designing a community around bicycle and pedestrian transportation helps create a livable community.

3. AARP. 2015. *What is a Livable Community?* http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/info-2014/what-is-a-livable-community.html
4. Montana Department of Commerce. 2013. *Census & Economic Information Center.*

Safe and accessible facilities create livable communities.

3. Benefits to Property Values

Neighborhoods with open spaces, parks and greenbelts have higher home sale prices, enhanced marketability and often faster sales or leases than conventional development. A national survey of developers noted considerable consumer interest and support for higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places. Sites that are more walkable command higher property values across property types, including office, retail, apartment, and industrial. Depending on the property type, a 10% increase in walkability increases property values between 5 and 8%.[5]

Walkability is desirable and adds value to property.

5. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 2010. *The Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design.* Active Living Research.

Mixed-use, pedestrian friendly downtown business districts generate more tax revenue per acre than other kinds of development.[6] A study by the Salt Lake City Department of Transportation found that "replacing parking with protected bike lanes increased retail sales." A project on Broadway Avenue removed 30% of on-street parking from nine blocks of this major commercial street, but improved crosswalks and sidewalks and added protected bike lanes. In the first six months of the next year, retail sales were up 8.8% over the first six months of the previous year, compared with a citywide increase of only 7%. After the changes, 59% of business owners said they supported the street improvements, while only 18% opposed them.[7]

Residential property values also see an increase as bicycle and pedestrian friendly infrastructure and amenities are created nearby. Properties within one-quarter of a mile of the Radnor Trail, part of Philadelphia's Circuit regional trail network, were valued, on average, $69,000 higher than other area properties. Homes in Montreal saw an average increase of $6,123 in their values after the installation of local bike-share stations. Minneapolis's Midtown Greenway has catalyzed more than $750 million worth of new residential development, and property values along the core have increased by over 90% in the past 10 years.[7]

6. Sonoran Institute and Urban 3. 2010. *About Town: Building Revenue for Communities.*
7. Urban Land Institute. 2016. *Active Transportation and Real Estate: The Next Frontier.*

B. THE COMMUNITY VISION

Vision Statement

The City of Whitefish will have a connected and continuous network of well-maintained bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These facilities will link key destinations inside and outside of town and will be safe, convenient and comfortable for both recreation and active transportation.

The City of Whitefish has a strong sense of identity, and a large part of that identity is drawn from year-round enjoyment of outdoor activities. Bicycling and walking serve as both recreation and transportation in Whitefish. Due to the popularity of bicycling and walking in Whitefish, the community has a sophisticated vision for future facilities and programming.

During the outreach and engagement portion of creating the Connect Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, members of the public, City staff and key stakeholders within the community overwhelmingly supported and advocated several key themes regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programming in Whitefish.

A 'Wordle' showing the most commonly occurring words in survey response comments.

1. Connectivity

A common theme of the outreach activities was focusing future resources on connecting the many existing paths, trails, bike lanes and sidewalks to provide continuous access to key destinations. The community overwhelmingly envisioned a future where residents and visitors can bicycle, walk or jog to downtown, schools, parks and trails outside of town without awkwardly hopping back and forth between paths and sidewalks and city streets and highways. Whitefish has an existing network of non-motorized transportation facilities that rivals any town of similar size and population, and connecting these existing facilities is a major component of the community's vision and a primary focus of this plan.

The community envisions a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

2. Comfort

Another popular theme that emerged during outreach and engagement was a desire for a comfortable bicycling, walking and jogging experience. Those who already bicycle and walk in Whitefish expressed concerns and ideas related to improving the safety of existing facilities and the interactions between bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles. The community envisions parents and children safely getting to school by bicycle or on foot, and all members of the community having a comfortable way to bicycle and walk as an equal and protected part of the city transportation network.

A comfortable way to get to school is a vision shared by many.

A similar topic related to comfort was a desire for more path and trail-specific wayfinding signage to guide users between facilities and help locals and visitors avoid getting lost or winding up at a dead-ends. Many times during the community tour of facilities people were heard to say, “Wow, I’ve ridden/walked around here for years and didn’t know this was here.” A future in which residents and visitors alike can comfortably find their way around town by following strategically placed signs or conveniently accessible maps was often mentioned.

3. Maintenance

A final theme mentioned repeatedly by the community as well as by Whitefish City staff was the importance of maintaining existing facilities and ensuring adequate resources to maintain new facilities in the future. Maintenance contributes directly to the connectivity and comfort of bicycling, walking and jogging in Whitefish. Poorly maintained facilities create gaps in the system and unsafe conditions as users seek alternate routes with less potholes, cracks, weeds, trash and dark places.

For more details on the public outreach methods that were used to create the Connect Whitefish Plan, please see Appendix C: Pubic Outreach and Appendix D: Survey Results.

Maintaining existing facilities is equally important to exploring new connections and corridors.

4. Achieving the Vision

The Connect Whitefish Plan establishes policies, actions and projects in six categories. These categories provide a framework for prioritizing funding and implementing the plan.

1. **Connectivity** - Providing connections between existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and key destinations, such as downtown, parks and schools.

2. **Safety** - Improving the safety of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities to help people feel more comfortable while walking, jogging and bicycling.
3. **Wayfinding** - Identifying the type and location of signs that provide directions, maps, and route symbols to improve the convenience and function of the bicycle and pedestrian network.
4. **Maintenance** - Identifying strategies and priorities for maintaining current facilities and ensuring resources for future facilities.
5. **Programming** - Establishing programs that educate and encourage locals and visitors to use the bicycle and pedestrian network.
6. **Funding** - Identifying existing and future sources of funding for both new facilities and maintenance of existing facilities.

Fundamental to the Plan is the understanding that Whitefish residents and visitors value bicycle and pedestrian amenities for both recreation and transportation. The ability to walk safely and comfortably to work, schools, parks and other destinations is an essential element of the Plan. Sidewalks are recommended throughout the urban core, with opportunities to use shared use paths in less developed, outlying areas.

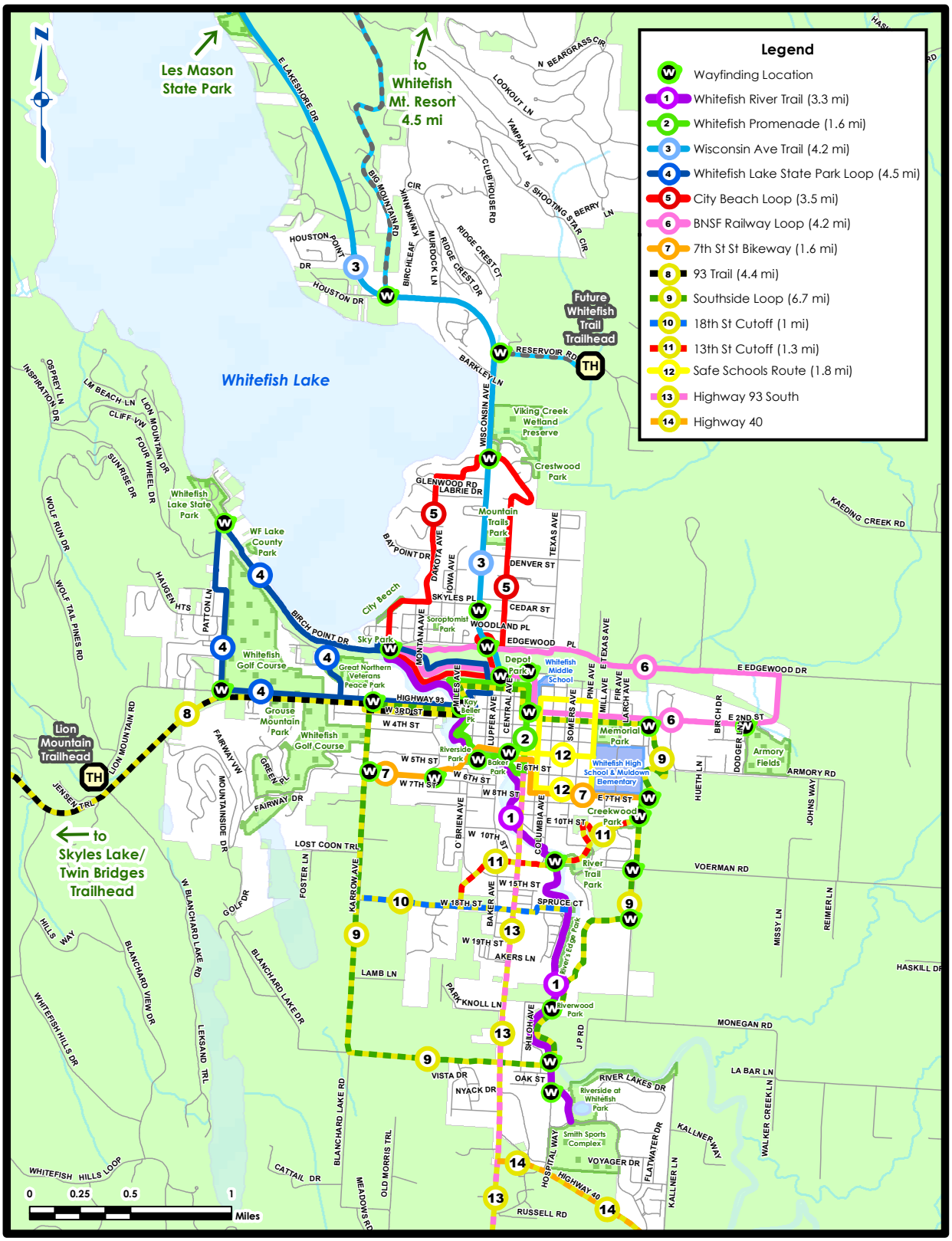
Similarly, the Plan seeks to create a network of separated paths, on-street bike lanes and bike routes that offer opportunities for exercise, sightseeing and access to recreational areas, as well as legitimate options for everyday transportation needs. The Plan places a high priority on separated bicycle facilities, such as paths and cycle tracks, that offer improved safety and comfort for less experienced riders.

The Plan identifies both long-term opportunities to be implemented as the City grows and short-term opportunities that can be implemented immediately. In many cases, short-term recommendations, such as on-street bicycle routes and urban trails, are interim measures that will enhance safety and connectivity until long-term improvements can be made.

Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Routes

ROUTE	ROUTE NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	**Whitefish River Trail**	A 3.3-mile shared use path between City Beach and Smith Sports Complex along the Whitefish River. The Whitefish River Trail is the backbone of the bike/ped network, providing a recreational and transportation corridor that links other routes throughout the City.
2	**Whitefish Promenade**	A 1.6-mile loop in Downtown Whitefish following Railway Street, Spokane Avenue, and the Whitefish River Trail. The Promenade serves as an important link in the bike network by providing a continuous protected bikeway (cycle track) or shared use path connection around busy streets in the downtown. The Promenade also provides the opportunity to connect downtown commercial areas to the river, parks, and nearby residential neighborhoods.
3	**Wisconsin Avenue Trail**	A 4.2-mile shared use path between Downtown and Les Mason State Park following Wisconsin Ave. and E. Lakeshore Dr. The route provides access to the future Haskill Basin Trailhead and Big Mountain Road, as well as connections to residential neighborhoods north of the railroad.
4	**Whitefish Lake State Park Loop**	A 4.5-mile loop from Downtown across the Skye Park Bridge and along Birch Point Dr. and W. Lakeshore Dr. to Whitefish Lake State Park, then returning along State Park Road and Highway 93. This route includes the "Ramsey Cutoff" to reduce distance and provides access to Great Northern Veteran's Peace Park.
5	**City Beach Loop**	A 3.5-mile recreational loop from Downtown to City Beach via the Wisconsin Viaduct to Colorado Ave., Birch Hill Dr., Glenwood Rd., Dakota Ave. and Skyles Pl., returning via Oregon Ave. and the Whitefish River Trail back to downtown. This route connects residential neighborhoods north of the railroad to City Beach and Downtown, and includes the "Mountail Trails Park Cutoff" to shorten the distance.
6	**Edgewood Loop**	A 4.2-mile recreational loop starting Downtown along Railway St to the Whitefish River Trail, then east along Edgewood Drive and returning on E. 2nd St.
7	**7th Street Bikeway**	A 1.6-mile shared use path and cycle track connecting W. 7th Street to the Whitefish High School via the Riverside Bridge.
8	**93 Trail**	A 4.4-mile shared use path from Downtown to Twin Bridges Road along Highway 93. This route provides access to the Golf Course, Lion Mountain Trailhead, Skyles Lake, Spencer Lake, and the Twin Bridges Road Trailhead.
9	**Southside Loop**	A future 6.7-mile recreational loop from Downtown along E. 2nd Street, south along Cow Creek and Monegan Rd to the Rocksund Bridge and returning on JP Road, Karrow Ave, and Highway 93.
10	**18th Street Cutoff**	A future 1-mile connection between Karrow Ave. and the Whitefish River Trail via 18th Street.
11	**13th Street Cutoff**	A future 1.3-mile connection between 18th Street and Cow Creek via Flathead Ave. and 13th Street, and a future bridge across the Whitefish River.
12	**Safe Routes to School**	A 1.8-mile network of "Neighborhood Greenways" providing safe, convenient walking and biking routes between Whitefish Middle School and Whitefish High School/Muldown Elementary.
13	**Highway 93 South**	An approximately two-mile bicycle route with signing and marking to improve the visibility of bicycle use and provide access to businesses and residential land uses along the highway. The route also exists to connect to areas south of Whitefish in the future.
14	**Highway 40 East**	An approximately one-mile route with signing and marking to improve the visibility of bicycle use along the highway. The route also exists to connect to areas east of Whitefish in the future.

Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Routes



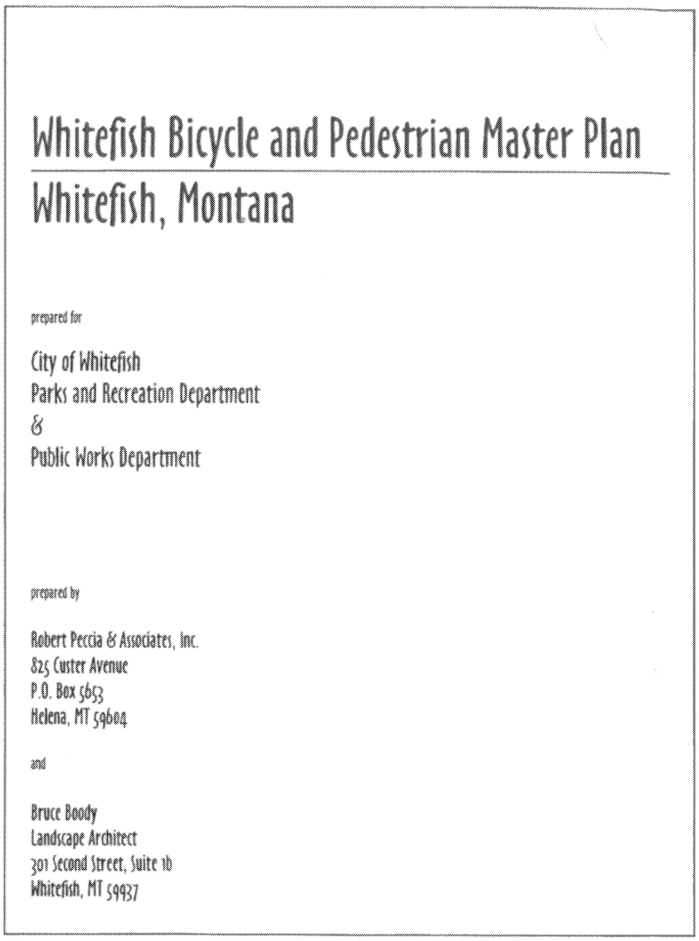
The Connect Whitefish Plan envisions a network of bicycle and pedestrian routes that provides both recreational and transportation opportunities.

C. THE PLAN

1. A Brief History

Planning for the future of bicycle and pedestrian facilities has a long and rich history in the City of Whitefish. Ron Brunk, owner of Glacier Cyclery and longtime member of the Park Board of Commissioners (Parks Board) and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee, tells a story of sitting at the Great Northern in the late 1980s with Bruce Boody, Pete Kurtz, Mike Fitzgerald and a few others and laying out a path network in Whitefish on the back of a napkin.

As far back as 1987, the Parks Board discussed a shared use trail system in Whitefish. The passage of the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* (ISTEA) in 1991 and the availability of *Community Transportation Enhancement Program* (CTEP) funding was a watershed moment for trail planning and construction in Whitefish. The group of volunteers now officially known as the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee was originally formed in the early 1990s. In July of 1998, the City adopted the *Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* as Chapter 12 of the *Whitefish Transportation and Storm Drainage Master Plan*. The 1998 Master Plan outlined types of facilities and design standards, established project lists and provided maps showing how trail projects could be made more consistent and connected. The 1998 Master Plan was amended in 2001, 2007, 2009 and 2011.



Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
Whitefish, Montana

prepared for

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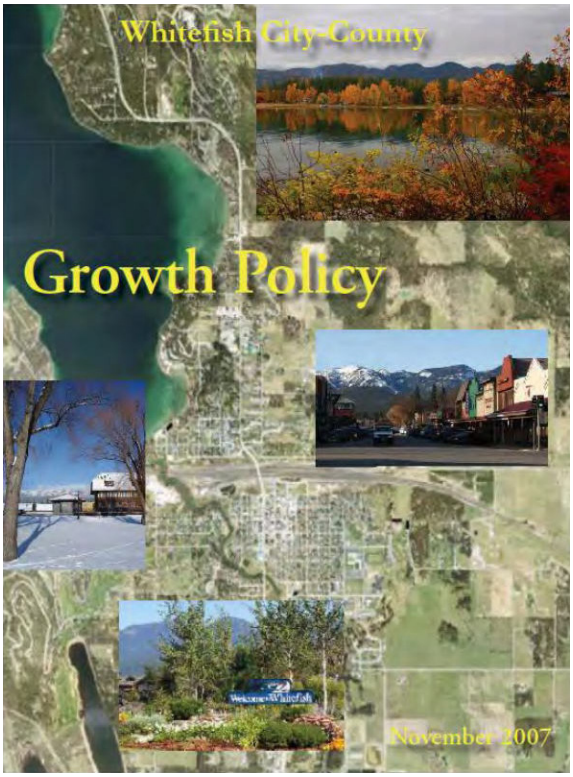
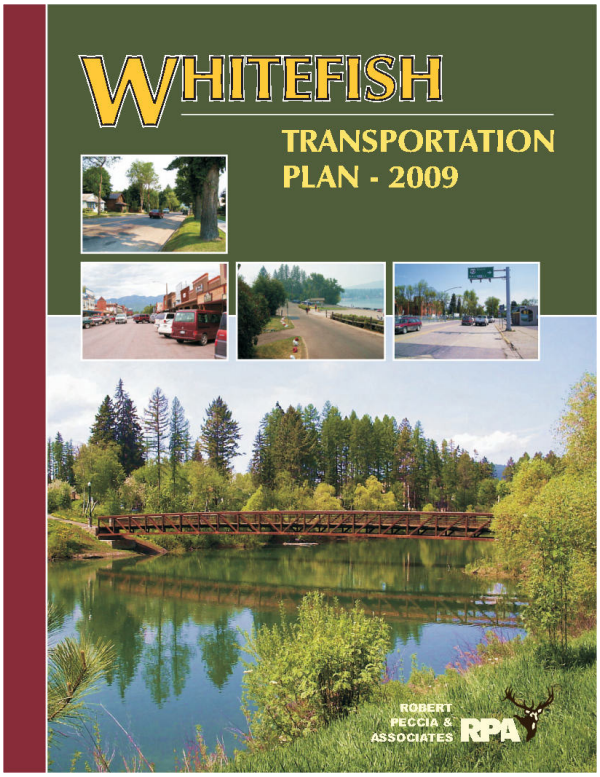
Since 1999, the City has adopted five other plans that influence bicycle and pedestrian transportation planning. The five plans are described below; Map 1 in Appendix A shows the planning area boundaries for each plan.

In 2007, the City adopted the *Whitefish City-County Growth Policy* (Growth Policy) to "set forth a broad body of public policy that is founded in a community vision, and that addresses growth and development issues through the various topic areas (elements) of natural resources, economic development, land use, community facilities, housing and transportation." Chapter 7 of the Growth Policy describes the plans that are adopted by reference "as part and parcel to this growth policy" and includes the Master Plan.





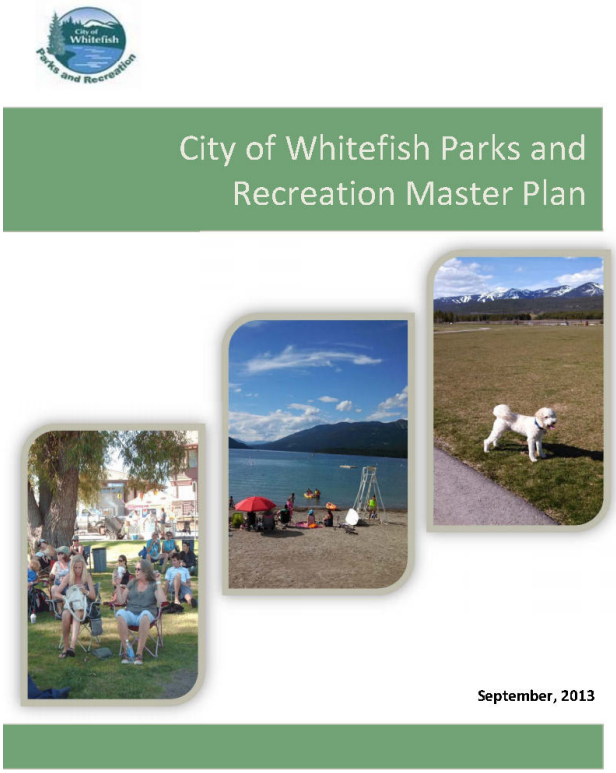
In 2009, soon after the Growth Policy was adopted, the City adopted the Whitefish Transportation Plan (Transportation Plan). The Transportation Plan recognized issues with pedestrian and bicyclist facilities in Whitefish and recommended an update of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan as an "Immediate need (high priority)" project. The Transportation Plan also recommended two specific projects related to pedestrian and bicyclist facilities and included pedestrian and bicyclist facilities in many major street network improvements.

In 2011, the City adopted the *City of Whitefish Safe Routes to School Improvement Plan* (SRTS Plan). This plan focused on improving the safety and comfort of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in planning areas within roughly a one-mile radius of schools in Whitefish. The SRTS Plan established projects and priorities based on enforcement, engineering, encouragement, education and evaluation. As a result of adopting the SRTS Plan, the City was able to prepare successful applications for a variety of pedestrian infrastructure improvements and SRTS programs.

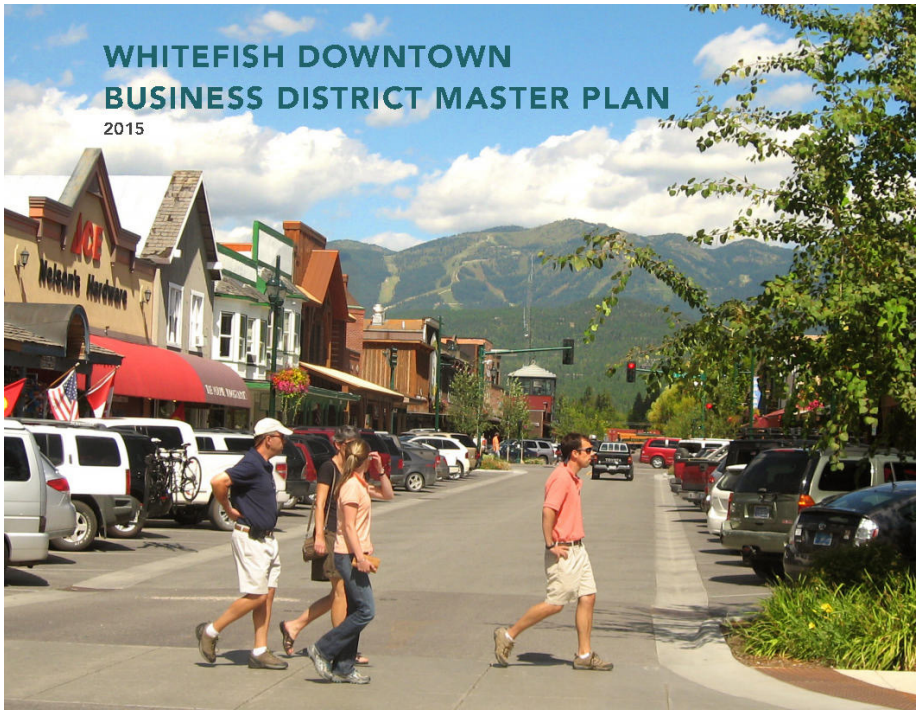
The City adopted the *City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (Parks Plan) in 2013 as an element of the Growth Policy. The Parks Plan defers to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for information on facilities, guidelines and proposed trail locations and establishes the following goal:

> *"Goal B: Expand the trail and linear park system to provide connectivity between all parks, water features, schools and major destinations in the community."*

Seven objectives are included in the Parks Plan to meet Goal B, all of which are consistent with other existing Whitefish planning documents.



Most recently, in 2015, the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan (Downtown Plan) was adopted by the City covering a planning area from E. 6th St. on the south, Somers Ave. on the east, Edgewood on the north (with a bump up to Skyles Place around Wisconsin Ave.) and the Whitefish River on the west. The Downtown Plan addresses five categories of objectives, one of which is transportation. The "Transportation Framework" of the Downtown Plan calls for pedestrian-emphasis streets, shopping loop emphasis streets, protected bikeways and shared use paths.



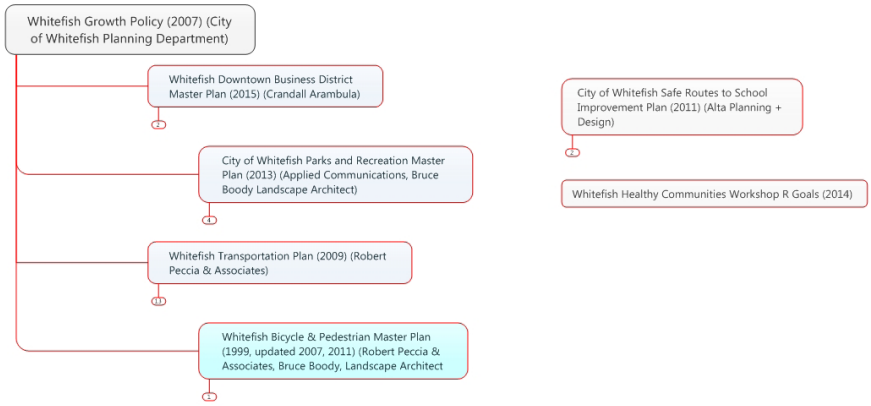
2. Updating the Master Plan

The need for a comprehensive update to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan has been officially recognized since 2009. The design and use of pedestrian and bicyclist facilities in cities has evolved significantly since 1998 with more sophisticated design, new technology and diverse funding sources. Additionally, there is now an acute need to plan for and fund the maintenance of the many miles of shared use paths and other pedestrian and bicyclist facilities built in the City of Whitefish since work began in earnest in the 1990s.

In July of 2014, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) sponsored a Healthy Communities Workshop in Whitefish that was led by Mark Fenton, an expert in building healthier, walkable communities. The goals that resulted from this well-attended community event were presented to the Whitefish City Council on August 4, 2014 and included:

- Active Transportation Plan (2014-2015) - series of walking audits
- Establish Path Legacy Program for Contributors
- Commit TIF funding to help fill in trail gaps before TIF expires in 2020
- Policy Change: Require Multi-modal Transportation Impact Study instead of a Traffic Impact Study for new development projects
- Establish a Sidewalk Improvement Program
- Establish a Maintenance Fund for Bike/Pedestrian Paths

In fiscal year 2016, the City of Whitefish budgeted for an update of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. WGM Group, Inc. was selected to provide planning services and was able to partner with the Flathead City-County Health Department for assistance with public outreach and education. The planning process for updating the Master Plan began in January of 2016 when WGM Group staff met with City staff and researched and inventoried existing planning documents. A thorough analysis of the pedestrian and bicycle-related content of existing plans was undertaken to ensure consistency between documents and to inform the process of updating the Master Plan.



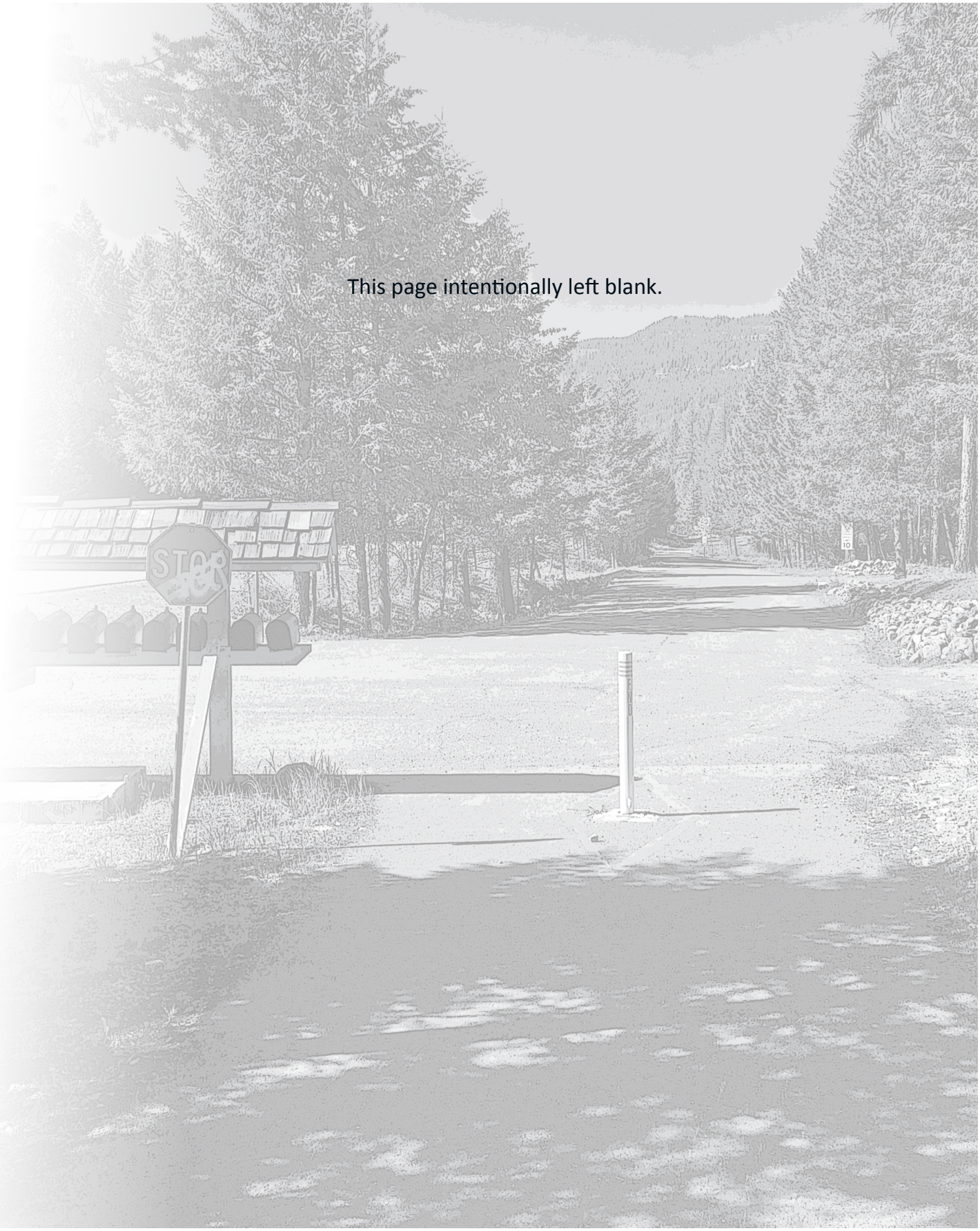
Previous Whitefish plans were analyzed to ensure consistency between documents.

The process of updating the Master Plan continued throughout the spring of 2016. Public outreach included an online survey and Facebook page, community forum meetings, a group bicycle tour of facilities, outreach events, press releases and personal interviews with key stakeholders. Details of the public outreach process used to create this plan can be found in Appendix C: Public Outreach.

Community forums were well attended by citizens wanting to participate in the Connect Whitefish planning process.

This 2016 Connect Whitefish Plan replaces the 1998 Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (as amended) and is adopted as an element of the 2007 Whitefish City-County Growth Policy. This Plan is designed to be consistent with, further implement and complement the 2009 Whitefish Transportation Plan, the 2011 Safe Routes to School Improvement Plan, the 2013 City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.

A public group bike ride offered a chance to explore connections and discuss future facilities.



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II. Existing Characteristics

A. CONNECTIVITY

1. Pedestrian Facilities

As of 2015, the City of Whitefish has a population of approximately 6,500 residents . There are approximately 41 miles of sidewalk in Whitefish in 2016. Sidewalks are common throughout the older downtown commercial and residential areas of Whitefish and within newer subdivisions developed since the 1990s. However, there are many areas that are absent sidewalks or where existing sidewalks do not connect. Sidewalks are less common in post-war "suburban" areas of Whitefish developed from the 1950s through 1970s. Relatively few intersections provide marked crosswalks to enhance pedestrian safety. However, there are six locations with pedestrian-activated flashing beacons and enhanced signing to improve safety at busy crossing locations.

Some sidewalks end abruptly without providing critical pedestrian connectivity.

2. Shared Use Facilities

For a relatively small Montana town, Whitefish has an impressive network of shared use paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. These paths range from 10' asphalt paths adjacent to the Whitefish River to 8' wide paths adjacent to recently reconstructed City streets such as Dakota and Colorado Avenues. There are 13.6 miles of shared use paths in Whitefish in 2016, with the longest continuous path being the showpiece Wisconsin Avenue path that is approximately 2.3 miles from the railroad viaduct to just past the intersection with Big Mountain Road. The path adjacent to US Highway 93 is now nearly equal in length and will soon extend to Twin Bridges Road. Other shared use paths have been built in segments of varying length throughout the City since the mid-1990s as easements, path funding, road reconstruction or new development allowed for construction. Some path segments begin and end with no connection to other facilities, but were constructed as "placeholders" until future paths could be built.

A solar-powered flashing beacon is frequently in the shadow of a pedestrian overpass.

3. Bicyclist Facilities

In 2016, the City of Whitefish has almost two miles of bike lanes on four city streets. This includes three city streets on the east side of town around Whitefish High School and Muldown Elementary School. These existing bike lanes are the result of efforts focused on improving the safety of children using bicycles to get to school. Bike lanes also exist on both sides of Baker Avenue south of the Whitefish River Bridge. These bike lanes provide bicyclist connectivity between commercial areas on the south side of town and residential neighborhoods in town, and provide a north/south alternative to riding on Spokane Avenue (US Highway 93), which has narrow to nonexistent shoulders, poor road condition and significantly higher traffic volumes. Map 2 in Appendix A depicts 2016 existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Existing bike lane on Baker Avenue

Existing two-way path leading to bicycle parking at Whitefish High School

B. SAFETY

1. Pedestrian Safety

Existing sidewalks are generally in good condition and free of unsafe cracks or tripping hazards. However, many areas that lack sidewalks, especially near schools, could benefit from the enhanced safety of continuous pedestrian facilities. Many intersections have curb cuts, but lack ADA-compliant detectable warnings or striped crosswalks. Winter conditions in Whitefish frequently fade crosswalk striping to a point of being ineffective. Most of the busiest intersections have safety signage of some sort, and six intersections have pedestrian activated beacons and enhanced safety signage. The locations of existing marked crosswalks and intersections with pedestrian-activated beacons are shown on Map 2 in Appendix A and listed below:

1. Wisconsin Avenue at Whitefish Lake Lodge
2. Wisconsin Avenue near Labrie Drive
3. Baker Avenue and E. 1st Street
4. Kalispell Avenue and E. 2nd Street
5. Pine Avenue and E. 2nd Street
6. Spokane Avenue and E. 5th Street

Solar-powered, pedestrian-activated crosswalks are an excellent example of pedestrian safety improvements.

Pedestrian safety is greatly enhanced in the downtown area with the construction of pedestrian bulb-outs that reduce the distance that pedestrians are exposed to vehicle lanes while crossing city streets.

Pedestrian bulb-outs significantly improve the pedestrian experience, but compete for precious right-of-way width with bike lanes.

2. Shared Use Safety

Many existing shared use paths throughout Whitefish were constructed using federal grants, Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) allocations or federal earmarks, and were therefore designed to meet Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for construction, signage, bollards, and detectable warnings. Some privately built paths, however, did not follow the same design and construction standards and now exhibit safety hazards. Path sloughing, roots growing up through paths and lack of removable bollards can be safety hazards on shared use paths. Additionally, safety signage on shared use paths indicating turns, path ends, and changes of path condition, as well as railings and appropriate fencing are all critical components of user safety. For more information on the existing characteristics of short-term and long-term shared use path repair and maintenance, see Section D of this Chapter.

Improperly constructed paths can create maintenance costs for many years.

3. Bicyclist Safety

Winter conditions and the use of water-borne paint affects the longevity of bike lane striping, often leaving bike lanes faded and unnoticeable. Existing bike lanes on Baker Ave. were widened in the spring of 2016 to address a commonly raised safety concern with the varying width between E. 19th St. and W. 6th St. The bike lanes on E. 2nd St., Pine Ave. and E. 7th St. were also re-striped in the early summer of 2016 with more durable markings and improved visibility. Bike lanes improve the safety of bicyclists by providing a more visible, designated space for bicyclists, but also require wider roadways, with a recommended width of six feet. For this reason, streets in the downtown generally lack adequate width for bike lanes.

BEFORE:
Faded bike lanes require frequent maintenance.

AFTER:
Recent City of Whitefish improvements in striping can increase longevity.

C. WAYFINDING

There is currently a diverse mix of pedestrian and/or bicyclist-specific wayfinding signage in the City of Whitefish. Existing wayfinding signage is generally either confirmation signage (confirming that a user is on a path or route) or directional signage (notifying the user that the path or route turns or continues straight). Existing directional signage ranges from hardware store letters nailed to telephone poles to more formal "Bike Route" signs with arrows.

Examples of Directional Signage

In the 1990s and early 2000s, an organization known as “Fish Trails” helped to promote and build paths in Whitefish that were subsequently signed with “Fish Trails” confirmation signage. Most of these signs still exist and provide confirmation to the user that they are travelling on a designated City of Whitefish path. Unfortunately, the “Fish Trails” signs are not consistent or continuous. Examples of other existing confirmation signage include “Bike Route” and “Bike Lane” signs as well as signs indicating routes to The Whitefish Trails outside of City limits.

Examples of Confirmation Signage

In 2012, a comprehensive city wayfinding plan was developed for the City of Whitefish by Cygnet Strategies in partnership with Mayfield Creative, Old Town Creative and Bruce Boody, LA. The plan included color schemes and design guidelines for gateway signage, vehicular directional and parking signage and directory maps. The plan also provided conceptual images of bicycle and pedestrian confirmation and directory signage. The vehicular signage portion of the wayfinding plan was subsequently implemented with a comprehensive message schedule and location plan. A similar comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian-specific message schedule and location was not developed. Since many existing bike lanes, shared use paths and sidewalks are adjacent to city streets, the existing vehicular wayfinding signage is useful to both locals and visitors. However, most off-street, shared use paths lack confirmation signage and path intersections lack directional or decision signage.

Some vehicle wayfinding signage serves vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

D. MAINTENANCE

Short and long-term maintenance is a critically important, but often marginalized, component of connected and comfortable bicycle and pedestrian facilities. A variety of city departments and budgets are involved in the maintenance of most shared use paths and other city bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

1. Public Works Department

In the City of Whitefish, sidewalk construction and repair is the responsibility of persons owning the abutting property pursuant to §7-1A-2 and §7-1A-6 Whitefish City Code. This method of building and repairing sidewalks is administered and enforced by the Public Works Director and saves the City on sidewalk expenditures. Unfortunately, abutting property owners are frequently unwilling or unable to undertake costly sidewalk construction or repair projects. Furthermore, strict enforcement of City sidewalk construction and repair laws by the Public Works Director is often challenging due to the lengthy, resource-intensive nature of the task. Occasional capital improvement projects are undertaken to build and/or repair sidewalks, but these are not the primary mechanism for developing and maintaining sidewalk facilities in the City at this time.

Maintenance responsibilities are far more extensive than simply mowing and plowing.

Generally speaking, crosswalk construction, repair and heavier maintenance is the responsibility of the Public Works Department. Fading crosswalk lines, damage to crosswalk safety signage and pedestrian activated lighting is repaired by Public Works staff. According to the Public Works Director, each year, the Public Works Department spends about $10,000 on crosswalk repair. The Public Works Department is also responsible for the routine repainting of crosswalk striping and bike lanes on city streets. Snow removal from sidewalks in the winter is the responsibility of property owners, pursuant to §7-2-2(B) Whitefish City Code.

2. Parks and Recreation Department

According to a field inventory of Whitefish facilities conducted by WGM Group, Inc. in the spring of 2016, there are approximately 13.6 miles of asphalt and concrete shared use paths within the City, most of which are considered recreation facilities and are therefore maintained and repaired by the Parks and Recreation Department. This total does **not** include internal walking paths or gravel trail networks within city parks or sidewalks adjacent to city parks and municipal buildings, which are also maintained and repaired by the Parks and Recreation Department. These responsibilities add about nine miles to the bicycle and pedestrian facilities maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department. A full list of facilities maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department is available in the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Fund summary in the FY2017 city budget.[1] For those facilities, short-term maintenance responsibilities include:

- Mowing
- Weeding
- Sweeping
- Painting
- Picking up litter
- Irrigation
- Snow plowing
- Ice removal
- Graffiti removal
- Parking area upkeep
- Tree trimming and replacement
- Emptying waste receptacles
- Sign installation and replacement
- Erosion control
- Light bulb replacement
- Light fixture repair
- Mutt Mitt station refill
- Bridge maintenance

1. http://www.cityofwhitefish.org/large-files/pdf/Preliminary%20FY%202017%20Budget.pdf

According to the City of Whitefish preliminary FY2017 budget, the FY2016 Parks and Recreation Department annual operations and maintenance budget for the Bicycle Path Maintenance Program was $36,000 for personal services (labor) and $19,675 for materials and services. An additional $72,213 was budgeted for maintenance of The Whitefish Trail, but this is managed by Whitefish Legacy Partners for facilities primarily outside of city limits.

Maintenance is an ongoing expense that the City must budget for to provide a safe, comfortable and connected non-motorized system.

According to a June 2015 report by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, the average annual cost for performing the most basic daily operations and maintenance of an asphalt surface path is $1,971/mile.[2] This figure includes the hourly value of volunteer work. (See Appendix E: Examples and Reference Materials.)

The annual operation and maintenance expenses of an asphalt path do not include long-term routine maintenance, such as crack sealing, patching, fog sealing, and overlays. This long-term maintenance is critical for the preservation of asphalt shared use paths and is also the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department. In 2015, the City of Whitefish was provided an

2. http://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=6336

estimate from Robert Peccia & Associates that was confirmed by the Montana Department of Transportation that estimated annualized long-term maintenance costs at $3,700 per mile. (See Appendix E: Examples and Reference Materials.)

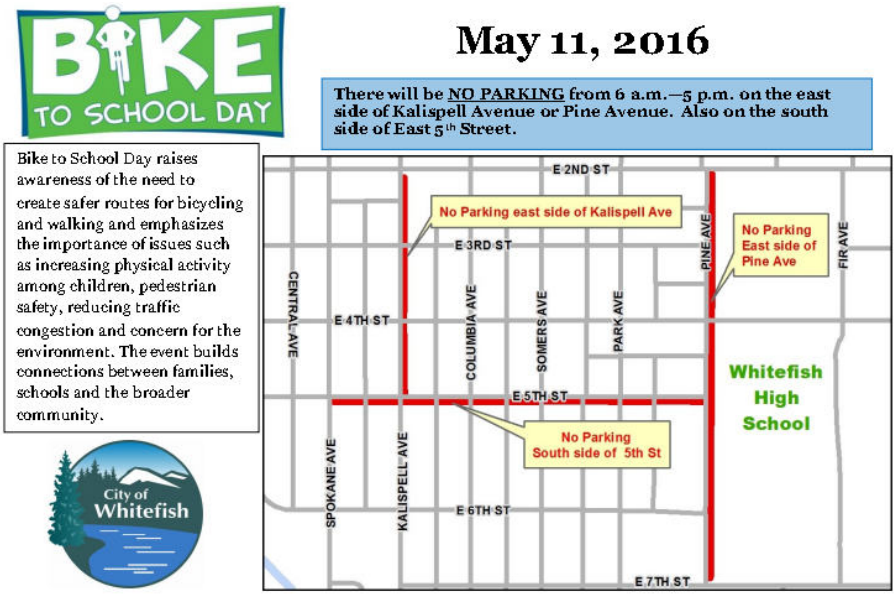
Lastly, shared use paths require occasional repair and refurbishment that goes beyond the scope of routine maintenance. Examples include repair of sloughing paths, flood damage and damage due to vegetation growth up through a trail. Each year, the Parks and Recreation Director presents a five-year capital projects list to the Parks Board of Commissioners, a list that includes necessary capital expenditures to repair paths. The amount spent each year on capital improvements varies and is funded from a variety of sources determined each budget year.

3. Volunteer Groups

There are groups of volunteers that assist with the routine maintenance of trails and paths in the City of Whitefish. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee not only advises the Parks Commission, but some members are known to work on path maintenance from time to time. Other groups of volunteers work on such tasks as weed removal, painting and staining, removing silt fencing and trail clean up. These volunteer efforts that provide valuable assistance to the community are coordinated by the Parks and Recreation Department.

E. PROGRAMMING

The City of Whitefish has a variety of existing programs to encourage the use of bicycles and walking in the community. For several years, the Public Works Department has worked with Muldown Elementary and Whitefish Middle School staff to organize spring and fall Bike and Walk to School Days. The events are very popular and routinely generate high participation rates by both students and parents (free ice cream for participants in recent years has certainly helped). In 2016, Bike to School Day was combined with a "tactical urbanism" project that created temporary protected bike lanes along Kalispell Ave., E. 5th St. and Pine Ave.



Programs like Bike to School Day have generated high participation rates.

Muldown Elementary's Bike To School Day was so popular that the bike racks ran out of space.

Muldown Elementary School also teaches bicycle safety through the Physical Education program. Vonda Garcia, one of the Physical Education teachers, has been instrumental in teaching multiple generations of Whitefish students of the benefits and responsibilities of bicycling, and has also worked on many rounds of SRTS funding. The Public Works Department also attained SRTS funding to provide Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety training to the school district's Health Enhancement teacher. In addition, a grant was obtained to provide 22 bicycles, a bike trailer, and repair kits to the school district for a 5th grade Bike Safety program. These bicycles are used by the Parks Department in the summer.

The Whitefish Community Library hosts a Bike Rodeo each year to teach and reinforce safe and defensive bicycling skills in youth. The City of Whitefish's Parks and Recreation Department hosts "Bike to the Beach" activities at City Beach Park during the summer that encourage children to ride their bikes to the beach and to other destinations in town.

Other organizations and programs such as "Fish Trails" and "Adopt a Trail" have been cornerstones of pedestrian and bicycle culture in Whitefish in the past, but have faded in recent years. However, during the "Connect Whitefish" public outreach process for creating this Plan, a new generation of Whitefish residents were educated about the many bicycle and pedestrian programming opportunities and efforts that are underway. The Flathead City-County Health Department is also committed to refreshing and reinvigorating existing programs and creating new ones to support and advocate for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs, a critical component of public health.

Signage remains from the "Fish Trails" organization and the "Adopt a Trail" program.

F. FUNDING

1. Operations and Maintenance

Funding for operations and maintenance and programming of pedestrian and bicycle facilities primarily comes from City tax revenue and is budgeted through the general fund. Annual budgets for the Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department are established by the Whitefish City Council and appear in the annual City of Whitefish fiscal year budget.[3] A more detailed discussion of maintenance funding is presented in Section D of this Chapter.

2. Construction

The City of Whitefish is fortunate to have a variety of existing funding sources for the design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The Resort Tax in Whitefish is a 3% sales tax on most retail, food and beverage, and lodging transactions that currently generates approximately $3,300,000 per year. 65% of the original 2% annual Resort Tax collections can go to the construction of roads, including sidewalks and currently equals approximately $1,526,000 each year. Another 5% of the original 2% annual Resort Tax collections can be used for park capital projects and bicycle paths and currently equals approximately $117,000 each year. The remaining 30% of the original 2% annual Resort Tax collections goes to administration and property tax relief. As of 2013, over $14 million had been collected and expended on street improvements since 1996 and over $784,000 had been collected and expended on park improvements during the same time. A Resort Tax Committee recommends priorities for street reconstruction projects to the City Council.

3. http://www.cityofwhitefish.org/cms-assets/documents/220168-832934.fy2016-adopted-budget.pdf

Examples of bicycle and pedestrian projects funded or partially funded with Resort Tax money include:

- Community-wide sidewalk replacement project (84 blocks)
- Riverside Park Shared Use Path
- Baker Street Park Shared Use Path
- 2nd to Armory Shared Use Path
- East Edgewood Shared Use Path
- Rocksund Bridge

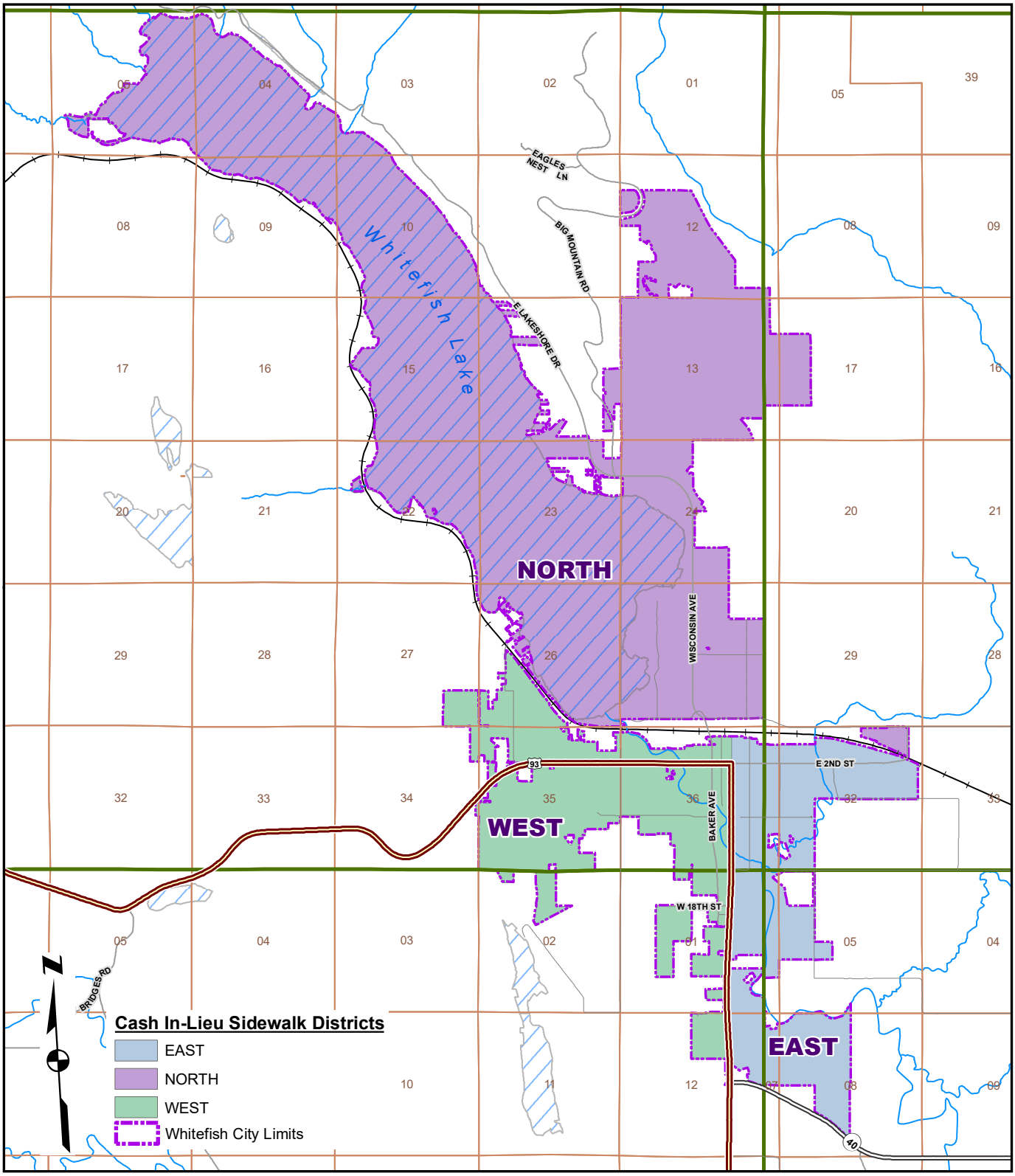
A Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District was created in 1987 to collect money for redevelopment projects. Since 1987, many bicycle and pedestrian facility projects in Whitefish have been completed using TIF funds for urban renewal. Some of these projects include Riverside Bridge, the purchase of Skye Park and the installation of Skye Park Bridge, and construction of the BNSF Loop and Hope Trail shared use paths. Unless additional bonding is authorized, the Whitefish TIF District will sunset in July of 2020 and revenue collected will return to normal taxing entities.

Recently completed Skye Park Bridge was partially funded with TIF revenue.

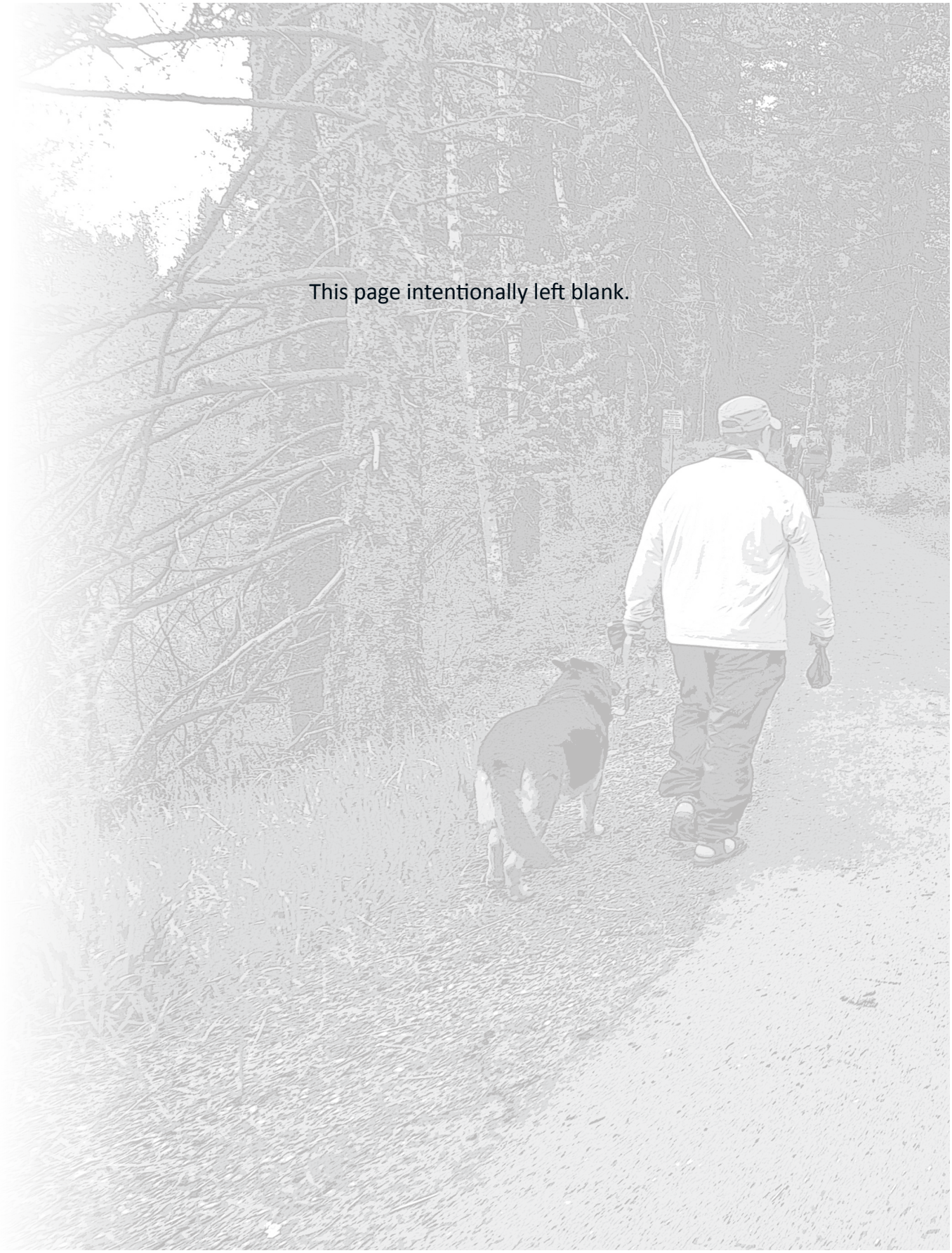
New development in Whitefish may be required to extend shared use paths in lieu of sidewalks in areas where paths exist or where a path has been identified in this Connect Whitefish Plan. Land use law stipulates that such exactions must be roughly proportional to the impacts of the proposed development, and must be for facilities that are planned in advance and of which the developer would have knowledge. A variety of shared use paths around Whitefish have been completed by private development.

In areas where path extensions would not connect, where future paths are not designated in this Connect Whitefish Plan, and where sidewalk construction may be premature, developers may be required to pay cash-in-lieu of bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities.
The City of Whitefish is divided into three sidewalk districts for the collection of cash-in-lieu funds, and money collected must be expended within the district in which it was collected. Sidewalk district funds are an existing source of money for pedestrian facility projects.

Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) and Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) funding previously authorized under the federal SAFETEA-LU highway bill were two of the most significant and productive funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Whitefish over the last 20 years. Both of these federal funding sources were significantly modified by the passage of MAP-21 in 2012, and subsequently with passage of the FAST Act in 2015. CTEP funding, which for many years provided an allocation to every community based on population, is now only available through a competitive grant under the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). SRTS grant funding is no longer specifically available, although SRTS projects qualify to apply for TAP grants. The 2017-2018 call for applications for TAP funding will occur in the summer/fall of 2016.



The City of Whitefish is divided into three sidewalk districts for the collection of cash-in-lieu funds.



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III. Issues, Recommendations & Priorities

A. CONNECTIVITY

"Connecting the River Trail is critical to elevating the status of the City's bike paths… The River Trail can serve as a core for recreation, commuting, and providing access to other connecting paths. This should be the City's focus until a connection is established from City Beach to River Lakes."

-Public comment from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Connectivity Issues

Many years of opportunistic bicycle and pedestrian path development in the City of Whitefish have resulted in paths and facilities that do not provide a continuous recreation or transportation function. Existing sidewalks, shared use paths and bike lanes do not provide the desired connectivity to downtown, schools and parks. The Whitefish River creates a challenge for connectivity, but provides an opportunity for a transportation and recreation corridor. Participants in the Connect Whitefish planning process agree that creating connections between existing facilities should now be the top priority for the future.

Existing shared use path along the Whitefish River that does not connect.

2. Connectivity Policy/Action Recommendations

1. Prioritize completion of the Whitefish River Trail as a 10' wide shared use path with lighting and wayfinding signage from Skye Park Bridge to JP Road as the City's top bicycle and pedestrian project.

2. Prioritize connections between the Whitefish River Trail and existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities that provide safe access to the downtown area, schools and parks. This includes project recommendations in the 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan and the 2011 City of Whitefish Safe Routes to School Improvement Plan.

3. Adopt a list of new connectivity projects divided into three tiers of priority:
   - Tier 1: Immediate Consideration, 0-5 years
   - Tier 2: Intermediate Consideration, 5-10 years
   - Tier 3: Long Range Consideration, 10-20 years

4. Encourage the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee to focus efforts on Tier I projects. In order to promote transparency and public participation, consider a formal plan amendment process to move projects between priority tiers.

5. The Resort Tax Committee should continue to consider connectivity and comfort of bicycle and pedestrian facilities when recommending priorities for street reconstruction projects. Those streets that need reconstruction AND would improve connectivity and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists should be prioritized.

6. Road reconstruction projects within city limits should continue to consider the connectivity and safety benefits of bicycle and pedestrian use, and include shared use paths, bicycle lanes and sidewalks where appropriate. The City of Whitefish should consider the community benefits and drawbacks of adopting a "Complete Streets" policy through a separate public process. (Examples of "Complete Streets" policies can be found in Appendix E: Examples and Reference Materials.)

7. Regulatory implementation should focus on connecting, rather than creating, disparate facilities. Continue to utilize “cash-in-lieu” for development near Tier 2 and 3 projects to re-allocate resources toward Tier 1 projects if within similar proximity and impact areas.

8. Use less-expensive “Urban Trails” as temporary measures to cost effectively connect some facilities. (See Appendix B: Definitions and Design Guidelines).

9. Work cooperatively with Flathead County to place Bicycle Route signage adjacent to county roads outside Whitefish city limits.

10. Work cooperatively with Flathead County to develop bus stop shelters where pedestrians and bicyclists can take refuge and connect to more distant portions of Whitefish and Flathead County. (See Map 3 of proposed bus stop shelter locations in Appendix A.)

11. Develop numbered or named bike routes in and around Whitefish to provide connectivity and recreation opportunities. Add these routes, along with distance and grade information, to City maps distributed to the public. (See Proposed Bike Route Map in Section 1.B.)

3. Connectivity Project Recommendations

Following is a list of prioritized projects to improve the overall connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Whitefish to achieve the Community Vision in Chapter 1 of this Plan. Project priorities are based on historic work by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee and Whitefish City staff coupled with public input received during the Connect Whitefish planning process and professional recommendations from the project consultants (WGM Group, Inc.). The City aspires to complete the connectivity projects in the table below as funding becomes available; these projects are also shown on Map 4 and Composite Map 6 in Appendix A. Cost estimates are provided for planning purposes only. These estimates represent order-of-magnitude costs based on average Montana and national construction costs in 2016 dollars. Projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and adjusted for inflation. For more information, see “Unit Cost Data” in Appendix E.

Connectivity

Tier I (0-5 yrs)

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
C1	**Whitefish River Trail - Kay Beller Park to BNSF Loop** Extend the Shared Use Path along the river between 2nd St and Railway St providing a key connection for multiple trail networks. Include a Bike Channel adjacent to stairs on the north side of Veteran's Memorial Bridge to provide bicycle access to the Shared Use Path from the north side of 2nd St. Consider an Urban Trail if additional right-of-way cannot be acquired from the Riverbend Condominiums.	Shared Use Path/ Urban Trail	828	$113,000
C2	**Whitefish River Trail - Stumptown Inn to Pine Lodge** Build a Shared Use Path to extend the river trail south to Spokane Ave. Provide temporary connections to Spokane. Connect to future Spokane Ave Bridge crossing.	Shared Use Path	1,339	$182,000
C3	**Whitefish River Trail - Walgreens to Duck Inn** Construct an interim Urban Trail connection from Spokane Ave to Columbia Ave along the south side of the river. Plan for future Shared Use Path. Connect to future Spokane Ave Bridge crossing.	Urban Trail	858	$13,000
C4	**Whitefish River Trail - Duck Inn to Old Hospital** Construct an interim Urban Trail connection along the west side of Whitefish River from Columbia Ave east to the existing asphalt path to the south. Plan for future Shared Use Path crossing under Columbia Ave Bridge.	Urban Trail	474	$7,000
C5	**Whitefish River Trail - Spokane Ave Bridge** Work with MDT during the design process for Highway 93 to develop an at-grade crossing for the Whitefish River Trail beneath the planned Spokane Ave Bridge.	Bridge	260	$905,000
C6	**Whitefish River Trail - Old Hospital** Build a Shared Use Path connecting River's Edge Park to the existing trail segment to the north. Likely built in conjunction with development of former hospital site.	Shared Use Path	1,561	$212,000
C7	**Whitefish River Trail - Rocksund Bridge to River's Edge Park** Construct an interim Urban Trail connecting the existing asphalt path on the west side of Whitefish River at Rocksund Bridge north to the existing asphalt path at River's Edge Park. Plan for future Shared Use Path.	Urban Trail	1,292	$19,000

Tier I (0-5 yrs)

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
C8	**Wisconsin Ave Viaduct** Implement improvements to Shared Use Paths on both sides of the Wisconsin Ave viaduct, as detailed on pages 52 and 53 of 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.	Shared Use Path	1,997	$272,000
C9	**Whitefish Promenade - Baker Underpass** Construct a Shared Use Path underpass on the south side of the Wisconsin Ave Viaduct, as shown on page 54 of 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. Alternate Route: Connect Promenade on north side of O'Shaughnessy Center as shown in Depot Park Master Plan.	Under-pass	198	$688,000
C10	**Whitefish Promenade - Baker Ave to Spokane Ave** Widen sidewalks along the north side of Railway St to create a Shared Use Path as shown on pages 48 through 51 of the 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. Alternate Route: Promenade is a Shared Use Path along south side of Depot Park, turning north on Central for one-half block, then turning west to align with Baker Underpass on north side of O'Shaughnessy Center as shown in Depot Park Master Plan.	Shared Use Path	792	$108,000
C11	**Birch Point Dr to West Lakeshore Dr** Secure an easement and develop a Shared Use Path connecting north end of Birch Point Dr to south end of West Lakeshore Dr. Add Bike Route signing and pavement markings to create a connection from Downtown to Whitefish Lake State Park.	Shared Use Path	815	$111,000
C12	**State Park Road Trail** Build a Shared Use Path adjacent to State Park Road when the road is rebuilt with resort tax funds (anticipated 2019). This creates a valuable connection to the Highway 93 Trail and a key link in the Whitefish Lake State Park recreational loop.	Shared Use Path	5,794	$788,000
C13	**Whitefish River Trail - River Lakes Parkway** Connect the river trail system to Smith Sports Complex along the east side of River Lakes Pkwy, west of "The Springs" assisted living facility.	Shared Use Path	1,036	$141,000
C14	**93 Trail - Lion Mountain Rd to Twin Bridges Rd** Extend the Shared Use Path adjacent to Highway 93 West to Twin Bridges Rd. The Montana Department of Transportation will complete this connectivity project.	Shared Use Path	16,854	$2,292,000

Connectivity

Connectivity

	NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
Tier I (0-5 yrs)	C15	**City Beach Loop - Skye Park to Dakota Ave** Connect the Whitefish River Trail to City Beach with an on-street Cycle Track/Walking Path along Oregon Ave, Lakeside Blvd, and Skyles Pl. Convert Lakeside Blvd and Skyles Pl to one-way traffic. See 2009 Whitefish Transportation Plan conceptual site plan in Appendix E. Modify treatments to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.	Cycle Track	2,346	$91,000
	C16	**13th St Cutoff Trail** Build a trail connection from the east end of 13th St to the Whitefish River Trail.	Urban Trail	1,091	$16,000
	C17	**Railway St Pedestrian Connection** Connect Railway St with a new sidewalk connection on north side of Whitefish Middle School. Add interim pavement markings and signage to indicate connection until a sidewalk can be constructed.	Sidewalk	397	$12,000
	C18	**E. 1st/Mill/Fir Sidewalks** Add curb and sidewalks on both sides of 1st St, Mill Ave, Fir Ave east of Pine Ave and north of E. 2nd St.	Curb & Sidewalk	2,538	$140,000
Tier II (5-10 yrs)	C19	**Skye Park River Trail** Construct Shared Use Path from Skye Park Bridge to the southeast, then west along W. 1st St right-of-way, then south on Karrow Ave to W. 2nd St.	Shared Use Path	2,963	$403,000
	C20	**Veteran's Peace Park Trail** Construct Shared Use Path through park between Karrow Ave and Ramsey.	Shared Use Path	2,743	$373,000
	C21	**Texas Ave** Construct Shared Use Path adjacent to Texas Ave when street is reconstructed.	Shared Use Path	4,312	$586,000
	C22	**Karrow Ave - 7th St to 2nd St** Construct Shared Use Path adjacent to Karrow Ave from W. 7th St to W. 2nd St. (Highway 93)	Shared Use Path	2,947	$401,000
	C23	**Denver St - Wisconsin to Texas** Construct Shared Use Path along Denver St connecting Wisconsin, Colorado and Texas Ave.	Shared Use Path	2,374	$323,000
	C24	**Mountain Trails Park Cutoff** Construct Shared Use Path along Marina Crest Ln between Dakota and Colorado Ave.	Shared Use Path	1,843	$251,000

Tier II (5-10 yrs)

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
C25	**Dakota Ave Trail Extension** Extend Shared Use Path along Dakota Ave from Marina Crest Ln to Labrie Dr.	Shared Use Path	1,014	$138,000
C26	**Monegan Rd Trail** Construct Shared Use Path adjacent to Monegan Rd from existing path to Voerman Rd when Monegan Rd is reconstructed.	Shared Use Path	1,490	$203,000
C27	**Cow Creek Trail** Construct Urban Trail from Creekwood Park to Willowbrook Subdivision to E. 2nd St. Plan for future Shared Use Path.	Urban Trail	8,743	$131,000
C28	**Baker Park Connection** Construct Shared Use Path connecting corner of Central Ave and 5th St, across Baker Park, to River Trail crossing on Baker Ave.	Shared Use Path	373	$51,000
C29	**Whitefish Promenade - 2nd St to Railway St** Construct a two-way cycle track adjacent to sidewalk on east side of Spokane Ave from E. 2nd St to Railway St, as shown on page 45 of the 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.	Raised Cycle Track	737	$100,000
C30	**Whitefish Promenade - 7th St to 2nd St** Construct a two-way cycle track adjacent to Spokane Ave (US Hwy 93), as shown on pages 40-42 of the 2015 Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. Connect to Whitefish River Trail and 7th St Bikeway.	Cycle Track	1,998	$272,000
C31	**Fir Ave Sidewalks** Curb and sidewalk on west side of Fir Ave from E. 4th St to E. 2nd St, and on east side of Fir Ave from E. 3rd St to E. 2nd St.	Curb & Sidewalk	852	$47,000
C32	**E. 4th St Sidewalks** Curb and sidewalk on south side of E. 4th St from Fir Ave to Willowbrook.	Curb & Sidewalk	670	$37,000
C33	**E. 6th St Sidewalks** Curb and sidewalk on E. 6th St from Kalispell Ave to Pine Ave.	Curb & Sidewalk	1,378	$76,000
C34	**Park Ave Sidewalks** Add sidewalks to both sides of Park Ave from E. 4th St to E. 8th St.	Sidewalk	3,046	$94,000

Connectivity

Connectivity

Tier III (10-20 yrs)

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
C35	**E. 8th St Connection** Connect E. 8th St between Park Ave and Ashar Ave to create a connection for kids on bikes.	Shared Use Path	684	$93,000
C36	**River Trail Park Bridge** Add a bridge to connect River Trail Park and Cow Creek Trail to the Whitefish River Trail and 13th St Cutoff.	Bridge	293	$1,017,000
C37	**Shiloh Ave Extension** Construct Shared Use Path next to roadway when Shiloh Ave is extended north to Whitefish Ave.	Shared Use Path	1,336	$182,000
C38	**JP Rd Extension** Construct Shared Use Path adjacent to JP Rd when it is extended west to Karrow Ave, and on to Blanchard Rd.	Shared Use Path	3,400	$462,000
C39	**Karrow Ave - JP Rd to 7th St** Construct Shared Use Path next to Karrow Ave from JP Rd to W. 7th St once JP Rd Extension is complete.	Shared Use Path	8,681	$1,181,000
C40	**Riverside Trail** Construct an Urban Trail along the south side of the river connecting Whitefish River Trail to Kallner Ln.	Urban Trail	5,206	$78,000
C41	**Monegan Rd Extension** Construct Shared Use Path next to Monegan Rd when it is extended from Voerman Rd to E. 7th St.	Shared Use Path	1,500	$204,000
C42	**18th St Cutoff** Connect Karrow Ave to the Whitefish River Trail with a Shared Use Path and on-street Bike Route via Lund Ln, 18th St, Greenwood Dr, and Spruce Ct.	Bike Route/ Shared Use Path	4,693	$638,000
C43	**13th St Cutoff** Connect 18th St to the Whitefish River Trail with a Shared Use Path following Flathead Ave and 13th St.	Shared Use Path	2,645	$360,000
C44	**Voermann Rd - Creekwood to Monegan** Construct Shared Use path on south side of Voerman Rd between Creekwood Dr and Monegan Rd.	Shared Use Path	841	$114,000
C45	**BNSF Railway Loop** Construct Shared Use Path on south side of E. Edgewood Dr between existing path and E. 2nd St.	Shared Use Path	8,998	$1,224,000

Tier III (10-20 yrs)

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
C46	**BNSF Railway Loop** Negotiate with BNSF to create a Shared Use Path connection under the north end of the Wisconsin Viaduct.	Shared Use Path	967	$132,000
C47	**Whitefish River Trail - Walgreens to Duck Inn** Convert Urban Trail to Shared Use Path from Spokane Ave to Columbia Ave along the south side of the river.	Shared Use Path	858	$215,000
C48	**Whitefish River Trail - Duck Inn to Old Hospital** Convert Urban Trail to Shared Use Path along the west side of the Whitefish River from Columbia Ave east to the existing asphalt path to the south with a crossing under the Columbia Ave Bridge.	Shared Use Path	474	$119,000
C49	**Cow Creek Trail** Convert Urban Trail to Shared Use Path from Creekwood Park to Willowbrook Subdivision to E 2nd St.	Shared Use Path	8,743	$1,189,000
C50	**Wisconsin Trail Extension** Extend Shared Use Path along E. Lakeshore Dr to Les Mason State Park.	Shared Use Path	9,251	$1,258,000
C51	**Whitefish River Trail - Rocksund Bridge to River's Edge Park** Convert Urban Trail to Shared Use Path. (See project C7.)	Shared Use Path	1,292	$176,000
C52	**7th St Bikeway - Spokane Underpass** Construct a Shared Use Path between Spokane Ave (US Hwy 93) and Kalispell Ave with an underpass connecting to the Whitefish River Trail when Hwy 93 is reconstructed.	Under-pass	458	$1,593,000
C53	**East Edgewood to Reservoir Connection** Construct a Shared Use Path along an existing right of way parallel to and approximately 700' east of Texas Ave, beginning at East Edgewood Drive on the south and going north to Reservoir Road via Rick O'Shay Road.	Shared Use Path	9,850	$1,340,000
C54	**Armory Road to Voerman Road Connection** Construct a Shared Use Path that connects Armory Road to Voerman Road and back into Whitefish along Park Ave.	Shared Use Path	20,504	$2,789,000

Connectivity

B. SAFETY

"I think Whitefish is one of the most Cyclist/Pedestrian friendly places I have ever been. I love riding the Whitefish Trails, and appreciate the constant work they're doing to maintain the trail system. I also like that the sidewalk has been extended past the Golf Course. It makes it easier to access places like Lion Mountain on foot/bike. The sidewalks in town are nice, and most drivers are courteous to pedestrians, but I would like to see more of the "pedestrian" flashing lights at intersections (mainly on intersections without a light). Otherwise, keep up the good work! The landscaping has been great and getting better - more trees, flowers, etc. It makes my morning "commute" pretty awesome. Thank you!"

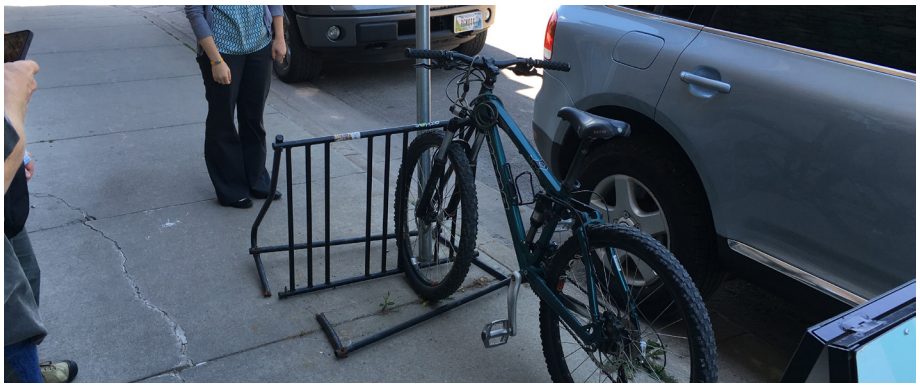
-Public comment from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Safety Issues

During the Connect Whitefish community outreach process, many members of the public cited safety concerns as a reason for not bicycling or walking more in Whitefish. Participants at the Community Forum meetings worked in groups to identify unsafe conditions and many group's maps were surprisingly similar. Written comments cited specific examples of unsafe intersections (such as Colorado Ave. and E. Edgewood) as well as unsafe practices by drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians (and even dogs). A lack of safe and secure bike parking at popular destinations and at City events was frequently mentioned by bicyclists. Pedestrians and bicyclists both raised concerns

The intersection of Wisconsin Ave and Railway was cited by both bicyclists and pedestrians as a safety concern.

about unlit areas and transient populations taking up residence adjacent to City pedestrian and bicycle paths. The proper and acceptable use of electric bikes (ebikes) on Whitefish shared use paths and bike lanes has recently been questioned and evokes strong feelings from many members of the community.



Safe and secure bicycle parking is lacking at some popular destinations.

Some safety concerns are the result of a lack of standardized bicycle and pedestrian facility design guidelines (such as narrow bike lanes, unsafe path crossings and dysfunctional bike racks). This creates an opportunity to adopt design guidelines that improve safety through more uniform function and appearance. While there will always be inherent risks when pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles share a transportation system, increased use and popularity of the pedestrian and bicycle network in Whitefish depends on the continued prioritization of safety improvements.

2. Safety Policy/Action Recommendations

1. The urgency of bicycle and pedestrian facility safety improvement projects does not allow for a 20-year planning horizon. Safety projects near schools, parks and downtown are shown in the table below. New projects should be inventoried at the 5-year review. (See Chapter 4 Administration).
2. Adopt standard Definitions and Design Guidelines for common pedestrian and bicycle facilities in order to achieve consistency in facility design and construction as well as communications. (See Appendix B: Definitions & Design Guidelines.)

3. Develop a plan for controlled intersection signage at uncontrolled intersections from E. 2nd St. on the north to E. 7th St. on the south, and from Kalispell Ave. on the west to Pine Ave. on the east
4. Include path lighting (that mitigates impacts to adjacent land uses) in the design of future shared use paths
5. Improve street striping materials and methods to increase durability and safety. Ensure that the Public Works Department has resources to perform necessary re-striping in the spring prior to seasonal bicycle and pedestrian activity.
6. Allow for and encourage pedestrian access in winter by improving enforcement of snow removal requirements. (7-2-2 Whitefish City Code)
7. Encourage the safe use of city streets and path facilities by pedestrians and children by improving enforcement of city leash laws. (5-3-5 Whitefish City Code)
8. Due to odors, wildlife and user traffic, locate waste receptacles away from benches on trails.
9. Create a map or use existing maps to show accessible sidewalk and shared use path routes.
10. Work cooperatively with Flathead County to place "Share the Road" signs on county roads outside Whitefish City limits where pedestrian and bicycle use is common.
11. A comfortable bicycling experience includes a safe and convenient location for bicycle parking. Increase the number of city-standard bicycle parking facilities downtown (Depot Park), at schools (Muldown Elementary and Whitefish Middle Schools) and at parks (City Beach and Kiddie Park). Where feasible, install covered bicycle parking at schools and parks to protect bicycles from rain and direct sun. (See Appendix B: Definitions & Design Guidelines.)
12. Consider purchasing and making available temporary portable bike racks for additional bike parking at City special events, such as 4th of July and the Farmer's Market.

13. Work to have sidewalks adjacent to all city streets and marked crosswalks at all intersections. Priority sidewalks and crosswalk improvements can be found in the table of safety projects below.

14. Accommodate the use of electric bikes (e-bikes) on Whitefish paths to expand the environmentally-friendly use of bicycles, increase the use and popularity of bicycle paths and parking, reduce vehicle traffic and increase recreation options for locals and visitors. Allow the use of Type 1 and 2 e-bikes on shared use paths with a maximum assist speed of 20 mph and Type 1, 2 and 3 e-bikes in bike lanes with a maximum assist speed of 28 mph. (Modelled on 2015 California law regulating Type 1, 2 and 3 e-bikes. Information regarding the use of ebikes, a copy of California's Assembly Bill 1096, and an infographic describing California Electric Bicycle Policy can be found in Appendix E: Examples and Reference Materials)

15. Consider requiring Multimodal Transportation Impact Studies/Analyses instead of traditional Traffic Impact Studies during the development review process to ensure consideration and appropriate mitigation of impacts on non-motorized travel as well as promotion of transportation diversity within the City of Whitefish.

3. Safety Project Recommendations

Following is a list of projects to improve the overall safety of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the City of Whitefish to achieve the Community Vision in Chapter 1 of this Plan. This list is based on recommendations from Whitefish City staff, public input received during the Connect Whitefish public outreach process and the professional recommendations of the project consultants (WGM Group, Inc.). The City aspires to complete the safety projects in the table below as funding becomes available; these projects are also shown on Map 5 and Composite Map 6 in Appendix A. Definitions of terms can be found in Appendix B: Definitions and Design Guidelines. Cost estimates are provided for planning purposes only. These estimates represent order-of-magnitude costs based on average Montana and national construction costs in 2016 dollars. Projects should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and adjusted for inflation. For more information, see "Unit Cost Data" in Appendix E.

Safety

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
S1	**Whitefish River Trail Repair - Riverwood Park** Refurbish existing asphalt path. Stumps and roots coming through asphalt, cracks and weeds damaging path.	Repair/Maint	1,500	$15,000
S2	**Whitefish River Trail Repair - Connection to Washington Ave** Improve stability of underlying materials and refurbish path. Path is cracking and sloughing downslope.	Repair/Maint	500	$5,000
S3	**Wisconsin and Labrie Dr Path Crossing** Examine performance and consider redesign to potentially add two-sided safety sigange, traffic calming and possibly standard flashing beacon. Safety signage is currently single-sided.	Crosswalk	N/A	$25,000
S4	**93 Trail - Underpass Mirrors** Add mirrors to approaches to improve visibility. Visibility is limited entering underpass at Golf Course.	Safety	N/A	$2,500
S5	**Whitefish River Trail - The Springs Bollards** Widen bollards or re-route path. Bollards on path are very narrow.	Safety	1,000	$2,500
S6	**Railway and Spokane Sidewalk** Improve sidewalk on northwest corner of intersection of Spokane and Railway. Concrete sidewalk is pitted on northwest corner, creating a safety hazard.	Repair/Maint	N/A	$7,500
S7	**Whitefish River Trail - Baker Ave Crossing** Install flashing beacon and curb bulb-outs to offer higher level of visibility. Frequent topic of concern for public due to large use by children and families going between Baker Park and Riverside Park.	RRFB Crosswalk	N/A	$25,000
S8	**13th St and Spokane Ave Crosswalk** Add crosswalk striping and pedestrian signals to north leg of intersection.	Signalized Crosswalk	N/A	$75,000

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
S9	**3rd St and Spokane Ave Crosswalks** Improve durability and visibiltiy of crosswalk striping on all four sides of intersection. Add safety signage notifying drivers of the presence of pedestrians. Consider use of flashing beacon similar to intersection of E. 5th St and Spokane Ave Frequent pedestrian use due to adjoining land uses and parking areas.	Crosswalk	N/A	$3,000
S10	**2nd St and Baker Ave Bike Route** Add "Sharrow" pavement markings through Downtown where there is not adequate width for bike lanes.	Bike Route	2,000	$6,500
S11	**Pine Ave and E. 7th St Crosswalks** Add crosswalk striping and safety signage on all corners of intersection. Major intersection for school access is unmarked on two sides.	Crosswalk	N/A	$3,000
S12	**Pine Ave and E. 5th St Crosswalks** Add crosswalk striping and safety signage on all corners of intersection. Tie in to existng cycle track on northeast corner. Major intersection for school children is only marked on south side.	Crosswalk	N/A	$3,000
S13	**Whitefish Lake Lodge Crosswalk** Redesign to reduce damage from drivers and plows, and include electrical source. Currently solar panel is in the shade of pedestrian bridge and pedestrian-actived LED lights are ineffective.	RRFB Crosswalk	N/A	$25,000
S14	**Skyles Pl - Dakota Ave to Wisconsin Ave** Add "Bike Route" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings.	Bike Route	1,300	$4,200
S15	**Colorado Ave and E. Edgewood Dr Crosswalk** Improve crosswalk striping and upgrade signing to current MUTCD standards. Frequently cited by public as safety problem with crosswalk.	Crosswalk	N/A	$3,000
S16	**Texas Ave and E. Edgewood Dr Crosswalk** Improve crosswalk striping and upgrade signing to current MUTCD standards. Frequently cited by public as safety problem with crosswalk.	Crosswalk	N/A	$3,000

Safety

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
S17	**Railway St and Baker Ave Crosswalk** Add crosswalk striping and safety signage to east/west crossing. Most frequently cited intersection of concern by public. Frequently cited as hazard for trail and pedestrian access.	**Crosswalk**	**N/A**	**$3,000**
S18	**E. 5th St - Central to Pine Ave** Address gaps in sidewalk system. Add traffic calming, signs, and pavement markings to create a safe, convenient route between Baker Park and the High School. Design treatments could include a Bicycle Boulevard, Advisory Bike Lanes, Cycle Track, Enhanced Crosswalk Markings and Traffic Diversions.	**Safe Routes to School**	**2,100**	**$52,500**
S19	**Kalispell Ave - 1st St to 7th St** Add traffic calming, signs, and pavement markings to create a safe, convenient route between the Middle School and the 7th St Bikeway. Design treatments could include a Bicycle Boulevard, Advisory Bike Lanes, Cycle Track, Enhanced Crosswalk Markings and Traffic Diversions.	**Safe Routes to School**	**2,350**	**$58,750**
S20	**E. 1st St - Kalispell Ave to Pine Ave** Add curb, sidewalks, traffic calming, signs, and pavement markings to create a safe, convenient route between the Middle School and the crosswalk at 2nd St and Pine Ave. Design treatments could include a Bicycle Boulevard, Advisory Bike Lanes, Cycle Track, Enhanced Crosswalk Markings and Traffic Diversions.	**Safe Routes to School**	**1,400**	**$35,000**
S21	**Pine Ave - 2nd St to 7th St** Address gaps in sidewalk system and build a two-way cycle track on east side of Pine Avenue from E. 2nd St. to E. 7th St. to replace existing bike lanes. Include traffic calming and enhanced crosswalk markings.	**Safe Routes to School**	**1,900**	**$47,500**
S22	**E. 7th St - Kalispell Ave to Pine Ave** Replace existing bike lanes with a two-way cycle track on the north side of 7th St from Kalispell to Pine Ave. Include traffic calming and enhanced crosswalk markings. Connect to future shared use path underpass at Spokane and connection to the Whitefish River Trail.	**Safe Routes to School**	**1,450**	**$36,250**

NO.	NAME & DESCRIPTION	TYPE	LENGTH (ft)	APPROX COST
S23	**E. Edgewood Dr** Add "Bike Route" and/or "Share the Road" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings.	**Bike Route**	**5,500**	**$17,655**
S24	**City Beach Loop Route** Add "Bike Route" and/or "Share the Road" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings on Dakota Ave, Birch Hill Dr, Parkway Dr, and Colorado Ave as part of the City Beach Loop recreational bike route.	**Bike Route**	**11,000**	**$35,310**
S25	**Voerman Rd** Work with Flathead County to add "Share the Road" signage along Voerman Rd. Frequently cited by public as safety problem.	**Signage**	**5,500**	**$17,655**
S26	**Additional Bicycle Parking** Install city-standard fixed bike racks at Depot Park, City Beach, Kiddie/Baker Park, Whitefish Middle School and Muldown Elementary School.	**Bike Racks**	**100**	**$65,000**
S27	**Reservoir Rd** Add "Bike Route" and/or "Share the Road" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings.	**Bike Route**	**2,385**	**$7,656**
S28	**Big Mountain Rd** Add "Bike Route" and/or "Share the Road" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings.	**Bike Route**	**24,000**	**$77,040**
S29	**E. Lakeshore Dr** Add "Bike Route" and/or "Share the Road" signing and "Sharrow" pavement markings.	**Bike Route**	**7,700**	**$24,717**
S30	**Highway 93 South** Add signing and pavement markings to improve bicycle safety along U.S. Highway 93, starting at the south end of the Promenade continuing south to city limits and beyod.	**Bike Route**	**10,200**	**$32,742**
S31	**Highway 40** Add signing and pavement markings to improve bicyclist safety along MT Highway 40, starting at the intersection with U.S. Highway 93, continuing east to city limits and beyond.	**Bike Route**	**5,100**	**$16,371**

C. WAYFINDING

"We need to develop and maintain a visible bike and pedestrian path system with more signage and the connectivity of bike and pedestrian paths. It would be helpful to residents, their visitors and our tourists to have signage showing maps and the distances of the WF bike/ped path system as we currently enjoy on the Whitefish Trail. Currently, only the most diligent individuals can figure out where the path system can be found and accessed. Few know how to follow the WF River as it meanders through the town. The City Park area around Shady Lane, Creekwood, the City water treatment area and across from the old hospital is difficult to access and needs to be planned, developed and connected to the WF bike/ped paths. We will all be enriched by a viable and usable WF bike/ped path system."

-Public comment from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Wayfinding Issues

"I never knew where this went!" was a common statement heard from participants in the group ride during the Connect Whitefish public outreach process. Long-time Whitefish residents that were comfortable enough to ride gravel trails, navigate traffic through unmarked intersections and push their bikes through wetlands to connect between paths were unaware of where paths led and how to get back to where they started. Imagine the experience of a family visiting Whitefish for the first time and trying to walk or ride a bicycle from Riverside Park Bridge to Skye Park Bridge and on to City Beach with no signage to guide them.

The City of Whitefish currently lacks consistent and coordinated wayfinding signage to comfortably guide locals and visitors along the many miles of paths and help them to find common destinations. Existing wayfinding signage is an inconsistent mix of designs, locations, and messages that can actually contribute to confusion. The 2012 vehicular wayfinding signage project did not include pedestrian and bicycle-specific signage, but did establish a theme and set of destinations that can be a launching

point for pedestrian and bicycle-specific signage. Lastly, a large number of Connect Whitefish participants were surprised to learn that the 10' wide concrete paths in many areas of Whitefish are, in fact, shared use paths. Concrete shared use paths have been built in Whitefish for many years because they are more durable than asphalt paths. However, many bicyclists simply associate concrete surfaces with sidewalks and have wondered for years why the City built such wide sidewalks.

Many path intersections lack wayfinding signage leaving users wondering "Where does this go?"

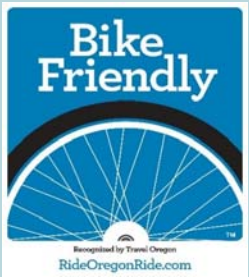
2. Wayfinding Policy/Action Recommendations

1. Create a committee to oversee wayfinding design and implementation.
2. Develop a design plan for bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding signage that is consistent with the appearance of existing wayfinding signage in the community to implement the conceptual sign location and sign type recommendations found in this Plan. Types of wayfinding signage that should be considered to achieve the Community Vision in Chapter 1 of this Plan are included in a table below.
3. Develop a practical and affordable schedule of detailed sign locations, appearance and content. Prioritize the top destinations cited in the public survey from the Connect Whitefish public outreach. (See top pedestrian and bicyclist destinations in a table below).
4. Establish a "mile-zero" point for the purpose of calculating length of bike routes and distance from downtown. This point should be on the Promenade route, near the planned multi-modal hub on the west side of Depot Park.
5. Create signs to inform public that concrete paths, such as those adjacent to Dakota and Colorado Avenues, are in fact shared use paths, not wide sidewalks for pedestrians only.
6. Create signed shared roadway loop routes near town for recreational use by locals and visitors.
7. Partner with North Valley Hospital, Flathead City-County Health Department and other interested entities to identify and sign a "Medical Mile" or "Prescription Trail" walking route. See Section E of this Chapter for more information.

3. Wayfinding Types, Destinations and Locations

The following tables reflect general types of wayfinding signage and top destinations, as determined by the community, to label with wayfinding signage to achieve the Community Vision found in Chapter 1 of this Plan. Conceptual locations to be considered for wayfinding signage are shown on Composite Map 6 in Appendix A.

Wayfinding Signage Types

SIGN TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Welcome Sign 	Provided at community entry points to indicate a bicycle-friendly community.
Confirmation Sign	Indicates a designated route and helps raise awarness for motorists. Typically placed every 1/4 to 1/2 mile on off-street facilities and every 2 to 3 blocks on on-street facilities. Can include destinations, distances, and travel times.
Turn Sign	Indicates where a route turns from one street to another. Typically located prior to intersections and can include destinations, arrows, and pavement markings.
Decision Sign	Provided at major path and route intersections with multiple destination options. Can include destinations, arrows, distances and travel times.
Regulatory Sign	Instructs users on what they should (or must) do under a given set of circumstances, such as speed limits, stop signs, shared sidewalks, or discouraging trespassing on private property or leaving trail in environmentally sensitive areas.

Wayfinding Destinations

SURVEY RANK	DESTINATION
#1	Downtown
#2	City Beach
#3	Depot Park
#4	Riverside Park
#5	Whitefish Community Library
#6	Baker/Kiddie Park
#7	Muldown Elementary School
#8	Smith Fields
#9	Les Mason State Park
#10	Whitefish Middle School
#11	Armory Park
#12	Whitefish Lake State Park
#13	Whitefish High School

D. MAINTENANCE

"I'm not a big bicyclist but do love to get outdoors and to walk my dog. I LOVE the Whitefish Trail and use the Lion Mountain access all the time. I also LOVE the bike path along Wisconsin and E. Lakeshore and am thrilled with how well it is maintained in the winter. Thank you!"

"Need to get busy with maintaining the trails we already have and spend less money on consulting fees for future trails especially when you aren't maintaining the current trails to a safe level."

-Public comments from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Maintenance Issues

The City of Whitefish has many existing miles of valuable sidewalks and shared use paths that are daily visual reminders of a community that is committed to walking and the use of bicycles as viable and desirable modes of recreation and transportation. However, if these facilities are not properly maintained, they will degrade to a point of being hazardous before they can be connected, and may eventually become unusable for future generations. Routine short and long-term maintenance by the City of Whitefish is expensive, with an approximate annual cost of $5,700 per mile of asphalt path. New path projects are frequently planned, designed and constructed without consideration of the long-range fiscal impacts of proper maintenance.

Future connectivity depends on existing paths and facilities being properly maintained and repaired.

2. Maintenance Policy/Action Recommendations

1. Budget a minimum of $2,000 per mile for short-term operations and maintenance of shared use paths.
2. Develop a long-term maintenance schedule for asphalt paths and provide annual funding of approximately $3,700 per mile to meet the minimum requirements for preservation of existing facilities.
3. Prepare a fiscal impact assessment and request for commitment of identified additional maintenance funding to accompany approval requests for new city bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
4. Until funding is adequate to maintain all paths at the required level, develop a list of priorities for maintenance that focuses resources on those facilities that create connections to and serve downtown, schools and parks.
5. Continue to encourage and promote volunteerism for routine sidewalk and shared use path maintenance.
6. Re-establish the “Adopt-a-Trail” program.

E. PROGRAMMING

"Put the police on bikes. Have car-free days on certain routes to encourage bicycle riding."

-Public comment from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Programming Issues

Whitefish has a solid foundation for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure but is lacking in bicycle and pedestrian focused programming. Participants in the online survey indicated that driver education and enforcement of bicycling laws were important to them. Safety concerns while bicycling and walking were also mentioned as issues in the online survey and through discussions with City staff and residents. These concerns could be addressed by appropriate bicyclist, pedestrian, and driver education programs.

Bicycle and pedestrian programming brings many segments of the community together.

The lack of a City of Whitefish staff person dedicated to bicycle and pedestrian work also hinders bicycle and pedestrian programming opportunities. Many of the programming recommendations that follow recognize this limitation and offer suggestions for potential partnerships between the City and other community organizations. These partnerships can ensure bicycle and pedestrian programming is sustainable and beneficial to Whitefish residents and tourists.

2. Programming Policy/Action Recommendations

1. Educate locals and visitors about the benefits of active transportation through city programs.
2. Encourage more walking and bicycle use in Whitefish by having programs that educate drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians of the rules, rights and responsibilities of sharing the road.
3. Coordinate future design and development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities with the Tree Advisory Committee to ensure the placement of shade trees along paths.

3. Proposed Programming

The following table reflects programs that were suggested and researched for feasibility during the Connect Whitefish public outreach process to advance the Community Vision found in Chapter 1 of this Plan. This list provides examples of programs that could be used to implement this Plan.

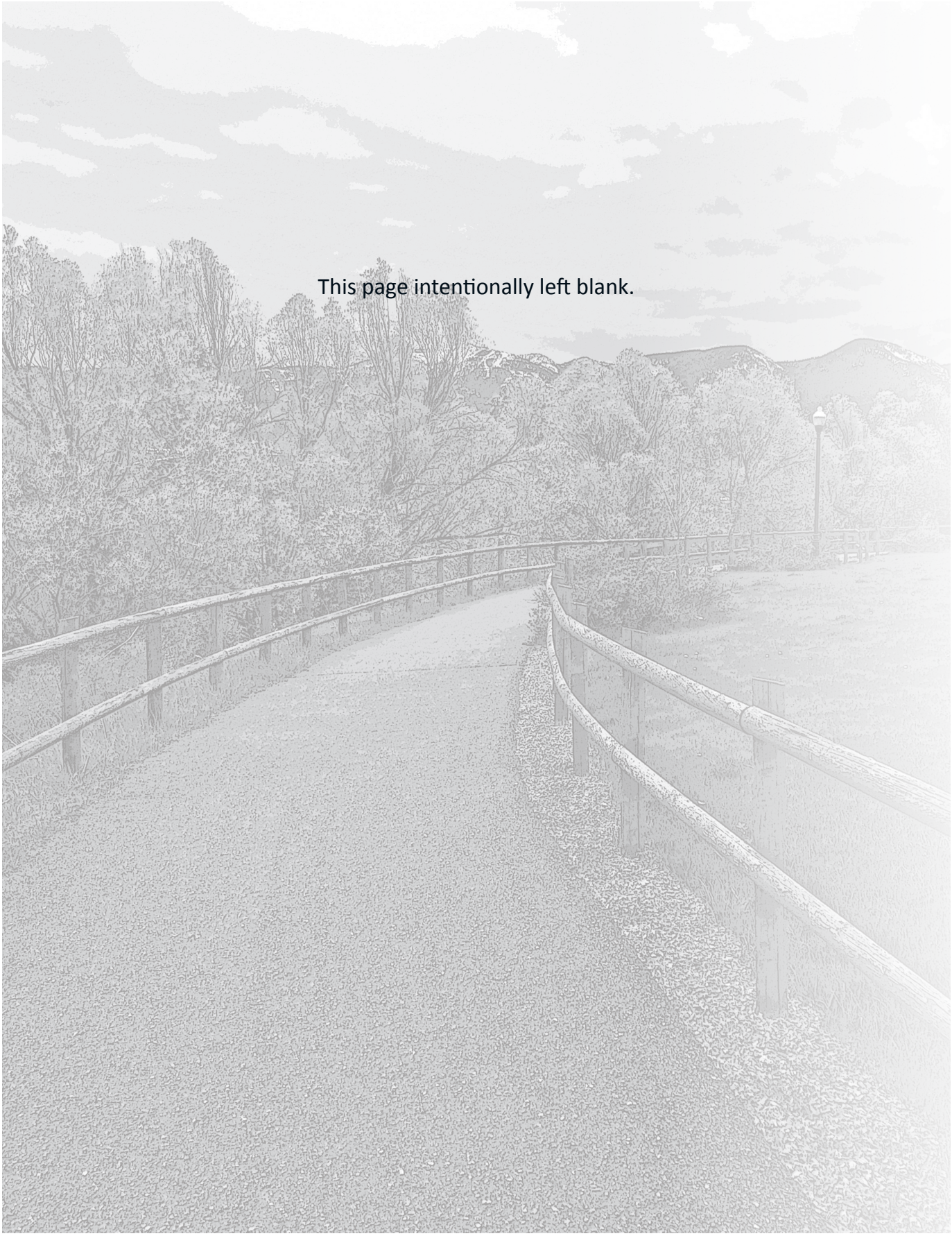
Programming

PROGRAM	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	PURPOSE OF PROGRAM
Bike Share Program	City of Whitefish, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Local Hotels	Bike-share programs allow for short distance, point-to-point trips where users can pick up a bicycle at a station and return it to another station within the network. Bike-share programs are targeted toward locals and tourists. Bike-share programs can help reduce vehicle traffic and negative air quality while promoting biking within Whitefish.
Artistic Bike Racks	City of Whitefish, Flathead Valley Community College, Connect Whitefish Foundation	Encouraging more people to bike around Whitefish means that more bike racks are necessary at popular locations. Partnering with Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) allows the City to engage students in the design and development of bike racks, giving them the ability to practice their skills. The City would provide the raw materials while the FVCC students would handle design and manufacture of the bike racks. The City may request customized bike racks that are not commercially available, thereby promoting the skills of FVCC students and providing Whitefish with unique bike racks to add to the town's aesthetic.
Sidewalk Replacement	City of Whitefish	Sidewalk maintenance is an expensive part of home ownership. In the City of Whitefish, sidewalk construction and repair is the responsibility of persons owning the abutting property pursuant to 7-1A-2 and 7-1A-6 Whitefish City Code. By creating a program for sharing the cost of sidewalk replacement with homeowners and offering homeowners various payment options, the City can ensure sidewalks are maintained and safe. Both Kalispell and Columbia Falls Public Works Departments have sidewalk cost-share programs that are in high demand by residents.
Group Rides - Adults	Bike Shops, Local Businesses, Connect Whitefish Foundation	As the City of Whitefish builds new infrastructure and routes, it becomes important to ensure residents are familiar with the network of paths and routes. Holding regular adult group bicycle rides ensures residents are shown new paths and routes around town, can help novices learn to feel more comfortable nagivating the paths and routes, and can highlight path and route connections to local business, neighborhoods and attractions.
Park and Ride "Trailheads"	City of Whitefish, Local Businesses, Connect Whitefish Foundation	One way to help alleviate parking challenges in downtown Whitefish, while promoting biking and walking for those who may believe they are too far away to bike or walk downtown, is to designate Park and Ride "Trailheads". These are public parking lots with easy access to multi-use paths, which promote parking and then walking or biking into downtown. Both online and at common tourist locations such as hotels, biking/walking maps should be provided that show designated Park and Ride "Trailheads" with approximate biking and walking times to downtown.

PROGRAM	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	PURPOSE OF PROGRAM
Car-free Week	Connect Whitefish Foundation, Local Businesses	A car-free week is designed to promote active transportation and to help people learn safe routes to bike while performing their daily activities around Whitefish. This program, designed for Whitefish residents, could include incentives from various businesses for people who bike during the week while running their errands, competitions between people running errands in a car versus a bike, etc.. A car-free week demonstrates to residents that they can complete many of their regular tasks without the use of car, thereby encouraging them to continue using their car less often once the celebration week is over.
Bike Ambassadors	City of Whitefish	A Bike Ambassador program is designed to promote and publicize biking in the City of Whitefish. This program could be designed as an internship (paid or unpaid) for high school students during the summer to train them on bike laws and educate them about the Connect Whitefish Plan so they can answer questions. Bike Ambassadors could help with bike rodeos and other City-sponsored biking events, lead group rides for kids/adults, and assist with recognizing local riders through coupons to partner businesses, social media mentions, etc.
Connect Whitefish Foundation	City of Whitefish, Interested Citizens	Fish Trails was a volunteer group under the umbrella of the City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Board whose goal was to raise money for maintenance of the multi-use paths. This group held an annual fundraiser bicycle event that was well attended by residents. Due to volunteer turnover and retirement, the group became defunct. The group should be re-created as the Connect Whitefish Foundation to advocate for the creation of bike/ped infrastructure found in adopted master plans, sponsor and coordinate bike/ped programming, and help raise money for auxillary needs like bike racks and path maintenance.
Adopt-A-Trail	City of Whitefish, Community Groups	The Adopt-A-Trail Program was part of the former Fish Trails group. The program allowed community groups to adopt segments of multi-use paths, posting a sign denoting who adopted trail. The Program ensured volunteers existed to help maintain the adopted path areas and allowed community groups to fundraise/donate money for path maintenance and improvements. Reviving this program could allow the burden of path maintenance to be shared between the underfunded City of Whitefish Parks and Recreation Department and private community businesses and groups.
Back-to-School Blitz	City of Whitefish, Muldown Elementary School, Whitefish Middle School, Connect Whitefish Foundation	At the beginning of each school year, a Back-to-School Blitz should be held to promote biking and walking to school. This could include distributing maps of safe and preferred biking and walking routes, organizing bike trains/walking buses to occur on a regular basis throughout the school year, and creating classroom competitions for the number of students who bike or walk to school each day.

Programming

PROGRAM	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	PURPOSE OF PROGRAM
School Zone Traffic Safety Campaign	City of Whitefish, Muldown Elementary School, Whitefish Middle School, Connect Whitefish Foundation	To alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety around the elementary and middle schools, a School Zone Safety Campaign at the beginning of the school year can help school administrations ensure that both children and drivers are instructed in safe drop-off and pick-up practices. At this time, school administrators could implement new pick-up/drop-off procedures (if applicable). Additionally, the City and schools could work with local homeowners and businesses along common school driving routes to display signs and print/mail publications imploring drivers to slow down and watch for students in school zones.
Driver's Education Outreach	City of Whitefish, Whitefish School District, Connect Whitefish Foundation	During the community engagement portion of the Connect Whitefish Plan process, both bikers and walkers felt that drivers needed to be more aware of them. One way to achieve that goal is to give presentations or demonstrations focusing on biker and pedestrian safety to driver's education class students in the local high schools.
Bike-Oriented Development Standards	City of Whitefish	The City of Whitefish Planning Department can encourage and facilitate increased bicycle travel by adding standards for bike-oriented development, such as reduced vehicle parking, wider hallways, and courtyards with bike pumps and tools. These ensure that both resident and tourist bikers feel welcome and can navigate safely and comfortably around town.
Medical Mile or Prescription Trail	North Valley Hospital, Flathead City-County Health Department, City of Whitefish, Connect Whitefish Foundation, Whitefish Legacy Partners.	Medical Mile or Prescription Trail programs are programs that allow local organizations to partner with local medical providers and local parks to provide resources for medical providers to issue prescriptions to patients for walking on local trails. The goal of this program is to reverse the increasing number of patients with chronic health conditions, while utilizing local trails to achieve that goal. These prescriptions can also be utilized to help patients recovering from surgery, folks with mental health challenges who may benefit from regular outdoor activity, folks undergoing physical therapy after injuries, etc.
Bike Friendly & Walk Friendly Community Designation	City of Whitefish, Connect Whitefish Foundation	Apply for and achieve recognition as a "Bike Friendly Community" through The League of American Bicyclists and a "Walk Friendly Community" through the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. Whitefish will gain nationwide recognition for efforts to improve the connectivity and safety of bicycle and pedestrain facilities. Through the application process Whitefish will receive specific suggestions from the organizations listed above on how to improve facilities and programs.



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F. FUNDING

"Way to move it forward! Hells yes!"

-Public comment from Connect Whitefish survey

1. Funding Issues

The City of Whitefish may be leaving a "golden age" of funding opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle facility projects. Additional federal earmarks for paths in Whitefish are unlikely, CTEP allocations no longer exist, and the Whitefish TIF District will sunset in a few years. Transportation Alternatives (TA) grants will likely continue in the near future, but competition is fierce. Of the 42 applications received by MDT for TA grants in the 2015-2016 cycle, only 12 projects were selected. Stiff competition and generous amounts of red tape will make federal funding a viable but less attractive funding mechanism in the future. Resort Tax funding for roads and recreation facilities will be available for many years and can be used for road reconstruction (including adjoining shared use paths) but recreation facilities like the Whitefish River Trail or the future path through Creekwood Park will compete for a much smaller portion of annual Resort Tax collections. Public/private partnerships require significant volunteer dedication, community involvement and philanthropic spirit, but passionate support for biking and walking bodes well for future fundraising in Whitefish.

2. Funding Policy/Action Recommendations

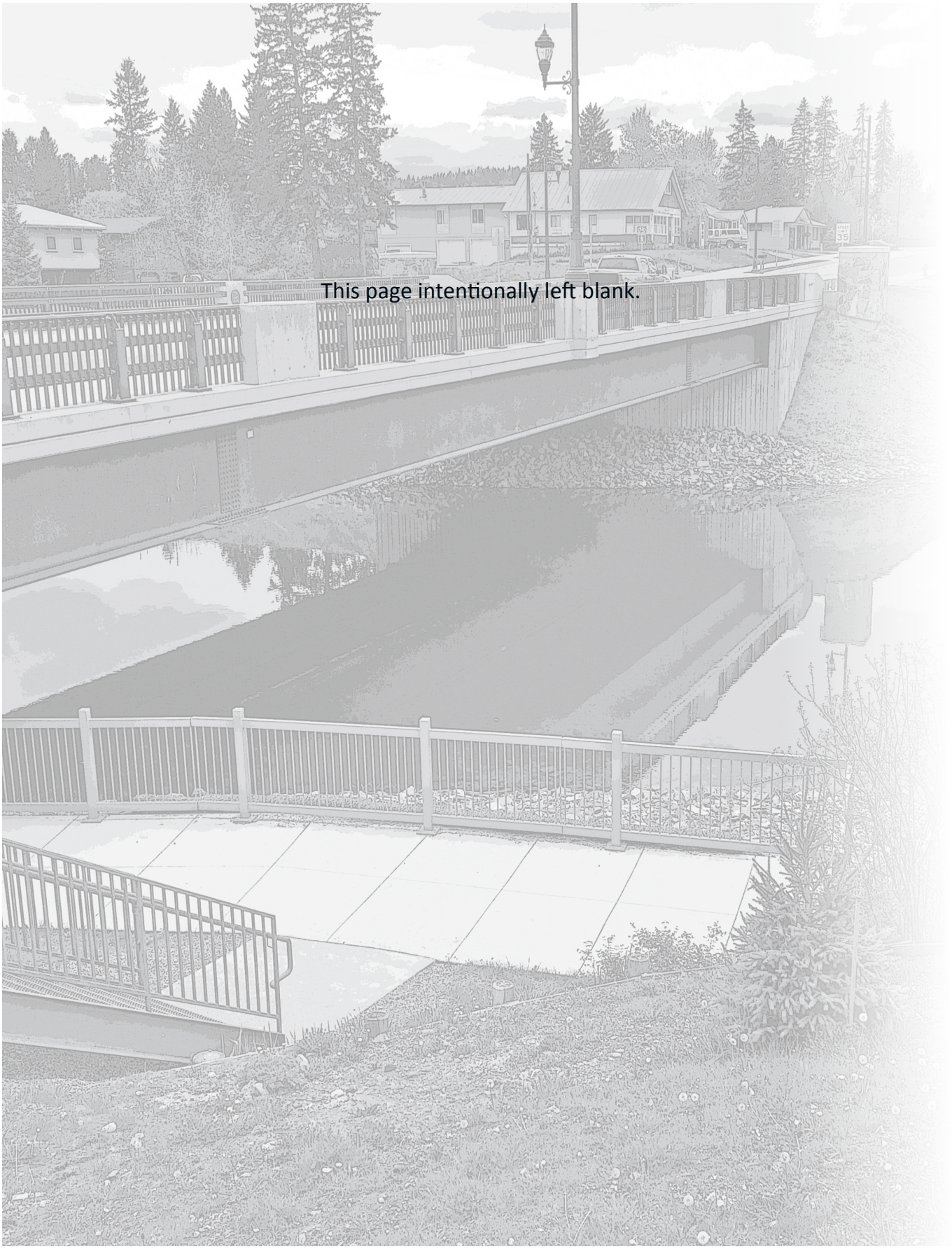
1. Develop "Connect Whitefish" as a non-profit foundation with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to partner with the City of Whitefish. Use this foundation and other public/private partnerships to actively market City of Whitefish paths, raise capital for City bicycle and pedestrian facilities, raise money to fund a path maintenance endowment and fund bicycle and pedestrian programming inside the City.
2. Include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in annual capital improvements planning as a placeholder for capital requests in the annual budgeting process.
3. Designate an existing staff position to research, prepare and submit grant applications for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programming inside the City. In the past, the Public Works Department prepared several successful bikeped grant applications.
4. Consider the feasibility of a full-time city staff position as a bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programming coordinator. This person would lead fundraising and grant-writing, work as a liaison between City departments and coordinate the efforts of committees, nonprofits and volunteers.

3. Funding Opportunities

The following table presents funding opportunities that could be used in the future for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Funding

NO.	FUNDING SOURCE	INFORMATION
1	**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**	Current TIF District sunsets in 2020. Consider creation of a new TIF for urban renewal based on the benefits of a connected Whitefish River Trail.
2	**Whitefish Resort Tax (Roads)**	Continue use of Resort Tax for roads (65% of annual revenue) to build streets with shared use facilities.
3	**Whitefish Resort Tax (Parks)**	Continue use of Resort Tax for recreation facilities (5% of annual revenue) to connect and improve safety of existing facilities.
4	**General Fund**	Use general fund money for maintenance of sidewalks, existing shared use path facilities and bicycle faciliities.
5	**Sidewalk District Fund**	Use cash in lieu paid by developers within the appropriate district to build sidewalks near schools.
6	**Exaction on Private Development**	May be required as a condition of approval of a development due to community impacts. Where appropriate, use cash in lieu on areas providing critical connectivity.
7	**Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)**	Projects located within MDT facilities may be included in future MDT-funded projects.
8	**FAST Act "TA" funding**	Consider applying for Transportation Alternatives (TA) grant funding when project provides a critical link between existing facilities and is already within an MDT right-of-way.
9	**Fish Trails (or similar Bike/Ped-focused nonprofit)**	Develop public/private partnerships to help fund large projects. Use money to leverage grants such as Transportation Alternatives.
10	**Open-Space Land and Voluntary Conservation Easement Act**	Use open space bond for preservation of Whitefish River Corridor or Cow Creek Corridor, with a shared use path as a facility necessary to the provision of the property as open space. (76-6-109(e) MCA)
11	**Special Improvement Districts for Recreation Facilities**	Use an SID for acquiring or building a shared use path. (7-12-4102(2)(b) MCA)
12	**Special Improvement Districts for Maintenance**	Use an SID for the maintenance of any recreation facility created using an SID. (7-12-4102(2)(k) MCA)
13	**Private Foundation Grants (PeopleForBikes, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Reinvestment Fund, etc.)**	Apply for private grants for small safety and connectivity projects.



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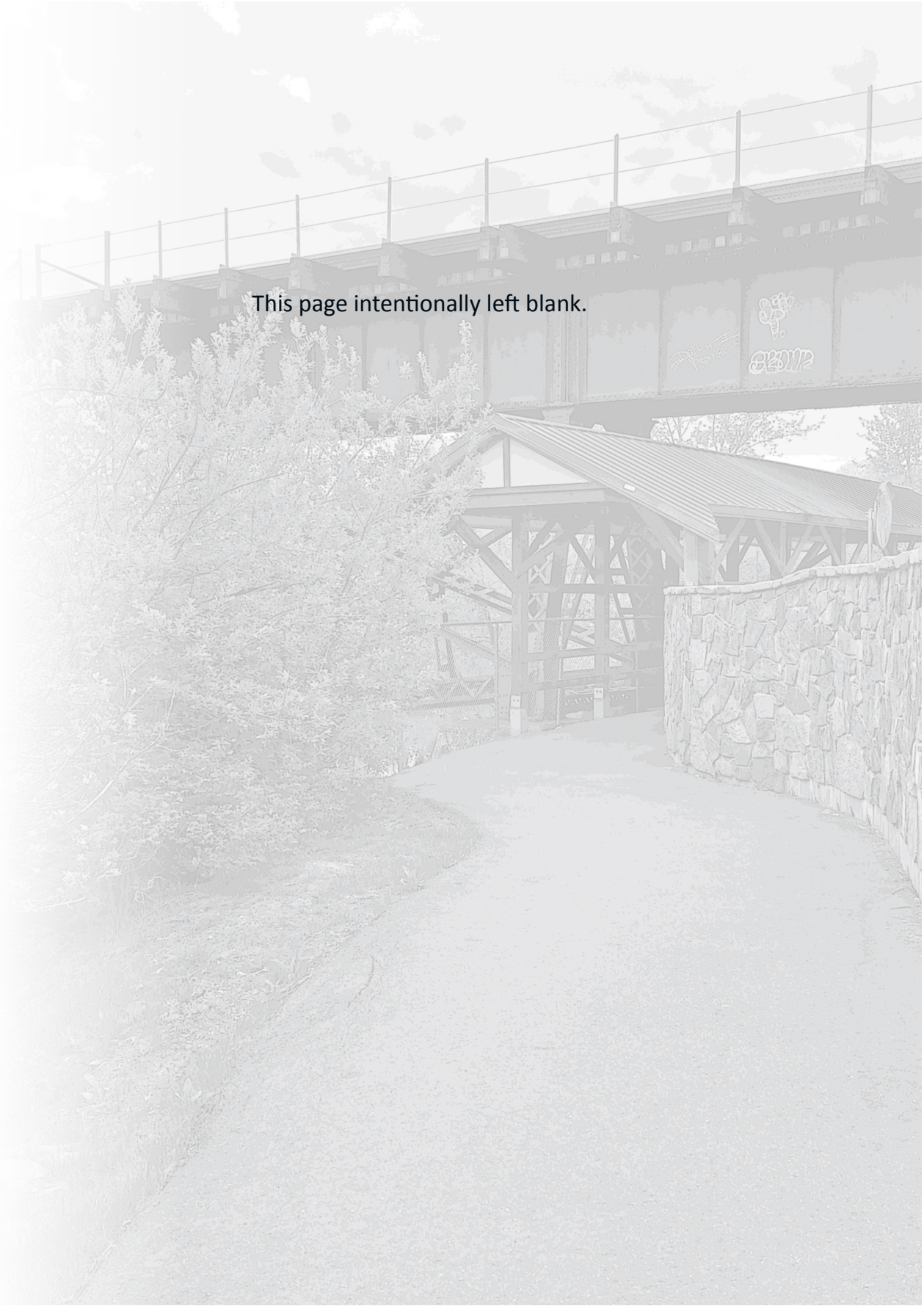

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IV. Administration

A. ADOPTING THE PLAN

The Connect Whitefish Plan is being updated in 2016 under the joint leadership of the City of Whitefish Public Works Department and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Advisory Committee. The Committee is an advisory committee to the Parks Board of Commissioners. Therefore, the Committee will review and consider the draft Connect Whitefish Plan before forwarding a recommendation to the Parks Board. The Parks Board will then review and consider the Plan.

An important procedural consideration is that the current Master Plan was adopted as part of the growth policy when the Whitefish Growth Policy was adopted in 2007. Therefore, an update of the Master Plan constitutes an amendment to the Whitefish Growth Policy. It is recommended that, at a minimum, the adoption of the Connect Whitefish Plan follow the public process outlined in 76-1-602 through 604, M.C.A. This process includes a public hearing by the Whitefish Planning Board and a recommendation from the Whitefish Planning Board to the Whitefish City Council.

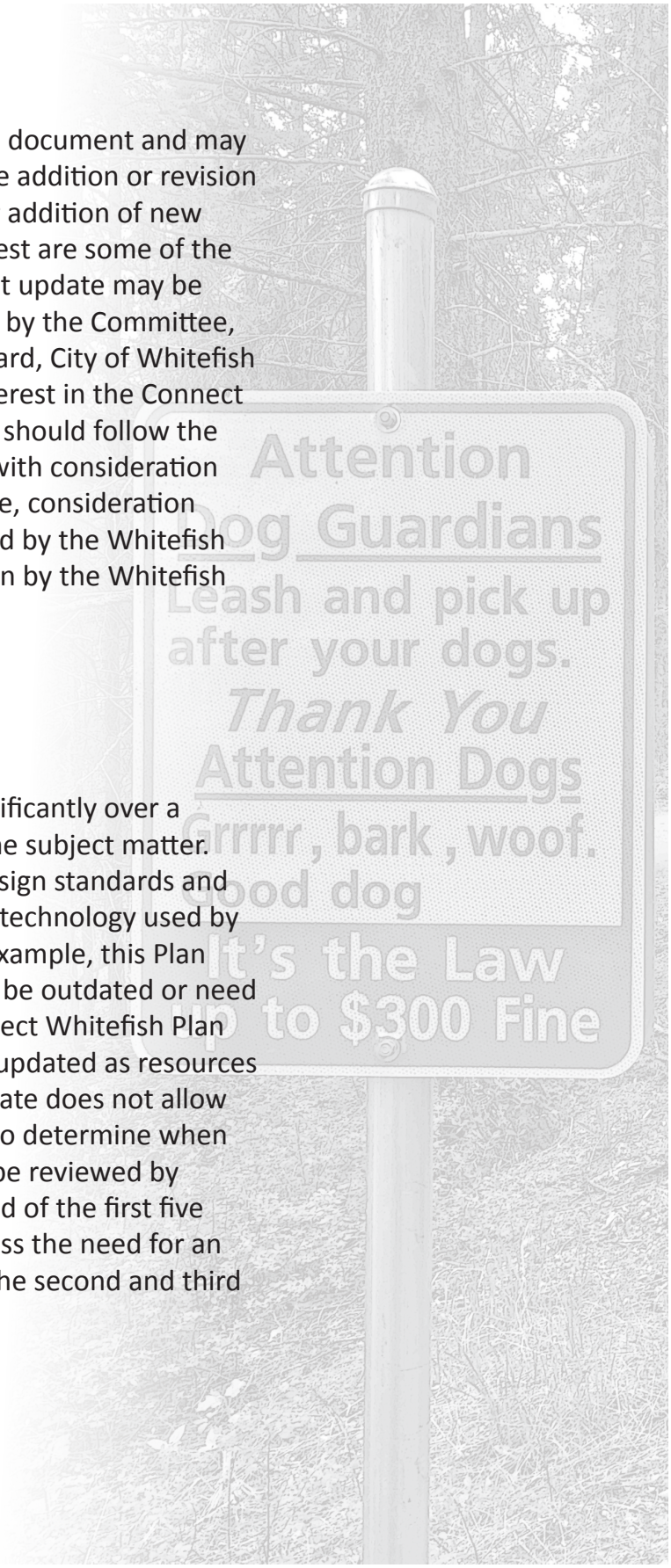
Participants at the Connect Whitefish Community Forum review a project map.

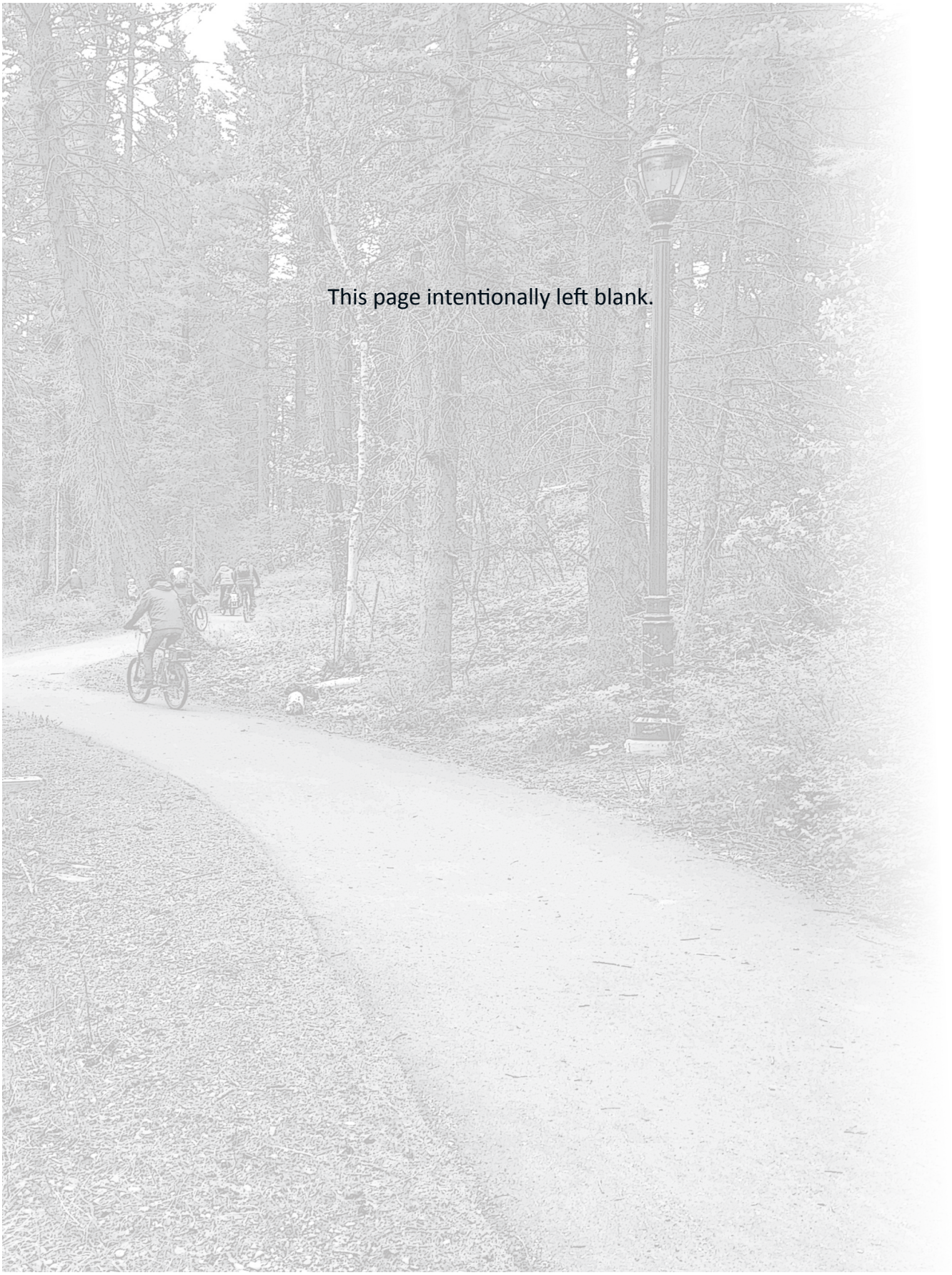
B. AMENDING THE PLAN

The Connect Whitefish Plan is not a "static" document and may need to be amended from time to time. The addition or revision of policies, reworking of priority projects or addition of new projects for which there is new public interest are some of the reasons a Plan amendment prior to the next update may be necessary. An amendment may be initiated by the Committee, the Parks Board, the Whitefish Planning Board, City of Whitefish staff, or a member of the public with an interest in the Connect Whitefish Plan. An amendment to this Plan should follow the same process as the adoption of the plan, with consideration and a recommendation from the Committee, consideration by the Parks Board and a public hearing held by the Whitefish Planning Board prior to formal consideration by the Whitefish City Council.

C. UPDATING THE PLAN

The Connect Whitefish Plan will evolve significantly over a short period of time due to the nature of the subject matter. Bicycle and pedestrian facility demands, design standards and safety technology change quickly. Even the technology used by locals and visitors can change quickly. For example, this Plan contains policies for electric bikes that may be outdated or need improvement in only a few years. The Connect Whitefish Plan should be reviewed from time to time and updated as resources allow. Setting a required interval for an update does not allow the necessary flexibility of the community to determine when a change is necessary, but the Plan should be reviewed by Whitefish City staff at approximately the end of the first five years to gauge the success of the Plan, assess the need for an update and determine the applicability of the second and third tier priority projects.





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CONNECT WHITEFISH

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

WGM GROUP