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# GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MIDTOWN MASTER PLAN

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals Due February 4, 2022

The Missoula Midtown Association (Association) and partners are seeking the services of an experienced community organizer to facilitate grassroots engagement for development of a Midtown Master Plan (MMP). The MMP will articulate a vision and promote strategies to meet community goals for growth in Midtown Missoula. The anticipated all-inclusive budget for grassroots community engagement is \$50,000.00. This scope of work is in addition to and separate from business and institutional engagement and community wide public relations, which will be included in the planning and design contract. The grassroots engagement consultant selected will work closely with design consultants, local officials, and the MMP steering committee before and throughout the planning and design process. The total process is expected to take about 18 months with grassroots engagements ebbing in intensity throughout.

The grassroots community engagement consultant will be expected to establish a strategy for engagement in advance of the design process and to become an integral part of the team once planning begins. Despite good intentions, many previous community public involvement efforts have fallen short of including the voices of everyone. Therefore, we are looking for a consultant who has both rapport in the marginalized communities we seek to engage and appreciates that while change may be unpleasant for some, it is inevitable and must be managed. The consultant will help us actively engage individuals and groups who are traditionally marginalized, but not overlook community members who are familiar with and regularly participate in civic efforts. We are seeking creative strategies for grassroots engagement, information gathering from stakeholders who often feel unheard, management through change, and consensus building.

The MMP has explicit goals to maintain an affordable Midtown and to include residents in the planning process in new ways. The consultant will be expected to focus especially on the first three goals:

- **Provide a voice for the people who live in, work in, and utilize Midtown.** Create a space for residents, workers, and users to articulate why they love Midtown, identify the unique characteristics that should be preserved, and envision improvements that will make it better as it inevitably grows.
- **Promote equitable development.** Ensure neighborhood balance with factors that promote healthy urbanism like affordable housing and retail, nearby groceries, healthcare, manufacturing and other living-wage jobs, business incubation space, green infrastructure, clean indoor and outdoor environments, quality education and growth opportunities, social gathering spaces, recreational opportunities, and mobility for all people and modes with reliable and safe connections.
- **Promote a sense of belonging.** Nurture the social fabric of Midtown by promoting positive and diverse human interaction. Hone and promote the Midtown brand to drive right-sized business in the area. Maintain existing and attract new businesses that meet the needs of a safe, clean, and connected neighborhood.

The project is funded by over 35 different partners, including 30 private businesses from the Midtown area and six public partners. As the public event space in Midtown, the Missoula County Fairgrounds will be available to host socially distant meetings and provide general assistance for community outreach as needed.

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# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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The Association is a 501(c)6 organization dedicated to the promotion, enhancement, and accessibility of the midtown area as it relates to businesses, residents, and the community. Its goals are to provide resources and information related to the success and growth of a healthy business community and enhance the quality of life and place for visitors and residents alike. All businesses, interested parties, and individuals are eligible for membership in the Missoula Midtown Association and can join at any time. Suitability is not based on geographic location.

The Missoula Midtown Foundation (Foundation) is a 501(c)3 organization with a close relationship with the Missoula Midtown Association. The Foundation researches issues associated with the ongoing development, infrastructure, historic preservation, and planning of Midtown for the benefit of all citizens of Missoula County, and assists in providing the public with education regarding these important community issues. The Foundation and the Association share staff and consultants.

The MMP will be managed through the Association. While the Association is generally focused on Midtown, the MMP will provide benefits to the entire community. The Association has appointed a steering committee who specialize in land use planning and development, public processes, community organizing and outreach, and fundraising to advise on the process. The project will be managed by the Executive Director and the MMP steering committee chair, in consultation with the MMP steering committee, and under the governance of the Association Board of Directors. There will also be a technical advisory committee made up of local subject area experts to help draft and implement the MMP.

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# PROCUREMENT PROCESS

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Although the Association is a private entity, this procurement process strives to follow established best practices for public transparency whenever possible. Funding for grassroots engagement comes from private businesses and individuals in Midtown, but over half the funding for the overall MMP project has been contributed from public entities, and we anticipate the MMP being adopted by relevant local and state agencies so following public procurement standards is desirable.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Email: [midtown@missoulamidtown.com](mailto:midtown@missoulamidtown.com)  
Phone: 406.370.8816

**Proposals are due electronically via email to [midtown@missoulamidtown.com](mailto:midtown@missoulamidtown.com) by 5:00 pm on February 4, 2022. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

1/12/22	RFP published	<a href="https://missoulamidtown.com/masterplan/">https://missoulamidtown.com/masterplan/</a>
2/4/22	Proposals due	midtown@missoulamidtown.com
2/17/22	Interviews held	Hybrid in-person/virtual *may change*
2/23/22	Grassroots engagement consultant selected to engage in negotiation of terms and conditions. Backup team notified.	
3/9/22	Contract signed by Association board	

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Format

The proposal should be submitted as one document via email in a printable PDF format. The proposal may include links to other documents and/or appendices; however, the proposer should not assume these will all be reviewed. All content the proposer feels is necessary for selection should be included in the body of the proposal, which should not exceed 10 (ten) 8.5x11 inch pages single-sided.

Proposal Content

The proposal should provide sufficient detail to enable the selection committee to thoroughly evaluate and compare it with other proposals. At a minimum, the following information should be included:

- A description of grassroots engagement firm(s), emphasizing the character, qualifications and experience needed to provide the services in this RFP.
- Demonstration of an understanding of the project goals and a proposed approach and methodology for completing the scope of work.
- An introduction of key team members assigned to the project describing respective roles and estimating the time they expect to participate in the project. Please include examples of related project experience if available.
- A statement expressing an understanding of the project budget and how you anticipate utilizing the funds.
- At least two references for similar projects undertaken by the lead team member. Please include a name, phone number and email address where the reference may be reached.
- Proof of Montana Limited Liability Corporation or licensed Independent Contractor in Montana with Workman Compensation Insurance (or a statement of willingness to obtain).

## SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria	Points
Grassroots organizing experience	40
Knowledge of Midtown and Missoula	50
Understanding of project goals	60
Approach and methodology to grassroots organizing	70
Ability to meet the scope of work, schedule, and budget	40
Philosophy of change management	40
Total points available	300

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## MIDTOWN MASTER PLAN BACKGROUND

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Recognizing the pressing need for cohesion around a vision that embraces Midtown’s existing character, encourages equitable development, and promotes healthy urbanism, the Association began to lay out a path to make the Master Plan a reality in 2020. A well-developed MMP, created through an inclusive process, will offer predictability, preserve the qualities we love about Midtown, and encourage growth that contributes to a vibrant and people-oriented place. While, a haphazard approach will continue the trend of auto-oriented development, lead to frustration for developers and local officials, poor outcomes for current residents or potentially gentrification that pushes them out of Midtown altogether.

The pandemic has highlighted how unplanned growth can impact equity and livability in Missoula. Long-term trends such as population growth, housing demand, and reduced housing inventory were exacerbated during COVID, putting acute pressure on, and driving up the cost of renting and owning a home. Without a community vision for Midtown, we risk being caught flatfooted when demand for development increases beyond our community capacity to manage it appropriately.

Midtown’s everyday retail, affordable homeownership, and available parking are qualities associated with a different experience than anywhere else in Missoula. New development should preserve and enhance this character with features like gathering spaces to nurture social connectedness, transit and bike/pedestrian networks to allow physical connections, and access to green infrastructure to reduce

heat islands, noise, and air pollution. An equitable MMP will help Missoula take care not to attract development for prosperity's sake alone, but to improve all outcomes for those working and living in our community.

Midtown is challenged with reigning in sprawl development that occurred in the middle of the 20th century and weaving auto-centric strips into the urban fabric. Over the last 20 years, a series of planning efforts have recognized that Brooks Street, as it currently exists, is a hindrance to smart growth and robust economic development in what has become the geographic center of Missoula. While it makes sense that planning efforts so far have focused on identifying challenges and infrastructure deficiencies in the corridor (see Dovetailing Projects section below), none have approached Midtown holistically, appreciating that it already is a loved place where people live, work, and recreate – albeit with the limitations mentioned above. The MMP will fold other focused efforts into a broader vision that meets the community goals listed below.

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## GOALS

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The goals of the MMP explicitly state our intention for Midtown to remain affordable and include current residents in the process in new ways. It is always a challenge to balance community affordability and economic growth and facing the realities of neighborhood change can be painful for people. The organizer selected will demonstrate a meaningful understanding of contemporary strategies for facilitating a fruitful and safe space to develop a vision for Midtown with the understanding that growth in Midtown is inevitable and must be managed. In a sense, the process of leading a discussion about the future of Midtown is also the product – while not everyone will agree on all aspects of the MMP, they should rally around Midtown as a place. Below are the stated project goals for the Midtown Master Plan. The community engagement team will focus primarily on the first three goals.

**Provide a voice for the people who live in, work in, and utilize Midtown.** Create a space for residents, workers, and users to articulate why they love Midtown, identify the unique characteristics that should be preserved, and envision improvements that will make it better as it inevitably grows.

**Promote equitable development.** Ensure neighborhood balance with factors that promote healthy urbanism like affordable housing and retail, nearby groceries, healthcare, manufacturing and other living-wage jobs, business incubation space, green infrastructure, clean indoor and outdoor environments, quality education and growth opportunities, social gathering spaces, recreational opportunities, and mobility for all people and modes with reliable and safe connections.

**Promote a sense of belonging.** Nurture the social fabric of Midtown by promoting positive and diverse human interaction. Hone and promote the Midtown brand to drive right-sized business in the area. Maintain existing and attract new businesses that meet the needs of a safe, clean, and connected neighborhood.

**Create predictability for private investment.** Attract and retain development that meets the community vision for Midtown. Provide a clear path forward so developers have fewer hurdles when approaching design, permitting, zoning, and regulatory agencies.

**Leverage local dollars to attract Federal infrastructure funding.** Position Midtown for large capital grants to build transformative infrastructure, such as transit, which serves new and existing populations.

Improve east-west connectivity in Midtown. Improve the Brooks Street Corridor to meet the multimodal transportation pressures of growth in Midtown, Miller Creek, and the Bitterroot Valley while improving – and not sacrificing – livability.

**Build on existing planning initiatives for Midtown.** Incorporate previous and ongoing work (see Dovetailing Projects section below). Several studies have been done of the area, each building on the previous effort. This will be the most ambitious scope of work-to-date and should incorporate work from the last two decades, including the Urban Renewal District III Plan, the ULI Report, and the Brooks Street Corridor Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Infrastructure Study. Currently, the Missoula Economic Partnership is engaged in a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the Tourist Business Improvement District is initiating a Tourism plan, and the City of Missoula has applied for a RAISE grant to design bus rapid transit for the Brooks Street corridor. The City of Missoula is embarking on a comprehensive code reform project that will lead to an overall modernized, innovative, and aligned set of land use regulations merged into a unified development ordinance, which will be informed by an audit of the community policies relating to regulations and with a lens for equity in land use.

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### TIMELINE

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## SCOPE OF WORK

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Meaningful participation from all residents is a vital component of the MMP. The study area is the heart of several neighborhoods and includes portions of four neighborhood councils that should be included in all stages of the process. The scope of work for the project reflects a heightened emphasis on participation from traditionally marginalized stakeholders. The consultant selected for community engagement will show a unique approach to connecting with and hearing from existing residents.

The scope will be executed by a community engagement specialist and teammates strategically proposed to ensure broad and inclusive participation. Currently, we expect the total budget to be \$50,000.00 (sans toolkit referenced below) and for the consultant to be engaged throughout the planning process.

**Develop engagement goals & define success.** Identify people and groups with whom to prioritize grassroots engagement. Define deliverables and metrics for project success.

**Coordinate with other projects.** There will be other planning processes occurring simultaneously (see Dovetailing Projects section below). One of the most challenging aspects of this project will be to understand these efforts and develop a coordinated strategy that doesn't overwhelm or confuse people. This may include a warm handoff to other efforts or sharing MMP space with other projects, so people do not have to attend multiple meetings or be inundated with mailers.

**Assist in selection of design team.** Review design team RFP and make suggestions to clarify roles and responsibilities for engagement. Draft questions for the design team interview process. Provide feedback on the proposers to the selection committee.

**Provide input on tools.** Provide input on visioning toolkit (maps, renderings, videos, powerpoints etc.) created by the design team to maximize usefulness by ensuring they are digestible for people who are not familiar with community planning processes.

**Implement engagement strategies.** Carry out an inclusive strategy for grassroots populations to provide useful input on what their needs are and how redevelopment of Midtown should occur to benefit them. This will require innovative approaches to working directly with people who are left out of traditional public processes.

**Develop a vision.** Help gather and articulate the grassroots vision for Midtown, utilizing traditional design charrettes and focus group formats provided by the design team and introducing or inventing new ways to engage grassroots populations. Provide feedback on a draft of the MMP. Help incorporate grassroots community feedback to the draft— continuing to roll out iterations and collect opinions as needed.

**Finalize the MMP.** Ensure the grassroots community is informed about the final MMP and has engaged in the process. Recommending media to roll out the final plan that is relevant and digestible for people unfamiliar or intimidated by traditional planning documents (such as short videos, infographics, influencers, etc.).

## PRIORITY AREAS OF STUDY FOR MIDTOWN MASTER PLAN

**People & Equity.** Demographic analysis of who lives, works, and plays in Midtown. Develop strategies to maintain their presence, improve the quality of life for existing residents, and welcome new residents and users. Explore opportunities for tourism.

**Land Use.** Evaluate the accessibility of public and private spaces, including hotel, food, commercial, mixed-use, residential, office, medical and institutional, educational, arts and entertainment, housing, parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.

**Connectivity.** Assess transit, street design, Brooks Street Corridor circulation (taking care not to duplicate efforts underway), east-west connections, north-south connections, slant street, Reserve Street and downtown connectivity, shared mobility, pedestrian circulation, bicycle circulation, and wayfinding. Evaluate consistency of transportation infrastructure and design with desired land use or redevelopment.

**Infrastructure.** Measure the availability of sewer, water, storm sewer, communication and broadband, electricity, lighting, trees, and other green infrastructure. Develop strategy to prioritize future investments.

**Parking.** Measure availability of parking and develop a strategy which allows the conversion of expansive parking lots into viable mixed use developments. Analyze the possibility of managed, either public or private, parking to support growth in housing and commercial sectors.

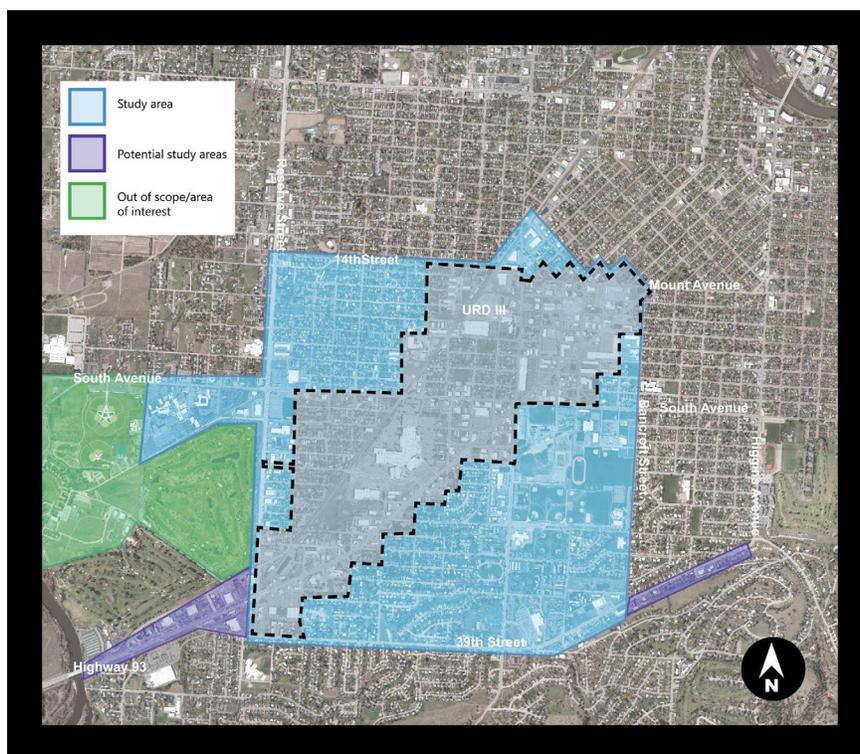
**Business & Nonprofit Health.** Support existing retail, commercial, nonprofit, medical, and other businesses and deploy development strategies to retain and attract suitable new businesses to the area.

**Housing.** Affordability analysis, evaluate work/live models, equitable and complete neighborhoods. Recommend strategies to improve quality of life while avoiding gentrification.

**Green Infrastructure.** Evaluate and identify strengths and gaps in trails and park facilities and connections. Identify ways to connect these assets to each other and key destinations outside of the study area.

**Culture, Arts, & History.** Identify and celebrate Midtown's historic features. Assess existing arts and cultural amenities and make recommendations for additional opportunities.

## STUDY AREA BOUNDARY



The steering committee recognizes that Midtown is a large area and that project boundaries may require adjustment according to budget realities. The area in blue in the map (above) are the boundaries the steering committee feels are important to include. The areas in purple may also benefit from being in the MMP, and we welcome proposers’ thoughts on their inclusion. The area in green deserves its own planning effort and is outside the scope of this project. However, having such a significant impact on Midtown, it must be recognized by the MMP.

The study area for the MMP is intentionally large to include neighborhoods, the area called “Central Park” (Playfair Park/Fairgrounds/YMCA/ Missoula County Public Schools) and an emerging medical district, near Community Medical Center, that may come to define much of the South Reserve Street corridor.

## DOVETAILING PROJECTS

The MMP is the first comprehensive masterplan for Midtown. It is being undertaken concurrently with other planning efforts that will propose transformational change in Midtown. This level of proposed change will be exciting for some, but may be alarming for others, especially those who do not typically participate in civic processes. The grassroots engagement consultant will be expected to become familiar with these other planning efforts, and assist with developing strategies to communicate the long-term vision and benefits of the proposed changes.

### **Brooks Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Study**

The city in coordination with Mountain Line and other partners is undertaking a detailed planning study to identify all that is required to make bi-directional, fixed-route, center-running bus-rapid transit (BRT) successful on Brooks Street, as a catalyst to foster transit-oriented development along the Brooks Street corridor. The Brooks Street BRT/TOD planning team will include a communications member who will focus on outreach to property and business owners and other stakeholders within the study area, coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation, and other community outreach as appropriate.

The Brooks Street BRT/TOD planning effort is independent of the MMP, but there will be overlap between the two efforts in many areas. The city and the Association will assemble a committee to ensure close coordination between the two efforts. The goal is to establish a consistent message about these two significant planning efforts in Midtown, to minimize confusion, and to build community consensus. The community engagement consultant for the MMP will be expected to understand the goals of the Brooks Street BRT/TOD plan, and closely coordinate with the Brooks Street BRT/TOD team.

### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) is a measurable, actionable, strategy-driven plan completed by the Missoula Economic Partnership (with a workgroup of local representatives from private, public, and nonprofit sectors) to identify regional priorities for economic and community development. CEDs is recognized by the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) as the cornerstone of EDA's investments in community economic development. The working vision of Missoula CEDs is "Missoula County's economy is equitable, inclusive, and resilient--offering every resident a path to prosperity for a lifetime."

### **Tourism Stewardship Plan**

Destination Missoula/Missoula Tourism Business Improvement District will be initiating a Tourism Stewardship planning process for Missoula. The goal is to provide an organized policy and planning framework for value-based, sustainable tourism development and promotion, that balances residents' quality of life with quality visitor experiences and promotes equitable economic development in our industry and community.

### **City of Missoula Comprehensive Code Reform Project**

The Comprehensive Code Reform Project will integrate all City land use regulations into one code and update the regulations to be responsive to Missoula's current and emergent land use needs, especially through the lens of equity and sustainability. The project will be responsive to city values and policies given consideration of the City's comprehensive plan (Our Missoula, City of Missoula Growth Policy) and includes coordinating with the Growth Policy Update process. It will result in a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for the City that is modernized, updated, streamlined, consistent, clear, aligned, and user-friendly. The process will begin in 2022 and will involve robust community engagement throughout the 3-year span of the project, with deliverables along the way. It will include comprehensive auditing

of the city's existing land development regulations and processes as well as conducting a review of land use from the lens of equity.

#### RELEVANT POLICIES AND PLANS

City of Missoula Growth Policy <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/1748/Our-Missoula-Growth-Policy>

Missoula Long-Range Transportation Plan <https://www.missoulampo.com/long-range-transportation-plan>

Bicycle Facilities Master Plan <https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/39172/2016-Bicycle-Facilities-Master-Plan?bidId>

Pedestrian Facilities Master Plan  
<https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/48031/Pedestrian-Facilities-Master-Plan->

Urban Renewal District (URD III) Plan  
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/140/Urban-Renewal-District-URD-III-Plan?bidId=>

Urban Land Institute Report  
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/31364/ULI-Report-October-2003?bidId=>

Brooks Street Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Infrastructure Study  
[http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/53666/20191227\\_Brooks-Street-TOD-Inf-Study\\_FINAL?bidId](http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/53666/20191227_Brooks-Street-TOD-Inf-Study_FINAL?bidId)

Brooks Street Corridor Study  
<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/39188/BrooksStreetCorridor-Final-Report12-20-16-HighRes>

Fairgrounds Master Plan and Design Guidelines  
[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59bc472df9a61ebc1fe389d3/t/5b0db240562fa72bdd6d2957/1527624292578/MCFG+Design+Guidelines\\_May+24\\_Web+Version.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59bc472df9a61ebc1fe389d3/t/5b0db240562fa72bdd6d2957/1527624292578/MCFG+Design+Guidelines_May+24_Web+Version.pdf)

CEDS <https://www.missoulapartnership.com/>

Housing Report <https://www.missoularealestate.com/5valleyshousingreport>