

FHWA's Livable Communities Case Study Series



Missoula, Montana – Connecting Transportation and Land Use to Support Livable Communities.

In rapidly growing Western Montana, Missoula County and the City of Missoula have entered into a cooperative agreement to enhance their ability to plan for future development so that a county-wide pattern of community-building, land use, and conservation that reflects the environmental, economic, aesthetic, and social values of city and county residents is achieved. The agreement created a City-County Office of Planning and Grants (OPG) responsible for land use permitting, long range planning, transportation planning, historic preservation, housing, the "Missoula in Motion" transportation demand management program, the Crime Victim Advocates Program and the Forum for Children and Youth. OPG works closely with city neighborhood councils and county community councils as it implements the city and county vision and mission as they relate to existing and proposed land use and the built environment.

Recent efforts conducted in support of livability include:

- The Urban Fringe Development Area Plan (UFDA), an innovative plan to allocate anticipated growth within the Missoula urban area through a cooperative effort of the county and the city. UFDA established development suitability criteria that seek to respond to an evolving market, provide housing choice, make efficient use of infrastructure, and protect sensitive lands. Progress is measured annually against a 2007 benchmark, allowing for course corrections and keeping the plan relevant.
- The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staffed by OPG created the "Envision Missoula" Transportation Plan, which won the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organization National Award for Outstanding Achievement in Metropolitan Transportation Planning for its linkage of land use and transportation planning and its inclusive process. Over 500 citizens participated in workshops and follow up "summit" meetings to confirm an inward focus to future regional growth. The workshops were followed by a telephone survey that confirmed the workshop findings and showed decision makers that the citizens actively participating in the project were representative of the community.
- The city's Brownfields Program is using the expertise of their Redevelopment Agency, Street Department, Parks Department, and the State Department of Environmental Quality to conduct environmental cleanup in support of redevelopment in the City.
- The city recently passed a complete streets policy. In addition to slowing traffic, Missoula has developed over 400 miles of pedestrian facilities, including over 25 miles of separated bike paths and three bicycle/pedestrian crossings of the Clark Fork River. The City is moving forward on work to extend existing bicycle/pedestrian trails along the former Milwaukee Railroad corridor and the Bitterroot Branch rail line.

A new roundabout is also helping traffic flow smoothly, increasing safety and beautifying the area. "It's making travel along Higgins Avenue easier for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians and making it safer for all to cross the east and west areas of the county" said the Mayor of Missoula. This \$600,000 construction project was funded with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices

