

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 viability.

Tourism is a major economic driver for Kalispell and the Flathead Valley. The annual TBID marketing plan, implemented by the Kalispell CVB, serves 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 elevated in its viability as a destination.

Restoring US 93 Highway corridor in downtown Kalispell to Main Street: The TBID board supports maintaining the courthouse couplet as a two-lane traffic circle with one lane on the north and one lane on the south. TBID 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 an improved 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 spaces 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 7th St East, as well as the south downtown area between the County courthouse and the south entrance to the bypass.

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Convenient parking for business community and visitors: it is important that the downtown core has well-identified parking within the corridor of Main Street and First and Second Avenues to be used by visitors and locals partaking in downtown businesses, events and amenities. We encourage the City to develop plans to better manage downtown employee parking.

Business development and redevelopment: We support the City's vision to offer incentives to encourage historic façade and exterior amenity improvements, and to identify opportunities to expand entertainment options in downtown. We encourage the preservation, conservation and adaptable reuse of historic buildings. The TBID supports the restoration of the historic Opera House which could serve as a much needed indoor event venue in Kalispell.

A unique and identifiable image for downtown Kalispell: The TBID marketing plan promotes Kalispell as 'located in the heart of the Flathead Valley offering best-of-Montana experiences in every direction combined with abundant shopping, terrific dining, cultural attractions, a 'shop local' historic downtown, as well as memorable events for a mix of city comfort and outdoor wonder'. Maintaining the historic character of downtown while improving the charm and vibrancy of Kalispell will serve as an increased draw for visitors. We agree that the development of aesthetics such as public art, informational kiosks, banners strung on Main Street announcing upcoming events, returning the farmer's market to downtown, and the enhancement of Depot Park to serve as a main gathering point for downtown will position downtown Kalispell as one of those destination small towns in western Montana. We encourage the City to consider how downtown Kalispell can be marketed and promoted as a destination.

The TBID board of directors appreciates the commitment of the City staff and Council to create a vision for downtown. Kalispell is one of the major destinations in Montana to visit, live, work and play. Creating a stronger sense of community in the downtown core will secure economic vitality for our city for years to come.

Regards,

Kalispell Tourism Business Improvement District Board of Directors

Dawn Hendrickson, Chair, Homewood Suites

Zac Ford, Vice-Chair, Hampton Inn

Janet Clark, Treasurer, Kalispell Grand

Lisa Brown, Red Lion Hotel

Shawn Campbell, America's Best Value Inn

Emily Schroeder, Hilton Garden Inn

Dan Moderie, Super 8