

Historic Site Development Plan For Virginia and Nevada Cities - 2008



Project Background:

The Montana Heritage Commission (MHC) will conduct a historic site development plan that will detail the projects, infrastructure and program priorities for the sustainable development of Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana. This planning project is a joint collaboration with the Town of Virginia City, and Madison County. While progress has been made to stabilize and preserve buildings, care for artifacts, and attract visitors, MHC does not have a comprehensive vision of how MHC and the community will collaborate to develop the sites and guide future decision-making.

One of our goals with this planning project is to identify services needed to support expanded educational activities, and encourage transition from a 1-season to a 3-season destination. This development plan will identify specific improvement projects and new (public and private) development potential in the study area. It will identify how and where our agencies can expand visitor services, create new business opportunities, grow existing MHC programs, and offer more educational experiences.

This is a fragile historic area and is geographically limited in how much development it can handle. Recent growth and the potential for additional private development is creating strain on this small community. A key objective of this plan will be to create a realistic vision to accommodate growth and change—within careful limits that the residents and local governments can accept.

This project is intended to combine our resources and mutual interest into one “master plan” for this area – which is a supported implementation policy in both the city and county growth management plans. The economic success of the area is directly linked to historic preservation and to living within the financial means of the community. This plan will combine the best of a site plan and business plan for the future of our unique resources at these sites.

Timeline: We have selected A&E Architects (Billings) as the lead planning consultants. The formal planning process started in February and will be completed in December 2008.

Funding: Funding for the project is coming from the Montana Heritage Commission, the MT History Foundation, a Community Development Block Grant from the MT Department of Commerce, and Madison County.

Purpose & Goals:

- involve the community and elected officials in a meaningful process

- create a vision that will help with future fundraising and a capital campaign
- identify specific projects and actions for MHC and local governments that will implement the plan (zoning, design review etc.)
- build excitement and clarity about the future of our historic sites
- address private and area development issues as they relate to our sites

Scope of Work and Plan Content:

The most challenging and intensive part of this project will be the public involvement process. Local residents are very passionate in their opinions about the future of these historic sites, and we want to engage them in ways that are meaningful and substantive.

The content of the plan will include:

- 1) Public Infrastructure: sewer, water, road improvements (leverage existing data)
 - a. Goal: identify projects & improvements that will support the project outcomes in this plan.
- 2) Parking Improvements
 - a. Goal: conduct inventory, improve site layout & management, new locations
 - b. Goal: create new way-finding and signage plans
- 3) Land Uses & New Development
 - a. Vacant parcels (id. land uses of)
 - b. Entryway plans (east and west)
 - c. Alder Cr. area enhancements (mine tailing, trash collection site)
 - d. Preliminary design for new visitor centers (LEED)
 - e. Preliminary design for new education center (LEED)
 - f. New housing needs (existing buildings)
 - g. Storage buildings
 - h. Development properties (hotel, businesses, 3-season services)
- 4) Historic Properties (existing buildings)
 - a. New economic uses to existing properties (new business opportunity)
 - b. History education & interpretation improvements (outdoors)
- 5) Amenities and Public Spaces
 - a. Parks, bathrooms, trail systems
- 6) MHC operations (improvements to existing operations)
 - a. example; growth in Virginia City Institute (VCI), what's needed for infrastructure?
- 6) Other (unknowns)

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