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Segment 'A' Vision

The segment establishes the entrance and will serve as a Gateway to downtown Whitefish, transitioning from highway uses further south. The segment will be pedestrian and bike friendly while maintaining efficient vehicle traffic flows. The river and public access to it will be highly valued. Trees and the urban canopy are important, and public greenspaces and recreation areas will be abundant. The built environment will remain small-scale with mixed uses and unique architecture that reflects the transitional nature of this segment between the downtown business core, residential uses, and highway commercial.

Goals and Objectives

Transportation

Goal: Improve capacity of segment to convey increased volumes of traffic.

Objective 1: Continue work with MDT to construct Spokane and Baker Avenue cross-sections that will accommodate future traffic volumes.

Objective 2: To reduce commercial truck traffic through the downtown core, work with MDT to designate Baker Avenue as the preferred truck route for the corridor between 2nd and 13th Streets once improvements have been made; consider and mitigate for potential impacts to residential uses; add appropriate signage at north and south ends of truck route.

Objective 3: Extend 7th Street east from Spokane Avenue to Kalispell Avenue.

Objective 4: When traffic volumes warrant it, and when a source of adequate funding is identified, extend 7th Street across the Whitefish River with a new bridge between Baker and Spokane Avenues.

Objective 5: As part of bridge widening or replacement on Baker Avenue and construction of new bridges on Spokane Avenue and 7th Street, ensure pedestrian and bicycle needs are accommodated and that design facilitates river access, river views, and is compatible with adjacent neighborhoods and, for Spokane Avenue, the bridge's role as a Gateway to downtown Whitefish.

Objective 6: Work with MDT to evaluate appropriate speed limits in Segment A.

Goal: Connect sections of Whitefish River Trail, highlight the multiple values of and provide better public access to the river, and increase public greenspaces.

Objective 1: Replace the Whitefish River culverts with a bridge designed to serve as a Gateway to downtown Whitefish.

Objective 2: Extend the existing paved multi-use path north of the culverts south across the river, which will involve a pedestrian/bike bridge or protected pedestrian/bike lanes on the vehicle bridge, and new path under the highway.

Objective 3: Investigate whether an at-grade tunnel or underpass to connect the sidewalk to the river trail between 6th and 7th Streets is feasible.

Objective 4: Develop the river trail for recreation, transportation, public access to open space, river and river habitat; investigate the opportunity for a river walk - a linear public space with small, seasonal businesses.

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Objective 5: Acquire riverfront property to develop as public park, and/or obtain permanent easements from private landowners along the river for additional public parks and access to trail and river:

- West side of river from Baker Avenue
- East side of river along Spokane between 6th and 7th Streets
- Southwest side of river downstream of Spokane Avenue

Objective 6: Develop Canoe Park with signage and other amenities to be more usable as a public space.

Goal: Construct a separated bike path and pedestrian sidewalk with safe crossing opportunities.

Objective 1: Continue work with MDT to construct cross-section that addresses the community's desire for a separated bike path and continuous pedestrian sidewalk with better, safer crossing opportunities (6th, 8th Streets).

Objective 2: Investigate installation of pedestrian-scale lighting as part of MDT project.

Land Use

Goal: Establish a Gateway theme for the segment that indicates the transitional nature of the segment between highway commercial uses to the south, surrounding residential uses, and the downtown business core two blocks north.

Objective 1: Enhance boulevard landscaping by revising landscaping regulations to illustrate desired boulevard and buffering effect.

Objective 2: Increase the number of street trees and expand the urban canopy along Spokane Avenue south of 6th Street.

- Continue work with MDT to construct cross-section of Spokane Avenue that allows for the retention of existing mature trees, as well as planting new trees within the ROW.

Objective 3: Investigate installation of pedestrian-scale lighting as a component of the Gateway.

Objective 4: Develop consistent wayfinding signage through Gateway segment.

Objective 5: Work with utility companies, MDT, and corridor property owners to investigate and consider burying overhead utility lines (identify approximate cost and funding source).

Goal: Evaluate existing zoning for compatibility and to encourage commercial and mixed-use development that is appropriate.

Objective 1: Develop a new transitional zoning district for the segment along Spokane Avenue that allows a mix of uses while acknowledging the small lot sizes, lack of parking space, proximity to the river and traditional residential neighborhoods, and location between the highway commercial/secondary business district, multi-family zoning, and the downtown core. Any changes to land use in the segment should not cause additional traffic congestion on Spokane Avenue.

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Objective 2: Develop architectural review standards specific to the segment along Spokane Avenue that emphasize small-scale development, variety in height, materials, visual interest, and the transitional nature of the segment.

Goal: Revise the sign district boundary along Baker and Spokane Avenues to be consistent with speed limits and appropriate signage

Objective 1: Review Commercial Business and Resort sign district for appropriateness

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Segment B - Vision

The commercial strip in Segment B will be restructured and the character of the corridor and types of business within it will be diversified. Land uses will continue to be primarily commercial but will not appear as a monotonous or continuous strip; high intensity uses will be focused around key intersections and in between there will be pockets of less intense uses such as offices, housing, recreation, entertainment, parks, and open spaces. The corridor will accommodate bicycles and pedestrians as well as vehicles; traversing the corridor for all users will be more enjoyable because there will be abundant green space, trees and landscaping with shade, views of the mountains, enhanced crossing opportunities, appropriately-scaled lighting, and an interesting built environment. The Whitefish River will be accessible, and the Whitefish River Trail will be continuous and connected to a separated bike path along the highway. Additionally, traffic will be better managed because there will be multiple routes to get through the corridor, and the number of highway accesses will be reduced. Transit will be available and convenient.

Goals and Objectives

Land Use

Goal 1: Encourage land uses in the corridor that improve aesthetics and attract more activity

Objective 1: Restructure the commercial strip and diversify the character of the corridor:

- Focus intense uses at commercial nodes around key intersections and less intense uses in areas between those intersections;
 - High intensity uses will be more densely developed, have a finer grain street network, be pedestrian friendly, have mixed uses (commercial and retail with multi-family) and be active
 - Add pockets of lower intensity uses including offices, light commercial, housing, civic/public and cultural facilities, entertainment, open spaces and recreation; add parks further from the highway
- Encourage and allow multiple uses on large lots such that smaller buildings lining the highway could be added to existing commercial developments with large parking lots fronting the highway (without subdivision);
- Break up large undeveloped lots with blocks and through streets as development proceeds.

Objective 2: Improve the visual character of the built environment:

- Update the architectural and development standards for the Highway Commercial district to require variation in materials, scale, transparency, and massing;
- Update landscaping standards to require more extensive screening (earthen berms and vegetation) and landscaping on highway frontage;
- Require new development to orient buildings toward the street and locate parking to the rear or side of structures, buildings to frame corners of major intersections in nodes;
- Step building rooflines back from highway where needed to ensure buildings do not completely obstruct mountain views;
- Review and revise sign code, lighting, and tree retention requirements for highway district;
- Work with utility companies, MDT, and corridor property owners to investigate and consider burying overhead utility lines (identify approximate cost and funding source)

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Objective 3: Revise WB-2 zoning regulations to encourage residential pocket neighborhoods and mixed uses where appropriate, as well as more entertainment, recreation, and cultural and educational uses

Objective 4: Consider acquisition of open space to preserve or develop into usable public park space (identify potential funding sources); review and revise WB-2 zoning to require more open space/park space in new project development.

Objective 5: Encourage infill development in segment by limiting extension of the urban growth boundary (and therefore, city services) further south (Segment C discussion, but implications here)

Objective 6: Develop cohesive theme and new moniker for segment or section of segment that signifies entry to City of Whitefish or the commercial focus (pedestrian scale lighting, banners, plantings, wayfinding signs, etc.)

Goal 2: Improve compatibility of adjacent land uses

Objective 1: Examine zoning and land uses to better buffer low density residential zones from adjacent commercial; encourage more multi-family or attached residential and/or offices along transition areas.

Economic Development

Goal: Help diversify the economy of Whitefish, increase employment, and encourage business types that provide higher wages and salaries

Objective 1: develop business incubator (small lease spaces); business assistance center

Objective 2: Consider development incentives – tools to support business development (technical assistance, financial assistance, tax incentives)

Objective 3: Adopt an economic development mission; create an economic development team

Goal: Make it easier for starter businesses and light manufacturing or assembly to operate in the corridor

Objective 1: Permit light manufacturing/assembly in WB-2 district of Segment B

Objective 2: Provide adequate number of smaller lease spaces at prices affordable to starter businesses (public-private partnership)

Goal: Provide mix of retail and services in the corridor to support existing and new housing and employment

Objective 1: Permit under-served retail types in the corridor that are difficult to serve in the downtown area due to traffic patterns, space needs, parking requirements, and cost of real estate

Objective 2: Encourage amenities in the corridor to support employees and residents such as public spaces for gathering and visiting, resident-focused retail including general merchandise, and “third place” type retail such as coffee shops

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Transportation

Goal 3: Improve traffic flow and safety through corridor

Objective 1: Continue work with MDT on a design layout that includes an intermittent raised landscaped median that minimizes potential impacts to business access; consolidate highway accesses and optimize timing and spacing of signals

Objective 2: Continue work with MDT to construct intersection improvements at 13th Street on both Highway 93 and Baker Avenue, including reconfiguration of driving and turning lanes

Objective 3: As individual parcels are developed, obtain ROW and construct extension of Columbia Avenue south to connect with Greenwood Avenue; Whitefish Avenue south to connect with Shiloh Avenue; Baker Avenue south to connect with JP Road; Greenwood Drive east across Whitefish River (construct new bridge) to Monegan

Objective 4: As part of highway reconfiguration, work with MDT to redesign the entrance to and exit from North Valley Hospital on Highway 93 South during future highway improvements

Objective 5: Work with MDT to better delineate driving lanes, whether with more frequent recurring maintenance of lane striping, or with permanent delineation tools such as recessed reflectors

Objective 6: Require new development and encourage existing uses to connect adjacent parking lots such that moving from one to another doesn't involve re-entering the highway.

Goal 4: Recognize that bike and pedestrian facilities provide valid and valued modes of transportation that are equal in standing with vehicles facilities

Objective 1: Continue implementation of *Connect Whitefish Master Plan* recommendations for bike and pedestrian facilities in the segment.

Goal 5: Improve opportunities and the experience for people using alternative modes of transportation including bicycles, walking and transit

Objective 1: Continue work with MDT to construct a cross section that addresses the community's desire for a separated bike path, safer and more frequent pedestrian crossing opportunities, pedestrian-scale lighting, and landscaping/canopy trees for shading along the boulevard

Objective 2: Review and revise zoning regulations and architectural standards to ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian access to a mix of uses near each other such that people can park once and walk to multiple destinations – commercial nodes, connected parking lots or access roads, mixed-uses, pedestrian scale lighting, and landscaping buffers between sidewalks and roadways

Objective 3: Work with MDT and transit partners to develop transit hub/park & ride lot/bus stops/more frequent transit service

Objective 4: Identify locations and provide bike locking stations in concert with transit infrastructure

Objective 5: Obtain road and trail ROW and permanent easements to extend and connect existing sections of Whitefish River Trail and connect River Trail to separated bike path along highway as described in the *Connect Whitefish Master Plan*

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Objective 6: Improve access and wayfinding to Whitefish River as described in the *Connect Whitefish Master Plan*

Objective 7: Add a bike/pedestrian path or convert a portion of West 10th Street between Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue to bicycle/pedestrian facility with potential easement to connect to new highway bridge pedestrian underpass

Objective 8: Revise WB-2 zoning regulations to encourage more recreational uses, parks or open space in the segment

Goal 6: Improve the aesthetics of the road right-of-way.

Objective 1: Break up and soften the expanse of five lanes of asphalt on the highway:

- Replace some sections of two-way left-turn lanes with landscaped median;
- Increase the number of trees planted in the boulevard and the extent of the urban canopy.

Objective 2: Encourage additional Adopt-a-Highway litter pick-up efforts (April – October); involve businesses, organizations, and families

July 29, 2019

Segment C - Vision

Segment C of the corridor will provide a gradual transition from the county to the highway commercial district in the City. Alternative modes of transportation will be available, useable and prominent. Traversing the corridor will be safe and pleasant for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. The mix of commercial uses and any parking or storage areas will be well-screened from the highway with existing tree and shrub canopy, added landscaping, and topographic features such as earthen berms. Access to the commercial properties will be from cross or back roads in addition to the highway. Commercial structures will blend well with the natural surroundings as a result of exterior materials, scale, building articulation, and extensive areas reserved for open or green space. Further from the highway, people will continue to live in single-family residences and make appropriate use of agriculturally designated lands.

Goals and Objectives

Land Use

Goal A: Incorporate this segment of the corridor into the City of Whitefish

Objective 1: Bring land uses between Hwy 40 and Blanchard Lake Road under jurisdiction of the City (extend Urban Growth boundary; annexation)

Objective 2: Provide City water and sewer services to properties in Segment C, as requested

Objective 3: Guide future development in Segment C as annexation allows

Objective 4: Since annexation will take time, encourage Flathead County to develop a zoning permit requirement as a tool to improve compliance with development standards

OR

Goal B: Maintain southern extent of City limits and the Urban Growth Boundary at Highway 40 Intersection

Objective 1: Limit the extension of City water and sewer services to focus more intensive development within City

Objective 2: Support Flathead County's efforts to implement Highway Overlay (HO) development standards; work with County to ensure development south of Hwy 40 meets City and County objectives

Objective 3: Encourage Flathead County to develop a zoning compliance permit as a tool to improve compliance with its own development standards

Objective 4: Re-evaluate policy as part of Extension of Services Plan update

Goal: Encourage and support implementation of design standards for non-residential development to improve aesthetics and functionality

Objective 1: Improve the visual character of the built environment by supporting the County's efforts to implement its HO development standards in the County

Objective 2: Improve the visual character of the built environment on property annexed into the City

- Review and potentially revise architectural and development standards used for Hwy Commercial district; or
- Look at potential “highway commercial transition zone” for area currently zoned County B-4 with revised permitted uses and 10,000 sf threshold for CUP

Objective 3: Consider acquisition of open space to preserve or develop into usable public park space (identify potential funding sources); consider zoning that requires more open space in new project development

Objective 4: Encourage preservation of environmentally sensitive areas: stormwater conveyances, wetlands, slopes, etc. that contribute to the character of the segment

Transportation

Goal: Improve traffic safety through corridor (speed/intersection safety)

Objective 1: Follow up to MDT’s LOSS analyses to resolve any safety issues identified at intersections of Blanchard Lake Road with Highway 93 and of Hospital Way and Emerald Drive with Highway 40

Objective 2: Encourage addition of right turning/deceleration lanes at intersections identified as needing such improvements

Objective 3: Consider speed limit reduction north of Blanchard Lake Road and west of Whitefish Stage Road (County to request speed study from MDT)

Objective 4: Support Flathead County’s efforts or work directly with MDT to consolidate highway accesses where feasible; require new development to share access with adjacent uses

Objective 5: Support County’s efforts to, or ensure City zoning regulations require new development and encourage existing uses to connect adjacent parking lots such that moving from one to another doesn’t involve re-entering the highway

Objective 6: With County, and as part of Whitefish Transportation Plan update, work to further develop backage road concepts presented in 2017 Highway 93 South Whitefish Corridor Plan and Zoning Amendment (Land Solutions LLC) to relieve future vehicle conflicts on highway

Goal: Improve opportunities and the experience for people using alternative modes of transportation including bicycles, walking and transit

Objective 1: Work with County to develop a separated bike path along the highway (identify funding source; City/County operation and maintenance agreement with MDT); as individual parcels are annexed into City obtain ROW for bike path, if needed

Objective 2: Work with County, transit providers, MDT to facilitate development of transit hub/park & ride lot/bus stops/more frequent transit service