LAND USE

PART 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Geography

Hamilton is located in the Bitterroot Valley between the Bitterroot Mountain Range to the west and the Sapphire Mountain Range to the east. The Bitterroot River is the dominant natural feature in town. The city is built along an axis following U.S. Highway 93 which runs north-south roughly paralleling the Bitterroot River. The highway is the primary route to Missoula to the north.

According to the U.S. Census, in 2000 Hamilton encompassed about 2.31 square miles of land area. Most of the incorporated city is contained between the Bitterroot River and US 93. The city limits extend west of the River to encompass the city run cemetery. East of U.S. 93 the city boundaries are limited to an area roughly defined by Marcus Street on the south, the fairgrounds on the north and the high school to the east. Within the city limits, there are pockets of unincorporated areas that are wholly surrounded by the city. The city is annexing these neighborhoods where there are plans to provide services. The GlaxoSmithKline manufacturing facility is a non-contiguous parcel northeast of the city on Old Corvallis Road that is annexed as part of the city.

Hamilton is located at 46°14’54” North, 114°9’35” West. It has an altitude of approximately 3,500 feet above sea level. Neighboring communities include Pinesdale (pop. 742) and Corvallis (pop. 443) to the north and Grantsdale to the south. Other communities in the county are Darby, Florence, Stevensville and Victor.

Agricultural land with scattered housing developments surrounds the city. A significant floodplain and riparian area is associated with the Bitterroot River which runs on the west side of town.

2. Land Ownership

Within the City limits land is primarily in private ownership. Government owned land include facilities such as local government buildings, parks, and schools. Federal owned land includes the Rocky Mountain Laboratory campus and National Guard Amory. The State of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has a fishing access in town and Montana Department of Transportation owns the right-of-way for the roads, trails and adjoining park on US 93. There is no Federally owned public land in the unincorporated planning area. The USFS Bitterroot Forest, however, is located just outside the planning area boundaries.
Map 1: Ravalli County—Cities and Towns

Source: Montana Department of Natural Resources
Most of the land within the city limits is developed with limited opportunities for in-fill development. Commercial uses generally follow Highway 93 and Main Street. Industrial uses are concentrated along the north and south portions of the US 93 corridor. For the most part, land uses are clearly delineated except for some transition areas adjacent to the commercial areas, there is little intrusion of incompatible uses in neighborhoods. Land uses in the Hamilton can be divided into the following categories:

- **Single Family:** This type of development includes single family detached structures and single-family attached units. Within the city limits, such developments are generally on smaller lots, of less than 10,000 square feet. In the old parts of town a typical lot may be 30’ by 140’ although it is not uncommon to find these smaller platted lots that have been combined into a larger lot. Traditional neighborhoods are found west of US 93 and are laid out on a grid pattern. Newer neighborhoods east of 93 have somewhat larger lot size and curvilinear streets. The Arbors is a new subdivision incorporating some neo-traditional elements such as front porches, narrower streets and smaller homes on small lots. The photo to the right shows a shared driveway which allows for more efficient use of land and higher densities.

- **Multi-family:** This land use designation includes apartments, hotel apartments, nursing homes, and mobile homes. Typical apartment buildings in Hamilton are multi-story garden apartments of two to three stories. Such units are at scattered locations throughout town. There is a concentration of assisted living units with somewhat higher density near the hospital. Mobile home units are located east of US Highway 93 near the Vester Williams ball fields. There are also several such developments in the planning area.

- **Office-Transitional:** Offices transitional areas are generally located between commercial and single-family residential uses with a mix of lower impact uses such as offices, public facilities and residential. Office buildings are typically one- to two-story buildings. Near downtown there are some single-family structures that have been converted to office space.
• **Commercial, General:** Retail, food and beverage, lodging, personal or business service, banks, entertainment, professional offices, medical clinics, auto sales, farm implement, gas station, auto repair or service, drive-in restaurants, car washes, and other uses are typical types of retail land uses. In highway commercial areas, sign clutter and lack of landscaping is a common concern.

Most of the commercial development along Highway 93 is single story structures with a mix of building facades. The largest structures are limited to supermarkets—grocery stores of medium size. Big box super centers that are commonly found in larger urban areas have not been established in Hamilton.

Hamilton has good examples of commercial redevelopment that have adapted old industrial structures into commercial uses. These redevelopment projects encourage investment in older areas of town while retaining the community character of Hamilton.

• **Downtown Commercial:** Commercial activities in the core area of town centered on Main Street. (See Section on Central Business District)

• **Industrial:** This land use category includes processing, manufacturing, contractor shops, outdoor storage, utilities, salvage yards, transfer stations, heavy equipment storage, warehouses, rail yards, and trucking terminals. This land use category has the widest variety of building types and land use impacts from outdoor processing to modern clean industrial buildings.

• **Public/Institutional:** Includes churches, government offices, schools, airport, and museums.

• **Parks** — Open space (See Parks and Recreation Element)
4. Central Business District

Central business districts or downtowns often define the community. The impressions visitors have of a place most often relates to the impression they have of downtown. Downtowns give communities a sense of place, preserve the history of the community and differentiate the city from homogenous highway commercial developments. A vital downtown can be the foundation for other economic development success. The community survey indicated that promoting downtown Hamilton is a top priority. Some of the features that give a downtown its character and ambience are described below.

A. Boundaries
The downtown boundaries as defined by the Central Business District zoning district and the Business Improvement District contains 11 city blocks between Cherry Street and State Street with US 93 as the east border and 5th street as the western most border.

B. Signage/Gateway
There is no directional signage to downtown or gateway entrance treatment. The main entryway is Main Street at US 93.

C. Land Use and Zoning
The Hamilton Zoning Ordinance has a Central Business District zone that contains regulations that differentiate the downtown from the general highway commercial uses. Examples of permitted uses include retail, financial institutes, restaurants and tavern, and offices.

The CBD zone also permits dwellings but restricts such units to upper stories. Drive-thru restaurants are prohibited. Parking requirements provide for a credit for on-street parking spaces. Building height is limited to three stories. In addition to the “City of Hamilton Building and Site Design Guidelines” has an appendix with specific design guidelines for the downtown area to recognize the unique historical character of the district. In general there is a concentration of retail and eating/drinking establishments on Main Street. Some first floor office space is interspersed amidst the retail space. Office space is more prevalent on the periphery of the district.
4. Central Business District (cont)

D. Business Mix

Retail establishments are the most common type of business in the CBD followed by professional/medical offices. Office space located on both first and second floors of downtown buildings.

Table 1: Business Mix in Downtown Hamilton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auto</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating/Drinking Establishment</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance - Insurance—Real Estate</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Medical Office</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional – Government, Library, Senior Center, Post Office</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Service</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Building or Partially Vacant</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, Fall 2008

E. Architectural Features

The Downtown Hamilton Historic District Design Guidelines describe the architectural character of the district.

“Buildings in downtown Hamilton date from the 1890’s to the present and vary widely in style. They include a few wooden “boomtown” structures with false fronts, early commercial brick structures, a variety of styles form the 30’s to the 50’s and a few more recent structures. Brick predominates, with a variety of accents, from insets to cornices and other ornaments, and painted wood accents. Brick varies in color and type and may be painted. Recent awnings have replaced historical in nearly all cases. Some buildings retain pressed metal ceilings, leaded glass transoms, recessed entrances, and other distinctive features. Some buildings have been remodeled with stucco, and others of more recent construction have used this simple exterior finish.

The cohesive visual character of downtown is enhanced by similarly-scaled buildings elements. Most are two-story, similar in height, width, and upper story window and design treatments. Storefronts are mostly in alignment as you walk down the sidewalk.”
4. Central Business District (cont.)

F. Business Improvement District

A business improvement district is when downtown property owners elected to tax themselves and form a business improvement district under the powers granted by the State of Montana per MCA 17-12-11. The City appoints the BID Board of Trustees (MCA 7-12-1121), approves the annual budget and work plan (MCA 7-12-1132), and shall by resolution levy an annual assessment upon the properties within the district (MCA 7-12-1133).

The Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement District (DHBID) was established in 1998 and reauthorized for another 10-years in August of 2008. The purpose of the BID is to:

- To conserve the historic values and promote the economic vitality of Downtown Hamilton.
- To promote the health, safety, prosperity, security, and the general welfare of those who work, shop, visit, own property in, and enjoy Downtown Hamilton.
- To provide special benefits to owners of property and businesses within the DHBID.
- To serve as a unified voice, to the public and to government entities, for the owners of properties and their tenants within the DHBID.

Since 1998, accomplishments of the DHBID include overseeing downtown streetscapping and infrastructure improvements. Maintenance of public spaces, advocacy, and marketing. The DHBID coordinated with local government on issues such as parking, historic preservation, capital improvement planning, transportation planning, special improvement district, tax increment finance district and design standards. As part of the reauthorization process, the DHBID conducted a survey among property owners in the district. Parking and marketing were top issues for downtown business owners.

Table 2: DHBID Survey—2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source: Downtown Business Improvement Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Promote on-street parking for customers only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Market downtown Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Keep the downtown economically viable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Encourage local business to support each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promote local stores and downtown shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Support parking time limit enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Funnel new retail growth downtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Preserve our cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Retail design standards and zoning ordinances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sponsor plaques for historic buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Target tax incentives to local businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Publish a local business &amp; events directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Publish the Hamilton Record historic walking tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Address the impact of large-scale retail box stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Limit the size of retail super-stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Publish historic building renovation guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Downtown Business Improvement Survey
5. Land Development Regulations

A. Zoning

Title 17 of the Municipal Code. The Zoning Ordinance was most recently updated in 2006. The regulations contain provisions for 14 zoning districts plus parking, signs, home occupations and planned unit developments. (PUDs) Zoning regulations will control for the types of land uses allowed in each district, minimum lot sizes, and setbacks. Regulations also includes standards to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses. Following is a list of zoning districts.

17.24 Single-Family Residential
17.30 Multiple-Family Residential
17.32 Residential High Density
17.38 Historical (Residential) District (Reserved)
17.44 Mobile Home Park Residential
17.60 Professional Services Business
17.64 Transitional Neighborhood Business
17.68 Local Business
17.74 Highway Related Business
17.76 Central Business District
17.80 Commercial/Manufacturing
17.84 Manufacturing/Industrial
17.88 Public and Institutional
17.92 Planned Unit Development

B. Subdivision

The Subdivision Regulations are contained in Title 16 of the Municipal Code. The provisions in these chapters are in conformance with the Montana Subdivision and Planning Act (Title 75, Chapter 3 MCA). The regulations provide for the division of land, the provision of roads and other infrastructure to serve new developments and the promote other public safety and conservation objectives. Public works standards with specifications for road, water and sewer improvements are incorporated by reference by the subdivision regulations.

C. Design Regulations

The City has adopted “Building and Design Guidelines” for the city of Hamilton. The guidelines apply to all development within the city’s jurisdictional area for proposals to develop land or remodel existing structures. The purpose of the standards is to protect the unique character of Hamilton. The design guidelines are used for reviewing proposals for new development in regards for site design and building design. Applicants should comply with the guidelines to the extent possible. Deviations from the standards may be obtained through a special use process as established in the zoning ordinance.

D. Annexation

The procedures for annexing land to the city vary depending on the type of annexation. The Montana Code Annotated specifies the various methods of annexation (MCA, Title 7, Chapter 2, Part 42 through 47)
6. Historic Resources

A. National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation’s cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act, the Register is administered by the National Park Service. Properties on the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Since listing on the register is voluntary, there may be properties that are historically significant or identified in some other survey that are not listed on the National Register. Table 3 only represents properties actually on the National Register.

Table 3: Properties Listed on the National Register

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Date Listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allison—Reinkeh House</td>
<td>207 Adirondack St</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean, Daniel V. House</td>
<td>611 N. Second</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood, Oliver, House</td>
<td>524 S. First St.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Creek Laboratory—US. Public Health Service</td>
<td>W. of Hamilton City Limits</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conway House</td>
<td>805 S. Fourth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daly, Marcus, Memorial Hospital (Current Use—County Offices)</td>
<td>211 S. 4th St.</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinkenberg’s, F.H., First Home</td>
<td>701 N. Second</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, E.G., House</td>
<td>801 N. Third</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foye Rental Houses</td>
<td>819 and 821 N. Fourth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goff House</td>
<td>115 N. Fifth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon House</td>
<td>806 S. Fourth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granke, Charles House</td>
<td>40 S. Seventh St.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Town Hall (Current Use—Fire Dept.)</td>
<td>175 S. 3rd St.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman, Charles, House</td>
<td>807 S. Third</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagerquist, Hohn, House</td>
<td>701 N. Fourth St.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGlaflin House</td>
<td>518 S. Eighth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Apartments</td>
<td>804 S. Fourth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravalli County Courthouse (Current Use—Museum)</td>
<td>225 Bedford St.</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>Eastside Hamilton</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stout, Hohn, House</td>
<td>1000 S. First</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trosdahl, Erick</td>
<td>206 S. Seventh</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFW Club</td>
<td>930 Adirondac</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallin, Frank House</td>
<td>608 N. Seventh St.</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamsley, Other C. House</td>
<td>200 N. Fifth</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Park Service, National Register Index Service
B. Historic Districts

In addition to the individual buildings listed on the National Historic Register, there are three historic districts that have been established within the city limits of Hamilton. Historic Districts are established after a survey establishes boundaries that encapsulates a particular architectural type of historic context. The survey identifies contributing and non-contributing structures in the district. Contributing structures are those buildings or features which sustain and enforce the historic context of the neighborhood. Once the district is established, properties owners may be eligible for certain tax incentives, cities and states may impose design standards or review. The city does not currently have zoning regulations for historic preservation. The Downtown Business Improvement District has “Historic District Design Guidelines”. Following is a summary of the Historic Districts in Hamilton.

1. Hamilton Commercial Historic District
   - Boundaries—Main, N. Second, S. Second, S. Third and States Streets
   - Date Listed—1988
   - Appendix A of the “City of Hamilton Building and Site Design Standards” include specific guidelines for this the Historic Downtown Area
   - The Downtown BID has published a walking tour brochure for this district identifying historically significant structures.

2. Hamilton Southside Residential
   - Boundaries—S. First, S. Second, S. Third, S. Fourth, and S. Fifth Sts.
   - Date Listed—1988
   - Section 17.38 of the Zoning Ordinance is reserved for a “Historical Residential District”

3. Rocky Mountain Laboratory Historic District
   - Boundaries—900 Block of Forth St.
   - Date Listed 1988
   - The eastern portion of the RML campus contains structures that together comprise the Rocky Mountain Laboratories Historic District. It includes 10 buildings and site amenities such as mature trees, period lighting, and landscaping that contribute to the integrity of the district. The buildings are generally brick academic style and clapboard frame houses. The recently adopted RML Master Plan maintains the buildings within the Historic District.
6. Historic Resources (cont.)

C. Marcus Daly Mansion

The Daly Mansion is located in the Hamilton Planning Area. The Daly Mansion was purchased by the State of Montana in 1986 through the Montana Estate Tax Forgiveness Act, in conjunction with a loan from the National Trust for historic Preservation. It is a public/private State historic site, operated by the Daly Mansion Preservation Trust (DMPT) in partnership with the University of Montana. The State of Montana leases the Mansion and approximately 50 acres of grounds to the DMPT. The DMPT is charged with the full financial responsibility of the Mansion which includes salaries, maintenance, restoration and operation costs. The DMPT does not receive any operational support, at this time, from either the State or the Federal Government. The Mansion was first opened to the public in May 1987, after being closed, boarded up, and abandoned following Margaret Daly’s death in 1941.
7. Brownfields

Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties both improves and protects the environment.

A. Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

Petroleum and hazardous substance releases can contaminate soil, groundwater and surface water, and may threaten or impact public and private drinking water supplies. Additionally, harmful and potentially explosive hydrocarbon vapors can accumulate in confined spaces such as basements, crawl spaces and utility corridors. If a petroleum release occurs, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Petroleum Release Section assists the facility owner or operator to assess the potential threat to human health and the environment, and provides assistance with corrective action. The Montana Petroleum Tank Release Compensation Board (PTCRB) provides financial reimbursement of eligible corrective action cleanup costs to tank owners and operators.

The Montana DEQ database reports a total of 55 storage tank facilities in and around Hamilton. Of these tanks there are nine properties with reported leaks that are actively being remediated or monitored. All but the BPOE and Rocky Mountain Lab sites have received funding from the PTCRB PROGRAMS. Causes of contamination include perforation of the tank, corrosion, leaking pipes and spills. Remediation may include removal of contaminated soil, groundwater testing and other preventative measures. More information on these sites is available from the Department of Natural Resource and Information, Natural Resource Information System. (http://nris.mt.gov/interactive.html)

B. Remediation Response Sites

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality list there are two remediation sites in the planning area. These sites may include state superfund sites, Federal superfund sites, Metal Mine Reclamation Sites, brownfields and voluntary clean-up sites. The sites in the planning area are described below.


C. Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulates facilities that deal with hazardous substances. The Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) requires that generators, transporters, treaters, storers, and disposers of hazardous waste provide information concerning their activities to state environmental agencies. These types of uses typically include transportation, construction, commercial cleaning and medical uses. State agencies report to regional and national U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offices who use the data primarily to track handler permit or closure status, compliant with Federal and State regulations, and cleanup activities. There are 17 handlers in the planning area listed in the database.
8. Land Use and Noise

Noise is unwanted sound. Noise has become a serious environmental problem because of its adverse effects on people and the environment. People are exposed to various levels and sources of noise every day, which affects them physically and psychologically. The most apparent physiological effect of noise is the temporary, or in some cases, permanent, loss of hearing. Noise can disrupt or interfere with communications and disturb sleep. It can also decrease children’s ability to discriminate among different sounds which affects their learning ability.

The predominant land use in the City is residential, and should also be considered the most noise sensitive. Other noise sensitive land uses include schools, parks, hospitals and churches. The noise sources in Hamilton consist primarily of transportation related noise and other attendant urban sources, such as heating and ventilating equipment, barking dogs, and human activities.

Because Highway 93 bisects Hamilton, traffic noise levels are relatively elevated throughout the City when compared with similarly sized communities. Maintenance of a moderately quiet ambience is important to maintaining the overall atmosphere of the area. The ambient noise levels for the City are lower in areas not adjacent to the Highway 93. Motor vehicle noise will continue to be significant even if each individual vehicle eventually meets state noise standards.

Noise ordinances are designed to protect people from the non-transportation related noise sources such as music, machinery and vehicular traffic on private property. Noise ordinances do not apply to motor vehicle noise on public streets or other transportation related noise sources that are preempted by the State or Federal government.

The most effective method the City has to mitigate all types of noise is through reducing the impact of the noise on the community through the use of noise barriers and site design review. Mitigation through the design and construction of a noise barrier (wall, berm, or combination wall/berm) is the most common way of alleviating noise impacts. The effect of a noise barrier is critically dependent on the geometry between the noise source and the receiver. A noise barrier effect occurs when the “line of sight” between the source and receiver is penetrated by the barrier. The greater the penetration the greater the noise reduction. Another option to mitigate noise is to use less noise sensitive uses such as office space as transitional buffers.

Noise concerns should be incorporated into land use planning to reduce future noise and land use incompatibility. This is achieved by establishing standards and criteria that specify acceptable limits of noise for various land uses throughout the City. These criteria are designed to integrate noise considerations into land use planning to prevent noise/land use conflicts. The noise/land use compatibility is used to assess the compatibility of proposed land uses with the noise environment.
PART 2: TRENDS

Trend 1: Community Character

Community character is comprised of physical elements that contribute to the individual identity of a place or neighborhood. These elements include natural features, historic and cultural resources, parks schools and other focal points. The mix of land uses and scale of buildings as well as architectural type are other important aspects of community character. Neighborhoods are more stable when the positive attributes of community character are protected. Design standards are one way to promote community character by identifying site layouts and building components that should be incorporated into new construction to maintain the sense of place. Land use changes should represent the type of neighborhood whether it is established and traditional, rural or new suburban type of development.

Hamilton Community Survey:
- 56.3% of respondents rated “Preserving small town character” as a top priority. This was the second highest rated priority.
- The top two planning policies supported by survey respondents were “Neighborhood Revitalization” and “Promote historic preservation”. Both of these policies contribute to community character.
- Limiting billboards on US 93 was the top land-use policy in the survey.

Figure 15: Example of new commercial development built to reflect the historic character of downtown through scale, building materials, signage and period light fixtures.

Figure 16: Well maintained older homes, front porches, mature landscaping, and architectural style all contribute to the community character of this residential neighborhood south of downtown.

“You will love Hamilton! The City is surrounded by beautiful mountains, and has some of the best fishing in the country. The people are very friendly, and there is a real small-town atmosphere here. You may never want to leave!”

(Quote from Growth Policy Focus Group Meeting—June, 2008)
Trend 2: Smart Growth

The concept of “Smart Growth” was mentioned repeatedly in focus group meetings, visioning sessions and in comments from the community survey. Smart growth is a term to describe how growth and development can promotes quality of life in a community rather than diminishes the characteristics that are valued by citizens. Smart growth practices extend infrastructure in a cost-effective manner, minimize traffic congestion, use land efficiently, and protect the environment. Smart growth techniques include a combination of actions from both the public and private sectors to meet the challenges of growth.

The International City Management Association defines “Smart Growth” as follows:

“Smart growth is development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. It provides a framework for communities to make informed decisions about how and where they grow. Smart growth makes it possible for communities to grow in ways that support economic development and jobs; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial, and transportation options; and achieve healthy communities that provide families with a clean environment.”


The publication identifies ten Smart Growth Principles. Many of them relate to land use decisions and regulations. The City of Hamilton has already incorporated many of the suggestions such as establishing historic districts, adopting design standards, examining the fiscal impact of development and annexation, and incorporating a public process to develop the growth policy. Future planning efforts and regulatory changes can continue to adopt these principles.

Figure 17: The new pathway and park where US 93 crosses the Bitterroot River represents a number of Smart Growth Principles. It promotes walkable communities and represents a collaboration of a number of State and local stakeholders. Period lighting and landscaping contribute to a sense of place while the open space protects the floodplain along the river.
Trend 3: Residential Growth

Housing starts in the last ten years peaked in 2001 and 2005. There was a decline in new housing starts in 2008. Since 2000, there have been a total of 455 building permits for dwelling units issued in the city limits of Hamilton.

Figure 18: Building Permits for Dwelling Units Issued by City of Hamilton

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Trend 4: Commercial Growth

Most of the commercial growth of in the City over the last ten years has occurred along the US 93 corridor. A field survey of businesses was conducted in January, 2009 and extended from Skalkaho Road to the bridge crossing on US 93. According to the field survey, retail is the most common type of business followed by Finance-Insurance-Real Estate offices and auto oriented uses. Contractor and industrial/warehouse uses tend to be concentrated along the north and south ends of the corridor. About half of the eating and drinking establishments were either casinos, fast-food or coffee huts. Large-scale retail such as grocery stores, hardware stores, and lawn and garden stores were mostly located along this corridor as opposed to the central business district. Vacancies rate reflects vacant suites or offices in commercial businesses. The vacancy rate was 11% on US 93 as opposed to 9% in the downtown area.

Table 4: Business Mix on US 93 Corridor

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<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional/Medical Office</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Institutional – Government</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Service</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacant Building or Partially Vacant</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Services</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial/Warehouse</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey—January, 2009
Trend 5: Rocky Mountain Lab Master Plan

The Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) is a 33-acre facility located in Hamilton, Montana. It is one of the facilities that is operated by the National Institute of Health. RML was originally established in Hamilton, MT in 1928 to study Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Its mission has expanded over the years and it is now one of the NIH facilities that conduct biodefense research. The facility currently employs approximately 330 individuals. The 20-year Master Plan provides for an increase in employment over the planning horizon to 427 employees. The lab is located adjacent to an established residential area with primary access on local residential streets.

The 2008 Plan is the first Master Plan for the RML campus. The Plan is a guide for orderly development of the campus that provides a framework in which design and construction may occur on the campus over the next 20 years. It does not represent a specific construction program. The planning process included RML staff interviews, community scoping meetings and an Environmental Impact Statement. The basic goals of the RML Master Plan are:

- An attractive campus whose setting and composition promote collegial interaction and opportunities for informal collaboration and conversation. A flexible framework for development of the campus, one that can adapt to the potential needs of current and future RML and NIAID programs over time.
- A campus that affords a secure, supportive, and convenient work environment for RML personnel, with amenities that enhance the quality of life for staff.
- Enhanced appearance of the RML campus to complement the surrounding residential community.
- Protected and enhanced natural, historic, and scenic resources at RML.
- Enhanced communications about NIH goals and policies.
- Environmental Sustainability/Low Impact Development

In order to achieve the goals, the Master Plan calls for an expansion of the campus to the north and northeast that will require land acquisition. To mitigate the impact of this expansion the Plan incorporates the following key features:

- 100’ buffer zone around site perimeter. Parking on north end is within the perimeter.
- Concentrate tallest buildings at center of campus with a transition in height to lower buildings at the perimeter.
- Best Management Practices (BMP) for Low Impact Development (LID) to protect natural areas and protect water quality from stormwater run-off.
- Acquire property at northeast corner of the site to create a publically accessible Interpretive Center.
- Use the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation for RML Historic District.
- Develop a pedestrian trail in the floodplain area to link to a public trail system should one be developed.
- Avoid spillover lighting into adjacent neighborhoods.
- The plan may require demolition of buildings and construction. Noise, traffic and waste disposal should be mitigated during these phases.

(A complete copy of the Plan and EIS are available at: http://orf.od.nih.gov/Planning+and+Space+Management/NIHMasterPlanning/RMLMasterPlan.htm)
PART 3: OPPORTUNITIES—BEST PRACTICES

1. Downtown Master Plan

The City of Hamilton does not have a comprehensive Master Plan. The purpose of a master plan is to illustrate the overall vision of the Downtown and to provide an implementation strategy that enables the City, property owners and citizens to make informed, strategic decisions about future development and public improvements. A master plan details a Downtown urban design framework and identifies specific public improvements including streetscape amenities, directional signage systems, opportunity sites for infill and/or redevelopment, circulation framework and parking improvements. The elements of the master plan vary depending on the needs of the community. Some elements may be separate planning documents that supplement the other planning efforts. Following are common elements of a Downtown Master Plan.

- Historic Preservation & Urban Design
- Streetscape & Public Amenities
- Parking, Transportation & Pedestrian Improvements
- Marketing Plan
- Land use, signage & zoning

2. Main Street Program

The State of Montana Main Street program uses an integrated, strategic Four Point Approach to Downtown revitalization that includes the following elements: Organization, Design, Economic Restructuring and Promotion. It is an incremental, grass-roots driven effort based on local community priorities and investment. It is based on the principal that effective Downtown revitalization doesn’t “just happen” — it requires focused energy and strategic decisions based on sound market analysis and community values. Typical Main Street program activities are business retention, recruitment, promotion, safety, maintenance, and planning. The underlying premise is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation. The Main Street approach encourages communities to use their unique assets--distinctive architecture, pedestrian friendly atmosphere, local ownership, and personal services--to rebuild their downtowns. The DHBID provides many services associated with a Main Street Program. The State of Montana Main Street Program was established in 2005 and consists of two types of designation:

1) Fully designated communities. Designated Communities must hire at least a part-time paid executive director and must have more than 5,000 residents. Designated communities receive on-site technical training delivered by the National Main Street Center.

2) Affiliate Communities: Affiliate communities are those with fewer than 5,000 residents. There is no requirement to hire a paid director. However, affiliate communities do not receive on-site technical training. The purpose of the affiliate program is to provide educational and networking opportunities for rural communities.

(Source: http://mtmainstreet.mt.gov/)
3. Historic Preservation—Certified Cities

Montana's Community Preservation program, also known as the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, is a means of preserving historic resources in communities. The program is based upon an appreciation of the community's historic patterns, architectural styles, influential architects and builders, significant people and events, and historic and prehistoric archeology.

In partnership with the National Park Service under the National Historic Preservation Act, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) certifies local governments with historic preservation programs, provides technical preservation assistance, and annually dedicate 10% of federal funding to cities, towns, and counties that commit themselves to preserving their heritage under the program. Each CLG receives $1,000 to $5,000, depending on their level of activity and the federal allocation. Towns can spend in ways that best assist their community's local preservation needs.

http://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/

4. EPA Brownfield Programs

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program provides direct funding for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and environmental job training. To facilitate the leveraging of public resources, EPA’s Brownfields Program collaborates with other EPA programs, other federal partners, and state agencies to identify and make available resources that can be used for brownfields activities. In addition to direct brownfields funding, EPA also provides technical information on brownfields financing matters. EPA Brownfields Grants are listed below.

- Assessment Grants
- Revolving Loan Fund Grants
- Cleanup Grants
- Job Training Grants
- Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants

(http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/assessment_grants.htm)
PART 4: GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance high quality development throughout the city.

A. Encourage variety, quality, and innovation in land use practice through modern, flexible land development regulations.
B. Promote quality commercial and industrial development.
C. Coordinate development review with different local, state and federal agencies that are involved in various aspects of development or may be affected by new development.
D. Continue to periodically review development standards to determine if they are adequate to meet health and safety concerns and are consistent with desired development patterns.
E. Require buffers between different types of land use that may cause conflict between the property owners.
F. Incorporate amenities into developments such as pocket parks, activity nodes, courtyards, plazas, and gathering places.
G. Coordinate with the National Institute of Health to make sure that any future expansion of the Rocky Mountain Lab does not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood.

Goal 2: Promote an economically viable Central Business District.

A. Work with the Business Improvement District to prepare a downtown master plan to strengthen the community center for shopping, finance, entertainment and culture.
B. Coordinate with the Business Improvement District to investigate the benefits of participation the Montana Main Street program.
C. Promote retail uses on first floor of buildings on Main Street to create a uninterrupted shopper traffic for shops on Main Street.
D. Use entry treatments, signage and public art to attract traffic from US 93 to the downtown area.
E. Encourage the use of on-street parking for customers of downtown businesses.
F. Reinforce downtown development through strategic public-private investment that will encourage further investment in the downtown.
G. Create a vibrant atmosphere to attract new businesses and residents with a mix of entertainment, eateries, public facilities, office, and medium-high density multi-family uses.
H. Promote events that contribute to the lively atmosphere of downtown and attract customers and residents to the area.
Goal 3: **Encourage the orderly growth and development of the community.**

A. Annexations should provide a direct benefit to the City and should be evaluated for fiscal soundness.

B. Annexations should represent the logical extension of city boundaries and services.

C. The City should consider an intergovernmental agreement with the county to regulate development adjacent to the city and ensure such development is consistent with the goals of the city.

D. Allow for innovative development that promotes principles of smart growth.

E. Promote in-fill development that is served by infrastructure and compatible with existing neighborhoods.

F. Direct development to areas already served by infrastructure.

G. Consider annexation and extension of services where such action will have a public health or environmental benefit.

H. Annexation that is not contiguous to the city it should meet all of the objectives of this section.

Goal 4: **Preserve the small town and community character of Hamilton.**

A. Development projects should reflect the character and scale of nearby properties.

B. Investigate the adoption of zoning regulations for historic districts and consider participation in the Certified Local Government Program.

C. Review development regulations and amend provisions for signs, billboards, landscaping and other features promote an attractive gateway to the community along the US 93 corridor.

D. New development should protect the visual and scenic quality of the community.

E. Work with community groups and the state agencies to preserve and rehabilitate sites of historic significance within the community.

F. Transition areas between residential land uses and the RML site or commercial core should allow for redevelopment and new investment while being sensitive to the existing character of surrounding neighborhoods.

Goal 5: **Confine impacts of development to the site or mitigate adverse impacts.**

A. New development should mitigate potential traffic safety hazards and should not create undue traffic congestion.

B. Include performance standards for industrial and commercial development in the transition areas to make sure such uses do not negatively impact nearby residential uses.

C. Investigate brownfield programs to clean-up hazardous sites for redevelopment.

D. Reduce the impact of noise on the community through design features that are incorporated during site review and through the use of land use transitions.

E. Identify programs to assist property owners with the clean-up of sites that are contaminated from leaking underground storage tanks.