

THE  
MISSOULA DOWNTOWN  
RIVERFRONT PLAN

1990



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*I started my walk at the Higgins Avenue Bridge where a beaver made a home two years ago. That particular beaver is gone but you can spot beaver in the Clark Fork River. Also muskrat. And if you walk along the bank in early morning or late evening you can spot a deer. Last Monday I didn't expect to see a deer or beaver or muskrat. I was walking in the middle of the day. I went to see the vegetation—the shrubs and trees and flowers. And the birds of course. Birdlife is part of a river. I think sometimes we forget that a river isn't just water running... A river the stature of Missoula's Clark Fork is far more than just water running. But what is it? Is it the sum total of a hundred things? That's what I went walking to see.*

*Cottonwood trees—yes, we all know the Clark Fork has to have cottonwood trees. And willows and red-stemmed dogwood. Without those you wouldn't have the Clark Fork River. Aspen trees, alder bushes, sarvisberry—they belong. I ate three ripe sarvisberries and it was a very satisfying thing to do. Let's have more sarvisberry bushes. The birds can eat the fruit and then they'll leave our strawberries and raspberries alone. I walked through a tangle of clematis, tansy, wild rose. They must belong because evidently they are the home of small birds. A pair of birds almost attacked me. Out! Out! they ordered. It was very satisfying.*

*A student in my wild edibles class brought in a platter of crawdads. He had caught them in the river. What else makes up the Clark Fork River? The swallows darting to and fro? The setting sun glinting on the water? Wild asparagus growing on the bank? Morels hiding in the shade of the cottonwoods?*

*I've been asking people about wildlife along the river ever since the idea of a Master Plan for the riverfront came up. It seems to me we have to know what is here now so we can figure out what we want of this marvelous river which is—wouldn't you agree—the heart and soul of Missoula.*

*Kim Williams, July, 1982*

**MISSOULA DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT PLAN**  
City of Missoula, Montana  
June 13, 1990

by Karen Timchak  
Land Use Planning Consultant  
for  
The Missoula Redevelopment Agency

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

Missoulians have long held a vision of a riverfront park system. This vision was renewed in public meetings held in the early months of 1989. Missoula's scenic and recreational potential in the riverfront has been developing in a steady and an incremental fashion, with the purchase and donation of parklands, walkway easements and with public and private investments exceeding twenty-two million dollars. When one considers the transition of land use on the southshore that has occurred with the abandonment of the Milwaukee Railroad, followed by the creation of parks and trails, it is exciting to consider the possibilities for fully restoring and enhancing the riverfront downtown. The transformations on the northshore have been dramatic, too. The riverfront is beginning to function as Missoula's town square and promenade.

The riverfront is characterized by a mixture of residential and commercial uses as well as parks and trails. While at first glance the riverfront already appears to be developed, it still has significant potential for reinvestment and redevelopment. However, we lack public policy to guide development and protect the amenities in the riverfront. We lack publicly-adopted strategies to stimulate, and coordinate public and private investments in the riverfront area. We also have not documented these amenities to protect them from being denigrated by changing land uses.

### The Riverfront Park Concept

This plan recognizes previous planning efforts to promote a continuous trail system, diversity of recreation and land uses, and an educational component (interpretive displays).

It is intended that chapters on public participation, water quality, river mechanics, irrigation, recreation, land use, zoning, vegetation and wildlife, and history provide a background on which recommendations are based.

The plan discusses incentives, cooperative measures and regulatory methods for meeting riverfront goals. The plan places a strong emphasis upon multiple strategies that:

- Recognize the riverfront parks and trails downtown as a community-wide park system that is central to the image of our city, and thereby commit funds and management tools necessary to provide for construction and maintenance of new and existing park facilities.
- Adopt planning criteria to provide for design review of new and redeveloped buildings and land uses, in order to protect and enhance riverfront amenities; further to adopt a *Riverfront Overlay Zone* to provide a process for such review.
- Adopt landscape criteria which allows diversity while assuring quality and harmony of design elements in public and private features such as trails, bank improvements, plant materials, benches, signs and fences.
- Recognize the potential and need for safe water recreation, and based on an evaluation, resolve hazards posed by the irrigation ditches and structures.
- Continue to stimulate private/public partnerships to achieve objectives contained in this report, as well as investigate new funding mechanisms such as a *Riverfront Park District* or a *Riverfront Trust*.
- Acquire key properties and easements to complete a continuous trail system. Provide and encourage access to the riverfront.

The enhancement and preservation of our riverfront heritage is the finest legacy we can leave to future generations of Missoulians. If we are to make a commitment to the riverfront we need to recognize and balance competing uses. This plan is presented as a framework to realize the potential of this singular resource.

-Karen Timchak

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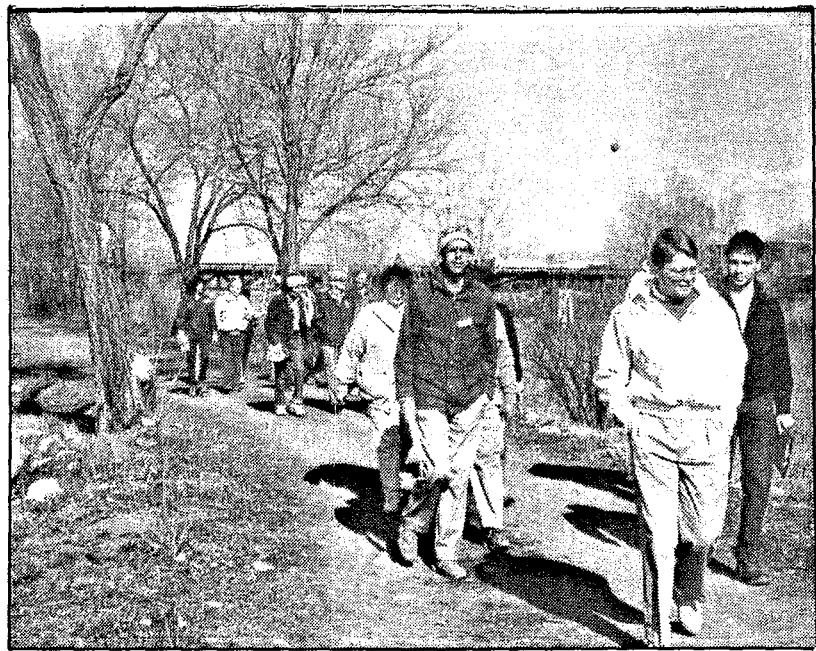
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Missoulians take a tour of the riverfront as part of a park planning workshop held at the Milwaukee Depot. K. Timchak, 1989

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PLAN

The Missoula Redevelopment Agency and the riverfront planning consultant provided an exceptional level of opportunities for public discussion of the riverfront. Over twenty public and private organizations held discussion sessions with the riverfront consultant about the future of the riverfront. The list includes:

- Missoula Economic Development Commission
- Missoula Downtown Association
- Southside and Riverside Neighborhood Associations
- Missoula Society of Architects
- Design Review Board
- Orchard Homes Irrigation Company
- Open Space Committee
- Public Art Committee
- Missoula Health Department
- Missoula Park Board
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Clark Fork Steering Committee
- Environmental Education Center
- Montana Riparian Association
- Missoula Chamber of Commerce
- Office of Community Development
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Montana Department of Commerce
- Missoula Police Department
- Montana Native Plant Society
- Water Research Bureau
- River Downtown
- Trout Unlimited
- Missoula Conservation District
- Soil Conservation Service
- Montana Highway Department



Jamil Bronson, Geography Professor from U of M, videotaping the discussion of park alternatives at Hellgate High School. K. Timchak, 1989

The general public was invited to three meetings and workshops, with one evening meeting in City Hall and two daytime workshops at the Milwaukee Station and the Hellgate High School. Public notice was accomplished by posting notices, mailing notices to 200 individuals and organizations, and through radio, TV news and the newspaper. Attendance at the meetings ranged from 40 - 60 people at each forum. Communication has been maintained through numerous phone calls and personal contacts with concerned individuals.

As Phase I of this planning process, public concerns were documented in a report entitled *Riverfront Priorities; Southshore Park*. Through tours and workshops the conceptual plan for the new southshore park was completed in the summer of 1989. An architectural firm is currently involved in the site plan and implementation.

This document is presented as Phase II. It is a special *Area Plan* undertaken in compliance with the state law which outlines authority for community comprehensive plans (Montana Codes Annotated 76-1-601 to 606).

## PLANNING AREA OVERVIEW

The area evaluated in this document includes the Clark Fork River and riverfront properties on the north and southshore from the Van Buren Street Bridge near the Missoula Chamber of Commerce to the west edge of McCormick Park.

Many of the public values discussed here are intangible, relating to aesthetics, quality of life and personal experience. It is difficult to put a price tag on a riverfront trail, wildlife, or a view, but this value is reflected in the price of riverfront real estate, and realtors communicate these amenities in sale opportunities.

The value of riverfront land will increase as natural and cultural amenities are enhanced and as development sites diminish. Although there are many communities along the Clark Fork River, Missoula's riverfront offers convenient access to services, cultural opportunities and outdoor experiences. This combination of wild and urban experiences places riverfront land at a premium. It is expected that land values will change in areas adjacent to the riverfront downtown, and this in turn, will create new development pressure, especially if those areas are located near a major street or intersection. For this reason, areas adjacent to the riverfront properties are also addressed.



## Description of the Area

This powerful river surrounded by parks, trails and cultural attractions is a source of community pride. As Missoula has grown and changed, so has the river's image. Missoulians are blessed with mountain views as well as the privilege of a river in its urban center.

The scale of the river makes an impressive visual impact upon riverfront properties. It is as wide as a city block and is well below the street level on either bank which allows it to be viewed from many riverfront properties. The river, which changes with the seasons, can be at times either exhilarating or calming to watch. Some riverfront landowners have oriented and designed their buildings to take advantage of the beauty of the riverfront using windows, decks and landscaped areas adjacent to the river.

Missoula has developed active recreational areas in the riverfront in past decades accommodating tennis, baseball, track and soccer, swimming, and play areas. The Grizzly football team of the University of Montana uses a riverside field, the River Bowl, for practice sessions. More recent additions to the riverfront have been passive recreational places including developed public walkways, lights and benches, and an amphitheatre whose function is emerging as a town square.

The riverfront parks are used extensively in the fair weather months. The trails are used year round by pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrian traffic is higher in this area than any other area in town with the exception of the University of Montana. Trails on the northshore are built above floodwalls and levees, consequently, it is difficult to get to the water. On the southshore, visitors may access the rivers edge in a few

places near irrigation outflow areas. These are not developed, designated or designed for safe access. The Van Buren Bridge, was reconstructed as a pedestrian/bike bridge connecting the University area with the northshore and the Rattlesnake Valley.

Riverfront developments include major restaurant, office and motel properties, the University of Montana, The Missoulian daily newspaper, a large retirement complex, residential properties, Western Montana Clinic, and numerous public walkways and parks. Investment in riverfront locations is high, yet there are numerous opportunities for reinvestment and redevelopment along the north and south shores.

An evenings entertainment on the riverfront could include browsing at an art gallery, dinner, a movie or musical entertainment at the Wilma Theatre, then dessert at a cafe or an ice cream shop. An afternoon may include shopping for sporting goods, antiques, clothing and general goods, followed by a walk on the riverfront. Missoulians may play tennis, baseball and swim or simply enjoy watching a special sporting or community cultural event in the riverfront parks.

Rattlesnake Creek, which originates in the Rattlesnake Wilderness and National Recreation Area, flows into the Clark Fork River adding interest to the east end of the riverfront downtown. Although this area is developed right up to the bank, and lacks a public walkway easement, it is an attractive area because it is not riprapped, and often draws fishing enthusiasts.

Historical features are central to the character of the riverfront. Homes and buildings marking several historic periods are adjacent to the riverfront properties on both shores. The Milwaukee Railroad Depot built in 1910 has been preserved by a group of private investors. The Wilma Theatre, the communities premiere cultural resource, built in 1921, anchors

the northshore to Missoula's past and is a main pedestrian gateway to the riverfront. Approximately a mile of riverfront is illuminated at night with lampposts fabricated from a turn of the century design.

Missoula, whether a final destination or a stopover between Yellowstone, Glacier Park and Spokane, accommodates many tourists each year. Tourism is a growing sector in our state and local economy contributing not only to food, lodging and gasoline but also retail trade. Tourists spent \$658 million in Montana in a recent twelve month period (in 1988) and nearly one third of all spending occurred in northwestern Montana. The number of tourist visits to the riverfront is not known. However, many hotels and motels are located on or near the riverfront parks, so we can speculate that if visitors were aware of the riverfront trails, many people would enjoy riverfront walks on their visit to Missoula. This visitor attraction is an amenity that many communities are developing to give them an edge in the tourism market.

The best of Missoula's natural and cultural resources come together in the riverfront downtown. Residents and visitors can enjoy the beauty of natural features as well as participate in urban experiences.

The problems and opportunities of this planning area are presented in the following sections.



Missoula's Out-To-Lunch Program sponsored by the Missoula Downtown Association, draws people to Caras Park every Wednesday at noon for art, food and entertainment through the summer. *Paul Dostert, for Missoula Downtown Association, 1989*

## WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE RIVERFRONT?

The whole riverfront planning area encompassing both shores from Van Buren Street Bridge on the east to the Montana Rail Link spur line on the west, is a mix of public parks, private property, and walkway easements. A continuous trail system is nearly complete with the exception of a few missing segments on the north bank. **What is lacking is formal acknowledgement of this park concept to aid private and public efforts to achieve the vision of a riverfront park system.**

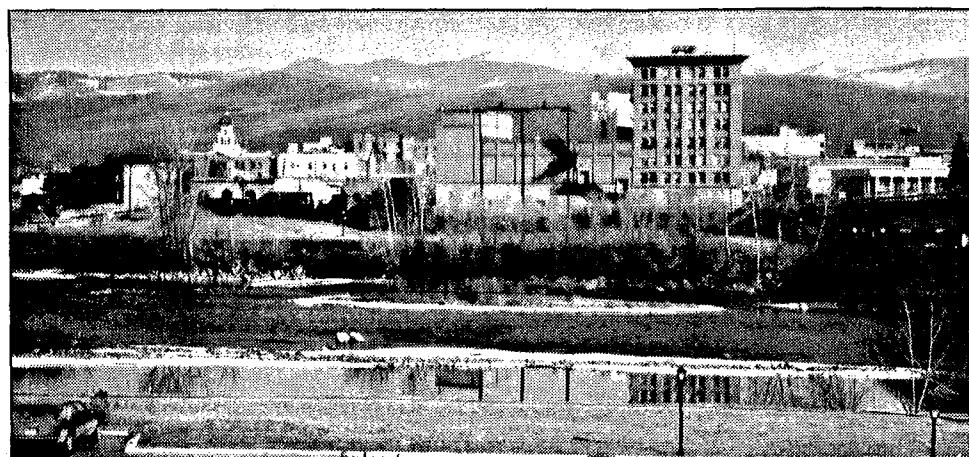
The formal development of a riverfront park system is warranted because of the continued high degree of public interest (see *Chronology of Riverfront Development*). The densities of the downtown neighborhoods and the business district justify the need for a park of this scale to meet the recreational needs of the urban community.

How do people view the future of the riverfront? In public meetings about the riverfront people suggested that signing, restrooms, trail and park improvements could encourage more passive recreation like walking and viewing the river. The

meeting participants proposed ways to encourage non-motorized water recreation. They suggested that boats on the river could be enjoyed by shoreline spectators too. People talked about how residents and tourists can combine shopping, dining and business excursions with riverfront recreational experiences. Participants suggested steps to protect and continue investment in the riverfront to enhance the quality of life in Missoula.

How is the future of the riverfront tied to our local economy? In addition to attracting residents and tourists, waterfront cities are becoming an attraction for corporations interested in locating and expanding into new communities. A location near a riverfront park system can be offered as an amenity to recruit employees or enhance a corporate image. The beauty of Missoula's riverfront provides the potential to compete nationally with cities our size.

Many community members eagerly endorsed the riverfront planning process as a means to promote enjoyment of the riverfront and as a way to enhance economic opportunities for area businesses.



View of downtown Missoula from the southside of the Clark Fork River.  
Kathleen Olson, 1990

## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

As a first step in the planning process, the public identified issues and opportunities. The major issues identified in public meetings are:

**Natural resources** - What is the state of water quality? What can be done to improve the in-river and shoreline habitat and wildlife?

**Recreation** - Trails and parks are not fully integrated, functional or aesthetic. Will access be adequate and at the same time minimize conflict between park users and adjoining land uses? The irrigation facilities pose a public safety hazard. Will Missoula finance or help in seeking funds for eliminating hazards and promoting the recreational potential of the riverfront? How will removal of these hazards be financed? Can Missoula afford to maintain a riverfront park system once it is established? How do we promote enhancement of the recreational opportunities in the riverfront?

**Character** - While there is strong public identity with natural and architectural features in the riverfront there are no assurances that the character will be maintained or enhanced as the community develops. What type of landscaping will be used in the improvement of parks? Should it be *natural* as proposed in the new park at Orange Street or *formal* as in Caras Park or a mixture of both styles? What kind of land uses and activities should be encouraged?

**Compatibility of adjacent uses** - While enhancement and promotion of the riverfront will invite more use, adjacent neighborhoods are concerned about impacts upon the character of the riverfront as well as impacts upon their neighborhoods. What are the interests of adjacent uses? What are community-wide interests? How do we balance these interests? How can we encourage compatible uses?

## PRIMARY GOALS

Goals and strategies to meet this vision of a riverfront park began to emerge through the public meeting process. Strategies related to specific locations are found in the land use chapter and strategies for specific topics are found within the chapter by that name such as *Recreation* and *Water Quality*. The primary goals are:

- Protect and enhance the riverfront lands, shores and water. Promote water quality programs and wildlife enhancement efforts.
- Protect and enhance the riverfront parks and trails for enjoyment of the residents, to attract visitors, and to enhance property values. Promote viewing opportunities of the river from existing and new developments and develop better access to the riverfront trails from surrounding areas. Minimize in-river and shoreline hazards to allow Missoula to further develop its recreational amenities.
- Identify the desirable natural and cultural amenities in the riverfront to aid in the resolution of conflicts between preservation interests and development interests.
- Encourage land uses which will promote the natural, recreational, and historical character of the riverfront and land uses that will allow public enjoyment of the area. Provide opportunities for the public to determine which land uses will negatively impact the riverfront.

## STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE RIVERFRONT GOALS

When one considers the circumstances leading to the present state of the area it is evident that the community is at a junction. Missoula could continue to develop its riverfront without formal policies or it can actively promote and enhance the downtown riverfront through a set of strategies. Partnerships between community groups and local government have contributed to the development of existing parks and trails, yet there are many other possibilities which have surfaced through this planning process.

Regulatory guidelines do not at present, incorporate goals for protecting the amenities that are valued in the riverfront. Inappropriate development or poor site design and orientation can spoil the setting and experience of the riverfront.

Evidence exists that regulation can enhance property values. In other cities that have invested in waterfront properties, and adopted restrictions on land uses, land values have risen. Individual property owners can benefit, as well as the community, by recognizing and protecting riverfront amenities. If a balance between private and public interests can be achieved, and that in turn, becomes integrated into the community's vision, Missoula will be effective in managing its heart, the riverfront.

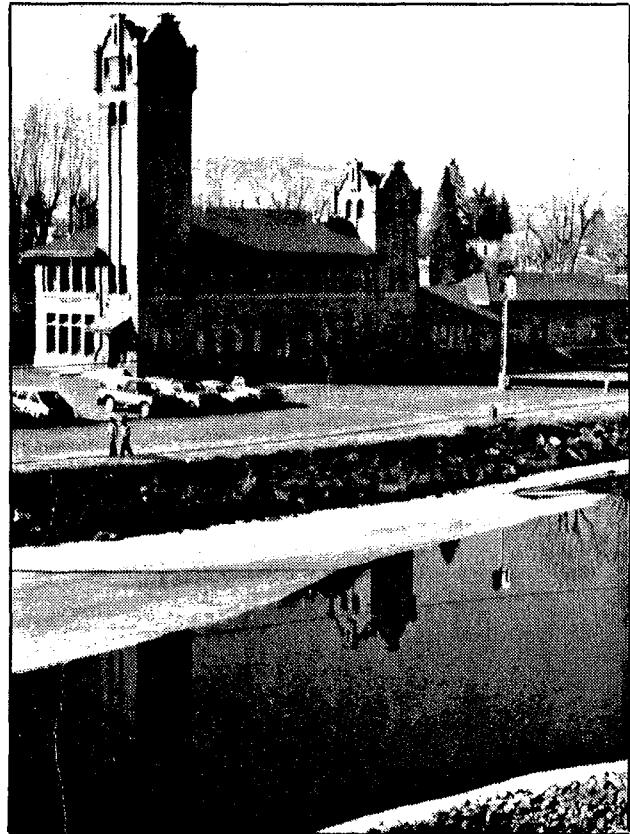
## Strategies

To achieve a balance of interests and meet community goals, Missoula needs to adopt strategies to focus community efforts. The following strategies were formulated from comments received at public meetings.

1. Adopt land use criteria and design standards for new private sector developments as well as landscape criteria and standards for park facilities in the riverfront. (See *Criteria* in the following section.)
2. Landscape parks and trails to improve the river environment for the enjoyment of the community and visitors. Improve the aesthetic and functional quality of riverfront recreational areas and trails.
3. Acquire public walkway easements to complete the continuous trail system on both shores. Explore the feasibility of connecting the riverfront trail from Kiwanis Park to Bess Reed Park. Connect the riverfront trails to existing and anticipated trails in the community (Rattlesnake, Mount Sentinel and to Kelly Island). Provide access from surrounding areas to the riverfront.
4. Improve access between the northshore and the southshore via a new pedestrian/bike bridge. Promote the redesign of existing bridges to incorporate pedestrian/bike access across the river and into the river trail system.
5. Seek solutions to hazards posed by the irrigation ditches, headgates and weirs. Retain an engineering firm to design and implement solutions that will help meet recreational goals and the interests of the irrigation groups.

6. Promote water recreation events and provide facilities for non-motorized boaters such as *put-ins and take-outs*, and flood resistant steps on the bank.
7. Plan and develop interpretive features. Develop brochures and displays, kiosks or signs to direct park visitors to attractions and facilities. Location and design of such facilities should not compromise the aesthetics of the area. A partial list of interpretive features includes a native plant arboretum, an edible plant trail, historic self-guided tour, riparian wildlife, and location of park facilities and community attractions.
8. Continue to promote partnerships between community groups, local government, and business to develop and protect riverfront amenities and views.
9. Promote community use of the riverfront; encourage and coordinate events like the Downtown Association events in Caras Park.
10. Sponsor art programs about the river for writers and artists to create and foster excitement about the riverfront park system.
11. Promote the continued development of The Rocky Mountain Science Center, a non-profit organization, whose members have expressed a strong interest in developing educational programs about the river in a riverfront location.
12. Promote non-regulatory methods of preserving riverfront amenities such as negotiating walkway easements or acquiring riverfront lands for parks and trails.
13. Utilize a recent survey of historic buildings which can provide incentives for historic preservation. Encourage nomination of historic structures and districts to the National Register of Historic Places.
14. Select and implement a regulatory approach for new developments, such as a *Riverfront Overlay Zone*, to promote and maintain the character of the riverfront and to promote land uses and designs compatible with the goals for the riverfront park corridor. The boundaries of such a zone should include commercial uses east of Van Buren Street and west of McCormick Park to Russell Street.
15. Investigate public opinion regarding funding for the riverfront park corridor. The mechanisms include formation of a special improvement district, continued funding of Missoula Redevelopment Agency, and/or some mechanism for City/County cooperative funding for this park which serves the whole urban area and visitors.





# PLANNING METHODS

*Cities have identities and the people there see themselves as unique in relation to their environment and each other. They need occasions for acknowledging this very powerful sense of that connection. Festivals and celebrations have always been geared towards comprehensive participation. They take place in public space and transform the ordinary environment into the location for a magical experience. Festivals raise the energy level of the entire community. They create occasions when people really become involved with each other and sense themselves as a responsive unit. Urban waterfronts offer endless possibilities for theater and all sorts of spaces can be incorporated into the energy of a celebration.*

*Marilyn Wood, Producer and Director of City Celebrations, 1986.*

## POLICIES FOR NEW LAND USE DEVELOPMENTS

Public law recognizes community interests and rights in the subdivision of land and use of property by authorizing several methods to evaluate and approve of land use changes. Adopting criteria will allow a better evaluation of land use proposals in the riverfront. Adopting a review process will assure a more consistent and predictable evaluation of new developments. The adoption of criteria and a review process would encourage new proposals to meet community goals for the riverfront. The following criteria are offered.

### CRITERIA TO MEASURE AND EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF CHANGING LAND USES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RIVERFRONT.

- Will the development promote public use and enjoyment of the riverfront? Is the riverfront the best location for this use?
- Is adequate access to the riverfront and along the riverfront provided?

- How does the development effect the environment (such as the stability of the banks and run-off from the parking area?) Does this use have the potential of compromising water quality?
- Will the scale of the development (the ratio of landscaped area to the building) and building height be compatible with riverfront character and adjacent uses?
- Will design and orientation be sensitive to adjacent uses and take full advantage of riverfront views?
- Will building materials, colors and design be consistent or complimentary with historic and architectural character of surrounding uses?
- Will the landscaping be functionally and aesthetically compatible with plans for the river corridor trail?

These criteria could be incorporated into a performance standard zoning when Missoula revises the City Zoning Ordinance. Adoption of a Riverfront Overlay Zone containing these criteria could be used as an interim tool to meet public goals for the riverfront area. Refer to the chapter on *Alternative Procedures for Regulating Development* for more information.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNING RECREATIONAL FEATURES

such as paths, intersections, river banks, benches, open space, and signs.

- » Is the feature appropriate in the riverfront and in this location?
- » Is it durable and resistant to vandalism?
- » Is it easy to maintain, available and replaceable?
- » Does the feature accommodate access needs for the differently abled and physically challenged?
- » Is the feature compatible with adjacent uses and designs?
- » Is the feature sensitive or complimentary to riverfront character?
- » Does the feature meet the needs of riverfront visitors?

The Missoula Parks and Recreation Department already applies many of these criteria in planning, construction and maintenance of the parks. This plan is an opportunity to inform the public of these criteria and to urge that they continue to be used in planning new public recreational features. These criteria can be made available to private developers as well.

## ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES FOR REGULATING NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

This section of the plan examines review procedures for new development and alterations to existing developments, with the intent of evaluating which method would best protect the scenic, recreational, historic, and architecturally significant values and sites in the downtown riverfront. (NOTE: Existing zoning districts in the riverfront contain standards that are quite different from those listed here in the Downtown Riverfront Plan, and for the most part do not contain architectural or design review. See chapter on *Existing Zoning*.) The purpose of this chapter is to outline the differences between various review procedures.

### Alternative 1 - City Staff Review with Existing City Regulations

The current method for review of redeveloped or new structures requires a landowner or developer to submit a plan to the City. Departments involved in the review may include Engineering, Building Inspection, Office of Community Development, and the County Health Department. The proposed project is evaluated by City Staff on the basis of the following City regulations:

- » Zoning District for the site
- » City Zoning Ordinance (parking and landscaping requirements)
- » Boulevard Resolution (Ordinance # 2168)

If a rezoning is necessary, the zoning staff works with the developer and considers the special constraints and amenities of the site as they relate to the proposal. The Office of Community Development staff makes a recommendation to the Design Review Board or Planning Board and/or City Council depending upon the use and the site. Existing zoning districts in the downtown riverfront contain little or no architectural or design review (see *Existing Zoning* chapter). Adoption of a Riverfront Plan would be helpful in outlining criteria to evaluate proposals in the riverfront, but the plan provides no formal procedure to evaluate and regulate a development proposal.

#### **Alternative 2 - The Permit System**

The permit system would require the formation of a special zoning district. This review procedure applies absolute standards and relative standards with the goal of establishing a basic score for a project to be approved. It is somewhat flexible in that scores can be adjusted by providing more development amenities to make up for low scoring on a particular criterion. The permit system requires a great deal of testing on many uses and sites to determine how effective it will be in achieving community goals while being fair to the developers. This initially requires much staff time to set up. The permit system could meet the needs of the riverfront goals if a riverfront plan containing criteria were adopted as a framework for setting up the permit system.

Performance standards, the basic concept behind the permit system, are tools that many communities are adopting for reviewing development proposals. *Cottage industries*, because of their nature have minimal impact upon residential land

uses. The old definitions of industrial uses and zones no longer accurately identify the nuisance impact of a given industry. Therefore performance standards more effectively measure compatibility of these types of developments.

#### **Alternative 3 - Planned Unit Development (PUD)**

The PUD ordinance is a process chosen by the developer in a zone where the developer can offer innovative design to meet the intent of the existing zoning district. Specific conditions for development are very general encouraging clustering and mixing uses. Although conditions are not applied until actual site plans are proposed, conditions can be tailored to meet the needs of the site. Administrative discretion on the part of the regulating body can be very broad allowing flexibility. Whether the PUD conditions address the special considerations of the riverfront depends upon whether a riverfront plan has been adopted and if it is followed.

This method relies on strong public interest to negotiate specific conditions. In this alternative, the Planning Board and the City Council review the development. It entails a comparatively long review process and is more costly for the developer than other methods, but is appropriate when the size and characteristics of the site and surroundings warrant a more tailored approach.

#### **Alternative 4 - Riverfront Overlay Zone**

The City Council would designate a Riverfront Overlay Zone that is superimposed and supplemental to restrictions which are presently applied to the land by the underlying zoning

districts. The zone would include areas within approximately 200' of the high water mark of the Clark Fork River or to the edge of the city block parallel to the river. The overlay zone would establish intent, criteria, reviewing body, review and appeals process. The suggested reviewing body would be the Design Review Board. City Council is the appellant body for the Design Review Board. This method is fairly easy to implement (does not require a great deal of staff time to set up). The process is not very complex yet it addresses the goals of a special resource area. The intent and criteria for the new zone could be adapted from the Riverfront Plan.

### **Summary of Alternative Procedures**

The differences between various review procedures have been described to determine which method might be the best for reviewing proposed buildings and land uses in the riverfront. The *existing zoning districts* contain requirements quite different from those addressed in the Downtown Riverfront Plan. *Existing districts* contain little or no design criteria to protect riverfront amenities.

The *Permit System* can be an effective zoning tool because it can address the special needs of an area. The disadvantage of the *Permit System* is that it requires much staff time to set up.

The advantage of the *PUD* method is that it allows flexibility and encourages innovative design. A disadvantage of the *PUD* method is that administrative discretion can be very broad and criteria may vary from one site to another, thus it is not a comprehensive or consistent way to deal with the riverfront goals.

*The Riverfront Overlay Zone* would be superimposed and supplemental to the restrictions which are presently applied to the underlying zoning districts. The *Overlay Zone* would establish criteria such as those outlined in this plan to protect scenic, recreational, historic and architecturally significant features in the downtown riverfront. It is relatively easy to implement, requiring adoption of criteria and inclusion in the City Zoning Ordinance. The process is not very complex yet it addresses the special concerns of the riverfront. There are already provisions in the City Zoning Ordinance to establish a *Riverfront Overlay Zone*. Clearly the *Riverfront Overlay Zone* is the most appropriate tool for accomplishing community goals in the riverfront.

It is strongly recommended that the City of Missoula develop and establish a Riverfront District called the *Riverfront Overlay Zone*, to provide a process for review of proposed buildings and land uses in order to protect the special amenities in the riverfront downtown.

## NON-REGULATORY METHODS OF CONSERVATION

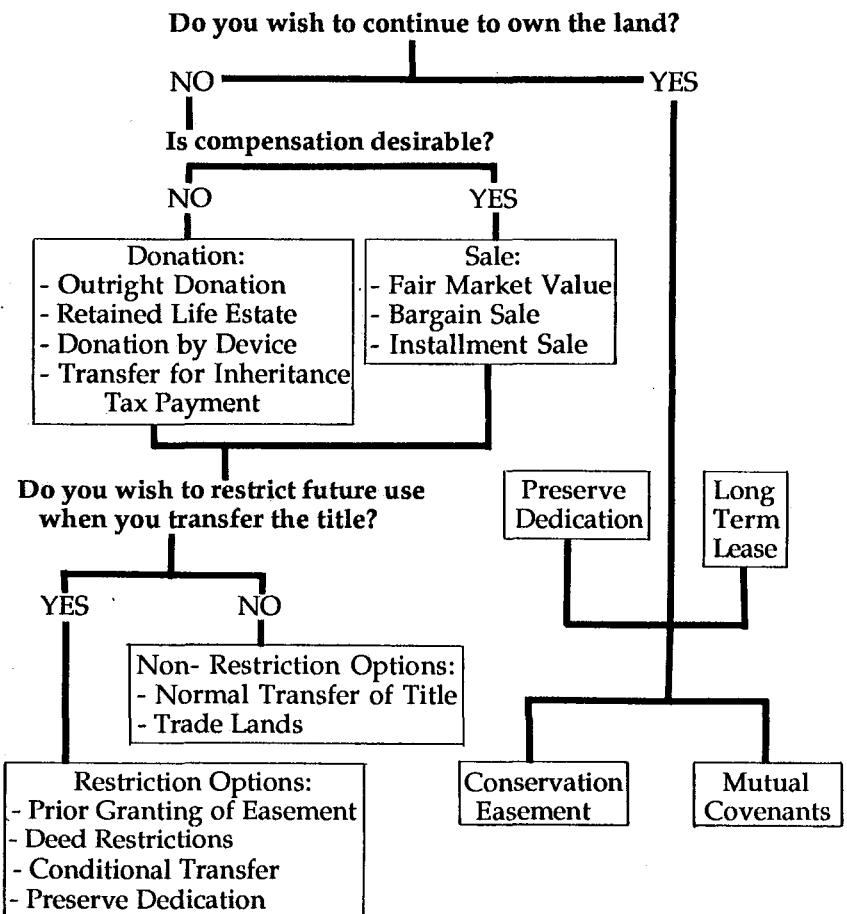
One of the primary goals of the Riverfront Plan is to acquire riverfront land through donation, purchase or some partial use option like a conservation easement. The City has been very successful in acquiring walkway easements. Negotiating with individuals who hold property which is also valued for public use and enjoyment has become possible because of incentives built into our tax laws. In some cases an easement or property is donated as a goodwill gesture by the landowner, or an easement may be negotiated as part of a public/private redevelopment agreement.

This chart, borrowed from The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation illustrates the many options available to landowners. (Courtesy of Bruce Bugbee, American Public Land Exchange Company.)

What resources do we have to achieve riverfront goals through negotiation with landowners?

*We are very fortunate in Missoula County to have a Land Trust. Missoula County has been instrumental in the formation of the Five Valley Land Trust, a private, non-profit organization formed to protect, preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, scenic open space, agricultural land and historic sites through private transactions and fund-raising. (Amy Eaton, Missoula County Rural Planner)*

## Options for Protecting Special Land



Note: This chart demonstrates the range of options available to landowners and land managers who are interested in protecting special lands. Definitions for these terms can be found in many real estate source books including *The Landowners Options*, by the Iowa National Heritage Foundation, or by contacting a qualified real estate agent.

There are areas in the riverfront where public values are very high for recreation, scenic and open space. These areas are identified in the *Land Use* chapter. The City should consult with the Five Valley Land Trust to help formulate some equitable solutions for the landowners of such property and the community.

Another incentive which can continue to preserve public values, specifically historic features in the riverfront, is having a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Structures that meet criteria established by the NRHP may be nominated to the listing either individually or as a contributing element in a designated historic district. Owners and lessees of historic structures listed in the National Register may take a 20% income tax credit on the cost of rehabilitating buildings for industrial, commercial or rental residential purposes. Some of the other benefits of nomination and acceptance to the NRHP include:

- Improved structures increase in value.
- Rehabilitated buildings are eventually returned to the tax roles at fully assessed values often raising property tax revenues.
- Tax incentives encourage improvements and provide impetus for surrounding neighborhoods to fix up their property.
- Historic districts often attract new business, tourists and visitors, stimulating retail activity in the community. The resulting activity will reduce crime and vandalism.
- While not every structure should be preserved improving historic buildings preserves the community's identity with the past and affirms a sense of place.

- Tax dollars are saved through the reuse of existing buildings which are already served by public utilities, schools, fire protection and other services.

Missoula adopted a resolution providing for local tax abatement for expansion of existing structures and new construction within an historic district.

*These buildings must meet the criteria for design as established by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Missoula's qualifying properties include properties in the East Pine Historic District and various individual nominations. Additional qualifying nominations currently undergoing review include the Southside Neighborhood as well as several structures in the downtown. (Candi Zion, Missoula Historic Preservation Officer)*

### Summary of Non-Regulatory Methods

Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, conservation easements and walkway easements are a few of the many ways Missoula can provide incentives to private property owners to achieve public goals. City officials should actively negotiate walkway easements to achieve a continuous trail system in the riverfront. Survey and identification of potential historic districts and structures can determine eligibility for local and federal historic preservation programs. The City should actively encourage preservation and renovation of historic structures because they affirm a sense of pride in the communities past and can stimulate reinvestment in the area. The City should continue to seek opportunities for public and private partnerships to enhance riverfront developments.

## FINANCING

Implementing projects in the riverfront and meeting the intent and policies of this plan will require a broad base of community support. It will also require cooperation between public and private property owners and all levels of government. Funding requirements of public improvements may go beyond the revenue capabilities of present funding such as tax increment funds and park funds.

Planning and construction of recent riverfront parks has been financed primarily through tax increment funds. Funding for new or reconstructed parks and trails may be limited after December 1990 because tax increment funds may no longer be available due to the anticipated expiration of the Urban Renewal District. Like all local government agencies the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department budget is strained because of the effects of Initiative 105. What alternatives do we have to finance improvements in the riverfront parks?

### State Grants and Loans

State grant and loan programs available through the Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) are appropriate funding sources for irrigation repair and conversion, fish, wildlife and recreation projects identified in this plan. Three funding sources are identified.

**Montana Water Development Grant and Loan Program** funds projects that conserve, distribute, develop, store or use Montana's water resources for beneficial purposes. Examples of eligible projects include irrigation system conversion and repair, and streambank stabilization. Funds are generated from .625 % of the coal severance tax and from 30% of the interest earned on the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund.

**Montana Renewable Resource Development Program** is a grants and loan program. Eligible projects include construction, feasibility, and demonstration projects which conserve, protect manage or develop Montana's renewable resources. Examples of renewable resources include soil, surface and groundwater, vegetation, watershed, fish and wildlife recreation.

To be eligible for **Reclamation and Development Grants**, projects should repair, reclaim, and mitigate damage to public resources. Projects are eligible that enhance the state's economy through development of natural resources or that develop, promote, protect or further Montana's human and physical environment and the public interest.

The most effective way to apply for these grants and loans is through a collaborative effort with the affected agencies and groups. The Missoula Conservation District is the appropriate lead agency to apply for funding to address the irrigation and recreation projects outlined in this report. Partners in this application would be the City of Missoula, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department, the irrigation districts, Missoula Conservation District, and recreationists.

### Local Funding

Local funding is appropriate for capital projects and maintenance of park facilities, trails, and landscaping. (Specific capital projects are identified in the *Recommendations Chart* ). Capital and operating costs will compete with other public needs. What sources are available in addition to the City General Fund?

## Special Improvement District (SID)

The City Council could authorize the creation of a special improvement district in the riverfront. (This plan does not recommend this as a solution, and the boundaries of the planning area are not related to a tax assessment district). It is simply presented as as an alternative for funding and maintaining the riverfront improvements.

A Special Improvement District is limited to very specific improvements under Montana Annotated Codes (MCA) 7-12-4102 and 4136. Landscaping is limited to *planting of grassplots and setting out of trees*. The concept of the district may be debated on the issue of *who pays* and *who benefits*. While the S.I.D. would serve the whole community, only those within the district would pay for improvements. However, land owners would see benefits from improvements because the land values will presumably rise as they have in other cities implementing riverfront plans, districts and improvements. The whole community would benefit from the amenities of a Riverfront Park Special Improvement District.

## County Park District in the Riverfront

The City of Missoula is limited by legislative definitions from establishing a park district. The City may wish to address these issues related to self-governing powers in future legislative sessions.

The County, however is authorized to establish a park district. District boundaries are set by petition and voted on by electors. The district may include land within the City.

*The statute provides for two funding mechanisms for operation of the district; the property tax levy through the county budgeting process and the issuance of bonds for payment of all or part of the cost of construction, acquisition, furnishing, equipping, extension, and betterment of park facilities and to provide an adequate working capital for such facilities. (Robert L. Deschamps III, Missoula County Attorney).*

If the riverfront parks and trails were to be included in a County Parks District, the base of support would broaden and more funding mechanisms would be available. The political, legal and practical difficulties of creating a County Park District in the riverfront are multi-faceted. This funding alternative is presented to offer a broad array of possibilities.

### City -Wide Bond Issue

The Open Space Bond that was approved by voters in 1980 is nearly depleted. This mechanism is available to finance additional open space purchases in the riverfront if the voters approved another open space bond issue.

### Financing through Community Partnerships

To support improvements in the riverfront the City could:

- Create an aggressive program to solicit gifts, donations, and memorials.
- Establish a non-profit corporation or foundation to assist in improvements and redevelopment efforts.
- Active pursuit of monies from federal, state and local government and private foundations.

## Summary of Financing

Landscaping, trail and facility construction as well as maintenance will require financial support. Whether this will be accomplished through state grants or loans and/or local government or community partnership programs such as a riverfront foundation, is a subject that should be considered by the community.

The problems associated with the irrigation facilities can be addressed through communication among all affected parties.

Application for state funds is appropriate. A collaborative approach supported by the responsible agencies, recreationists, the irrigation companies and the whole community will enhance Missoula's eligibility.

Aggressive pursuit of all available state and local financial assistance programs will optimize Missoula's chances for successful implementation.

*Agencies responsible for particular recommendations need to consider how the recommendations relate to private sector developments and planned public improvements. The list that follows contains short and long range objectives. Public agencies and boards may wish to determine priorities among the recommendations and include these where appropriate in their respective short and long range budget programs.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 - a

TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Parks and Trail Enhancement	Downtown Riverfront	1. Protect and enhance riverfront lands, shores and water for the enjoyment of residents and visitors.	Missoula Park Board Office of Community Development Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Missoula Planning Board Soil Conservation Service MRA
Land Use	Downtown Riverfront	2. Encourage land uses that will promote the natural, recreational and historical character of the riverfront.	Office of Community Development MRA
Land Use	Downtown Riverfront	3. Adopt landscape criteria and design standards for changing land uses and new developments.	Office of Community Development MRA
Land Use	Downtown Riverfront	4. Select and implement a regulatory method such as a Riverfront Overlay Zone for evaluating changing land uses and new developments in the riverfront. Extend boundaries of such a zone to include area east of Van Buren Street and west of McCormick Park to Russell Street.	Missoula City Council Office of Community Development MRA
Historic Preservation	Downtown Riverfront	5. Utilize a recent survey of historic buildings which can provide incentives for historic preservation.	Historic Preservation Officer Office of Community Development
Non-regulatory methods of preservation	Downtown Riverfront	6. Promote non-regulatory methods of preserving riverfront amenities such as nomination of historic structures and districts to the National Register of Historic Places.	Missoula City Council Office of Community Development Historic Preservation Officer MRA
Access	Downtown Riverfront	7. Improve access between the northshore and the southshore via a new pedestrian/bike bridge.	Missoula County Missoula Parks & Recreation Department Transportation Advisory Committee Missoula Engineering Division

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 - b

TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Access	Downtown Riverfront	8. Acquire public walkway easements to complete the continuous trail system on both shores. Connect the riverfront trails to existing and anticipated trails in the community (Rattlesnake, Mount Sentinel and Kelly Island).	Missoula Trails Project Missoula Parks & Recreation Department MRA
Access/Bridges	Downtown Riverfront	9. Promote the redesign of existing bridges to incorporate pedestrian/bike access across the river and into the river trail system.	Office of Community Development Transportation Advisory Committee Montana State Highway Department
Access	Downtown Riverfront	10. Consider the accessibility of riverfront parks, trails and facilities for elderly and physically handicapped.	Local Handicap Service Agency Area Aging Services Missoula Parks & Recreation Department MRA
Safety	Downtown Riverfront	11. The City should acquire easements and plan future trail widths sufficient to handle both bikes and pedestrians.	Missoula Bike Coordinator Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Access	Downtown Riverfront	12. Develop better access to the riverfront trails from surrounding areas.	MRA Office of Community Development Missoula Engineering Division
Visual Access	Downtown Riverfront	13. Promote viewing opportunities of the river from existing and new developments.	Design Review Board Office of Community Development MRA
Passive recreation	Downtown Riverfront	14. Encourage more passive recreational experiences like walking and viewing areas.	Missoula Parks & Recreation MRA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 - c

TOPICS	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY
Interpretive	Downtown Riverfront	15. Develop brochures and displays such as kiosks or signs to direct park visitors to attractions and facilities.	Missoula Trails Project Missoula Parks & Recreation Department Missoula Chamber of Commerce MRA
Public Involvement	Downtown Riverfront	16. Promote public involvement in park projects.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department MRA
Water Recreation & Safety	Downtown Riverfront	17. Remove barriers to water recreation in the river and develop more efficient irrigation diversion by formulating an overall engineering plan for the river with a qualified engineering firm.	City Council Irrigation Companies Soil Conservation Service Missoula Conservation District
Safety	Southshore	18. Mitigate the danger to children posed by the irrigation ditches in the riverfront.	Irrigation Companies Missoula Conservation District MRA
Water Recreation	Downtown Riverfront	19. Plan and build put-ins and take-outs for non-motorized boaters after conferring with recreationists about appropriate locations. Consider impacts on other activities and uses.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department Office of Community Development MRA
Motorized In-River Recreation	Downtown Riverfront	20. Discourage motorized water craft in the riverfront downtown.	Montana of Fish, Wildlife & Parks Missoula City Council
Public Use/Special Places	Downtown Riverfront	21. Promote public use of historic buildings in the riverfront where appropriate.	MRA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 - d

TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Public Use/Special Events	Downtown Riverfront	22. Sponsor and coordinate events in Caras Park and other riverfront parks.	Downtown Association University of Montana Local Arts and Recreation Organizations
Art	Downtown Riverfront	23. Encourage public art pieces in the riverfront.	Public Art Committee
Public Use/Education	Downtown Riverfront	24. Promote the continued development of the Rocky Mountain Science Center, a non-profit organization, whose members have expressed a strong interest in developing educational programs about the river and locating the center in a riverfront location.	Rocky Mountain Science Center Missoula Schools
Public Involvement Special Events	Downtown Riverfront	25. Sponsor art programs about the river for writers, artists and performers, to create and foster excitement about the riverfront park system.	Missoula Downtown Association Missoula Schools University of Montana
Water Recreation	Downtown Riverfront	26. Support fisheries enhancement programs to restore the integrity of our fisheries and to contribute to our recreational opportunities.	Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Local Trout Unlimited Chapter Sporting Goods Stores Clark Fork Coalition
Financing	Downtown Riverfront	27. Make a commitment to a funding and management program that will ensure proper installation, and management of parks and trails.	City of Missoula Missoula County Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Financing	Downtown Riverfront	28. Promote the creation of a Riverfront Trust that would solicit donations and encourage riverfront enhancement projects.	Open Space Committee City Finance Office MRA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 -e

TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Financing	Downtown Riverfront	29. Investigate public opinion about funding for the riverfront park system downtown. The mechanisms include formation of a park district, a special improvement district, and continued funding of Missoula Redevelopment Agency.	MRA City Finance Office
Financing	Downtown Riverfront	30. Aggressively pursue all available state and local financial assistance programs to meet riverfront goals.	MRA City Finance Office Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Park Enhancement	McCormick and Kiwanis Parks	31. Complete a site analysis of McCormick and Kiwanis Parks to outline specific actions to maximize the beauty and function of these parks. Invite interested citizens, landscape and park planners to complete the enhancement plan.	MRA Missoula Parks Recreation Department
Park Enhancement	McCormick Park	32. Improve circulation in the childrens' fishing pond in McCormick Park.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Park Enhancement	McCormick Park	33. Buffer the riverside of the pool building with vegetation, and repair the dilapidated red stone retaining wall.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Park Enhancement	McCormick Park	34. Improve the landscape in the passive recreational areas and on the perimeter trail in McCormick Park.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

18 - f

TOPICS	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Park Enhancement	McCormick Park	35. Landscape the area in McCormick Park west of Orange Street Bridge which is presently used as a soil mixing site.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Trail Enhancement	Downtown Riverfront	36. Willows and other vegetation that provide food and cover for small birds should be encouraged along the river corridor, particularly from Madison Street to a point downriver of the Milwaukee Station.	Open Space Committee Missoula Parks & Recreation Department Missoula School District 1 Audobon Society
Access	Southshore & Fourth Street	37. Provide a trail from the new parking area on Fourth Street to the riverfront trail.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Park Enhancement	Southshore and Clegg Lane	38. Landscape the area just west of Orange Street Bridge and south of Clegg Lane with conifer trees or shrubs to bring color and form to the trail.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Park Construction & Maintenance	New Southshore Park, East of Orange Street	39. Construct the park as described in the conceptual plan in Riverfront Priorities: Southshore Plan. (a passive recreational area of riparian plantings.)	MRA Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Facilities & Park Acquisition	Milwaukee Station	40. Provide support and assistance to owners of the Clark Fork Station to compliment the attractions in the riverfront park.	MRA
Park Enhancement	John Toole Park	41. Continue landscape management of John Toole Park with riparian species rather than ornamental vegetation.	Open Space Committee Missoula Parks & Recreation Department

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

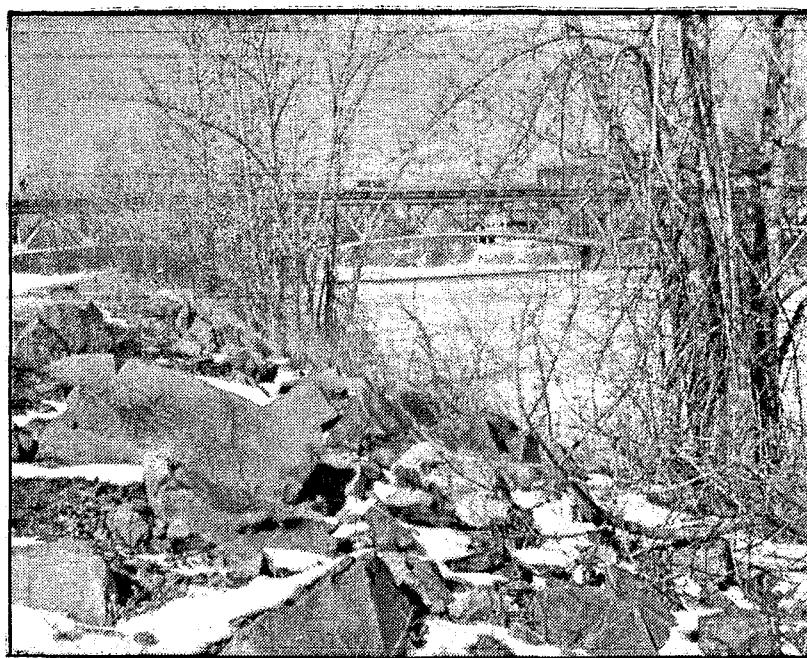
18 - g

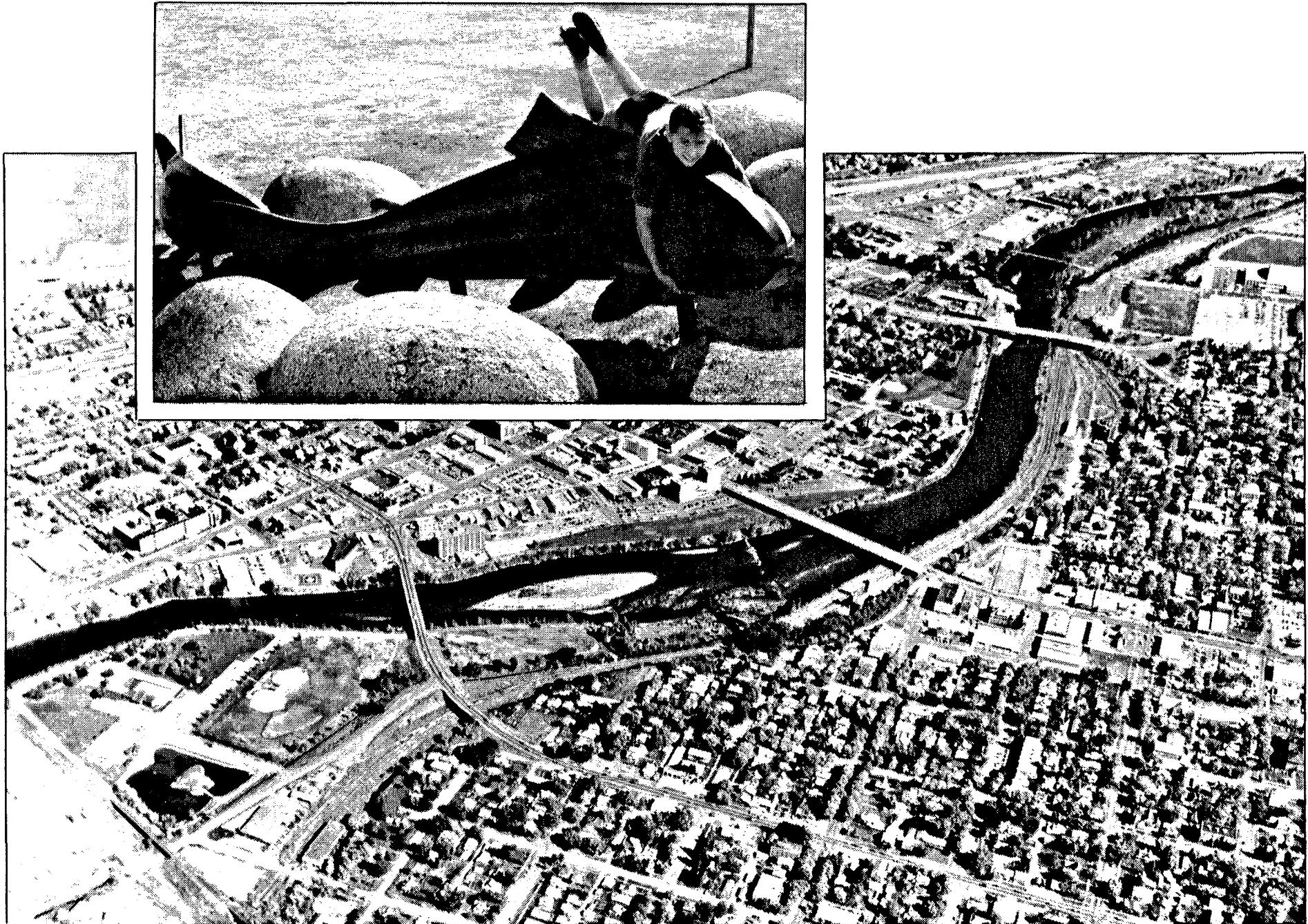
TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Access	John Toole Park	42. Consider a trail from Arthur to the riverfront trail.	Open Space Committee Missoula Parks & Recreation Department Missoula Engineering Division
Land Use	Southshore and Fourth Street	43. Evaluate the appropriateness of industrial zoning in the riverfront area on Fourth Street.	Office of Community Development
Land Use	East of Van Buren Street	44. Encourage redesign of Eastgate Plaza near the Van Buren Street Bridge. Buffer with vegetation as an interim measure to redevelopment.	Office of Community Development
Access	Rattlesnake Creek	45. Link the riverfront trail to Greenough Park. Connect the trails with signs along street routes until the easements and trails are developed.	MRA Missoula Trails Project
Park & Trail Enhancement	Kiwanis Park	46. Acknowledge the Front Street entrance to Kiwanis Park by erecting a directional sign to the park and river.	Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Access	Northshore & Orange Street	47. Connect the northshore trail with Orange Street near Clark Fork Riverside Manor with a stairway or ramp.	MRA Missoula Engineering Division
Land Use	Front Street	48. Encourage redevelopment of Front Street buildings from Higgins Avenue to Orange Street to add to the scenic value and public use of the riverfront.	MRA Office of Community Development

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RIVERFRONT DOWNTOWN

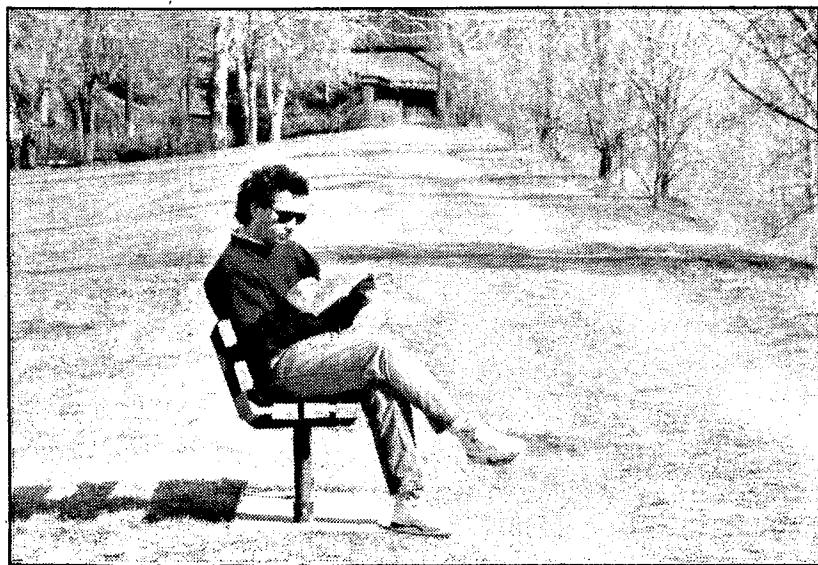
18 - h

TOPIC	LOCATION	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
Land Use Design	Northshore & Van Buren	49. Properties near Goldsmith's Bed and Breakfast should continue to be promoted as redevelopment areas.	MRA
Access	Kiwanis and Red Lion Motor Inn	50. A public easement and trail is recommended to connect the trail in Kiwanis Park with the Red Lion Motel and Madison Street.	MRA Missoula Trails Project Missoula Parks & Recreation Department
Trail Enhancement	Under Bridge Abutments	51. Fill and grade under bridge abutments (Orange and Madison on the northshore) to make the trail more aesthetic.	MRA Montana Highway Department Missoula Engineering Division
Signing	Downtown Riverfront	52. Guide visitors to riverfront parking areas with signs at the main gateways from Interstate 90 at Orange, Van Buren, and Madison Streets.	Missoula Chamber of Commerce MRA
Access and Land Use Design	Northshore & Levasseur Street	53. Negotiate a walkway easement or acquisition of properties from Levasseur Street into Kiwanis Park,	MRA
Visual Access	Caras Park	54. Construct a viewing deck in front of the irrigation weir in Caras Park.	MRA
Access	Northshore & West of Orange Street	55. Connect the area west of Orange Street behind Western Montana Clinic, with the riverfront and Orange Street. Where the river embankment is steep, the trail could connect with the sidewalks on Front Street.	MRA

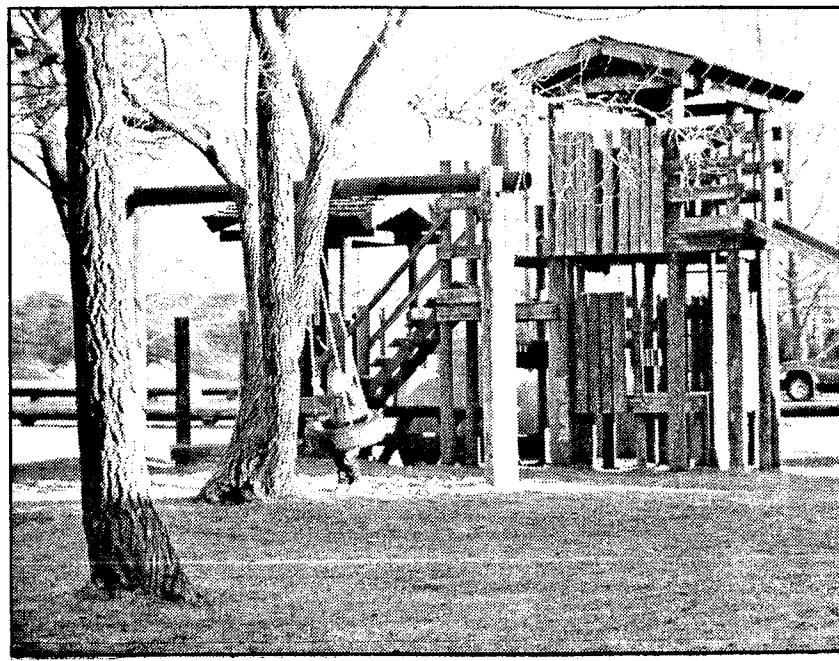




**BACKGROUND**



Passive recreation in Kiwanis Park. K. Timchak, 1990



Playground at McCormick Park. Zoe Molesky, 1990

## LAND USE PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### An Area by Area Analysis of the Riverfront

The purpose of this section is to describe problems and proposed solutions in specific areas. Land use recommendations herein should be viewed as suggestions for the future. The rights and opinions of present riverfront land owners may not coincide with the recommendations. If the landowners' wishes are compatible with the recommendations, a means to protect these areas should be explored to benefit both the landowner and the community. If recommendations are not compatible with the landowners' wishes, the community, through its elected officials, must consider how valued the area is and how aggressively to protect future use options. In the following narrative the reader is referred to maps on pages 25a, 25b, and 28.

#### SOUTHSHORE

##### McCormick Park Area

McCormick Park is presently the western boundary of the riverfront trail system. The City has purchased property on the southside of Clegg Lane adjacent to the Parks Department building and storage area. Located south of Clegg Lane is an industrial building and an irrigation ditch bordered by a residential area. Hickory Street and the old railroad right-of-way links the neighborhood to the riverfront park system. It may be desirable to retain a walkway easement on the former railroad right-of-way next to Clegg Lane. The residential area and riverfront would be enhanced by rehabilitation of the former City Glass Factory property and by landscaping the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department storage yard and the site just west of Orange Street. Conifer trees or shrubs would bring color to the riverfront in winter and would be a minimal investment in the area.

McCormick Park is bordered to the west by the Bitterroot Spur Line owned by Montana Rail Link. The railroad bridge crossing the river serves the mill and is used by two trains weekly to the Bitterroot Valley. A representative of Montana Rail Link said that even if the mill closed, this rail line is still viable and there is no plan to abandon it. This industrial use does not compliment the urban center or the recreational and aesthetic character of the riverfront downtown. The mill, although outside the planning area, needs to be acknowledged as a potential site for extending the riverfront trail. The southshore west of the mill for several miles has the potential for higher order uses (commercial and residential) and the extension of the riverfront trails.

McCormick Park includes:

- an outdoor swimming pool
- picnic area
- 2 baseball fields
- tennis courts
- play area
- fishing and ice-skating pond
- trail system around its perimeter
- parking and a restroom

The pond is a wonderful feature but would be better in the summer months if water circulation were improved. The area between the ballfield and the bridge, currently a soil mixing site, could be improved if it were landscaped. An *English Garden* and trail from Orange Street has been suggested. A garden club or business could adopt this site for a special project. Currently pedestrians walk down a steep hill where the bridge meets the southshore creating an eroded embankment. As the public continues to be drawn to the riverfront trail system there will be greater expectations for this area.

The trail near the river is very pleasant as it is lined with mature trees. The riverside of the pool building should be buffered with vegetation. The red stone retaining wall at the pool entrance is in disrepair. The introduction of some variety of textures and forms is needed to give the perimeter trail and the passive areas of the park more visual interest and a human scale.

The condition and traffic use of Orange Street Bridge has been evaluated by Peccia and Associates, along with the other bridges spanning the river. The Orange Street Bridge is scheduled for reconstruction in the next 5-15 years. The new bridge profile could be lower since it no longer has to span the abandoned Milwaukee railroad right-of-way. New bridge designs would include four vehicular lanes with wider curb lanes for cyclists and better pedestrian facilities.

Since the Milwaukee rail line has been abandoned, people have been using the old right-of-way to access the riverfront. There has been some resistance to losing this underpass with the bridge reconstruction. However it would be very costly to provide a structure to parallel the present design and less expensive treatment would provide a tunnel-like passageway that is much less desirable. The least costly alternative is to give up this trail site and to lessen the grade and landscape the area. The bridge reconstruction will be recommended by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and will be determined by the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC). There will be opportunities for public comment.

### **The New Southshore Park**

An undeveloped area on the southshore, formerly owned by the Milwaukee Railroad, is the newest addition to the riverfront park. The conceptual plan proposes a passive recreational site traversed by two trails and a landscape of

natural and to the extent possible native vegetation. It also recommends reducing the grade from Orange Street and constructing steps, ramp or a stairway into the park from Orange Street. Landscape architects are developing a site plan and preparing cost estimates for a pedestrian/bike bridge that would connect the north and south shores near the new park. The conceptual plan recommends reconstruction of footbridges across existing irrigation ditches to provide access to the riverfront for the neighborhood and to connect the trails along the riverfront. The report entitled *Riverfront Priorities: Southshore Park* describes this area in detail.

The irrigation facilities on the southshore influence park safety and aesthetics. Problems associated with irrigation are addressed in the *Irrigation* chapter of this plan.

The neighborhood adjacent to the new park site is characterized by a variety of homes and building styles from various historic periods. This plan acknowledges many of the preliminary goals formulated by neighborhood representatives through a neighborhood planning process.

### **Milwaukee Depot**

Milwaukee Depot, renamed the Clark Fork Station, was a restaurant and office complex, that was approved as a *planned unit development* (PUD). Phase I included renovations, landscaping and walkway easements from Third Street to the river along the entry drive and along the riverfront. Phase II included a conceptual plan for another building. Before any construction could take place, Phase II would require further public meetings and review by the City Council. Although part of the building is still being used as office space, the restaurant has closed and the building is for sale. The City has purchased property from the Clark Fork Station. The property is located between the depot and the new southshore park. The historic and scenic and cultural values of the area would

be greatly enhanced if this land and the depot could be leased or acquired for some public or private use to complement the attractions in the riverfront park and trail system.

### Higgins to Van Buren

The Missoulian newspaper building was also approved as a PUD and includes a public walkway easement along the riverfront. Where trails pass under bridges the aesthetics of the recreational experience is diminished due to the darkness and decades of graffiti. Some communities fill-in the underside of the abutments to discourage transient loitering. In the riverfront park in Spokane, a curvilinear concrete wall and public art pieces direct the trail visitors' attention to new focal areas. When trails are extended under Orange and Madison Street this type of treatment can make the trail under the bridge a more pleasant experience.

The river corridor from Madison Street to a point downriver of the Milwaukee Station is open with little vegetation. Willows and other vegetation that provide food and cover particularly for small birds should be encouraged along the corridor (see *Vegetation and Wildlife* chapter).

The implementation of John Toole Park is overseen by the Open Space Committee. Future improvements include a new parking area east of the Missoulian daily newspaper and a public restroom. Missoula County High School will, through an agreement made with the City, provide landscaping of the park. The landscape is to be *natural* using native species where possible. The park includes a running track and playfield. The site is popular for intramural soccer and other

team sports. Site distance up and down the river is very good from the riverfront trail. The grey floodwall on the opposite bank diminishes the aesthetics of the area.

Improvements to Fourth Street allow a limited number of parking spaces for park visitors. The land uses on Fourth Street include residential and commercial uses, although the land is zoned Industrial. This area will be subject to development pressure as the riverfront corridor develops. Development criteria and a process to define appropriate use and design is recommended to protect and enhance riverfront amenities and allow the best value for the property owners. Removal of the industrial zoning or a change to *performance zoning* should be a priority. (Performance zoning would allow particular uses as long as the planned use does not have a negative impact on adjacent uses).

There is a small parking lot, owned by the City, located east of the Madison Street Bridge. Trail improvements and signing would encourage access here. The area next to the parking lot along the irrigation ditch is overgrown with noxious weeds. Some landscape management in this area could make it very attractive.

Kim Williams Park, an undeveloped section of the riverfront follows the abandoned Milwaukee Rail right-of-way into Hellgate Canyon.

The University of Montana owns the riverfront property near Madison Street and Jacob's Island Park. The University is not subject to local land use plans but has worked with the community in the creation of a trail and open space along the river.

## NORTHSHERE

### Van Buren to Madison

Van Buren pedestrian/bike bridge connects both shores and invites people to stand and watch the river and recreationists below. The historic character of the bridge adds to the enjoyment of the area.

Eastgate Plaza is outside the MRA District, thus outside the planning area boundary. However, it has a negative influence on the riverfront as its back faces the riverfront just across from Jacob's Island, a popular park for spring and summertime activities. Buffering with vegetation would help until the structure is redesigned or the area redeveloped.

Missoula Chamber of Commerce and Goldsmiths' Bed and Breakfast on East Front Street take advantage of the river views and have negotiated riverfront walkway easements. Other properties in the area should be evaluated for redevelopment potential. This area is the gateway to the riverfront from the Rattlesnake Valley and from Interstate 90. Entrance to the Van Buren Bridge needs beautification.

A trail from the riverfront to Greenough Park and further to the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area is part of a multi-agency and community effort. Connecting the trails with signs along street routes is recommended until easements and trails are developed more fully. While the Village Red Lion allows visitors to view the river close-up, because windows and deck face the river, it leaves no pedestrian passage along the river or creek. As properties are redeveloped, walkway easements should be acquired along the riverfront and Rattlesnake Creek to provide a continuous riverfront trail.

Improvements to the public easement and trail is recommended between Kiwanis Park and the Village Red Lion Complex on Front and Madison Street.

### Madison to Higgins

The residential district surrounding Parsons Street holds scenic and historic value as well as providing housing in the downtown area. Residential areas in the downtown offers variety to the urban landscape and adds a measure of comfort in the fact that the downtown does not become deserted at night. This makes the city more liveable.

Kiwanis Park has a picnic site, baseball field and tennis courts and a small parking area. The Front Street entrance to the park, which includes a walkway, should be acknowledged by maintaining the overgrown vegetation and by erecting a directional sign to the park and river. The river trail is situated on top of a flood levee and ends awkwardly in a residential area to the west. The chain link fence on the west boundary of the park is extremely unattractive.

Private ownership and the concrete floodwall are barriers to one of the last remaining links in the continuous trail system. A walkway easement continuing from Lavasseur Street into Kiwanis Park would be an alternative to the present street route around a very large apartment building. This route would require securing a walkway easement. The residential area is sandwiched between two public parks and a large hotel. This is an area where public values are so high that the City should meet with the landowners to try to negotiate an agreement for future preservation and/or development rights. There are a number of protection options available that could mutually benefit the City and the landowners. These methods are illustrated in the section entitled *Non-Regulatory Methods of Conservation*.

The Holiday Inn Parkside provides a good mix of private and public space in the riverfront. The curvilinear trails add variety to the trail system.

A stairway connects East Caras Park to Higgins Avenue Bridge. A public art piece called *Returnings* will add to the visitor experience here.



*"Returnings"* by Jeffrey Funk, Missoula public art and play sculpture. Kathi M. Olson, 1990

### Higgins to Orange

The future of the Wilma Theater is critical to the riverfront, both in its function as a cultural arts center and because of its historic architectural character. In any rehabilitation of the building, it is advisable to provide a more aesthetic stairway and improve or repair the facade on the river-side of the building.

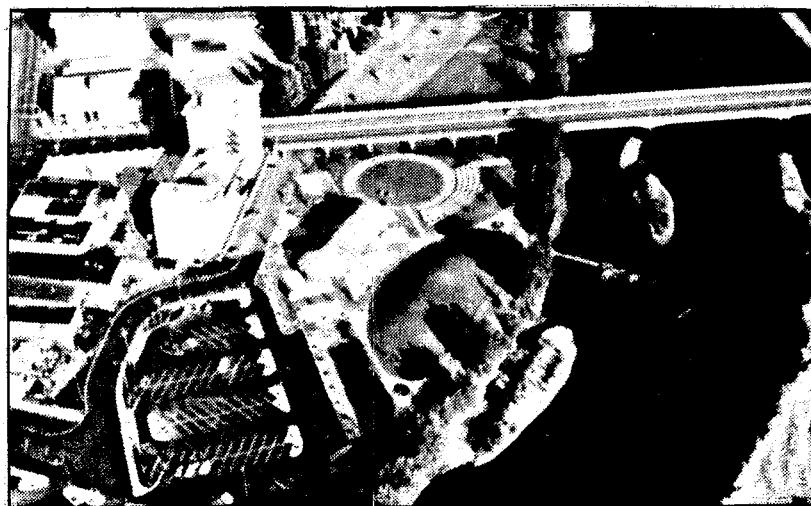
Caras Park functions like Missoula's Town Square. Landscaped as an amphitheater, it serves as a community gathering area for events such as the *Out-To-Lunch Program* sponsored by the Downtown Association. The *Out-To-Lunch* program offers food and entertainment in the park every Wednesday at noon during the summer months. In the past, Riverfront Theatre, financed by the University Drama Department, sponsored summertime theater productions under a brightly colored tent. The Downtown Association is purchasing a new tent and inviting performers, presenters and community groups to sponsor programs in Caras Park. The riverfront trail in Caras Park offers benches, grassy areas for picnicking and a view of the river. In front of the irrigation weir is a place people seem to go to get a closer look at the river. A viewing deck in this location would add to the enjoyment of this park.

Ryman Street, recently rebuilt concurrent with Caras Park improvements, connects Front Street and the downtown to the northshore walkway. It is an inviting entrance for pedestrians, bikes and cars.

Front Street buildings extending from Higgins Avenue to Orange Street continue to face their backs to the river. The Design Competition held in 1981 is an inspiration for redevelopment in this location. The designs included a promenade, business and retail uses that look out over the

riverfront. The undeveloped space currently used as leased parking is, for now, retaining open space near the river. However, such a large parking area is not the highest and best use of the area. The scale of redevelopment will effect the question of whether the parking can be incorporated within a new or redeveloped structure. In this area the City should encourage land use and design standards that will add to the value of the riverfront park. It is an opportunity for an investor to create an attractive environment for employees and customers and to invest and support public enjoyment of the riverfront.

A very formally landscaped trail follows the river from Bess Reed Park and dead ends at the Orange Street Bridge. A ramp or stairway should connect this trail with Orange Street near Clark Fork Riverfront Manor. The investment in this connection will have to consider the eventual widening of the Orange Street Bridge as well as the redevelopment of the Fox Theater Site. This area is a gateway to the riverfront from Interstate 90. Many visitors to the community get their first impression of the riverfront from this spot. A prominent directional sign should guide people to parking and access points into the riverfront parks.



Aerial view of Caras Park. Jeffrey Sutton

### Orange to Bitterroot Spur Line

The Fox Theatre site, west of Orange street, is owned by the City. The future of this property will determine the character of the the riverfront on the west end of the redevelopment district. The Western Montana Clinic, St. Patrick Hospital, and the Red Lion Motor Inn are near the riverfront. Creating a trail corridor for these uses, which have large numbers of employees and visitors, would provide convenient access to passive recreation while extending the trail system for the whole community. Where the river embankment is steep, the trail could connect with the sidewalks on Front Street.

There is much potential for redevelopment on the northshore west of the Missoula Redevelopment District and hopes for a future trail connection with Russell Street. The City has secured a walkway easement east of the Russell Street Bridge. Properties west of Russell Street are set back from the river banks and create an opportunity to secure easements and trails to areas west of the city that have higher wildlife values.

### Summary of Land Use

What makes a park setting attractive can vary a great deal among riverfront visitors. Common elements include accessibility, the beauty of the setting, how it is managed and integration of activities.

What makes a park setting beautiful is the combination of colors, textures, forms and lines created by the natural and man-made features. In many areas, man-made features have disturbed the natural setting or have been introduced inappropriately. In these areas, enhancement or rehabilitation is needed to increase the visual variety and harmony.



Stairway to the riverfront on Higgins Avenue. K. Timchak, 1989

The comments contained herein about McCormick and Kiwanis Parks are not all inclusive. These parks would benefit from a site analysis by interested citizens, landscape and park planners to outline specific actions to maximize the beauty and function of these settings. Accessibility to the riverfront can be addressed with immediate remedies and through the adoption of design standards for future developments.

All actions and capital improvements recommended in this chapter are outlined in the *Recommendations Chart* along with the responsible agency.

As the community plans improvements to the riverfront it is essential to recognize the unique features that make the riverfront attractive. The governing bodies decision may, in some situations, force a compromise between one goal and

another. For example, in providing access the community may compromise an open area that they would also like to preserve. These kind of conflicts can be recognized by determining which goals are more important than others. This will require continued public participation in riverfront issues. Maintaining a balance between community-wide interests and special interests is essential.

Creation of a truly beautiful and integrated riverfront park system will require collaboration between citizens, private landowners and local government. Solutions will require negotiations, compromise and investment. Ultimately, investment and protection of the riverfront will benefit the community directly and contribute to Missoula's image as a liveable city.

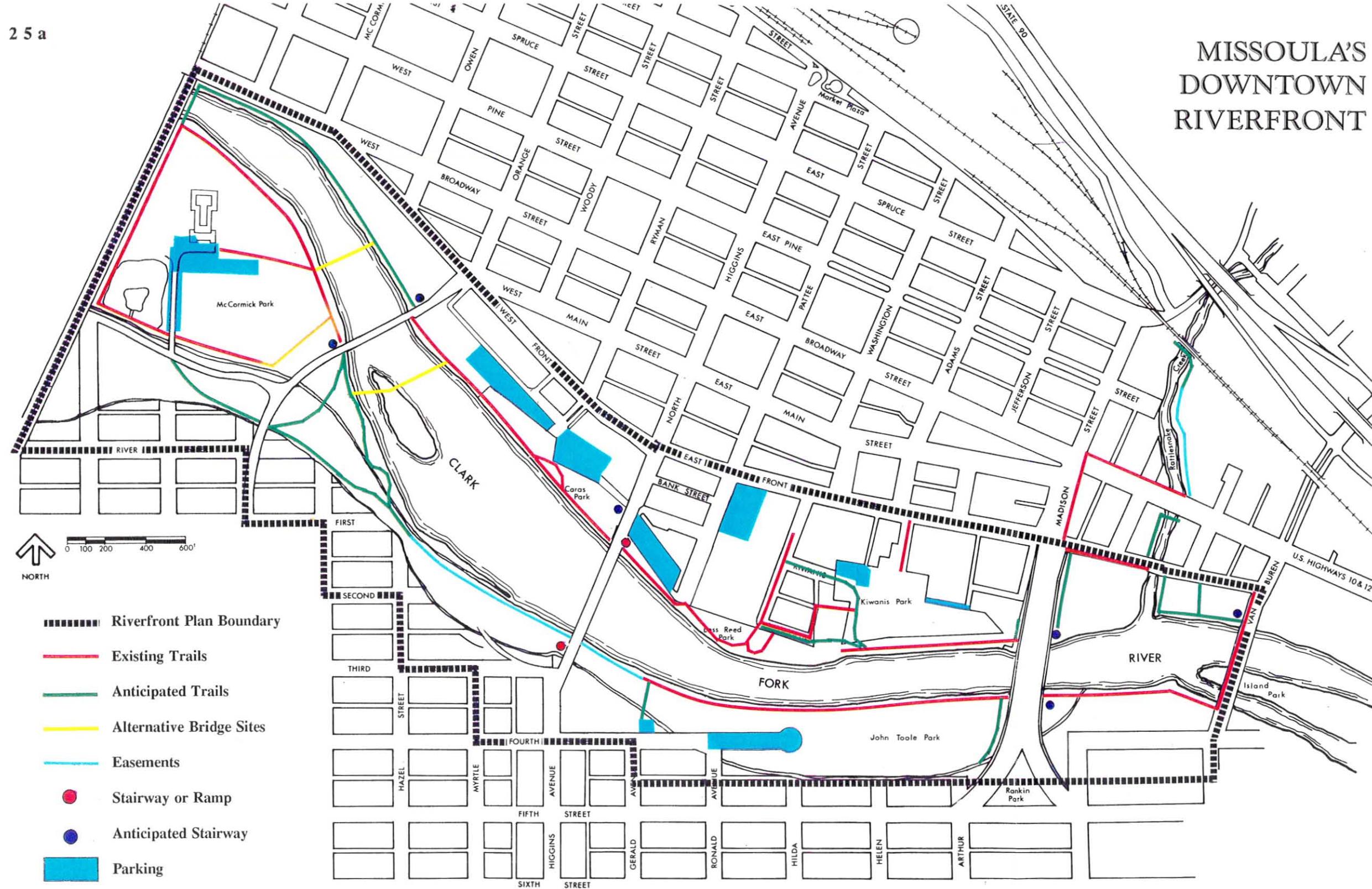
*The unique opportunity which is presently open to Missoulians, then, is the development of the riverfront area in a way that maintains this powerful natural phenomenon in as natural a form as possible while at the same time making it a more integral element in the urban area.*

*Richard Gotshalk, 1982*

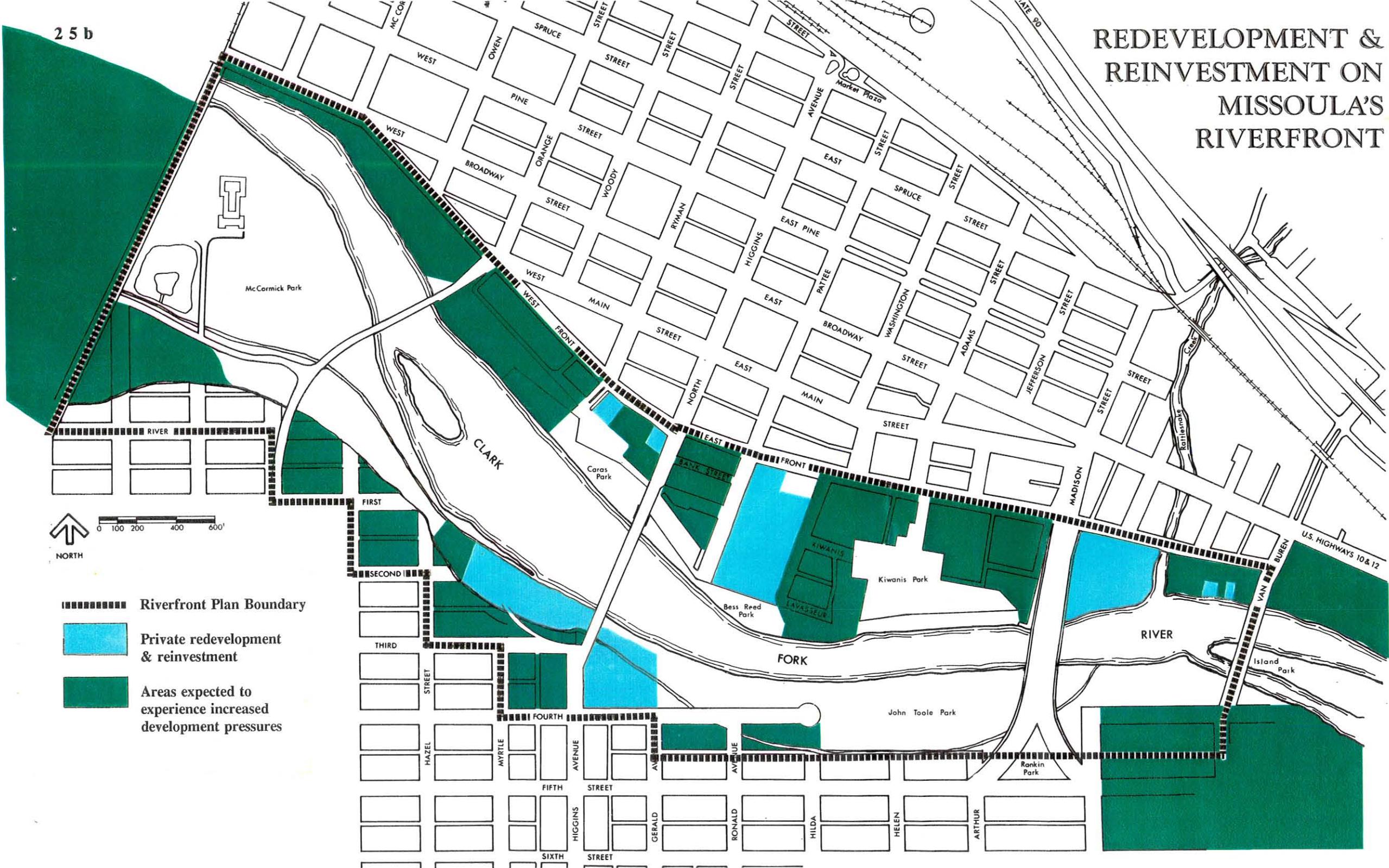


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# MISSOULA'S DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT



# REDEVELOPMENT & REINVESTMENT ON MISSOULA'S RIVERFRONT



## EXISTING ZONING

### The Northshore

The most predominant commercial zoning designation on the northshore is the *Central Business District* (CBD). This zoning permits a diversity of uses, ranging from motels to second-hand stores and taverns. Design of structures is not controlled nor is there any procedure for architectural review. Under this district there are:

- NO PARKING REQUIREMENTS
- NO EASEMENT REQUIREMENTS
- NO MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE
- A 12 STORY BUILDING HEIGHT LIMIT
- NO SETBACK REQUIREMENTS except a 50 foot setback from a river for a **conditional use**, but not a **permitted use**; a minimum side yard of 10 feet where abutting a residential zone, and a 20 feet minimum rear yard where abutting a residential zone. Minimum rear and side yard can be met by a distance one third of building height or given standard, whichever is greater.

Kiwanis and Bess Reed Park are designated *Open Space* zone (P-1). This zoning classification is intended to protect Missoula's park lands from uses other than those accessible to the entire community. Uses such as pathways, gardens, and playgrounds are allowed. Accessory buildings to these types of uses like gazebos, and shelters cannot exceed 25 feet in height. No design review of such structures is required.

A small *neighborhood commercial* ( BC ) designation exists east of Rattlesnake Creek to serve the local area. The ( BC ) zone limits retail sales to establishments under 2,500 square feet and encourages professional services (doctors, dentists etc.). Setback requirements vary from 0 - 20 feet, and the maximum permitted height is 45 feet. No architectural or design review is required.

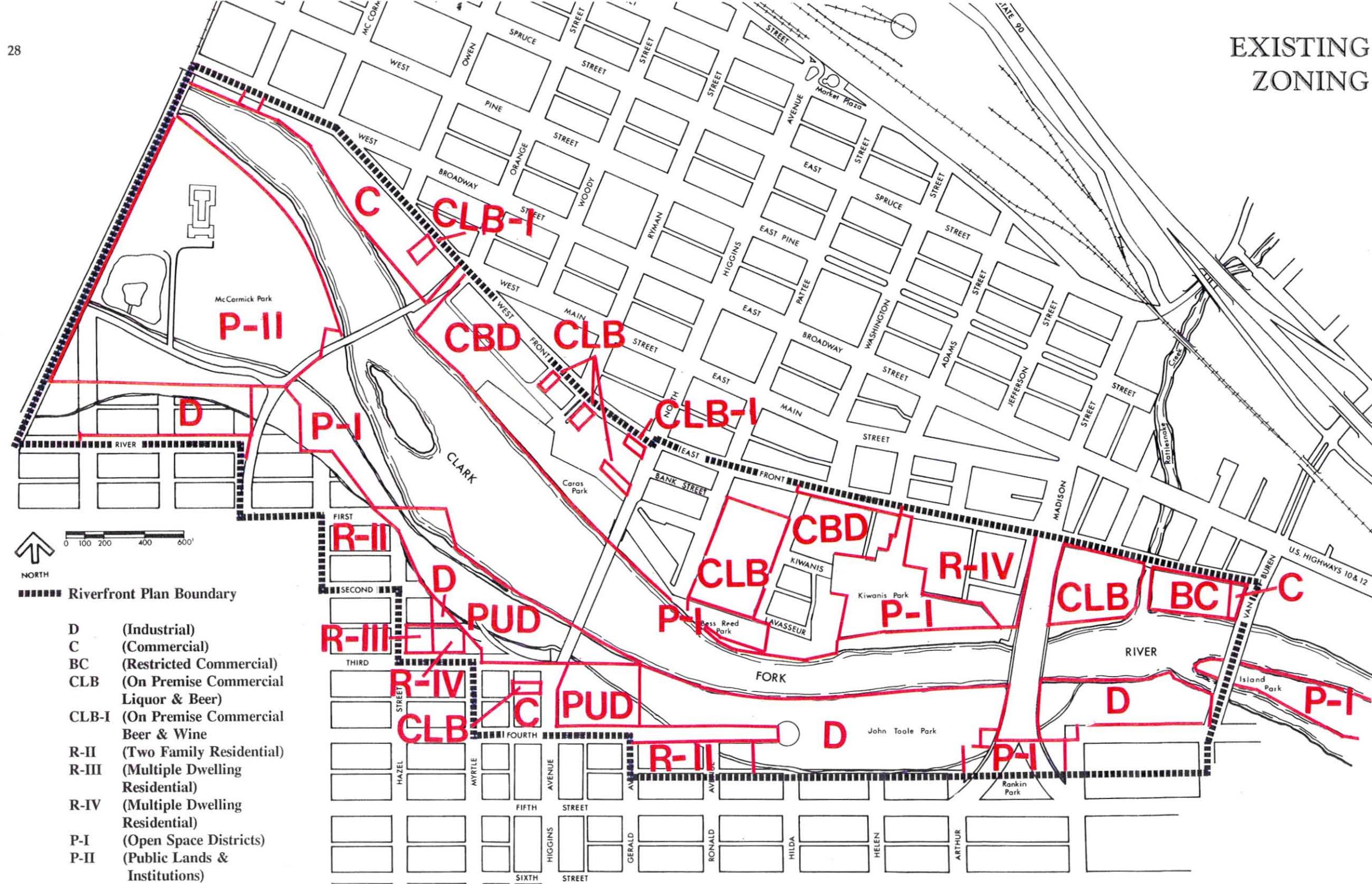
A *Multiple Dwelling Residential* ( R-IV ) zone is located west of the Madison Street Bridge. This zone permits residential and professional office use. The setback requirements vary from 0-20 feet, with a maximum height of 30 feet. No design review is required in this zone.

*Commercial zoning* ( C ) and ( C-1 ) west of Orange Street and east of Van Buren also permits a wide range of property development, encompassing retail and wholesale sales, bowling alleys, hospitals, automobile repair and other related uses. Setbacks in this district are minimal 0-20 feet and height limitations are not substantial, 125 feet in ( C ) zone and unlimited in the ( C-1 ) zone. As in the ( CBD ) area, architectural and design elements are not reviewed by staff or citizen boards.

### The Southshore

McCormick Park and the area near Van Buren Street is a *Public Lands and Institutions Zone* ( P-II ). Uses permitted in this district include schools, zoos, hospitals and related community facilities. Setbacks range from 10-30 feet and have a maximum permitted height of 100 feet. No architectural or design review is required in the ( P-II ) district.

## EXISTING ZONING



The area between Van Buren and Higgins is an *Industrial Zone* (D). This zone allows uses ranging from bulk oil storage tanks to food processing and lumber yards. Setbacks are 20 feet (front and rear), with a maximum height of 50 feet from any structure. No architectural or design review procedure is required in the (D) industrial district. John Toole park is currently zoned (D) *Industrial*.

The area east of the Orange Street Bridge, the new southshore park is zoned (P-I) *Open Space*, and (R-II) *Residential*. In the (P-I) zone accessory buildings such as kiosks or restrooms cannot exceed 25 feet in height. No design review of structures is required. (R-II) allows churches, schools and one-family dwellings. Because the City has purchased this area for parkland the zoning should be changed to an appropriate parkland zone.

Zoning designations on the southshore include 2 *Planned Unit Developments* (PUD's), Clark Fork Station and the Missoulian site. City Council review of the use, site development, and landscaping is a requirement of all (PUD) projects. Both PUD's include walkway easements along the river. The Clark Fork Station also contains a walkway easement down its driveway from Third Street.

### Summary of Existing Zoning

Current zoning in the riverfront does not:

- Consistently require access or easements for riverfront properties.
- Consider whether use, design, orientation or materials are consistent with the character of the riverfront.
- Address the environmental effects of the development upon the river.
- Have height limitations consistent with community expectations. The Open Space Committee and people attending the riverfront meetings said they would like to avoid a *canyonlike effect* on the river created by many buildings taking advantage of the 12-story limit in the (CBD).

When one considers the public comments and expectations for the aesthetics and function of the riverfront, the current zoning is inadequate for setting standards for use, architectural and site design, and building height, in the riverfront area.

## RECREATION

The spectrum of recreational activities possible in the riverfront is very broad. All of the activities listed here can be combined with visits to many other attractions like the Missoula Museum of the Arts, the library, shops, restaurants, and galleries, just a short walk from the riverfront. Among the activities possible now are:

walking	jogging-race walking
viewing art	ice fishing
fishing	boating
bird watching	swimming
picnicking	skateboarding
special events	star gazing
outdoor theater	musical entertainment
dinner and drinks	relaxing
ice skating	tennis
baseball	football
soccer	ultimate frisbee

While the *Land Use* chapter describes locations of these activities, this chapter will focus on recreational preferences, specifically **trail use and water recreation**, as well as recreational programs and facilities related to the riverfront.

### Recreational/Cultural Facilities

The community has through the years and in many different settings identified the need for community activity centers. Facility assessments have already been done and may need to be updated. The value of a *facility assessment* is that it identifies opportunities for shared facilities and helps to focus on what is affordable and appropriate.

Several public service, non-profit organizations are currently looking for a facility to house public programs. The Rocky Mountain Science Center is looking for a site to provide community educational programs. A cultural commission may be the outcome of a recent public meeting and planning process. Art and recreational interest groups identified the need to collaborate and promote Missoula's existing cultural resources and *bring art into more public places*. With its rich historical buildings and green spaces, the riverfront has been identified as Missoula's *arts and culture corridor*.

### Recreational Preferences

The 1986 Missoula County Recreation Needs Assessment Survey (Steven MacKay, Recreation Planner) shows high participation levels for walking and jogging and water sports county wide. A random group of 400 County residents responded to the survey. Participation was tabulated and showed the following:

94% walk	39% playground activity
80% picnic	30% nature study/ bird watching
65% bicycle	26% ice skating
75% swim	18% softball
73% fish	10% baseball
65% bicycle	4% tennis
42% jog	

### Water sports:

24% raft
10% canoe
2% kayak
5% in more than one type of water craft

Activities preferred by the elderly require easier access to recreation areas and nature trails. Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley have been identified as a popular retirement areas. Missoula's population characteristics parallel the national trend toward longer life spans and a larger elderly population. We need to consider this population group in recreational facilities planning.

### Water recreation

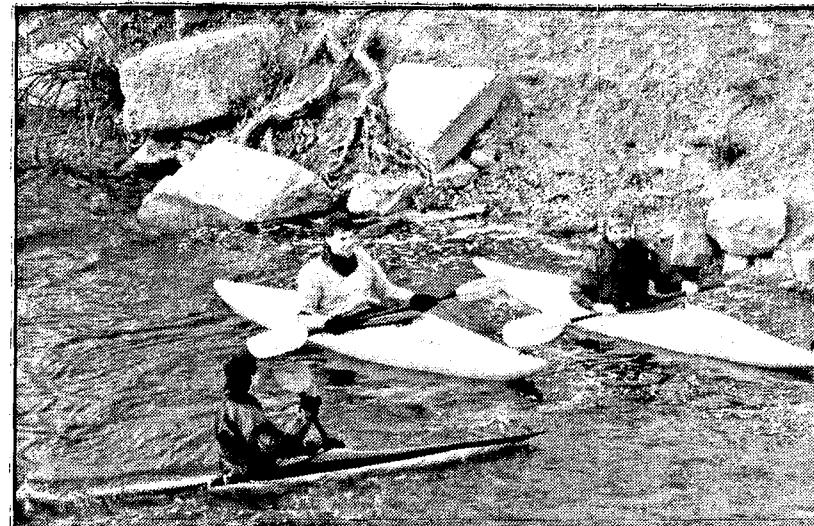
#### Non-Motorized Water Craft

In 1987 a group of citizens called *River Downtown* met to discuss the recreational potential of the river. They are a broad based committee of approximately 20 members. The group outlined short and long range issues and identified features that would create an aquatic park. They reported the findings of a Colorado firm concerning the estimated costs of modifying the weir and creating play spots for tubers and boaters. They met with City officials and expressed interest in the development of an overall plan to address river recreational issues.

While some people want a quiet atmosphere in the river downtown, others share an interest in watching non-motorized boats on the river. One meeting participant said:

*In Sandpoint, Idaho shoreline visitors can watch the sailboats. Missoula's shoreline visitors could enjoy watching canoeists, rafters and kayakers on the river but there are some obstacles that need to be overcome.*

In addition to developing put-ins and take-outs for boaters on a *casual use basis*, there is an interest in sponsoring events in the downtown riverfront. The Blackfoot Race held near



Kayakers on the Clark Fork River near Van Buren Bridge. K. Timchak, 1990

Memorial Day each spring begins in the Blackfoot River and ends at McCormick Park. Participation ranges from 50-100 boats and draws approximately 200-300 spectators. Race planners have speculated that if more races were held later in the season it would draw more participants and spectators. This kind of activity has the potential to draw more people into the community for participation in other planned activities. The benefit of promoting these kinds of races is to create an exciting recreational event as well as draw tourism dollars into Missoula. Kayakers have been setting up gates in the river south of Jacob's Island near the University of Montana.

Kayakers have an event circuit. Most of the race locations are in fairly remote locations like the Wenatchee White Water Rodeo, where the national kayak championships are held. This event attracts 150 competitors and results in 300-500 spectators. Payette, Idaho is another location for a national kayaking event which has a similar draw. Local water recreationists are interested in developing a kayaking course of *slalom and surf waves* in the riverfront downtown. Missoula's riverfront, with its availability of services and parks is an ideal

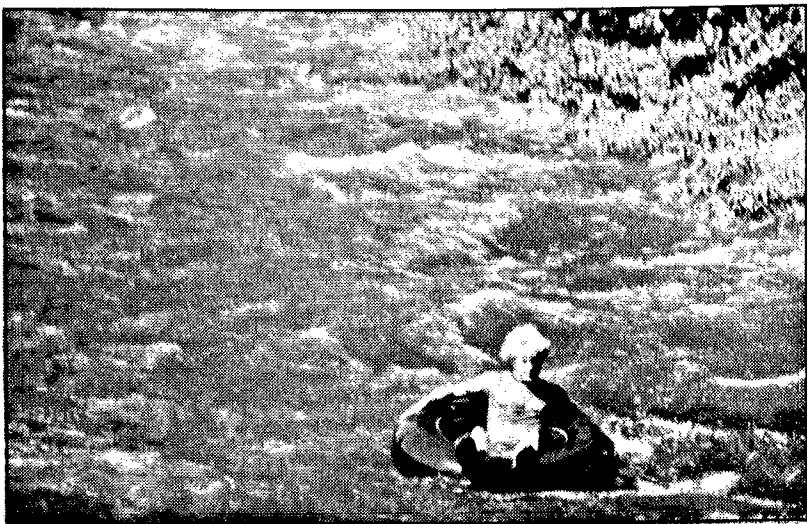
location for drawing spectators to planned events. Some have expressed a concern about the impact of these activities upon the tranquil mood of the riverfront. However, these activities would be an occasional use not a daily use. The promoters of these activities should seek public input to help minimize concerns about the potential conflicts. Technical aspects of creating these kinds of water features are discussed in the chapter on *River Mechanics*.

#### Motorized Water Craft

The Clark Fork River is classified commercially navigable from DeerLodge, Montana, to the Idaho State line, consequently motorized water craft are allowed. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission has the authority to regulate boating activities. They have a review procedure for activities that pose problems in the waterways.

In 1981, an investor proposed building a dock near the Milwaukee Station to originate jet boat tours in the Clark Fork. Public opinion was divided. The Citizen Advisory Committee on Open Space initiated a resolution against power boats on the river siting it was noisy, dangerous and polluting. The City however does not have any authority over this activity. After some public debate, the investor withdrew the proposal.

Jet skiers use the Clark Fork River downtown in the high water months of spring and early summer. Missoula City Council dealt with this issue in the summer 1989 because of citizen complaints. As yet they have not initiated any review by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. People attending meetings on the riverfront felt motorized water sports were inappropriate for the downtown riverfront.



*Water should be accessible, touchable, splashable.*

*William H. White, 1980*

## Fishing

Missoula is a hub to which many people are drawn to plan fishing trips on the Blackfoot River, Rock Creek, Flathead River and favorite sections of the Clark Fork River. Missoula is one of a handful of cities in the northwest where you can catch rainbow trout in the urban center. How Missoula shapes the character of our riverfront reflects how the community feels about the area. If we develop and maintain our fisheries in the Clark Fork River downtown we can reinforce the positive image that people have for the whole area.

The most popular areas for fishing include the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek, near the Higgins Street Bridge and along the southshore. Children fish for stocked fish in McCormick Pond. Improving the water circulation in the pond was proposed and supported by the City Parks and Recreation Department, Orchard Homes Irrigation Company, the City Engineer and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

What is it that draws fly fisherman to the riverfront near Rattlesnake Creek?

*Few people understand that trout sustain themselves on aquatic insects that hatch from the water. Most think they take flies that fall into the water in the summer. Aquatic species that lay their eggs in the river and pass their juvenile stages living under water and hatch from the water itself are the principal diet of the fish. The calendar of flyhatches has a rhythm that repeats itself year after year. Fly hatches cause selective feeding, and the fish cannot be fooled without a workable imitation of the flies they are taking. Understanding these intricate puzzles is the key to the chess-playing skills involved in fishing difficult trout.* (Ernest Schwiebert, *A Year of Fishing Secrets*)

The challenge of trout fishing and the outdoor experience itself, draws people to this sport. Knowing that the Clark Fork is able to sustain these ancient ecological cycles is part of what makes the sight of a fisherman in the riverfront downtown so special.

The river's aquatic diversity could be the subject of interpretive classes or workshops for adults and children. The University Biology Department, local schools and sporting goods stores could promote the development of educational and recreational experiences for children and adults.

Fishing adds to the economic value of the region.

*In the past, the primary indicator of the economic value of fish and wildlife in Montana has been dollars spent by sportsmen. Although these expenditures are important to local and state economies, they do not reflect the total recreational value of the resource that includes the personal benefits one receives from fishing.* (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1988).

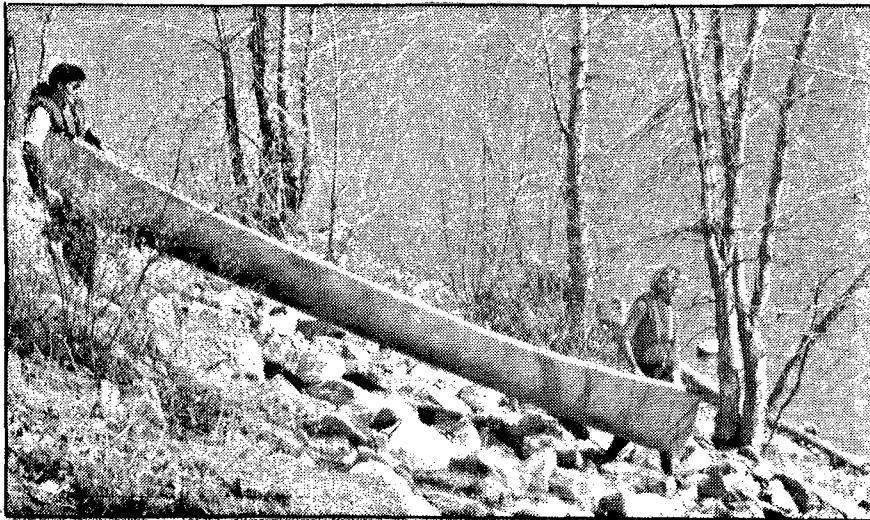
In 1985, The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, initiated a two-year study to document the recreation value of sport fishing in Montana.

*The study developed an estimate of how much additional amount recreationists would be willing to pay over and above their actual travel costs to have access to a particular site for fishing. Survey data was used to analyze fishing pressure, net economic values and actual expenditures by fisherman on the major fishing streams and lakes in Montana. The net economic value for the Clark Fork was documented. The value per day multiplied by*

*fishing pressure provides estimated annual site value. At \$30.27 value/day on the Middle Clark Fork (Milltown Dam to the Flathead River) multiplied by 30,414 angler days (visits) per year the site value is equal to \$921,000. (John Duffield, 1987)*

A community in Colorado has created an aquarium view of a creek as an attraction at a creekside hotel. The local county matched funds with private and corporate donations to build the wall and observation window to view the underwater environment of a trout stream. Can Missoula create an attraction like this, that is both educational and fun?

Community support of fisheries enhancement programs will contribute to our recreational opportunities and to our outdoor recreation image.



Access for water recreationists can be improved by creating flood resistant put in spots near parking areas. K. Timchak, 1990

### Trails Project

*Missoula Trails Project* is a cooperative effort initiated by Lolo National Forest with co-sponsorship from Five Valleys Chapter of Audobon Society, Missoula Chamber of Commerce/Convention and Visitors Bureau and Missoula County. Their goal is to focus on the existing trails as a community asset and build upon the existing network of trails. *The Trails Project* goals are:

- Provide brochures about trails and recreation areas (including interpretive signing and pamphlets on natural and cultural features).
- Improve trails and link existing trails.
- Form partnerships to accomplish goals and assist in funding. (Kate Chumrau, 1989)

The riverfront trails are at the heart of Missoula's trail network. Supporting programs that link community trails and recreational opportunities will meet a need identified by recreation surveys and contribute to the quality of life in Missoula.



Trails and public access to the downtown riverfront is treasured by many community residents. K. Timchak, 1990

## Bicycling

*Bicycling Magazine*, in October 1988, ranked Missoula number two among the 10 Best Cycling Cities in the U. S. and Canada. Missoula is home to Bikecentennial, the nation's largest recreational cycling organization. The article reported that over one half Missoula's 60,000 residents own a bicycle. Missoula's Bicycle Program has focused on bicycle parking and education, safer street routes and not so much on separate bike paths. Hundreds of bicycle tourists pass through Missoula each summer on TransAmerica Bicycle Trail contributing to Missoula's image as an outdoor recreation center.

Although many people bicycle along the riverfront trails, most of the trails are too narrow to handle high volumes of pedestrians and bikes. Access for bikes into the the riverfront is poor. Because of the many obstacles, ditches and steep slopes and lack of connections between the riverfront and other destinations it can be surmised that little commuter use occurs along the river.

Approximately 1/4 of Missoula's population lives within 1 mile of the riverfront, and this population is largely the young adult age group (16-44, 1980 Census data). This is the age group most likely to use a bicycle for commuter as well as recreational purposes.

Missoulians, in public meetings, have identified the conflicts that do and will occur between pedestrians and bicyclists. In the planning of the Southshore Park the prevailing sentiment was to create trails attractive for the pedestrian ( i.e. curvilinear trails) near the river and more direct trails on the old railroad right of way for bikes.

If the City wishes to encourage bike use in the riverfront it needs to bring many of the trails up to safety standards promoted by the Federal Highway Administration. These standards prescribe widths, surfacing, site distance, and intersections. The City would also need to make better connections between the riverfront and surrounding roads and bridges.

The City should acquire easements and plan future trail widths sufficient to handle both bikes and pedestrians. Proper trail design, signing (such as requesting people to yield to the right) can also reduce conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians.



Riverfront trails could accomodate bikes and pedestrians if designed and installed properly. *Zoe Mohesky, 1990*

## Summary of Recreation

Based on public comment, public surveys and existing programs, the following recommendations are offered to continue development of riverfront recreational opportunities.

- Support development and enhancement of riverfront trails.
- Promote more passive recreational experiences.
- Remove barriers to water recreation opportunities.
- Improve fisheries in the river downtown.
- Make the riverfront the center for art and cultural opportunities.
- Consider the appropriateness of proposed activities in the riverfront and mitigate the conflicts that may arise between recreational uses and adjacent land uses.

The riverfront is a recreational resource primarily because it is a public use area that is both beautiful and accessible. Presently it is a combination of many active parks and passive recreational trails. The public expressed a desire for more passive recreational experiences like walking, viewing areas, and picnicking. There is a desire to improve visual and physical access and to promote water recreation. Missoulians are concerned about the potential conflicts between recreationists such as bikes and pedestrians, motorized and non-motorized water craft, between active recreational activities and passive ones.

The recommendations contained herein should not be viewed as the end of the planning process. The planning process requires continued public involvement to guide riverfront development. Many communities are encouraging only activities which are *water related* in their waterfront areas. In a very long range planning context, Missoula may want to examine whether active recreational areas should be continued in the riverfront locations. Further, Missoula recreational planners may wish to identify opportunities for active recreation outside the river corridor yet accessible to the urban population and promote more passive recreational experiences in the riverfront.

## THE BRIDGES

If Missoula wants to improve the pedestrian experience in the riverfront, particularly the connections between the north and southshores, one needs to evaluate the pedestrian and biking experiences on the bridges.

Van Buren is ideal as it combines an historic bridge design and a width that accommodates bikes and pedestrians. The bridge connects the University, Kim Williams Trail, southshore neighborhood, and Jacob's Island Park and the more urban service area on the northshore. The southshore ramps are pleasantly landscaped.

Madison Street Bridge, because of its high profile and very low side rails is very uncomfortable for pedestrians. Cyclists and pedestrians have much conflict with traffic movement, because of the high traffic counts and the southshore lanes turning from Madison to Fifth Street. This is a major bike route connecting many off-campus University students on the northshore with the University of Montana Campus.

Higgins Avenue Bridge with its four vehicular lanes, separates the sidewalk from the traffic lanes, yet the sidewalk is very narrow. Noise and proximity to traffic detracts from this passage over the river.

Orange Street Bridge is the least desirable pedestrian and bike experience of the downtown bridges. Because it carries only two lanes of traffic and curbs are very high, bicyclists often ride on the sidewalk. Hand rails are very low, making it uncomfortable for pedestrians too.

The idea of a separate pedestrian/bike bridge, which came from the 1981 Riverfront Design Competition was reintroduced at public meetings about the riverfront. While

many people have been in favor of a separate pedestrian/bike bridge, the location has been debated. There is also a question of whether the new bridge would compete with the City's ability to afford landscaping in the new southshore park and other improvements in the riverfront.

The decision about the bridge and its location, has been debated at public meetings. The benefits of a separate pedestrian/bike bridge near the riverfront parks are:

- » The bridge would promote access from the northshore trail to the southshore trail. It provides a west end crossing for the riverfront park system downtown, which parallels Van Buren Pedestrain/Bike Bridge, the east end crossing.
- » If the bridge were an appropriate width, it would provide a safer route for bicyclists until reconstruction of the Orange Street Bridge.
- » The bridge would create a viewing area over the river which is an attraction in itself.

The bridge west of Orange Street is favored by some bike commuters, southshore neighborhood residents and others who would like to preserve the open area between Orange and Higgins Avenue and limit direct access to the new southshore park. Proponents of this site view the east side bridge as a visual intrusion in the riverfront. They also anticipate that such direct access will be detrimental to the new southshore natural park. The benefit of the west side bridge is that it would allow children living on the northshore to access McCormick swimming pool in the summer months.

The northshore access to the west side bridge would be contingent upon the development of the Fox Theatre site. Proponents of this site would also like to lengthen the riverfront walking loop.

A pedestrian/bike bridge east of Orange Street would encourage community and visitor use as it is located closer to the downtown shopping area. The bridge site is near existing public trails and public parking in Caras Park. Proponents of this site view the bridge as an attraction and feel detrimental impacts sited by opponents can be minimized by design of the bridge and the southshore park.

The report *Riverfront Priorities: Southshore Park*, outlined the varied public perceptions about a proposed pedestrian/bike bridge and the alternative locations. The report states that the west side bridge was the most popular alternative at the 3rd in a series of 3 public meetings. It also stated that the east side bridge would be more inviting to both residents and visitors since it would be located closer to the downtown shopping district and existing public parking. The report's recommendations were adopted by the Missoula Redevelopment Board.

The Missoula Redevelopment Board hired an architectural firm to draw up a site plan and cost estimates for the park and bridge. The architects and MRA staff met with the public to receive comments. The Missoula Redevelopment Board has recommended to City Council to allow the expenditure for the new southshore park and a separate pedestrian/bike bridge in a location east of Orange Street. The City Council will make the final decision on these expenditures after the Missoula Redevelopment Agency authorizes use of tax increment funds for this purpose.

## Summary

Missoula's riverfront trails are well below the bridges and street level of adjacent areas. If the trails are to be touted as a recreational amenity, better access from the bridges and adjacent areas needs to be accomplished. Creating short and long walking loops and connecting the shores on the level of the river trails will invite more use of river trails and parks.

The impact of another bridge upon the aesthetics of the riverfront is a matter of personal taste. The value of the bridge is that it will encourage pedestrian access to the downtown, to passive recreational trails and parks, and to the neighborhoods, and this in turn will boost Missoula's image as a *Riverfront City*.

*Bike/Pedestrian Bridge- Adequate width is critical. While it is true a wider bridge will be more expensive, a narrow bridge won't serve the need. How much at Orange Street? ....Between 14-18 but you might get away with 12 feet—but no narrower. Cyclists will shy 2 feet off a static vertical obstruction (railing) so an 8 foot bridge would end up with an effective width of 4 feet...with an 8 foot width the bridge would be seriously substandard.*

*Connecting paths should be at least 12 feet wide. If the bridge is to connect with the path on the northside of the river the existing trail should be realigned....it is too narrow and too close to the river for safe bicycle traffic to share with pedestrians. Connections are critical if the bridge is to serve any utilitarian purpose. Typically, a bike path's safety rests on the safety of its connections.*

*John Williams, Bikecentennial, 1990*

## VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

### Desired Character of the Riverfront

In public meetings about the riverfront, people acknowledged the difference between the more urban northshore and the less developed southshore. In regard to the southshore, there were those who said they wanted a *people park* and those who wanted a *natural undeveloped place*. In describing what they wanted in the parks, the spectrum was not too diverse. Most agreed that passive recreational trails and parks were needed and that Missoula had plenty of active recreational parks in the riverfront. There was a desire to view more wildlife and natural vegetation and a desire to add flowering shrubs and conifer trees for color in all seasons. Some people expressed interest in having an educational area planted with edible plants used by Native Americans and some interpretive signing.

The cottonwood trees along the banks are part of the character of the riverfront. Cutting the cottonwood trees on the riverbank is an issue that requires further explanation. Mature trees that fall into the river destroy the flood control levees. The Missoula Parks Department has an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers to selectively thin the cottonwood trees to maintain the integrity of the the flood levees. In the case of a flood, Missoula would remain eligible for reconstruction of the flood levees financed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

### Existing Vegetation

Much of the native vegetation has been replaced in the riverfront corridor by kentucky bluegrass (turf) and ornamental trees. A few exceptions are John Toole Park, where cottonwoods and willows line the banks, and some shoreline species of grasses and shrubs found in pockets of

undeveloped land in the floodway. The riverfront is largely without evergreen trees. Disturbed areas have been invaded by cheatgrass, quackgrass, kentucky bluegrass, knapweed, yarrow, lamb's quarters, goatsbeard and wild mustard.

Tamara Lehuta, a landscape consultant retained to work on the development of the southshore park with Stan Zimmet and Associates inventoried existing plant materials and found:

Box Elder	Chokecherry
Currant	Honeysuckle (non-native)
Sandbar Willow	Black Cottonwood
Snowberry	Yarrow (non-native)

According to Paul Hansen, Research Riparian Ecologist, other plants typically found in river areas of western Montana are:

Rocky Mountain Juniper	Thin Leaf Alder
Red Osier	Dogwood
Water Birch	Douglas Fir

### Existing Wildlife

John Firebaugh, of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department toured the riverfront and reported that the area currently supports an occasional beaver, great blue heron, common merganzer and various songbirds. Dick Hutto, Professor of Zoology of the University of Montana, provided information on existing wildlife and recommendations for enhancing wildlife viewing in the riverfront corridor. Wildlife includes:

Beaver	Fox Squirrels
Garter Snakes	Great Blue Heron
Mallard	Common Goldeneye
Common Merganzer	Painted Turtles
Spotted Sandpiper	Belted Kingfisher
Woodpeckers	Eastern Kingbirds
Cliff Swallows	

*Many small songbird species use the river already, but the viewing opportunities are limited because the vegetation is too sparse. Seed eaters of various sorts (House Finch, Cassin's Finch, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, Chickadees, etc.) could be encouraged through artificial means (e.g. feeders). It would take some coordination with volunteer groups to keep feeders stocked, but feeders placed near hedge rows and shrubs would provide lots of wildlife viewing and entertainment. (Dick Hutto)*

The in-river wildlife is described in the *Water Quality* chapter under *Fisheries*.

#### **Enhancement**

Several individuals and groups provided information about the kinds of vegetation that would enhance the riverfront. These comments are highlighted below.

Susan Reel, of the Audubon Society's local chapter, offered comments on the southshore park.

*We feel that the most critical aspect of the plan is the design and composition of the vegetative landscape.... To enhance the area's use by birds, butterflies and possibly small mammals, it is essential that the park's landscape provide food and cover for wildlife...*

*We suggest clusters of vegetation, the use of native-berry producing shrubs such as serviceberry, mountain ash, chokecherry, and honeysuckle. Along with food, birds also need vegetative cover... conifer trees such as juniper, ponderosa pine and douglas fir are sources of good year round cover.*

*We suggest some raised beds of native plants that can be used for educational purposes, a mini-arboretum. We think community groups would help maintain these gardens. 'Snags' should be left standing, for hole nesters like the mergansers.*

Tamara Lehuta, Landscape Designer, noted how various riparian native species would meet design considerations that people proposed in the public meetings. Those considerations included:

- Attractive vegetation
- Drought resistant species
- Provide food or cover for wildlife
- Native species planted to demonstrate
  - succession of natural communities;
  - characteristic topographical locations
  - species found in association with each other in the landscape
- Use of species by Native Americans
- Plants which are edible and have herbal uses

John Pierce of the Clark Fork Chapter of the Native Plant Society provided a recommended planting list subdivided into five distinct assemblages. For example, plants associated with ponderosa pine were distinguished from the plants associated with douglas fir, aspen, juniper, and lodgepole pine.

David Crabtree, Missoula County Horticulturist, offered some management advice, specifically a sequence of seasonal landscape management needed to establish native meadow in

the riverfront. He emphasizes the importance of an initial management period to assure establishment of desired species, without the use of herbicides.

The complete plant list and their classifications are contained in a file with the County Extension Office. These plant lists are valuable tools which can be used in planning vegetation in other areas of the riverfront where this naturalistic setting is desired.

When people refer to natural or near native landscape, they may be referring to a range of vegetation from a meadow type planting to more complex combinations of shrub and tree assemblages. This range of definitions for *natural areas* is important to recognize when considering cost of installation and management.

The public desire to develop natural character in John Toole Park, in the new southshore park and along the riverfront trails poses a new vegetation management situation. Specifically, is it more expensive and difficult to install and manage a natural area?

Compared to planting turf, the installation costs may be comparable depending upon what is planted and the sequence of care required to establish the natural landscape. Another variable is whether the species that have been chosen, require irrigation and if the soil needs to be reconditioned. There may be some weed problems in the first few years, and more supervision and labor may be required

for the naturally landscaped park. Long term maintenance costs should be much lower for a properly designed and installed natural landscape. This is a result of lower (or no supplemental) water requirements, fewer insect and disease problems and less mowing and pruning costs. This is the unanimous opinion of the many landscape professionals that were consulted about this issue including: Rud Jennings, Landscape Associates, David Crabtree, Missoula County Horticulturist, Ken Ball, Denver Water Board, Tamara Lehuta, Landscape Designer, Jill Thornton, Landscape Planner, Pat Burke, Bitterroot Native Growers.

Because the community has a strong desire to establish some natural landscapes in the riverfront corridor downtown, Missoula needs to commit funds for installation and management. Partnerships with community groups may be another method for accomplishing these goals. Many groups have offered their help in establishing this kind of vegetation, including the Audubon Society, Native Plant Society, Montana Riparian Association, Missoula County Extension Service, and the Southshore Neighborhood.

#### Summary of Vegetation and Wildlife

If the character of passive recreational areas of the riverfront downtown is to be enhanced with natural and, to the extent possible, native plants and trees, Missoula needs to make a commitment to a funding and management program that will ensure proper installation and establishment of these areas.

## WATER QUALITY

The quality of the Clark Fork River is essential to community health, recreation and our local economy. The riverfront downtown is affected by activities and conditions in the upper Clark Fork and its tributaries. The river is cleaner than decades past but our fishery is considered far below the carrying capacity of the river. Public awareness of the river's quality will affect water quality management programs and ultimately the value of the riverfront downtown. The following section summarizes water quality issues of the area.

The rich natural resource base in the Clark Fork Basin supports economic activities that are important to the state and local economy. Prior to pollution abatement programs of the 1950's, the river was used as a dump for mining, municipal and industrial waste. Agriculture, forestry activities and hydroelectric projects contributed to poor water quality. Federal water pollution control legislation requiring wastewater treatment has brought the Clark Fork back to a fairly healthy state.

Water quality of the Clark Fork is an extremely complex problem. Federal programs, state agencies, the local health department and a citizen coalition all play a role in balancing competing interests and use of the river. Effective management is contingent upon public opinion, which determines the amount political leverage and subsequent public dollars that are available for managing the river.

The surface water quality is important to Missoula's health because the Clark Fork provides 90% of the total recharge to the Missoula aquifer. That aquifer is the sole source of drinking water for 60,000 residents.

Some local initiatives have had a positive impact on water quality in Missoula. The Clark Fork Coalition, a citizen group formed in response to public opinion about renewing a discharge permit of a local paper mill, has improved communication between industry, government and citizens. They have become a model for citizen participation in Super Fund clean-up sites. They also initiated a ban on phosphates in the Clark Fork Basin.

*The City of Missoula enacted a phosphate detergent ban in November, 1988, to meet new permit conditions that limit phosphorus discharges. As a result, phosphorus discharges have been reduced by 39% for the area. (Currents, October 1989, Clark Fork Coalition)*

The Missoula City-County Health Department petitioned the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to designate groundwater resources in Missoula-Huson area as a principal source of drinking water. The petition states:

*Although the water quality over most of the study area is satisfactory for domestic use, widespread potential exists for degradation. Potential sources of direct contamination include; septic systems, industrial waste ponds, several historical and one active municipal waste landfill(s), underground fuel and chemical storage tanks, and high pressure petroleum pipelines. Two major transportation routes, the Burlington Northern Railroad and Interstate 90, run parallel to each other bisecting the northern boundary of the aquifer. This Sole Source Aquifer Determination may provide Missoula with financial and technical assistance needed to protect the water supply. (Federal Register, June 7, 1989)*

## Fisheries

The Clark Fork originates at the confluence of Silver Bow and Warm Springs Creeks in the Deer Lodge Valley of west Central Montana. The fisheries of the Clark Fork are described here in an excerpt from the Clark Fork Basin Project.

*The fisheries in the Clark Fork has passed through many stages in the past 140 years. Beginning as a varied and productive fishery: it was devastated by human activities in the watershed. Now it is a slowly recovering system.*

*Indian historians referred to the significance of trout migrations in the Clark Fork. Salish Indians used weirs to catch migrating fish in side streams of the Clark Fork. The Salish fished for migratory bull trout near Missoula. In fact, the Salish name for the Missoula, Milltown and Butte areas refers to "bull trout" that were caught there.*

*The bulk of the sports fishery in Middle Clark Fork (Milltown Dam to Flathead River) is provided by rainbow trout along with a few brown, bull and westslope cutthroat trout. Mountain whitefish are an important winter sport fishery. While the Clark Fork supports an average of 200-400 catchable trout per mile, other large trout rivers in Montana support 2,000-3,000 or more catchable trout per mile.*

*In recent years the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP) has initiated several investigations to determine why the Clark Fork fishery is poor relative to other rivers of comparable size, such as the Blackfoot River. Some of these factors are readily recognized, while others are less obvious and require additional investigation. (Howard Johnson, Clark Fork Basin Project)*

The principal threat to local fisheries is from metal accumulations that are released during dam drawdowns, siltation and nutrient enrichment from agriculture and community non-point sources, de-watering from irrigation and channelization.

The Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (DHES) classifies Montana rivers and streams for purpose of monitoring and the application of pollution abatement programs.

*Clark Fork River is rated as a Class II stream. For comparison sake, the Blackfoot River and Rock Creek are classified as Class I. (Bruce Bugbee, Inventory of Conservation Resources)*

Water quality is a valuable resource for outdoor recreation, not only for water sports like fishing and boating, but for casual visits by the valley's residents. This streamside zone is characterized by high species diversity and high productivity. The recreation chapter discusses the personal value and the economic values associated with fishing.

### Summary of Water Quality

The public needs to be aware of the relationship between land use and water quality because managing the quality of the river is critical to maintaining what we value in the downtown riverfront and our investments there.

*The quality of our water puts us face to face with the quality of our life. Whatever we do to water we do to ourselves.*

*William Everson, Poet*

## IRRIGATION FACILITIES

The irrigation ditches have been a part of the riverfront since the 1880's. Irrigation was an important component of Missoula's early agricultural economy. Two irrigation ditches are located in the riverfront planning area. Missoula Irrigation Company has a ditch and outflow facility west of Van Buren Street and Orchard Homes Irrigation Company has a ditch and outflow facility west of Higgins Street Bridge. The water rights of these two companies are well established.

What role does irrigation play today in Missoula's economy? How many people are served by the irrigation ditches? Is the water used for commercial operations or primarily backyard gardening and lawns? To what extent do these facilities conflict with public use of the riverfront area? As recreation is becoming a more important part of our local economy, should Missoula reexamine its priorities and deal with the issue of public safety and aesthetics of the irrigation facilities in the riverfront? These are the kinds of questions that have been posed as people begin anticipate more public use of the riverfront.

A negotiation process between appropriate agencies and the irrigation interests would be the best way to answer these questions and choose actions that will benefit the community while preserving the rights of interested parties.

As more people will be invited to use the riverfront parks and trails, there is an increased risk of children drowning in the open irrigation ditches on the southside of the river. Children are often attracted to a ditch because it appears less dangerous than the river. However the ditches are fairly deep and swift flowing and can be dangerous to children.

The weir west of Higgins Avenue is a hazard and an obstruction to the development of water recreation in Missoula. A group of citizens interested in the recreational enjoyment and potential of the river downtown have been examining ways to make the river more accessible and safe. A one-day short course on river mechanics, held in Missoula this summer provided a perspective on these issues. The mechanics of removing or modifying the weir is presented in the chapter on *River Mechanics*.

Reducing or eliminating these hazards should be accomplished through a joint resolution with interested parties. Several alternatives exist. The following list of alternatives is offered for discussion and is not meant to be all inclusive.

- The irrigation companies could investigate the possibility of combining the point of diversion to reduce the number of ditches in the riverfront.
- The ditches could be put in culverts, as well as being screened and covered in the riverfront.
- The irrigators could convert to wells to acquire water for irrigation. The City and State may consider financing this conversion since it would promote public safety in the riverfront parks.
- Design of trails with vegetation, fencing and signs in the riverfront could promote public safety until a more permanent solution is reached.

Conversion to wells or combining points of diversion requires some clarification and negotiating among the ditch companies. The irrigation company representatives are concerned about losing their water rights. Joint meetings with the Water Rights Bureau, the Conservation District and the ditch companies will help clarify the outcomes of the suggested alternatives. Financing may be available for solving these problems through the Montana Department of Natural Resources. This is addressed in more detail in the chapter on *Financing*.

The irrigation company representatives have met with city officials and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers several times as a result of this planning process. Because the weir was not constructed by the U.S. Army Corps it is not eligible for any federal reconstruction programs. The Army Corps representatives said they could not fund a project unless it is necessary for flood control. They suggested we examine some pre-engineering alternatives for the weir through the private sector.



### Summary of Irrigation Facilities

It is suggested that a committee representing an engineering firm, and a water recreation planner, meet with local officials, irrigation company representatives and local water recreationists to formulate alternatives and make a recommendation concerning the weir.

Mitigating the danger posed by the irrigation ditches in the riverfront and modifying the weir to reduce the danger to water recreationists will require a commitment by government officials and the community to formulate some acceptable alternatives. Both of these objectives will require formal communication between appropriate agencies and parties. The solution could save lives.

*Our group, recently formed, is a coalition of businessmen, recreationists and environmentalists...Our premise is that the environment and the economy are now and will increasingly be, closely linked. What's good for the river is good for the town.*

*The River Downtown (citizens group), Nov. 1987*

## RIVER MECHANICS

In the course of the public meetings about the riverfront many people asked, what can we do about the irrigation weir and enhance the river's recreational potential? Many suggestions posed more questions about whether the river could or should be altered.

Missoula Redevelopment Agency invited Dr. Donald Reichmuth, President of Geomax, to answer these questions. Dr. Reichmuth is experienced in river projects and formerly was a Professor of Engineering at Montana State University. Twenty Missoulians attended an all day short course on river mechanics. Those attending represented local engineers, irrigationists, architects, builders, flood control administrators, water quality and wildlife organizations, redevelopment officials and recreationists.

Dr Reichmuth's basic message was that random placement of water diversions is not prudent. The placement of diversions should be done with an overall engineering plan because the placement and orientation can effect erosional and depositional patterns of the river upstream and downstream.

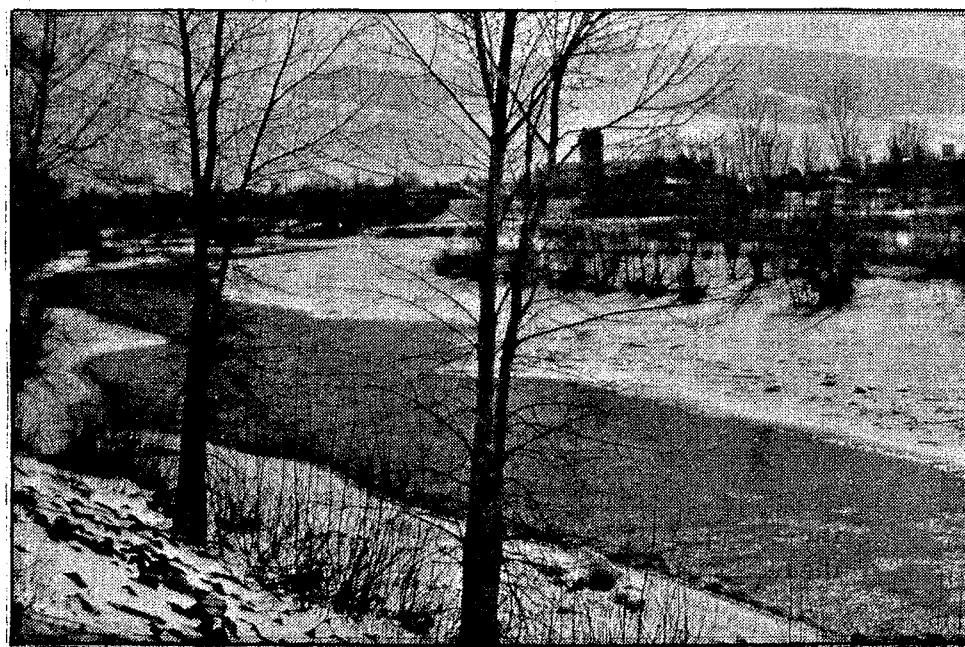
Some communities are implementing Overall River Engineering Plans to address problems like failing irrigation diversion and riverside developments, and to meet the demand for recreational use of the rivers. On the Boise River, rock and inflatable rubber tube will be constructed to direct irrigation water in low flows yet allow boaters to safely pass the diversion. Although this method may not be appropriate for Missoula there are other engineering solutions. Diversions have been modified on the Jefferson and the Gallatin to correct irrigation problems, improve fish productivity and to allow safe passage for boaters. A diversion in Whitehall, Montana, built for irrigationists crosses about 800 yards at a cost of \$24,000.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as Federal Flood Control Administrators, will approve permits for rock diversions if the community has made an Overall River Engineering Plan, and if the plan's pre-engineering work satisfies each agency's requirements. Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Water Quality Bureau also require a permit for in-river work. One concern is the amount of turbidity created during placement of the diversion. The amount of turbidity created by a project can be minimized to acceptable levels by working in low flows with the appropriate machinery and by minimizing disturbance of the river armour.

### Summary of River Mechanics

The question of whether to alter the river depends on river characteristics and community goals. Irrigation companies are experiencing several problems with their diversions. Naturally occurring migration of pools and riffles have made present systems inefficient in low water periods. The irrigation company's attempts to correct the situation have resulted in floodplain violations and public dissatisfaction over the aesthetic outcome of corrective measures.

There is a desire by many Missoulians to develop the river downtown to a fuller recreational potential. Further discussion is found in the chapters on *Irrigation and Recreation*. The irrigationists, recreationists, and others have been meeting to find a solution that would be mutually beneficial. It would be helpful to bring together an engineering team with these interest groups to advise them of alternative scenarios for the river, estimate associated costs, and investigate sources of grant monies available to local communities dealing with these kinds of problems. These efforts are an essential step in the recreational development of the river downtown.



## HISTORY OF THE RIVERFRONT

The history of the river is rich and knowing how the river developed to this point reveals an historic perspective in which to view the present period of development. Knowing the river's history also provides the inspiration for interpretative displays, public art and design ideas for new and redeveloped areas adjacent to the parks. The following sections highlight historic periods in Missoula influencing the riverfront.

### Native American Era

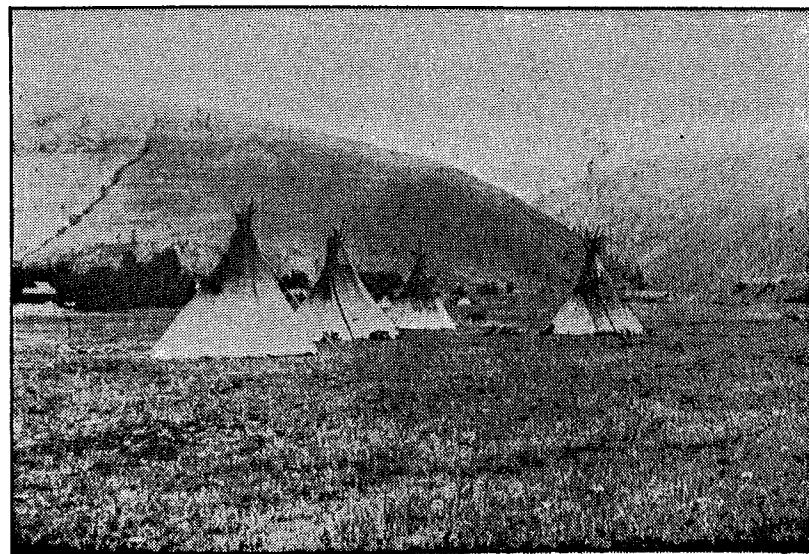
Missoula is located at the intersection of five major river valleys: the Hellgate (east), Frenchtown Valley (to the west) the Flathead and Blackfoot Valleys to the north and the Bitterroot Valley to the south. These areas are presumed to have been travel routes for prehistoric people. In prehistoric times people could have inhabited the region after Glacial Lake Missoula receded 10-13,000 years ago. The striations visible on Mount Sentinel and Jumbo are evidence of the glacial lake action on local features. A prehistoric site is located near the University of Montana's Field House at the mouth of Hellgate Canyon.

Native American tribes who inhabited or traveled in this area include: Flathead, Kootenai, Shoshone, Blackfeet and Nez Perce. Salish - Kootenai lived in the Bitterroot Valley. The Blackfeet Indians would routinely ambush parties of Flathead and Nez Perce Indians at the canyon. The canyon became so littered with human bones and skulls that French trappers called it *La Porte d' Enfer*, meaning *Gate of Hell*.

The area offered rivers, wild game, roots, berries and firewood. Willows were collected and made into backrests for tepees. Bitterroot flowers were collected from hillsides and

plants by the river were a source of herbal medicines. Native American oral histories tell of the tribal origins. These *creation stories* are rich in symbols and reveal the spiritual attachment to the land embraced by their people before contact with European culture. (Janene Caywood, Historian)

The landscape was quite different prior to settlement, as seen in an early photo of tepees clustered on the almost treeless valley floor. The grassy foothills and rivers lined with cottonwood and willows dominated the landscape.



Looking East Toward Hellgate Canyon, n.d. (Mansfield Library, University of Montana)

### The First Explorers - 1805

The first whites in the region were probably Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, although they may have been preceded by traders from the British Northwest Company moving down from Canada. The two explorers traveled through the Bitterroot Valley in 1805 and 1806., but only Lewis saw the Clark Fork River. On the return trip Lewis traveled down the Bitterroot River, went through Hellgate Canyon and then up the Big Blackfoot. The previous fall the explorers named the Bitterroot River the Clark's Fork. In 1937 the U.S. Geographical Board named the river from the headwaters to Lake Pend Oreille the Clark Fork.

Explorer David Thompson mapped the area and named the valley at the confluence of the Bitterroot and the Clark Fork Rivers Nemisoolatako, Salish for the "at the water of surprise." Historians presume this is the origin of the name Missoula.

In 1831 a member of a Hudson's Bay Company Brigade sent out to hunt beaver said in his journal, "This river was formerly rich, but being frequently hunted by the whites and Indians, beaver are very scarce.." Fur trade was active until around 1840. (Bruce Farling, Northern Lights Magazine)

### First Settlement and Gold Mining, 1860-1880

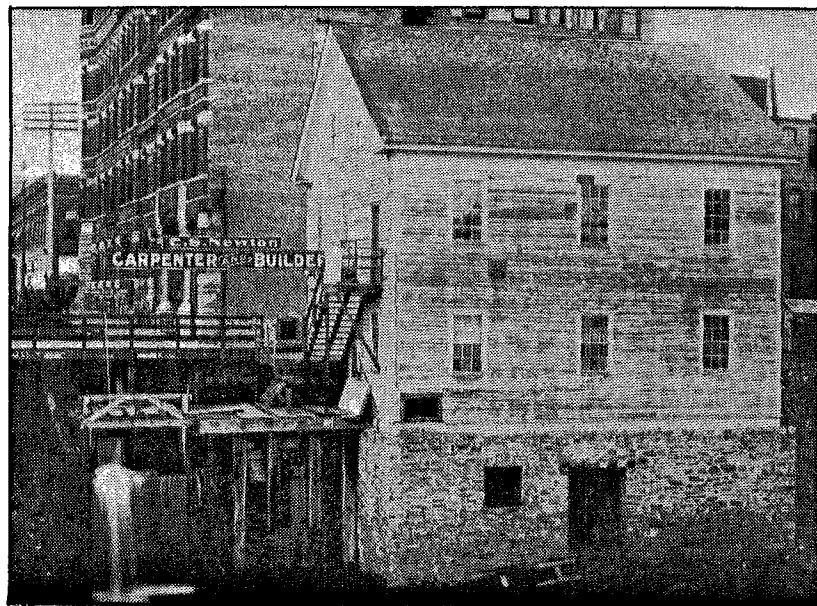
The first permanent white settlement in 1860 was located 4 miles west of Missoula's Downtown along Mullan Road. Mullan Road was used originally as a military road linking the upper Missouri and the upper

Columbia Rivers. It also connected Jocko Indian reservation to the north and Fort Owen in the Bitterroot Valley. In the winter of 1864 a lumber mill and grist mill were located along the Clark Fork River west of Rattlesnake Creek, providing power to operate the mills. Farmers marketed produce and ground wheat at what became known as Missoula Mills. Gold mining during the 1860's and 70's in Bannack (east of the divide) and at Cedar Creek 65 miles west of Missoula increased markets for produce and flour. (Bill Babcock, Historian)

In the early 1880's there was a demand for copper for electric lights and telephones. Extraction of silver and copper increased Missoula's role as a trading center. Placer mining operations also had an effect on the river. President James Garfield, traveling in the area in 1872 remarked: "The beautiful river has been permanently ruined by miners: and has been for three years as muddy as the Missouri. Before it was as clear as any mountain stream could be." (Bruce Farling)

In 1865 - 1871 there were intermittent ferries with people fording the river the rest of the time. In 1869 the first bridge was built opposite St. Patrick's Hospital, with a steep approach dug down through the bank over the Clark Fork River. It washed away that spring. (Audra Broman, Historian)

In 1873 a bridge was built at Higgins Avenue which ran west of Missoula Mills. Most buildings were located along East and West Front Street with only two structures north of Main Street. By 1872, 50-70 buildings were located in Missoula Mills. (Bill Babcock)



Missoula Flour Mill and First National Bank, c. 1890. (Mansfield Library, University of Montana).

### Construction Period 1880 - 1920

Missoula was a frontier town until the Northern Pacific Railroad arrived in the 1880's. Railroad construction required lumber for bridges and ties, mining required support timbers and firewood for smelters. (Bill Babcock)

Several key political figures made wealthy through business interests in mining provided political leverage to establish Missoula as the location of the University of Montana and as a regional railway center.

As Missoula grew the demand for electricity grew too. Missoula's first electric generating facility was a steam powered plant fueled by coal. It was located on East Front Street which at that time fronted on the river. Later the

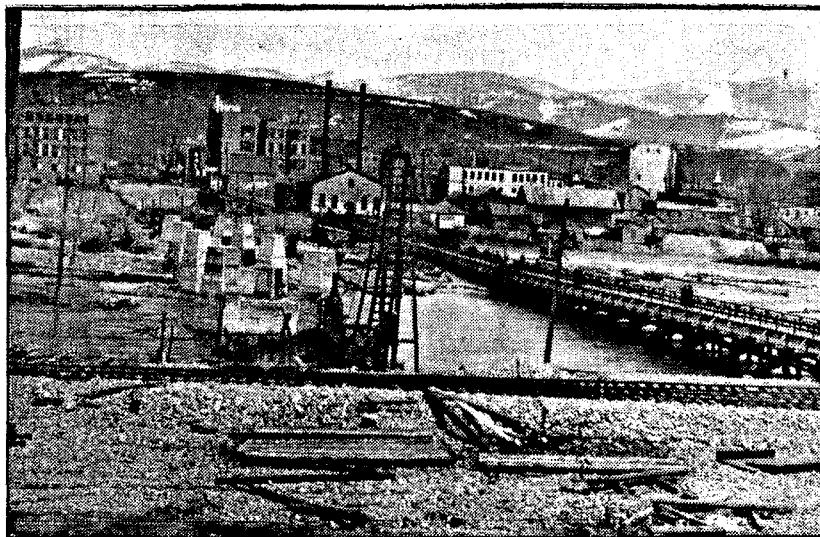
Missoula Mercantile (now the Bon) built a steam plant on the north bank to heat downtown businesses. Early photos show tall smoke stacks on the northshore skyline. The brick viaduct, which housed the heating pipes is still visible along the building foundation near the Children's Theatre and other downtown building foundations.

*In 1908, technological changes in the transmission of electricity allowed the dam built at Milltown to supply Missoula with electricity. Likewise, mining and metallurgic technologies increased demand for electricity. The river offered great potential for hydroelectric development. Copper mining provided capital for new facilities. (Frederic Quivic, Architectural Historian)*

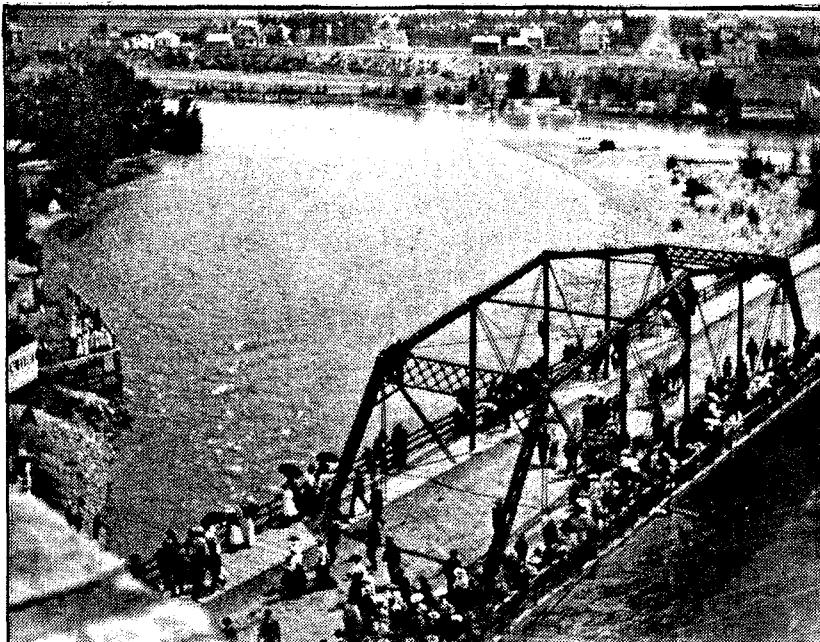
*In May of 1908 the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad was completed on the southshore of the river. This rail line was coal powered before 1913, electrified until 1974 when it was converted to diesel and finally abandoned in 1980. The Milwaukee Depot located west of Higgins Bridge, built in 1910, is a remnant of the railroad era. This building, with two towers and Spanish style roofing, is on the National Register of Historic Places. (Bill Babcock)*

*During this period the first hotel, the Penwell, was completed at the corner of South Higgins and South Third Street West. (Audra Bromman, Historian)*

Special projects provided stability during economic downturns, such as construction of the University of Montana, on the southside of the river in 1890's and additions in the 1920's.



Construction of the Higgins Avenue Bridge after the 1908 Flood.  
(Mansfield Library, University of Montana)



Gathering on the Higgins Avenue Bridge, pre-1908.  
(Mansfield Library, University of Montana)

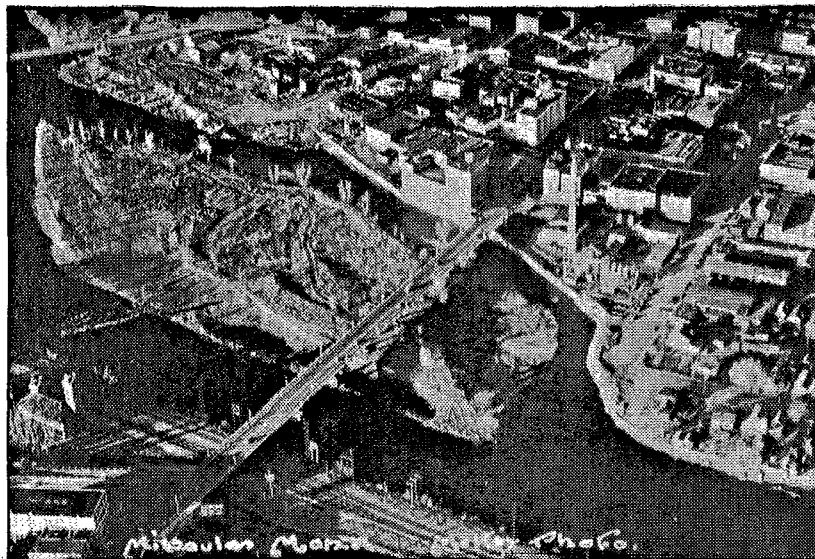
Early water supplies were provided by Rattlesnake Creek until May of 1982 when wells became the source of drinking water due to the presence of giardia, a parasitic micro organism, in the Rattlesnake Creek.

In June of 1908, the Clark Fork River flooded to its highest mark since settlement of the town, and caused extensive damage. The south span of the Higgins Avenue Bridge washed away, carrying with it telephone cables connecting north and south Missoula. A footbridge was strung between the two remaining sections until reconstruction. (Stan Cohen, Historic Photography)

*Development of Orchard Homes into gentlemen farms began in 1900 consisting of 300 irrigated 5-10 acre tracts. Irrigation allowed more intensive and diversified crop production. (Bill Babcock)*

The Missoula Irrigation Ditch was constructed in 1880 with a point of diversion on the Clark Fork River near the Van Buren Street Bridge. In 1907 the Orchard Homes Ditch company began using water from the Hellgate River (Clark Fork). Their point of diversion is west of the Milwaukee Station. The irrigation facilities in the downtown riverfront were built and maintained by ditch companies that secured water rights early in the century.

In 1916, Mayor H.T. Wilkinson, appointed a committee to come up with plans for improvement for the river island near the Higgins Street Bridge. At that time there were two river channels. The committee recommended as one alternative that access be made to the island as a site for a beautiful park with gardens and walks. World War I started and the project was forgotten. (Missoulian, January 1972)



Missoula, c. 1945. McKay Photo, (Mansfield Library, University of Montana).

The images of this period are horse drawn and electric street cars, brick streets, and lights illuminating the city. A strong sense of community developed during this time as the City incorporated in 1883 and Missoula remained the County seat.

#### **Automotive Age and Federal Projects and a change in Agriculture 1920 - 1970**

*As basic mining and timber industries slowed, Missoula's economy was balanced by agricultural operations such as sugar extraction from beets, wheat, dairy, and truck farming. Missoula area agricultural products found a market in Butte and the value of produce increased as the regional population grew.*

*Works Progress Administration (WPA) a federal capital improvement program fed the local economy in the mid 1930's through road and building construction as well as park construction, such as Kiwanis Park on the northshore of the Clark Fork River was constructed by the WPA.*

*The City of Missoula developed a system of public parks in 1902. Two of these parks were located in the waterfront. Kiwanis Park, originally extending from Pattee Street to Rattlesnake Creek, was improved by the Kiwanis Club in 1934. The McCormicks donated a large parcel of land on the southshore of the river, west of Orange Street Bridge. WPA funds were used to develop this park in 1938. (Bill Babcock)*

The development of boulevard projects, through Special Improvement Districts, further enhanced Missoula's image as the *Garden City* following the earlier tradition of planting maple trees throughout the City. In spite of the development of the river parks, Front Street businesses faced the street with their backsides to the river.

*Expansion of the central business district to the north was due to the Great Northern Railroad and a fire of 1884 that destroyed many buildings on Front Street. Construction of bridges across the Clark Fork river accelerated growth on the south side of the river. Expansion was steady in the first half of the century. From 1933 - 35 the fastest growing number of retail stores were automobile related. (Bill Babcock)*

In the early 1940's, John Toole and others worked to make a park on the island complete with wading pool and a bridge to the northshore. The park was completed in 1948 under Mayor Juliet Gregory and lasted only until a flood the same year washed the improvements downstream.

Prior to the widespread use of a community landfill and a sewer system the river was a convenient dump. The late and former Mayor John Toole recalls:

Trucks would pull up on the Orange Street Bridge to heave refuse onto the river's banks. When spring came the river would rise with snowmelt and the garbage would go away. Every house and business had its own pipe, discharging raw sewage into the river or groundwater. Junk cars were lined up on riverbanks to protect the City against floods. In 1960 the Clark Fork River flowed directly up to the base of the Wilma Building on Higgins Avenue, home of Missoula's premiere movie theatre; they would sweep the popcorn containers right out into the river.

With the enactment of the Solid Waste Recovery Law in 1947 and the establishment of sewage treatment plant in 1967 the river began to experience a cleaner image.

The US Army Corps of Engineers adopted a flood control project on the Clark Fork River in Missoula in 1950, consisting of several levees, a floodwall, a floodgate, and an extension of a highway levee on the northshore. These structures extend from Madison Street Bridge to Orange Street, with a separate levee and floodgate located east of Russell Street. The project was completed in 1966 and transferred to the City for maintenance. Two pre-existing levees are located under the Higgins Street Bridge on the northshore and on the southshore from a point north of Hazel Street to the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge.

The character of the riverfront by this period was quite different from the past and the present. The river was marked by floodwalls, smokestacks and a tepee burner; and the neighborhoods on the southshore knew the smell of train diesel and rail yard noise. The river itself, once the charming setting for Conrad Fisher's beer garden and summer resort (1880's to 1910), was lined with car bodies and garbage.

### Recent Development Period 1970 -1989

Continued expansion of road systems and the era of automotive travel precipitated the outward growth of the population. Commercial businesses along main travel corridors and the advent of the shopping mall played a role in the decline of the downtown business district. Like many downtowns, Missoula suffered from urban blight, characterized by aging facades and infrastructure, and loss of businesses to new popular locations on commercial strips.

Under state legislative authority Missoula adopted an Urban Renewal Plan, and a renewal district, which encompassed the riverfront area. The Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) was empowered to utilize tax increment financing for urban renewal expenditures. Historic renovation, provision of additional parking, facade, street and sidewalk improvements, boulevard trees, all have enhanced the beauty of the downtown. Improvements, made possible through the tax increment financing, have revitalized the Central Business District.

Tax increment funds have also been used to acquire and improve parklands along the river as well as fund this planning effort. Parkland acquisitions, public walkway easements and improvements in the riverfront parks have been actively pursued by the MRA and the City.

The City purchased property west of Madison Street Bridge with money from the *Conservation Bond*, and named it John Toole Park. Hellgate High School faced the loss of accreditation if it could not provide adequate athletic areas. In an arrangement with the City, the high school was allowed to develop a playfield and the school district agreed to rehabilitate the railroad yard and landscape the area. The City is providing a restroom and a small parking area. Park

improvements on the southshore include lighting along the trail, landscaping at Jacob's Island Park and the addition of Kim Williams Park extending to Hellgate Canyon.

The most recent park planning is in-progress on the southshore in the area between the Milwaukee Station and the Orange Street Bridge. This area will be developed as a passive recreation area characterized by naturally occurring riparian vegetation. With the addition of this new park there is now a continuous trail from McCormick Park to Hellgate Canyon.

Northshore park improvements made in recent years include creation of Bess Reed Park in conjunction with construction of the Holiday Inn, and reconstruction of Caras Park into an amphitheatre which provides a focal point for community activities.

Many projects have occurred in the last two decades along the riverfront including the Clark Fork Manor, Missoula Chamber of Commerce, Village Red Lion Inn, Milwaukee Depot renovation, Inland Market, the Missoulian Building, the Holiday Inn Parkside, and Goldsmith's Bed and Breakfast.

The riverfront is an area where the planning of both commuter and recreational paths contributes not only to the recreational concept of a riverfront park but also to the larger goals of the community toward better air quality and increased public health.

## Historical Summary

Missoula's relationship with the river has changed over the last one hundred years. The following comments made by Dan Kemmis in an article from Northern Lights describing the future for the whole basin, communicate a direction for the riverfront downtown.

*In spite of all our technical sophistication, our marvels of transportation and communication, we find patterns of inhabitation still powerfully shaped by the river.... Much as we may have damaged the river system, we have clearly not destroyed its capacity to shape the way we inhabit this place.... No matter how diverse and complex the patterns of livelihood may be that arise within the river system, no matter how many perspectives from which people view the basin, no matter how diversely they value it, it is, finally one and the same river for everyone.... If the patterns of human habitation have created problems for the river they also present prospects for healing it.*

*If good places are so felicitous, why are there not more of them. The biggest single reason is the problem of undesirables. They are the most harmless of the city's marginal people, but a symbol, perhaps, of what one might become but for the grace of events. The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make a place attractive to everyone else. The record is overwhelmingly positive on this score.*

William H. White, 1980



## CHRONOLOGY OF RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The following list highlights events effecting the preservation of cultural and natural amenities of the riverfront to date.

December 1971 - Mayor George Thurman submits an application for technical assistance to Bitterroot Resource Conservation Development Agency to develop a River Park Plan.

1972 - Ronald Pagel authors *Application of Land Use Controls to Missoula's Clark Fork River Corridor*. The plan area extends from Bandman Flats to west Kelly Island.

January 1972 - Bruce Bugbee, Regional Planning Association Project Director, made a preliminary proposal for a trail system for surrounding hillsides and the waterfront in Missoula.

1974 - Five Valley River Park Association a non-profit organization published *A Comprehensive River Park System for Missoula County: a Conceptual Plan* by Arnold Bolle and others. The report outlined a framework for a riverpark system and made recommendations about particular areas which led to the donation of various properties on the riverfront for parks including Jacob's Island. This group worked with Senator Mike Mansfield on a Railroad Rehabilitation Act which would have allowed Milwaukee to use Northern Pacific Tracks and secure Milwaukee tracks for community trail systems. Milwaukee went bankrupt just before this plan could be implemented.

January 1974 - Chris Fields (University of Montana) submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts to support a program plan for riverfront recreational development with an environmental and educational component.

1975 - Missoula Land Use Plan was adopted. It established goals for protection of the riverfront areas and recreational development of the rivers within Missoula County.

August 1976 - Adoption of Missoula County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan included the goals for a river park system.

December 1978 - Missoula Urban Renewal Plan Adopted creating the Missoula Redevelopment Agency.

October 1979 - An inventory of community facility needs was completed under the direction of the City Spirit Committee. The river corridor was identified as a location for facility development and for its recreation potential.

March 1980 - Missoula Historic Resource Survey documented important historic and cultural attributes in the Urban Renewal District. This provided information for nomination of structures for National Register of Historic Places. Wilma Building and the Milwaukee Depot are both registered as *Historic Places* and are important landmarks of the riverfront downtown.

June 1980 - A grant was awarded from the National Endowment for the Arts to partially finance a Region/Urban Design Assistance Team Report (R'UDAT) and design competition to explore the potential for community facility and recreation development.

1980 - Milwaukee Railroad declared bankruptcy and began to liquidate their depot and rail line properties. The *River Corridor Trust* a group of local businessmen purchased the Depot in the hopes of securing it for public use. As the City did not have the funds for purchase, it was sold and converted to a restaurant and offices and later added a casino.

November 1980 - City of Missoula voters approved Conservation Bond in the amount of \$500,000 to purchase and preserve open space areas.

1980 - The University bought Milwaukee right - of - way on the riverfront.

April 1981 - The City purchased riverfront property (John Toole Park) with funds from the Conservation Bond. There was much controversy associated with the use of land purchased with Open Space funds as an active play field and running track. Improvements plans are still in-progress.

October 1981 - An architectural firm was selected as the winning entrant of the Design Competition, and was retained to formulate schematic designs for recreation development within the project area between Pattee and Owen Streets.

January 1982 - Clark Fork Master Plan was initiated by the City. The Missoula Redevelopment Agency completed a letter report to submit for funding eligibility under the Army Corps Code 710 Recreation Development Program. Formal adoption of the recommendations in the letter report were contingent upon the completion and public review of the Clark Fork Riverfront Master Plan.

May 1983 - Missoula's School District One held a two day *Riverfront Park Convocation*, which focused on how Missoula's riverfront corridor should be developed. Seventh and eighth graders met with a cross section of community people to discuss the broad range of perspectives.

September 1983 - The City Spirit Committee urged Missoula to conduct a feasibility study for a Major Events Facility (known as MEFIC). Economic Research Associates of San Francisco, California, recommended a facility which would house a mix of sports and entertainment activity, with a balance of spectator and community participation activities. Of nine potential sites that were ranked, a location on the river near the University was recommended. There was public doubt about the willingness to finance the project, concerns about traffic and locating a large scale facility and parking area in the riverfront. The facility was never built.

1984-1989 The City of Missoula Capital Improvement Program documented the need for Riverfront Park facilities.



1984 - A citizen group, The Clark Fork Coalition, mobilized over the renewal of a permit by Champion's Paper Mill Plant in Frenchtown for dumping waste. The 1000 individual members and 100 organization and business members are active in basin-wide water quality problems. They have been instrumental in a basin-wide management of the river.

September 1987 - A group of citizens called *River Downtown* met to discuss the recreational potential of the river. They are a broad based committee of approximately 20 members. They reported the findings of a Colorado firm concerning the estimated costs of modifying the weir and creating play spots for tubers and boaters. They met with City officials and expressed interest in the development of an overall plan to address river recreational issues.

February 1989 - The MRA hired a consultant to hold public hearings and develop a land use plan for the riverfront downtown.

*The river is a powerful and interactive thing. Its power—sometimes in repose, sometimes raging—is irresistible to me. Its ever changing appearance invites contemplation and consideration. Simply watching at the river's banks or from its bridges has yielded priceless visual treasures to me over the years. In the spring, great logs and other debris are swept down by the rising torrents. In winter, the parts of the river which are not covered by snow and ice are slow and black as black gets. During the clear months of summer and fall, the river reflects and is reflected in its surroundings.*

*Geoff Badenoch 1989*

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*The sound of the water,  
says what I think.*

*Chuang-tzu, 500 B. C.*

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