

Mayor Davis' Task Force on City Land Redevelopment

RECOMMENDATIONS

JULY 2025

Mission

To advise and support the City in developing a clear, actionable strategy for the disposition or redevelopment of City-owned properties that are surplus to municipal needs in the short and long term. The Mayor's goal is to utilize these City-owned properties to expand housing options Missoulians can afford and advance broader neighborhood and community objectives.

Vision

Missoula's "redevelopment lands" will be strategically used to address the city's most pressing challenges—affordable housing, economic vitality, nontax revenue sources, and community well-being. Rather than treating each parcel in isolation, the City will approach its land assets as a mosaic of interconnected opportunities. Redevelopment decisions will be made with a portfolio mindset—sequencing actions, unlocking leverage, and aligning with broader community plans to deliver measurable, lasting public benefit.

Guiding Principles

City-owned Properties for Public Benefit

City-owned land should be utilized in ways that create long-term public value. Examples of long-term value propositions include housing our residents can afford, economic opportunity, public spaces, critical infrastructure, and other such benefits. Proceeds from the sale of lands can be a public benefit when utilized to advance community goals, even if those goals are offsite.

Strategic Leverage, Not One-Off Sales

Properties must be evaluated as a portfolio with an eye toward how the sale, development, or retention of one parcel can enable collective outcomes or opportunities on, or via, other redevelopment lands.

Right Use, Right Place

Not every site can or should serve every goal. Housing, commercial, community, and recreation space uses should be matched to the specific strengths, constraints, and neighborhood context of each site as well as broader community needs. Prioritization and pragmatism will help the City avoid imposing unattainable requirements on redevelopment.

Engagement with Pragmatism

Public engagement and Council direction are vital, but must be paired with clear communication about market realities, trade-offs, and feasibility.

Balance Speed with Stewardship

Missoula faces urgent needs. Redevelopment should move with purpose, while still honoring long-term community plans and maintaining transparency and engagement. Creating the opportunity to develop faster also reduces costs to the developer and ultimately to the buyer.

Fiscal Responsibility and Creativity

Use a full range of financial tools—sales, leases, TIF, partnerships—to maximize long term public benefit and reinvest strategically, while staying grounded in legal and achievable community expectations. For example, a long-term ground lease could provide ongoing revenue as well as better control for a change of use in the future.

Preliminary Action Items

Develop a Prioritization Framework

Establish criteria for evaluating redevelopment properties based on readiness, impact potential, alignment with city plans, available financing tools, urgency, and potential role within the portfolio. Criteria should include public benefit (e.g., housing, connectivity, revitalization), development readiness, market conditions, and availability of tools like TIF. Apply the criteria to the City's surplus properties and develop implementation plans.

Document and Communicate Strategy

Produce a concise written strategy based on the prioritization framework to guide decisions, inform Council and public discussions, and provide a foundation for future updates and implementation. This strategy will clearly articulate how City-owned property will be used to meet both near- and long-term community goals that have been articulated in existing plans but have also been reviewed for relevance and achievability.

Leverage Community Partnerships for Implementation

Engage task force members and other community stakeholders as public ambassadors for the strategy. Their credibility and cross-sector representation can support adoption by Council and foster understanding among residents. Consider reconvening the task force or subsets of it to review major proposals or provide early feedback on project alignment with strategy.

Advance High-Readiness Sites

Focus initial action on sites with minimal barriers and near-term development potential (e.g., Southgate Crossing), while creating strategies to unlock complex sites through infrastructure, partnerships, or consolidation. For example, prioritize master planning and strategic phasing for the City-owned parcels on the Northside—including White Pine Park, the Rodgers Street property, and the Back Nine. These sites present unique opportunities to consolidate City operations, unlock land for housing, and reinvest sale proceeds in neighborhood parks and amenities.

Make Deliberate Choices About All Redevelopment Sites

When parcels are low-priority, unready, or deliberately held to achieve specific long-term goals, ensure that City staff and partners remain aware of redevelopment lands and goals and alert to opportunities as proximate development occurs or opportunities to advance goals arise. When sites offer low or undefined non-fiscal public benefits, consider immediate disposition with minimal requirements. Acknowledge interim uses of City properties where applicable and identify them as transitional rather than permanent. Incorporate timelines or triggers for reevaluating their continued use as development readiness evolves.

Designate the City's Role Site by Site and Project by Project

The City can play different roles at different sites: seller, partner, convener, or lead developer. Site planning should explore opportunities for public-private and nonprofit collaboration while being mindful of site and resource constraints. Engagement with potential goal-aligned partners (especially affordable housing partners) at the outset of site planning increases the likelihood of achieving challenging development goals, such as income-qualified housing. Consider models that retain long-term public value (e.g., land leases).

Revisit City Policies Related to Surplus Lands

Re-examine current lands policies that may inadvertently impede stated goals. Evaluate whether support for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund is best realized by the current policy that directs all property sale proceeds into the Fund or whether greater strategic flexibility and sequencing will achieve better results. Evaluate when reinvestment in infrastructure or key capital priorities might better serve the City's housing or broader goals.

Re-examine whether the goal of working with trusted partners to develop homes Missoulians can afford is best-served by the current policy that requires the City to offer the Missoula Housing Authority the opportunity to acquire lands considered for disposition.

Prioritize Engen Building Transition

Redevelopment of the Engen Building will unlock other important redevelopment opportunities and reduce reliance on leased space. Consider how disposition of certain parcels within the portfolio could fund or facilitate the move to the Engen Building, unlocking key redevelopment opportunities and reducing the need for property tax revenue.

Evaluate Current Goals and Policies

Goals established for particular sites or within aspirational planning documents may be barriers to redevelopment. Goals established for stagnant sites such as the Sleepy Inn and Old Library Block should be reviewed for currency and achievability. Avoid premature infrastructure commitments that may limit future options or provide a low return on investment. Where appropriate, preserve rights-of-way to maintain long-term flexibility without impacting immediate construction potential.

Produce Public-Facing Prospectuses

Develop and publish clear, accessible prospectuses for priority redevelopment properties to attract qualified partners and build community understanding. Include use potential, available tools, site constraints, and planning alignment.

Report Progress and Outcomes

Follow-up with the task force every six months to report progress on action items.