The City of Missoula is engaged in a project to promote high quality design in the community. The Missoula Design Excellence Project seeks to reinforce recent development successes which have demonstrated that high quality design can add value to properties and the city as a whole. It also responds to concerns that some development projects have not met the city’s objective to convey a distinct identity and instead are generic, without expressing a unique sense of place that is Missoula. The Missoula Design Excellence Project focuses on Downtown and the city’s commercial corridors, such as Brooks Street, Broadway Street, Reserve Street, Russell Street and Higgins Avenue (including the Hip Strip). How development in those areas can enhance the public realm and be sensitive to abutting neighborhoods are key considerations.

The City of Missoula, along with a consultant team led by Winter & Company, will explore a variety of character management strategies to address community concerns, and implement a system that will promote high quality development in terms of design, materials, construction and character. Strategies may include the use of design guidelines, design standards, design overlays, incentive programs and modifications to the existing zoning code to promote high quality development.
The project will engage the community in a two-phase process to seek input from the public and stakeholder groups. Outreach efforts will be designed to gather feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders to broaden the base of support and create a successful strategy. These will include hands-on workshops and focus groups as well as online venues.

Phase 1 focuses on exploring design issues with the community and identifying expectations for new development. The public will have numerous opportunities to share their ideas throughout Phase 1 in order to help inform a strategy that identifies potential tools for managing development character.

In Phase 2, the strategy will be refined into the specific regulations and/or guidelines for review and adoption. Community participation opportunities exist throughout Phase 2 as well.

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