

X. FUTURE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

While our research provided an overall assessment of how Missoula's land inventory is prepared for near future industrial development, it was also able to point to a number of opportunities for further analysis. There are many participants already engaged in the endeavor to attract good, solid industries to our valley that will employ a willing workforce. So any future analysis should be able to work with these groups and agencies to follow-up on important leads. Here are a few of the possibilities:

1. **Broadband Availability** – Missoula is unique in Montana and has a competitive market with multiple Internet Service Provider (ISP) options. The Missoula Community recognizes the importance of fiber as basic infrastructure to do business. In August of 2014 Missoula completed a Next Generation Broadband Feasibility study that was funded by the city, county, and Montana Department of Commerce. Missoula has put together a Broadband Taskforce of ISP's, public and private sector representatives to help guide developing a Master Plan for an Open Access Network, more "broadband friendly" public policy, greater sharing of broadband records and information, and education of the community regarding what broadband services are available. This effort to incorporate information in the Industrials Lands Map is part of that effort.

An Open Access Broadband Master Plan is currently in progress, the outcome of this work is to deliver a business plan and operations strategy that will increase competition and reduce rates with the goal to deliver improved and affordable high speed/high capacity broadband for the benefit of economic development in the region.

2. **Zoning** – We have done a brief analysis of the difference between industrial zoning in City contrasted with County industrial zones. We believe there should be research into ways that the County's industrial zones could be modified or amended to provide for a simpler transition to a broader array of commercial uses on industrial zoned lands, where the need is identified.
3. **Transloader Facilities** – Missoula's rail service provides an important opportunity for efficient delivery of large shipments of raw materials and export of large shipments of finished product. However, there are a limited number of sites with direct access to rail spurs (see Map). Transloader facilities can fill this gap by enabling the transfer of freight between rail and truck or pipeline, thus broadening the area of freight delivery. Missoula has some existing transloader locations and recently the Bonner Transfer and Storage Company announced it was going to occupy the largest warehouse at the Millsite. There are other potential sites that may be good locations for rail/truck transloader facilities, such as the northside MRL property lying to the east of Bitterroot Lumber, or a number of sites near the Wye.

4. **Clustering of Interdependent Businesses** – Certain types of industry thrive better when they are located in proximity to other businesses that offer such things as support services such as copying or food service. The environment of a Montec or business incubator can be instrumental in getting new industry off the ground. Even beyond the start-up stage, there are advantages to locating close to businesses that can share technology, transportation or other services. Perhaps it would be possible to determine whether the clustering model could be applied to the Technology zoned area of the Missoula Development Park where 12 vacant lots existing next to Direct TV.
5. **Industrial Site Readiness & Certification** – There are examples in other states in the region such as Oregon and Washington that have developed criteria for site certification. This allows communities to assess industrial site readiness. It also reduces risk for potential developers. Missoula could be the first community in the state of Montana to establish such a program. A program such as this would narrow the amount of land that meets certification status, but would add value to potential users by identifying the land that is most suited for industrial operations.

AREAS WITH INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIENCIES

Our research has identified “blocks” that may be appropriate for future industrial use but are deficient in infrastructure. The assessment of industrial lands did not address whether landowners in the noted blocks are interested in a public/private effort, including tax increment districts, to address deficiencies.

PAST CITY AND COUNTY EFFORTS

The City of Missoula, through the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, has addressed infrastructure needs for a series of tax increment financing districts (TIFD) throughout the urban area. Most recently the City designated the North Reserve/Scott Street District, where competing industrial/commercial/residential demands have pointed to the importance of planning for the future growth of this area.

The County developed the Missoula Development Park with a TIFD and a Technology District to finance the infrastructure. There are industrial and technology lots available for development.

Missoula County recently identified the Bonner/Milltown area for redevelopment and formed a TIFD and a TEDD (targeted economic development district) to finance infrastructure in the area. Missoula County recently received a grant to conduct a feasibility study for public wastewater treatment for the Bonner/Milltown area. Several options, including piping wastewater to the Missoula Wastewater Treatment Plant, will be considered.

Missoula County has been working closely with the Seeley Lake Sewer District to design and implement a wastewater treatment system in Seeley Lake to address ground water issues. The County is seeking a variety of funding sources to make this system affordable to the people who live in the area. Improved wastewater treatment would also benefit industrial development.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Looking west from the Airport and Development Park, just past the railroad overpass, there are areas on either side of Highway 10 that may benefit from road improvements, public water, and possibly rail spurs or sidings. Block numbers 5 and 6 have seen recent changes that point to a possible need for roadway improvements. Those areas were platted as Missoula Industrial Park, Racetrack Industrial Park, and adjoining Haffner subdivisions. Their design and layout was intended to benefit from the nearby rail line and the potential for spurs or sidings to serve industrial development within the subdivisions.

Block 8 on the other (north) side of Highway 10 is undeveloped, but if the property owners are interested may bear further investigation as to whether public infrastructure or rail extension will spur development.

It needs to be noted that any public effort at economic development or industrial expansion will only be successful with the full support of private investors. The Bonner Millsite redevelopment of recent years is a prime example of how the landowners, in coordination with the County and Montana Rail Link can work together to the benefit of all the parties concerned.