

# Planning & Community Services Department 2013 Annual Report

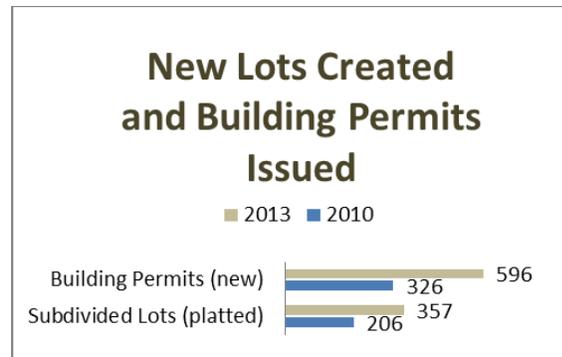


## Director's Report

Candi Millar, AICP, Planning & Community Services

Moving isn't easy, but if you have a good plan and are highly motivated, you just get 'er done. The Planning and Community Services Department old offices are scheduled to be demolished in January, 2014 when the old Library Building is razed - you can't get more motivated than that! The floor plans for the new Miller Building location (4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors, 2825 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N.) were skillfully prepared by O2 Architects while the remodeling was expertly and quickly performed by Fischer Construction. Others to thank for getting us situated on schedule are Neil Drywall, Square One Cabinets, Ace Electric, McBride Mechanical, Pierce Flooring and Van Arsdale Construction. Special thanks to City employees, Saree Couture and Doug Melius, whose persistent efforts ensured we were in on time and functioning quickly. We actually managed the entire move with less than a week of downtime. In the end, we have a very professional, customer friendly space and we are open for business. Thanks to everyone who assisted us in the move!

Three years ago I reported a significant decline in development and building activity in Billings. The considerable increase in activity this past year indicates Billings is definitely on the upswing. The chart below shows the remarkable level of activity in 2013 compared to the level in 2010.



The Planning and Community Services Department is here to assist with most aspects of property development and preservation. As a reminder to our businesses and residents, we offer the following services:

**Building Division** (Kim Palmieri, Building Official and Division Manager) - issues building permits and inspection services for new and remodeled structures. The Building Division also manages the floodplain program.

**Code Enforcement Division** (Nicole Cromwell, Division Supervisor and Zoning Coordinator) - inspects zoning, building, and other City code violations on a complaint basis. The officers work with the property owners to achieve compliance.

**Community Development Division** (Brenda Beckett, Division Manager) - administers First Time Homebuyer and Housing and Manufactured Home Rehabilitation programs. The Division also works with organizations and volunteers to improve economic conditions and help the homeless population in Billings.

**Planning Division** (Wyeth Friday, Division Manager) - processes subdivision, zone change, special review, annexation and other permit applications. The Division is staff to the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization which plans and secures funding for motorized and non-motorized transportation projects. The Division also serves the nine Boards and Commissions responsible for advising the governing bodies on current and long range planning activity and provides support to the eight Neighborhood Task Forces in our community.

Our staff is committed to providing superior customer service to our citizens and helping make Billings a great place to work, live and play!

The Planning and Building Divisions have staffed up for the increased activity, and so far have added 2 new employees to positions that have been vacant since 2009: Scott Wilson and Dave Green.

Not to be outdone, the Community Development Division has skillfully expanded the Billings Metro Vista Program which now consists of 16 volunteers - 6 work directly for the Division. Darlene Tussing, our Alternative Modes Coordinator (rockstar!) retired this year and she will be greatly missed. However, we welcome our new Coordinator, Jeffrey Butts, who returns to his hometown of Billings by way of Portland, Oregon. We hope to fill our vacant Commercial Code Enforcement Officer position in 2014. Lastly, though very important, is a new face that will greet all visitors to the office. Jeannette Vieg has joined our staff as the receptionist/administrative assistant. Jeannette directs customers to the right service counter, handles phone inquiries and generally creates order out of chaos. She is a very cheerful and helpful addition to our staff.







# Planning Board President's Report

Paul Gatzemeier, President



The Planning Board saw a significant increase in subdivision application reviews in 2013, engaged in updates to the City and County Subdivision Regulations, participated in extensive discussions on how to mitigate train traffic in downtown Billings, and reviewed and made recommendations on several long-range planning studies. With economic conditions continuing to improve, the Board expects subdivision reviews to remain strong into 2014.

Concern over impacts to vehicle travel at the intersection of 27<sup>th</sup> Street and Montana Avenue from train traffic was an issue the Planning Board spent a lot of time on in 2013. The Board provided recommendations and input to the elected officials to support implementing intersection improvements, additions to the current train crossing early warning system,

and comprehensive upgrades to traffic signal systems in the downtown area.

The Board also was instrumental in ensuring that the 2014 Transportation Plan (being drafted currently) addresses the issues and needs for coordination of vehicular and rail traffic in the downtown area. Major long range planning efforts and transportation initiatives that will be under way in 2014 include completion of the 2014 Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan; completion of a Highway 3 Corridor Study from the 27<sup>th</sup> Street and Airport Road intersection to the Indian Cliffs Subdivision west of Zimmerman Trail; completion of a trail corridor feasibility study between Zoo Montana and Riverfront Park; and construction of several pedestrian

and bicycle projects through the Community Transportation Enhancement Program.

The Board looks forward to being very involved in the development and review of all of these community planning efforts. Specific topics of interest for the Planning Board going into 2014 include oversight of transportation planning by the Board in its capacity as representative for the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization, pedestrian and vehicle access and circulation in new and existing neighborhoods, and park dedication and development community wide.

I would like to thank the planning staff, on behalf of the Planning Board, for their support of our activities, fact finding efforts, and deliberations.

## Community Development

Brenda Beckett, Community Development Manager

The Community Development Division (CD) manages and administers affordable housing programs funded through the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) and Corporation for National and Community Services.

As the fiscal year closed in June, CD staff completed an analysis of accomplishments through the Comprehensive Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER can be found online at [www.ci.billings.mt.us/caper](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/caper)

### CDBG / HOME Accomplishments

CDBG / HOME budget totaled \$1.3 million, and three dollars was leveraged for each federal dollar invested in our community; totaling \$3.7 million! With this funding, the City has accomplished many affordable housing goals:

- \* 16 housing units were rehabilitated, which stabilizes the community's affordable housing stock.
- \* 47 households achieved homeownership, and 183 households received first time homebuyer education.

\* 51% of all clients served in CDBG and HOME are minorities, exceeding the City's average minority percentage (19%).

\* As CDBG / HOME programs are designed to serve low income households, 99% of the allocated funding supported low income clients.

### *Special Projects*

CD has also spearheaded several projects, bringing over \$3 million in additional funding (outside of CDBG / HOME) to the City:

\* **Homeless Initiatives**, [www.ci.billings.mt.us/homeless](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/homeless):

\* **Welcome Home Billings**: The City's ten-year plan to impact homelessness was adopted by the City Council in October 2009.

\* **Downtown Resource Map & Notepad**: These portable, user friendly guides quickly connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the community resources they need. The documents illustrate access to shelter, food, clothing, health care, legal aid, restroom, shower and laundry facilities.

\* **Youth Count!** The overall intent of this project was to prepare and facilitate a count to enumerate and assess youth experiencing homelessness in the Billings area.

\* **Billings Community Connect**: One day each year, dozens of organizations gather to provide immediate access to services such as housing, food, clothing, employment, medical care and legal aid.

\* **Metro VISTA Project**, [www.ci.billings.mt.us/vista](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/vista)

\* 80 volunteer positions have been filled to date and these volunteers have generated millions of dollars in resources to impact poverty! Volunteers have served in 21 non-profit organizations to build capacity.

CD staff strives to exceed the expectations of stakeholders by supporting our housing and community partners with quality leadership, accountability, and innovative programs and services. For additional information, please call (406) 657-8281, or visit our website: [www.ci.billings.mt.us/comdev](http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/comdev).



# Code Enforcement

Nicole Cromwell, AICP, Zoning Coordinator  
& Code Enforcement Supervisor



The Code Enforcement Division continues to respond to increasing demands for service and has handled over 2,860 violation cases in 2013. We experienced a small increase in nuisance weed complaints this past season but the number of weed complaints is still low due to drought conditions. Our new partnership with the City Forester - Fred Bicha - to help identify and remove hazardous trees in city boulevards and streets and respond to complaints on street trees is working well for both divisions.

Our largest violation category for complaints (not including nuisance weeds) is still recreational vehicle parking and storage with 763 violations with 66% of those cases related to parking and storing trailers on public streets.

### Nuisance Properties

The Division continues to work on abating nuisance properties through the court system. In 2013, the Division received court permission to abate nuisances at 3 locations throughout the city.

The Division worked with the Public Works Department to ensure 2 of these abatements were completed quickly and cost-efficiently. The property owners have been billed for the abatement costs and the Division hopes to recover those costs in the next year. The Division notified 14 property owners in 2013 of improperly boarded structures. Four of those locations are still active cases pending either demolition or repair by the owners.



3310 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S - Asbestos contaminated structure



# Zoning

Nicole Cromwell, AICP,  
Zoning Coordinator & Code  
Enforcement Supervisor



In 2013, the City Zoning Commission and City Council reviewed 10 zone changes and 12 special review requests. The City Board of Adjustment heard 34 variance requests and 20 of those requests were related to existing nonconforming conditions. Three zone changes were related to recently annexed properties including a zone change for the new Fed Ex Ground Transportation Hub on Hesper Road.

Activity in the County continues to be limited but increased in 2013 compared to 2012. The County Zoning Commission and Board of County Commissioners approved 9 zone changes and 2 special review requests for new businesses in the county. The County Board of Adjustment met once in 2013.

Planning staff is also working on development of regulatory changes that meet the goals of the City In-Fill Policy and Complete Streets Policy adopted in the past 2 years. Lessons learned from the form-based code for the EBURD will be helpful as we move to implement these policies.





# Building Division

Kim Palmieri, Building Official

It has been a banner year for building construction activity. Nearly all categories of new construction including single family, multi family, and commercial permits are above previous year levels. A total of 393 single family homes have been issued for the first eleven months of the year. That compares to 355 homes issued for the entire year of 2012. Not to be outdone, the 30 multi-unit buildings easily surpassed last year's number of 20. This equates to over 500 individual apartment or sleeping units that were added to the city.

The number of new commercial structures has been impressive as well. The Division has issued 91 new commercial buildings. Fifty of these projects had a value exceeding one million dollars. Nine of the developments were valued in excess of ten million dollars. These projects include five new hotels with two additional hotels under review. A couple of projects of special interest include a large FedEx facility, and a new Scheels sporting goods store set to open next year.

The increase in both residential and commercial applications Montana Sapphire Subdivision east of Shiloh Road.

All the construction activity has had a significant impact on the Division's created a surge of activity during the spring of the year. The Division struggled to maintain review times when an onslaught of plans were received in late February and March. As always it is a challenge to balance the desire for short review times while keeping staff costs and efficiency in check. This is especially true when in early spring the Division sees a glut of plans in a short time frame. We encourage builders to keep this in mind and submit their plans as early as possible.

The increase in activity has allowed us to rehire an additional building inspector. Scott Wilson who had previously worked for the Division for seven years, transferred to another department when local construction slowed. After two years we were able to rehire Scott, which required little retraining allowing him to jump right back into inspection activities.

The Division is also responsible for the administration of the floodplain within the Billings City limits. A new Floodplain Ordinance was adopted by the City Council in late October. The ordinance includes revised floodplain maps. If you are located next to a stream, you may wish to visit the City's website or stop in at our office and view the new maps.

Each year we see an increase in demand for general information, public records, and building permit details. To help alleviate the burden we have pointed many businesses and individuals to our online site where most of this information is available for review or printing. Please visit the website at <https://www.services.ci.billings.mt.us/citizenaccess/publicAccess.zul> to access this information.

The Building Division along with the rest of the Planning Department has found a new home. With the construction of a new library, it was necessary to move our entire operation. We are now located approximately one block south of our old location at 2825 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North. Once again we are on the fourth floor along with Planning and Code Enforcement. If you haven't done so, please stop in and see our new offices.



Affinity Apartments at 42nd on Montana



Scheels Sporting Goods Store at Shiloh Interchange

# Planning Division Review

Wyeth Friday, AICP, Planning Division Manager

## Regulatory updates, staff changes, and an office move made 2013 busy for Planning staff

Subdivision and zoning application reviews, amendments to regulations, several major special projects, and an office move kept Planning Division staff very busy in 2013. Subdivision activity increased markedly from 2012 (See Subdivision Report, Page 9), zoning activity remained strong (See Zoning Report, Page 4), and development reviews for residential and commercial construction have increased further and remained high.

The Division entered Fiscal Year 2014 (started in July 1, 2013) in a solid financial position and revenues are progressing at or better than projected for the first 5 months of the Fiscal Year. FY2014 subdivision revenues in the first five months of the year are at 50% of total expected revenue. Zoning fees are tracking a little above projected for FY2014 at 60% of total expected revenue and only 5 months through the year. Staff has processed a total of 2,121 permits and applications from January 1 through October, 2013, equating to almost 7 permits per day. This is a 27% increase from 2012.

### Staff Changes

The increase in development activity and demand for services enabled the Division to refill a Planner I position that had been vacant since 2009. Dave Green returned to staff and brings his past experience as a landscape architect, planner, and commercial code enforcement officer to the Planner I position. His knowledge of the process and activities of the Division meant that he has been able to jump right into projects with limited training.

The Division also saw the retirement of Darlene Tussing, Alternative Modes Coordinator for the community for the past 13

years. Darlene's tireless work to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Billings and Yellowstone County has put our community in a position of providing commuters and recreation seekers alike numerous options for traveling in and around Billings safely and easily.

Picking up where Darlene left off, the Division welcomed Jeffrey Butts as our new Alternative Modes Coordinator in late November. Jeffrey is a Billings native who most recently lived in Portland, Oregon, where he studied and worked in the field of land use, community, and transportation planning. Jeffrey's office will be located here at the City-County Planning Division and he will be working closely with Transportation Planning Coordinator Scott Walker and Transportation Planner Lora Mattox, with many of you across the City and County, and with community members and groups.

### Regulation Amendments

Changes at the 2013 Legislature regarding review of projects that involve buildings to be leased or rented meant the Division had to make amendments to the City and County Subdivision Regulations for the third time in about two years. The new Building for Rent or Lease regulations are now in place for the County and apply outside the zoning jurisdiction, which is how they were crafted by the Legislature (See Subdivision Report, Page 9).

The Division staff continues to support nine standing boards and commissions, participate on many staff and community committees, and work on numerous special projects. The following are some examples of projects Division staff has been working on through 2013:

- \* Working in coordination with a consultant team, completing the 2014 Billings Long Range Transportation Plan (expected completion in Spring 2014)
- \* Participated in the formation and adoption of the Exposition Gateway Concept Plan (Area at the east end of the East Billings Urban Renewal District)
- \* Managing the Hospitality Corridor Study (Along Hwy. 87 from Lockwood Interchange to Airport Road)
- \* Participated in drafting the 2013 Complete Streets Benchmark Report
- \* Through the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board, hosted a community workshop on archiving historical records for organizations and communities
- \* Managed submittal of three community applications to the Montana Department of Transportation for the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to build facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The program replaces the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) (award of the new TAP grants was expected as this report was going to press)
- \* Hosted 15 educational and training webinars open to staff and the community.

We look forward to maintaining our high level of planning services for the community in 2014. Happy New Year!



# Trail News Highlights

Scott Walker, Transportation  
Planning Coordinator



This year we were very pleased and excited to see the completion of the Hillner Lane Sidewalk Project in Lockwood. The project included the construction of a 5' wide concrete sidewalk approximately 1,900 feet long in the existing right-of-way of the northern side of Hillner Lane, from Hemlock Drive to Piccolo Lane. ADA accessible ramps were provided at each intersection and a marked pedestrian crossing on Old Highway 87. The Highway 87 crossing includes a rapid flash beacon.

This next year you will notice quite a few new trail projects occurring around town. Many of these are connector sections of larger trails. They include:

**25th Street Pedestrian Bridge:** This project will place an existing, restored Carnegie steel bridge structure over the railroad tracks near 25<sup>th</sup> Street South. The bridge will provide a direct connection from the South Side and Old Town Historic District (Minnesota Avenue) to the Montana Avenue Historic District and downtown.

**Arrowhead School Path:** This will construct a bike/ped facility along the ditch bank from Shiloh Road to Arrowhead School through St. John's Ministry Campus. School District #2 and St. John's is contributing to this project.

**Hope Church Sidewalk:** This project will build sidewalk in the public Right-of Way along 56<sup>th</sup> Street West and Grand Avenue around the Hope Church property. This sidewalk will be one of the many future linkages we will see along Grand and 56<sup>th</sup> as properties continue to develop.

**Poly Drive School Sidewalk:** This project will construct two curb extensions and associated street crossing, a bike/ped landing area, 280' of ADA compliant sidewalk and 390' of curb and gutter.

**Ponderosa School Path:** The project will include planning, design and construction of installing a trail connection and ditch crossing between Kings Green Subdivision Trail and Ponderosa School.

Also included will be an additional connection along the existing roadways west of Ponderosa School with sharrows or other on-street infrastructures to connect with the trail corridor that is along the Cabela's subdivision on the south side of King Ave. E.

**Shiloh Conservation Area:** This project consists of the construction of approximately 1.6 miles of hard-surfaced bicycle and pedestrian path. The project will be located in Billings, south of King Avenue West and west of Shiloh Road, along 44<sup>th</sup> Street West and through the Shiloh Conservation Area.

**Swords Park Outlet:** The Project will include planning, design and construction of a multi-use, hard surface ADA accessible 10 ft. wide trail along the 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. bypass. It would allow the existing trail to continue on the east side of Swords Park down to the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. and Hwy. 87.



Hillner Lane Sidewalk



sharrow at 32nd W and Central



25th Street Pedestrian Bridge

# Transportation Planning

Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator  
Lora Mattox, AICP, Transportation Planner

## 2014 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan

In June of this year, the Planning Division along with the consulting services of Kittelson & Associates began work on the 2014 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This project will help define any changes in the transportation network, land uses, and socioeconomic characteristics that have occurred since the 2009 plan. Review of the 2009 LRTP and other recently completed plans will focus on seven (7) areas that include: land use, streets and highways, public transit and transportation, freight movement services and facilities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, safety, and security.

As part of this planning process, Kittelson has developed a project website to encourage public participation to identify transportation route deficiencies. The website hosts an interactive map that allows users to identify locations and add comments concerning this location. The website is located at <http://www.billingslrtp.com/>. To access the map click on public involvement on the top tab.

The website also includes information regarding public meetings and draft documents.

## Hospitality Corridor Planning Study

The Hospitality Corridor Planning Study is a plan to provide an opportunity to re-envision the US Highway 87/Main Street/Exposition Drive Corridor as a gateway into central Billings. The goal of the plan is to weave vehicular and non-vehicular needs together to provide a cohesive vision for the corridor, providing safe and comfortable travel for a variety of modes and supporting the City's overall vision of revitalizing the Exposition Gateway district and making a better connection with Metra-Park.

The plan includes discussion of a planning context that presents study objectives, other related plans, existing conditions, and near and long-term trends important to the overall corridor planning area. Design recommendations illustrating alternatives considered, proposed improvements for the near-term, proposed improvements for the long-term, and recommended streetscape illustrations are also included.

Finally, the plan presents funding sources and strategies for recommended improvements, plus a draft implementation schedule. The plan can be found here: <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/index.aspx?nid=514>

## Upcoming Planning Studies

- \* A new study that will begin in 2014 is a Highway 3/Airport Road Corridor study that would stretch from the Zimmerman Trail/Airport Road intersection east to the Airport Road/27<sup>th</sup> Street intersection. It would address ingress and egress to Airport Road, future access options as development occurs along the roadway, future intersection improvements, storm water management along Airport Road at the top of the rimrocks, and bicycle and pedestrian access and safety along the corridor. The study would be completed through a consultant contract.
- \* Another planning study that will be undertaken looking at connecting the Zoo Montana area with Riverfront Park with a bike/pedestrian, trail/on street connection.



Blasting Airport Road Rims, 1937

# Subdivision

Juliet Spalding, AICP, Subdivision Coordinator

The creation of new transferable lots through the subdivision process can be one indicator of growth. Once again this year's numbers indicate continuing growth for the City of Billings. Overall, during the past 5 years, there has been an *annual*/15% increase in lots approved at both the preliminary and final stages. Furthermore, since this time last year there are now 305 more lots available for development in the City, and another 496 lots in 15 plats that received preliminary approvals this year. These plats and numerous other approved preliminary plats from years past, will make up the lot inventory for next year and years to come once they receive final approval.

Subdivision activity in Yellowstone County, outside of the City of Billings, has been a bit more variable over the past 5 years, but activity levels this year would indicate a strong resurgence of County development. Lots receiving preliminary plat approval saw a 46% increase since last year, and final plat lots were up 179% in Yellowstone County this year! Furthermore, based on recent pre-application meetings and the numerous major plats in the "hopper", 2014 looks poised to see possible record-breaking rebounds.

In addition to reviewing subdivision applications, Planning staff was busy this year preparing updates to the subdivision regulations yet again.

	Pre-application meetings held	Preliminary Plats reviewed	Final Plats reviewed
<b>City Subdivisions</b>			
2009	10	10 (281 lots)	8 (175 lots)
2010	20	8 (140 lots)	16 (181 lots)
2011	14	12 (269 lots)	12 (166 lots)
2012	20	11 (310 lots)	11 (357 lots)
2013* (% change from 2012-2013) (average annual % change since 2009)	22 (+10% inc.) (+25% average)	15 (496 lots) (+60% inc. in lots) (+15% lot average)	10 (305 lots) (-15% dec. in lots) (+15% lot average)
<b>County Subdivisions</b>			
2009	24	8 (135 lots)	4 (30 lots)
2010	19	2 (9 lots)	13 (114 lots)
2011	13	4 (21 lots)	4 (50 lots)
2012	17	6 (41 lots)	8 (19 lots)
2013* (% change from 2012-2013) (average % change since 2009)	23 (35% inc.) (-1% average)	2 (60 lots) (+46% inc. in lots) (-11% lot average)	8 (53 lots) (+179% inc. in lots) (+15% lot average)

\*2013 Subdivision Activity totaled through November 30<sup>th</sup>

This year, amendments were for the most part necessitated by changes made to the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act(79-3-101 et seq., MCA) during the 2013 State legislative session.

As expected, the 2013 State Legislature tackled issues surrounding the review of "subdivisions for lease or rent" (SLR).

In short, it deleted all reference to such rent/lease developments in the MSPA and created for them a new review process of their own, complete with various exemptions from any review at all.

These changes have required local governments to adopt "Buildings for Lease or Rent" (BLR) regulations as well as update their subdivision regulations to delete former SLR references. Supplements with the updates for both City and County Subdivision Regulations, and Yellowstone County's Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations are available in hard-copy at the City-County Planning Division or online on the Division's website.

Happy Holidays, and all the best to you and yours in 2014.



Josephine Crossings 4th Filing



# EBURD — SBBURD Report

Candi Millar, AICP, Planning & Community Services Department Director

## East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD)

Tax increment in the EBURD increased this year over last, from \$245,000 to \$347,000 as reflected in the FY14 City Operating Budget. Significant increases are expected this coming fiscal year as a result of the new GSA Building located at 2021 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. North. The building was open for occupancy in March. The design was completed prior to the adoption of the form-based code in the District but is still a very attractive addition to the District. The form-based code, adopted in September, 2012, is a new zoning code designed to create distinct districts within the EBURD. Each district has its own characteristics consistent with the vision of the EBURD Master Plan.

Associated with the GSA Building is a new form of pedestrian-controlled traffic signal, referred to as a "HAWK signal". HAWK is an awkward acronym for "High-intensity Activated crossWalk". The device allows pedestrians to trigger a traffic stop signal so they can safely cross 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Unrelated to the cross walk, but still traffic related is the conversion of the one way streets; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues North, to 2-ways. This was accomplished with the assistance of the City Engineering Division and is intended to increase traffic access to businesses along these routes.

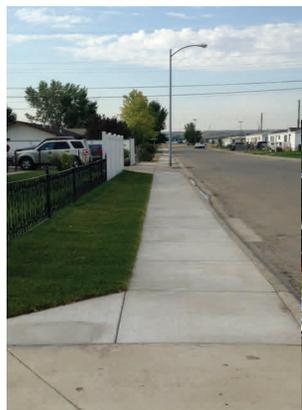


Hawk signal at 4th and 20th, located near the new Federal Building

The most ambitious project accomplished last year is not in the EBURD but enhances the opportunities for future commercial development in and adjacent to the District. The Exposition Gateway Master Plan establishes a vision for the area east of the EBURD. The plan identified future land uses, transportation networks and infrastructure needs to create a commercial hub between Exposition Drive (Hwy 87) and the EBURD. The plan was adopted earlier this fall by the City and County.

## South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District (SBBURD)

Tax increment financing (TIF) dollars are making a big difference in the SBBURD beginning with the completion of the reconstruction of Newman Lane from King Avenue East to Ruth Avenue. This important project provides a safe route to Newman Elementary School by foot and vehicle alike. It also goes a long way to control storm water drainage and enhance the neighborhood. The advisory organization for the SBBURD, the South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SBURA), hit the ground this summer to obtain interest for installing sanitary sewer lines on the side streets west of Jackson Street.



Newman Elementary School sidewalk construction.

This part of the District is not served by City sewer. All of the properties in this area are on septic in various condition and many are failing. The sewer will be a tremendous asset to those properties. City Engineering has begun designing the sewer system and expects to begin construction in 2014.

These projects, along with upcoming Calhoun Street reconstruction and Ponderosa Trail construction, are all financed by tax increment funds with additional funding from grants and City contributions. The tax increment is currently at \$2.7 million and is expected to increase this year with several motels slated for construction in 2014 and remodeling activity occurring in 2013. Also beginning in 2014, is a Tax Increment Funding Assistance program that will be offered to private businesses and land owners to offset public improvement costs. The applications will be reviewed by the SBURA but the City Council will have the final say on the allocation of TIF funds.

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR