

# BILLINGS HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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### PREPARED FOR

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## Introduction

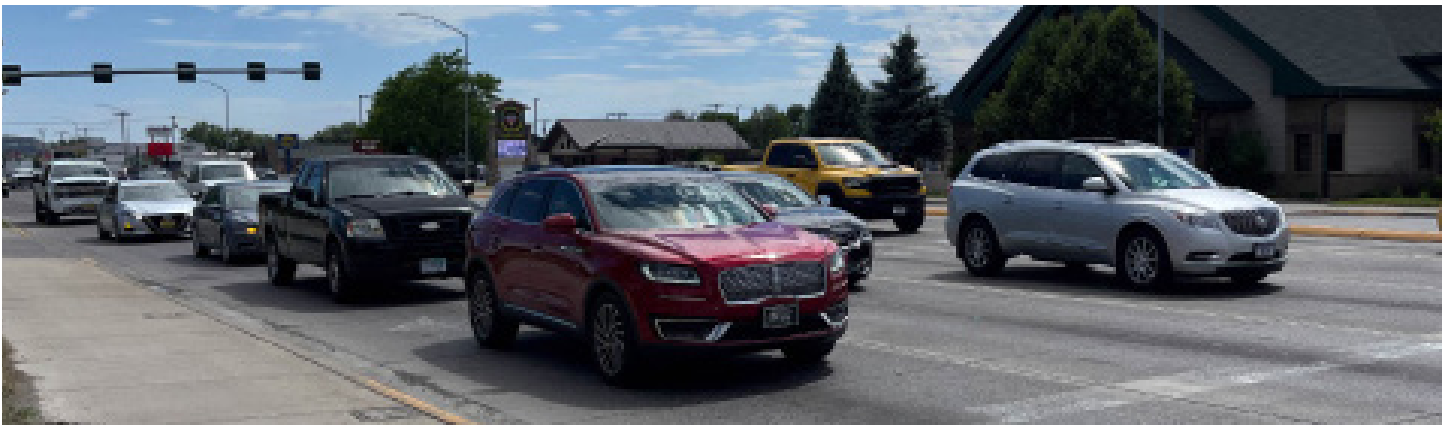
In accordance with the City of Billings Land Use Planning Public Participation Plan, the purpose of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to help the project team identify and outline opportunities for continuous public participation in the development of the updated Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan.

The PPP will also help the project team provide relevant, accurate, and consistent project information to stakeholders and the general public.

## Project Summary

Working from the existing Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan that was developed in 2005, this project will include a comprehensive analysis and recommendations for city and county agencies to use when developing future plans for the Billings Heights (“Heights”).

The updated plan will focus on themes identified through public participation activities such as surveys, feedback forms, open houses, and stakeholder meetings. We anticipate those themes to align with categories such as public safety, education, economic development, and more. The plan will also include a transportation analysis and tangible implementation strategies.



## Public Participation Objectives

The city’s public participation (PP) objective is to “consistently keep the public well informed and actively involved at every stage of the local planning process, starting from the formulation of planning policies, progressing through the conceptual phases of planning projects, and concluding with the formal adoption of planning documents.” Our team understands that proactively engaging the community and key stakeholders throughout the project is essential in building trust with the community, creating opportunities for public participation, and ultimately developing a high-quality planning document that represents the needs and values of the community.

For this project, our PP goals are to:

- Provide useful and timely information to the public throughout the development of the project.
- Provide opportunities for verbal and written comments from the public.
- Facilitate open discussion of controversial issues and/or communication themes.
- Respond to comments and suggestions.

- Confirm public comments are fully considered so that useful ideas are incorporated into the project as appropriate given availability of resources and policy constraints.

Strategies to inform the public on the project will include:

- Engaging the steering committee to provide oversight and input to inform plan development.
- Developing a website and corresponding materials to share general project information and to connect the public with opportunities to provide input (e.g. comment form, online survey, interactive map, etc).
- Meeting with stakeholder groups to determine shared goals, gather input, and facilitate open conversations about the project.
- Planning, promoting, and hosting two open houses to discuss project with members of the public.
- Distributing press releases about the project and coordinating with area media to raise awareness about the project and promote public participation.
- Sending periodic email updates to the project distribution list.

## Communication Objectives

Effective and open communication will play a vital role in the project's success as it relates to public and stakeholder receptiveness and participation.

The key communication objectives for this project are:

- To identify and share key communication themes with stakeholders and the general public.
- To share project information in a clear, concise mannner to increase understanding, public interest, and input.
- To promote public meetings and other public participation opportunities.
- To consistently communicate the purpose and status of the Billings Heights Neighborhood Plan.
- To engage the community and stakeholders throughout the project.
- To provide information on policy- and regulatory-driven processes.





## Project Area Demographics

Located on the northeast end of Billings, Montana, the Heights neighborhood is nestled between Billings' notable rimrocks (also referred to as the "rims") and the Yellowstone River. With about 33,500 residents, the Heights houses about one third of the city's total population. Longtime residents of the Heights are known for having a prideful sense of community. Since it's annexation to the city of Billings in the 1980's, the Heights has experienced consistent growth due to various factors including affordable housing, easy access to outdoor recreation, good schools, and other quality of life amenities.

Despite consistent growth, connectivity challenges between the Heights and Billings proper have contributed to the perception that the Heights is a less desirable place to live and/or start a business. Most of the commercial district of the Heights is centered around Main Street, the primary access point for many surrounding neighborhoods and Highway 312. As a result, Main Street has become a heavily used commercial corridor. The ongoing construction of additional roadways through the Inner Belt Loop and Billings Bypass projects are intended to increase connectivity, improve traffic operations, and make the Heights more accessible overall.

Understanding these demographics and how they relate to the continued growth and improvement of the Heights will be instrumental in tailoring our communications approach.



## Target Audiences

Our team will tailor our outreach and engagement approach with the following Target Audiences in mind.

Audience	Communication Purpose
<b>1</b>  <b>Steering Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination/collaboration to discuss ideas and share opportunities to provide input.</li> <li>• Inform about project status.</li> <li>• Establish open lines of communication and facilitate a dialogue to inform document development.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>  <b>Stakeholder Groups*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heights Task Force</li> <li>• Heights Business Association</li> <li>• Yellowstone River Parks Association</li> <li>• Big Sky Economic Development</li> <li>• Law enforcement/EMS</li> <li>• School district representatives</li> <li>• Local clubs (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve them in the project; learn about needs.</li> <li>• Facilitate in-person meetings to collect input.</li> <li>• Inform about project status.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>  <b>Business and Property Owners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce project and share opportunities to provide input.</li> <li>• Inform about project status.</li> <li>• Facilitate open dialogue about comments/concerns.</li> <li>• Garner support.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>  <b>General Public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide general project information and inform about project status.</li> <li>• Share opportunities for public participation.</li> <li>• Garner support.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>  <b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide general project information.</li> <li>• Share opportunities for public participation.</li> <li>• Individual coordination to encourage media coverage and consistent project messaging.</li> </ul>

*\*Additional stakeholder groups (up to 10) will be identified in collaboration with the Steering Committee as the project evolves. This is a preliminary list.*

Communication Tactics

Our team will engage stakeholders and members of the public early in the data collection phase to solicit input and discuss the purpose of the project. We will develop targeted communications specific to the audiences identified in the table on page 4. The overall communications and engagement strategy will focus on delivering timely, accurate, and clear information to encourage public participation and support for the project using the tactics outlined in the table below.

Outreach/Communication Tactic	Project Phase				
	Project Initiation	Data Collection/Analysis	Document Development	Draft Document	Finalize/Revise Document
Public Participation Plan Development	X				
Logo and Brand Development	X				
Develop Stakeholder/Media Contact Lists	X				
Website, Interactive Map, and Online Survey	X				
Open Houses and Informational Video (including promotion, presentation materials, and media outreach)		X		X	
Graphics and Project Area Photography	X	X	X		
Stakeholder Meetings and Coordination	X	X	X		
Steering Committee Development, Coordination, and Meeting Facilitation	X	X	X	X	X