

Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District

November 3, 2017

Mayor Mark Johnson and Members of City Council

Kalispell City Hall
201 First Avenue East
Kalispell, Montana 59901

Subject: Comments for the Public Hearing on the Downtown Plan

Dear Mayor Johnson and Members of City Council:

The Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District board of directors is pleased to submit comments and overall support for the draft City of Kalispell Downtown Plan. We are encouraged that City staff and Council are placing a renewed focus on downtown Kalispell and creating a vision for responsible growth and vitality.

Tourism is a major economic driver for Kalispell and the Flathead Valley. The annual TBO marketing plan, implemented by the Kalispell CVB, strives to influence travel to Kalispell. Beyond the draw of Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake visitors are attracted to northwest Montana to enjoy quaint and charming small towns that are active and vibrant. A downtown that has a unique character, inviting aesthetics, and is pedestrian friendly is essential to its viability as a destination.

Revisiting US 93 Highway corridor in downtown Kalispell to Main Street: The TBO board supports maintaining the courthouse complex as a two-lane traffic circle with one lane on the north and one lane on the south. TBO members have varied opinions on the concept of reduced lanes on Main Street. The group does unanimously agree that Main Street should never be expanded to more than four lanes.

We support other proposed enhancements in the plan that would serve to create or improve sense of community and place for Main Street:

- lobby for the completion of the southern half of the bypass to direct truck traffic on that route while not discouraging locals or visitors to bypass downtown.
- widen sidewalks to accommodate a mix of activity
- increase outdoor and indoor gathering space for expanded year-round events
- increase landscaping and gathering areas such as pocket parks
- incorporate pedestrian scaled street lighting and improve pedestrian access and safety
- work to incorporate bicycle lanes, bike routes and bicycle facilities into the main street corridor
- incorporate traffic calming techniques to enhance pedestrian safety
- strengthen the linkage between the Core Area, Main Street from Center to 1st St East, as well as the south downtown area between the County courthouse and the south entrance to the bypass.