# City of Billings

Visioning Plan 2018



Prepared by: Missouri State University
Planning Practicum

## Visioning Statement

The City of Billings is a small community that provides opportunities for sustainable, moderate growth. Over the next 20 years, the City can work towards community-driven goals through economic development, upgraded recreation facilities, and creating a strong visual identity for their downtown. As a class, the Missouri State Planning Practicum has analyzed the community to best identify a vision for its future. Included in the following document are various analyses, goals, and recommendations to enhance the small-town atmosphere by strengthening its sense of community and building upon its history through future growth and preservation.

From the information we have gathered, the City of Billings places great emphasis on community, religion, and family. The City has been built on the values of hard-work and neighborliness. Moving forward, the community hopes to preserve these values while creating new ways to express them.

## Who We Are



The Community and Regional Planning degree at Missouri State University culminates with a capstone practicum course. This course partners with a local city to provide them with an analysis of their current conditions as well as methods to improve growth and sustainability for their future. The class has taken various trips to the City of Billings to develop an understanding of the town and have provided goals and objectives based on personal observations and community input.

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## History

The City of Billings is located in Southwest Missouri in the panhandle of Christian County. Americans first began to settle in the area in 1836, naming the town "Elba" and later, Elma, Missouri. In the mid 1860s, the City became known as "Plymouth" because of the acquirement of a plat of the same name in 1865. The name Billings came from a railroad businessman named John Billings, who donated \$1,000 to the town for the construction of the Union Church. In 1884 Billings became incorporated as a village, with Frank Morris named the first Chairman and others filling the

A steady population increase in the mid 1800s resulted in the establishment of the community's first post office in the spring of 1860. The St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad played a huge role in the growth and development of Billings with its opening in 1871, along with a hotel opening the same year. By 1877 the

positions of Village Clerk and Village Marshall.

### City of Billings

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first school building in the area was built and an elementary schoolhouse followed just seven years later. A high school for the town was constructed in 1912. Many of the buildings in downtown Billings were constructed in the late 19th century, like the Bank of Billings (c. 1889), J.W. Sanders Mercantile Co. (c. 1879), and St. Joseph's Church (c. 1883).



Historic Bank of Billings (Became current City Hall in 2015)

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# History

Billings has always been known for its churches. When the name "Billings" was selected, there were five churches that already called the town home, however, none of them had a permanent building. As the town grew, so did the churches' congregations, and eventually every group constructed their own permanent building.

Today Billings has grown to a size of 1,035 people (2010 Census) and its neighboring municipalities have grown even more. With its proximity to Springfield and other amenities, Billings residents are able to live the small-town lifestyle while also enjoying the amenities of an urban center right next door. Billings has changed since its early days in the 1800s, but it is still home to several of the businesses and organizations that made it the community it is. Some of these institutions no longer exist, but their buildings stand today as a reminder of the town's heritage and identity. Many residents of Billings claim a German-Swiss heritage, which is reflected in some of the gift shops downtown.



Above: St Peter's United Church of Christ, constructed in 1967

Right: Historic Billings Water Tower



## Demographics

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## **Population Pyramid**

Looking at the population pyramid for Billings (Figure 1), there are a few age groups that are better represented than others. The first two are interrelated: 0-9 years and 25-34 years. These age groups reflect an abundance of young families in the area. Those in the older age group are more than likely the parents of the younger age group. The last age group that is worth mentioning is from 50-64. This matches with the national average age of retirement. A city like Billings, with its rural charm, lower land prices, and close proximity to Springfield make it an ideal place for retirees. Looking forward, Billings should strive to keep trends up. Encouraging young families to stay in the school district and encouraging retirees to own land in the area can help sustain the moderate growth that the City envisions.

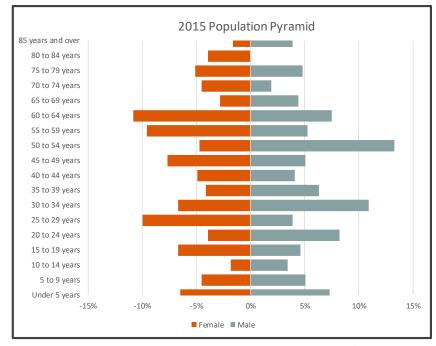


Figure 1 shows the population breakdown between males and females by age group for the year 2015. Data is from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates

# Demographics

## **Population Projection**

The City of Billings has experienced uneven growth over the past 5 years. As shown by the line graph (Figure 2), the City experienced a significant decrease in population from 2011 to 2012, and continued to drop another significant amount over the next year. The population then nearly plateaus until 2016 when it jumps back up near its 2010 amount. Overall, this gives Billings a negative growth rate. Using a basic population projection formula, it is predicted that the City will decrease over the next 5 years, however, the decrease is minimal (-1.1%). With a little foresight and improved housing conditions, the City can easily overcome the projected statistics and create growth in their future.

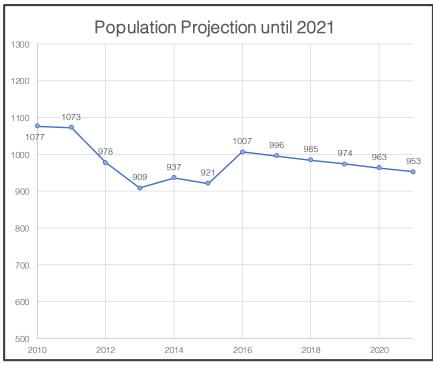


Figure 2 shows the population projection for the City of Billings. The growth is negative, but is minimal and can be easily reversed.

## Current Land Use

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### **Current Conditions**

In order to determine land use in Billings, GIS data from the Christian County Assessor was combined with data gathered in a "windshield survey" to create a map of the current land use. Land uses were grouped into eight categories: Residential Single-Family, Residential Multi-Family, Commercial, Government/Institutional, Parks and Open Space, Agricultural, Industrial, and Vacant.

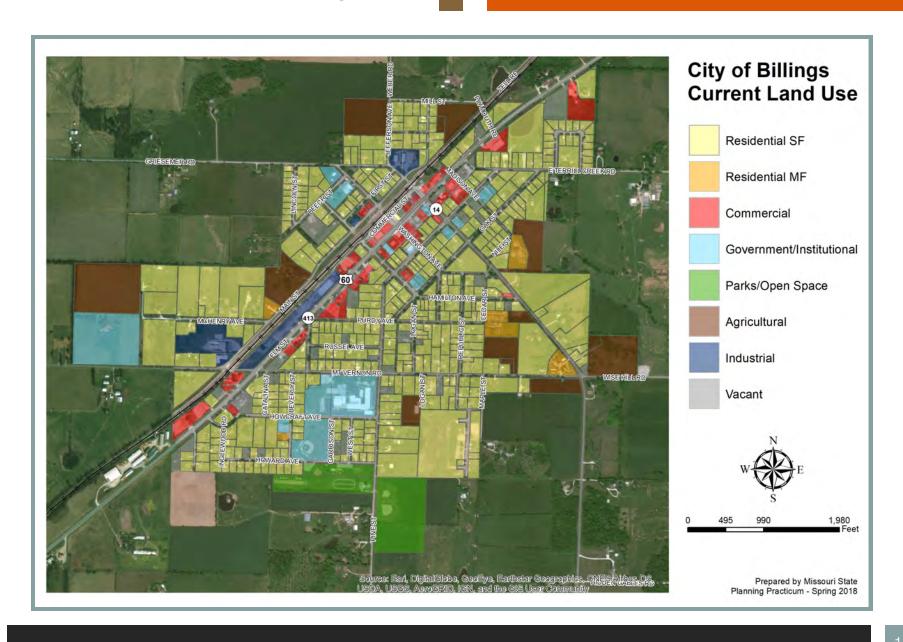
Billings is dominated by single-family residential land uses, which exist throughout the City. There are a few multi-family developments on the east side of town, and one on the west. Commercial and industrial uses are almost entirely confined to the Highway 60 corridor or within one or two streets from it. Churches and governmental buildings are mostly in the middle of the City, and Billings School is on the south side. The only park land is directly south of the school, on the southern boundary of the City. Some agricultural

property still exists on the fringes of the city limits, primarily bordering single-family residential areas. Finally, there are several vacant parcels throughout the City, along the commercial corridor and in residential neighborhoods.



Corners contains some of the main downtown commercial activity in Billings

## **Current Land Use**



## Current Land Use

## City of Billings

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## Goals & Objectives

**Goal #1:** Encourage future growth that is compatible with current development patterns and maintains the qualities of small town life.

#### Objective #1:

Identify areas for growth and annexation that fit the future land use goals of the community.

#### Objective #2:

Ensure that growth and future land use changes are compatible with a small-town feel.

#### Objective #3:

Zone future growth areas to balance residential and commercial growth.

**Goal #2:** Prioritize infill development and improvement of existing development.

#### Objective #1:

Enforce property upkeep standards.

#### Objective #2:

Consider changing minimum lot and/or house size requirements to enable construction of more affordable housing within the community.

#### Objective #3

Ensure the availability of land usable for new commercial developments, updating the zoning map if necessary.

# Housing

### **Current Conditions**

The City of Billings contains 416 individual housing units surrounding Highway 60 and the downtown area of the City. It mostly consists of single family residential with a few units of multi-family residential. During the creation of the land use map, the existing housing units in the City were rated based on their physical condition. The condition of each house was determined by the condition of the foundation, roof, windows, and cleanliness of the property. It was determined that 216 houses were rated as "Good", 166 were rated as "Fair", and 36 were rated as "Poor". 52% of houses in the City were rated "Good", 40% of houses in the City were rated as "Fair", and 8% of houses in the City were rated as "Poor". There are 85 vacant lots in Billings, not all are housing lots, but many are meaning that there is room for potential expansion.

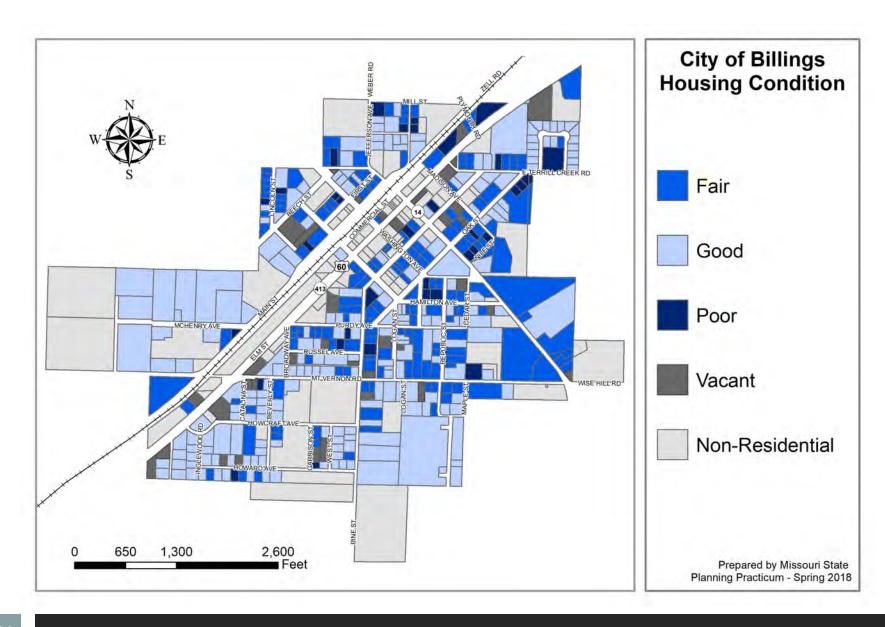


Single-family homes in Billings



# Housing

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## Housing

## Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Diversify housing options in Billings.

#### Objective #1:

Continue to zone for and develop single family homes within the City.

#### Objective #2:

Add more multi-family zoning into land use plans. This can help attract multi-family concepts to the area such as duplexes.

**Goal #2:** Divert new residential development to appropriate areas.

#### Objective #1:

Encourage more residential development on the west side by zoning more land as singlefamily and multi-family.

#### Objective #2:

Encourage infill and new residential development on the east side of the City by zoning more land as single-family and multifamily and considering incentives for infill development.

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### **Current Conditions**

Billing's location on Highway 60 draws in activity for the gas stations and numerous antique stores located in town. The City of Billings is reliant on neighboring municipalities for many basic needs such as groceries, dining, and entertainment. Most Billings residents travel out of the community for these services, which deprives the City of much needed tax revenue. In addition, the majority of workers commute within the region to jobs outside of the city limits. Billings is largely a bedroom community for Springfield, Missouri.

Most Billings businesses lie within the downtown area. The Bank of Billings, City Hall, numerous antique stores, and the Post Office all have a presence there. Those buildings are situated on an intersection along Highway 60. There are lots suitable for infill development and vacant buildings available for new businesses to occupy.

Billings currently lacks diversity in local retail and commercial options. Antique shops are a charming aspect to Billings' retail, but Billings would greatly benefit by focusing on finding ways to attract other retail and dining options for its residents. Citizens must leave town and go to Republic or Springfield to explore a more diverse set of retail and dining options. Money that could be spent in Billings is often spent in other cities.

Billings' household median income is \$43,430.92. This is within 10% of the comparison's groups average. It is significantly higher than Springfield, but drastically falls short in comparison to Christian County and the State of Missouri.

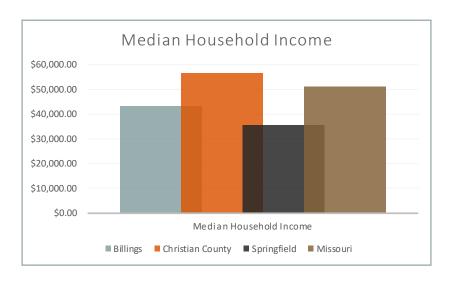
Employment opportunities are not very diverse in the City of Billings. The Billings School District is the largest employer in town and heavily contributes to the local workforce where labor in Educational Services for Billings carries more than ½ of the total. This is followed by the Finance or Insurance category and the Real Estate category which is near 20%. The last relevant category is Accommodation or Food services which makes up 10%.

### **Current Conditions (cont.)**

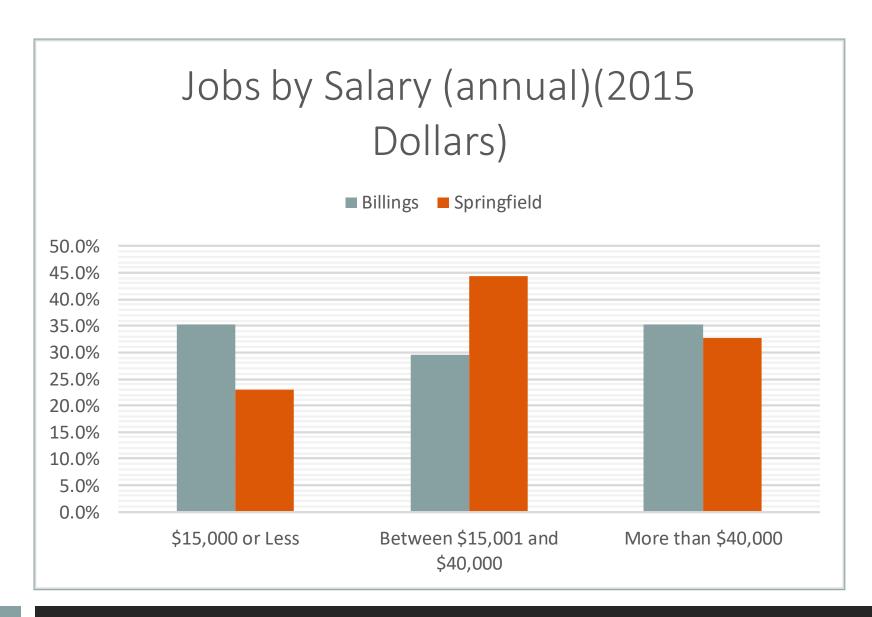
The labor breakdown is typical of a small town. Most of those employed in town are middle-aged. However, there are few middle-income jobs in the City of Billings itself. In fact, 29.5% of jobs in town are middle-income. This is much lower than in Springfield where it is 44.4%. Lower-income and higher-income local jobs represent 35.3% each.

These are key reasons that most residents commute for work. Of the 399 workers living in Billings, 384 commute and 15 work in the city limits. 56.5% of the commuters are middle-aged. The remaining 209 jobs in the City limits are filled by outside commuters. There are significant differences in the flow of jobs between "workers into Billings" or inflow and between "workers who live in Billings but commute" or outflow. The pay of outflow jobs (or jobs that residents are seeking outside of Billings) is much higher than inflow jobs. Many more workers are

leaving Billings for middle-income work than those that are commuting to Billings for the same work. In total, the net flow jobs are heavily outward and accounts for -175 jobs.







## **Goals & Objectives**

**Goal #1:** Diversify Billings' economy to attain self-sufficiency.

#### Objective #1:

Attract local grocery store, through incentive programs, to provide residents with local, easy access to food.

#### Objective #2:

Expand the Billings Merchant Association and coordinate with the Christian County Chamber of Commerce to encourage economic development.

#### Objective #3:

Design a tax abatement program to incentivize the establishment of new businesses.

#### Goal #2: Revitalize the downtown district.

#### Objective #1:

Establish a Downtown Development Committee to oversee improving the Downtown District.

#### Objective #2:

Seek state and/or federal grants to foster growth and promote aesthetic continuity.

#### Objective #3:

Create a Bavarian theme that utilizes design and branding principles to be used throughout Downtown.

## Community Facilities

### City of Billings

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### **Current Conditions**

### Fire Department

Billings Fire Protection District is responsible for approximately 100 square miles including portions of Christian, Greene, Lawrence, and Stone County. The fire department consists entirely of 35 volunteers that operate four fire stations for the City. Volunteers are responsible for fire response, periodic training for



One of the four stations in the Billings Fire Protection District

volunteers and public, as well as education at the local school and within the department. The department is funded through personal property taxes collected in the City as well as an annual fundraiser.

### **Police Department**

The City of Billings Police Department provides safety and protection for the City of Billings as well as provide mutual aid to surrounding jurisdictions. The department currently employs one Police Chief and one additional officer. The department has funding for two more officers, though one position is being held for an officer currently serving in the military. The Christian County Sheriff's Department, located in Ozark, provides mutual aid for the City when staffing is low. A substation has been created within the Billings school to increase campus safety and security.

## Community Facilities

# Current Conditions (cont.) Health Facilities

Clinics are available in the neighboring towns of Republic and Marionville. A 25-bed hospital in the Mercy network operates 12 miles away in Aurora. For trauma, intensive care, and more specialized services Mercy Hospital and Cox Medical Center in Springfield are the facilities of choice. Nearest hospitals for the area include:

- Mercy Hospital Aurora (12 miles southwest) 25-bed hospital
- Cox Medical Center Springfield (18 miles northeast) 596-bed hospital
- Mercy Hospital Springfield (18 miles northeast) 886-bed hospital

### **School District**

The Billings R-IV School district is comprised of one elementary school and one combined junior high and high school. The elementary school houses pre-kindergarten through 6th grade and the high school has 7th grade until 12th grade. The district has 410 enrolled students total and 44 certified staff members.



A Billings School entrance facing Pine Street

## Community Facilities

### City of Billings

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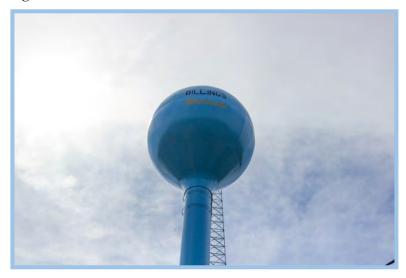
# **Current Conditions (cont.) Electricity**

Empire District Electric is responsible for providing electric and natural gas services for Christian County, including the City of Billings. Currently, Empire Electric provides electric services to approximately 600 active meters within Billings city limits and its rural residents.

### Water & Sewer

Billings Public Works Department provides water and sewer services to an average of 470 connections. The department currently owns two water wells in the City, one located near the city park and one located behind the Bank of Billings. The City also operates two

water waste pump and lift stations, located on the north and south sides of the City. The City is currently performing updates to the sewer systems by lining older sewer lines to prevent infiltration of groundwater.



Water tower located on the edge of Billings City Park

# Transportation

### Streets & Sidewalks

Billings is laid out in a grid pattern, with the central portion of town angled to align with U.S. Highway 60. State Routes 14 and 413 run through town, with the latter sharing a route designation with U.S. 60 throughout the city limits. These three highways are maintained by the Missouri Department of Transportation while the remaining streets are maintained by the City public works department. To determine the quality of all of the streets in Billings, an inventory was done, and the streets and sidewalks were given a rating of good, fair, or poor. Overall, the streets in Billings are well maintained with 84.2% considered to be in good condition. Routes currently in fair or poor condition are primarily less-traveled residential streets.

The presence and condition of sidewalks vary throughout the City. Along the downtown corridor the footpaths are well connected, providing convenient walking access. As one strays from downtown the sidewalk network becomes less continuous. Aside from the city center, long stretches of paths are primarily limited to streets near the school, Oak Street, and Pine Street. About half of the streets in the City do not have an adjacent path for pedestrians to use.

Of the sidewalks that do exist, only 67.3% are considered to be in good condition. Sections of paths



This stretch of Elm Street is designated as U.S. Highway 60, State Route 14, and State Route 413

## Transportation

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### **Current Conditions (cont.)**

are no longer walkable because tree roots have grown underneath the concrete, causing entire chunks to become broken off. Some sidewalks still exist, but are not visible because excessive amounts of grass have grown across the cracks in the pavement. Simpler problems such as overgrown foliage make paths impassible as well. A significant portion of sidewalks in good condition are relatively new and have a larger concentration on the south side of town. Painted crosswalks can also be found throughout the City, but especially near the school.

**Bus System** 

Christian County utilizes OATS transportation for their public bus services. Routes are designated to specific regions for certain days of the week and pick up locations are determined by prior scheduling. Each Wednesday a route connects Billings to Nixa and every 3rd Tuesday of the month a bus travels from Billings to Springfield. Long distance medical transportation to Springfield can be provided every other Tuesday each month if scheduled 48 hours in advance.



An example of a sidewalk in poor condition on Hamilton Avenue

## **Transportation**

## **Current Conditions (cont.)**

### Airport

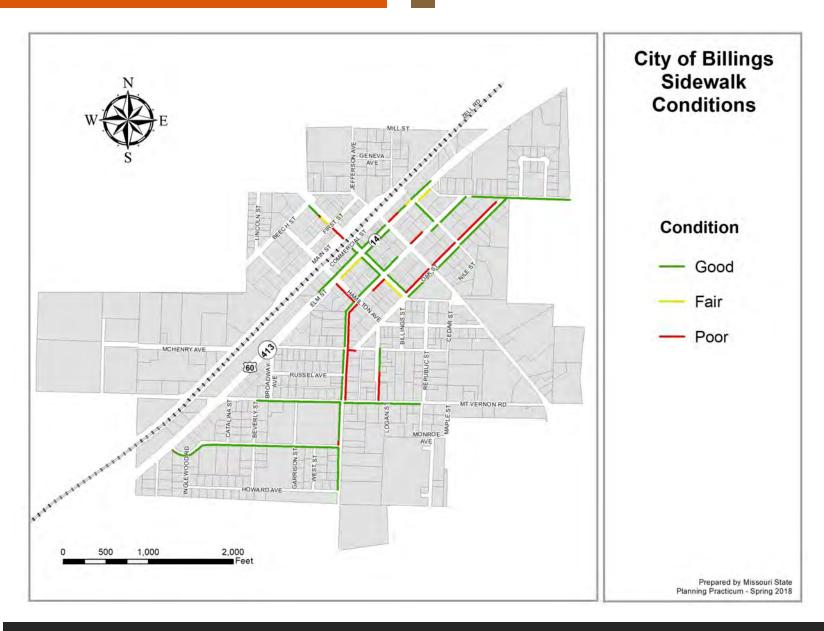
The Springfield-Branson National Airport, located at 2300 N Airport Blvd in Springfield, is 16 miles away from the Billings city center. Four major airlines fly from this site which is owned by the City of Springfield. The facility is self-sufficient as it receives funding from customer fees and businesses based inside. Grants from the Federal Aviation Administration, funded primarily through federal taxes on fuel, luggage, and airplane tickets, have been accepted on the condition of the airport matching the contribution amount. For regional travel, the Jerry Sumners Sr. Aurora Municipal Airport is in reasonable proximity to Billings. The one-strip airfield is located 11 miles southwest of town.

### Railroad

BNSF Railway (formally Burlington North and Santa Fe Railway) owns the tracks that run through the Billings city limits. No passenger cars ride along this route as the Class I railroad company specializes in transporting freight. To the northeast it connects to Springfield while to the west it branches off, bound for either Joplin or Tulsa.

# Transportation

## City of Billings Visioning Plan 2018



# Transportation



## Transportation

# City of Billings Visioning Plan 2018

## **Goals & Objectives**

**Goal #1:** Provide citizens with more sidewalks to create a more walkable community.

#### Objective #1:

Identify areas of significant pedestrian activity that are not equipped with sidewalks .

#### Objective #2:

Provide sidewalks for areas that have the most pedestrian traffic.

#### Objective #3:

Develop a connected sidewalk system throughout Billings.



An existing sidewalk at Howard Avenue and Pine Street

## **Transportation**

## **Goals & Objectives (cont.)**

**Goal #2:** Provide a trail network that creates opportunity for leisure and enables citizens to navigate the City without traveling along major roads.

#### Objective #1:

Identify destinations within Billings with the potential for sidewalk development.

#### Objective #2:

Seek funding assistance for trail development by applying for grants from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

#### Objective #3:

Develop a trail network that connects with other communities to encourage alternative forms of transportation and to attract new residents to the area. **Goal #3:** Create shared bike lanes on streets based on popular biking routes throughout the City.

#### Objective #1:

Determine popular bike routes in the City.

#### Objective #2:

Apply for state and federal grants to help pay for proper signage and markings.

## Recreation & Open Space

## City of Billings

Visioning Plan 2018

### **Current Conditions**

Billings City Park is a source of pride and a center of activity for the City of Billings, MO. This area includes a designated park space that sits on the Southeast side of town. The park mostly consists of a large open grass area, which is used for town events such as the fall carnival and cattle shows. There is limited park equipment which includes a merry-goround, swing sets, and other traditional playground equipment. There is a gazebo and picnic tables located at the entrance of the park. The park is spacious but lacks greenery and landscaping and this addition would be a quick and cost-effective implementation.

A charrette activity was completed in Billings on March 22, 2018. During the activity, residents were shown a series of pictures on a board that displayed a variety of park features in order to see what they visualized as the future of the community park. The features that were rated the highest on the boards were the addition of trees and sitting areas and a walking trail. The charrette boards are available in the appendix.



Playground equipment at Billings City Park

## Recreation & Open Space

## **Goals & Objectives**

**Goal #1:** Implement basic design elements and landscaping to create an updated green space and to beautify city facilities.

#### Objective #1:

Add landscaping to create defined spaces within the park.

#### Objective #2:

Add a landscaped walking path through the park.

### Objective #3:

Add a water feature, such as small lake, koi pond or waterfall to the park to add movement and another park feature.



The existing walking track at Billings City Park lacks trees and landscaping

## Recreation & Open Space

### City of Billings

Visioning Plan 2018

## **Goals & Objectives (cont.)**

**Goal #2:** Provide recreational infrastructure to encourage and promote community recreation and public health.

#### Objective #1:

Purchase disc golf goals (around \$400 each; 9 needed for half course, 18 for full course).

#### Objective #2:

Add disc golf goals and course to provide additional recreational opportunities.

#### Objective #3:

Improve outdoor basketball facilities by providing a dedicated outdoor basketball court in the park.

#### Objective #4:

Update playground equipment and add trailside exercise equipment for all ages.

#### Objective #5:

Provide adequate lighting to park to improve safety.

#### Objective #6:

Look into a grant to build a community center to allow for community activities such as bingo nights, events, and other opportunities.

## Conclusion

The City of Billings has great potential. The collected data and subsequent analysis provides the council with an appropriate road map towards a sustainable future. Small improvements in the right areas can go a long way towards ensuring longevity and growth for the City. In order to facilitate this growth, Billings should focus on growth in the economic and housing sectors, updating the local recreation facilities and sidewalks, and expanding local land uses. The hope is that this plan will help the City formalize and realize its vision for the future.

# Appendix - Survey

## Billings, Missouri Community Visioning Survey

Please mail or drop off your survey at Billings City Hall, Box 207 202 US-60, Billings, MO 65610. You may also complete the survey online at <a href="https://goo.gl/forms/SzhP1n2uimw3gSa02">https://goo.gl/forms/SzhP1n2uimw3gSa02</a>. All survey responses remain confidential.

Created by the Missouri State University Planning Studio.

De	emographics	
1.	What is your gender? Mark only one oval.	
	Male	
	Female	
	Other/Prefer not to say	
2.	What is your age?	
	Mark only one oval.	
	Under 25 years old	
	26-35 years old	
	36-45 years old	
	46-55 years old	
	56-65 years old	
	66-75 years old	
	76-85 years old	
	86+ years old	
3.	Are you a resident of Billings?	
	Mark only one oval.	
	Yes	
	No	

4	How long have you been a resident of Billings?  Mark only one oval.
	Less than 1 year
	1-5 years
	6-10 years
	11-20 years
	Over 20 years
	I do not live in Billings
5	Where do you work?
	Mark only one oval.
	In Billings or within 2 miles
	Within 2-10 miles of Billings
	Within 11-25 miles of Billings
	Greater than 25 miles from Billings
	Retired/Unemployed
6	Do you have any children in the Billings R-IV School District?
	Mark only one oval.
	Yes
	○ No
	I will within the next five years
C	ity Priorities

# Appendix - Survey

## City of Billings Visioning Plan 2018

	Very Important	Important	Neutral/No Opinion	Unimportant	Not Neede
Job creation		()			
Access to jobs					
Housing variety					
Housing price					
Historic preservation					
Farming/agricutture					
Local education					
Sense of community					
	row. Very	each of the fol	Neutral/No	Satisfied	Very
community Natural environment Rank your level of sati	row.			Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department Fire Department	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department Fire Department Schools	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per  Police Department Fire Department Schools Parks Recreational	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department Fire Department Schools Parks	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department Fire Department Schools Parks Recreational Facilities	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	
community Natural environment  Rank your level of sati Mark only one oval per Police Department Fire Department Schools Parks Recreational Facilities Water Services	row. Very		Neutral/No	Satisfied	Very Satisfie

	What do you feel would be the ideal population of Billings in 20 years?  Mark only one oval.
	Smaller
	Remain the same
	Increase slightly
	Increase significantly
Но	using
11. 1	Do you own or rent your residence?
1	Mark only one oval.
	Own
	Rent
	n the future, what kind of housing developments would you like to see in Billings?
1	Mark only one oval.
	Single Family Homes
	Apartments
	Townhomes
	Duplexes
	Other:
	Which areas of town could benefit from more residential development?  Check all that apply.
- 0	
	North
	West
	Other:
	South East West

# Appendix - Survey

8. What are some ways Billings could be improved?	14. Should Billings provide additional resources (time, effort, money, etc.) to attract more businesses?  Mark only one oval.  Yes  No  No opinion
9. Is there anything you would like to share about your vision for Billings that was not covered in this survey?	15. What do you like most about downtown Billings?  Mark only one oval.  The history  The businesses  The architecture  Pedestrian friendly  Nothing/no opinion  Other:  16. What could be improved in downtown Billings?
	Final Thoughts  17. What do you most like about Billings?

# Appendix - Mini Survey

## City of Billings Visioning Plan 2018

Please rate each of the following aspects of the quality of life in Billings.	Excellent = 1.0, Above Average = 2.0, Average = 3.0, Below Average = 4.0, Poor = 5	The city as a place to live A place to raise children The overall quality of life in the city A place to work A place to retire Sense of community	Please rate each of the following opportunities available in Billings.	Excellent = 1.0, Above Average =2.0, Average =3.0, Below Average =4.0, Poor =5	Shopping Recreation Education Employment Entertainment Community Events Religious or Spiritual activity Sporting Events	Please us the space below to provide any additional comments or insight that you believe may be helpful in understanding the needs of the Billings community.	
Please rate of Billings.	Excellent = 1.0,		Please rate	Excellent = 1.0,	8 8 5 E E S 8 8	Please us the that you beli community.	

This mini survey was handed out in addition to the larger survey that we gave to the citizens, we gathered 12 responses and used this input in addition to our visioning exercises and our large survey

# Appendix - Visioning Activity



# Appendix - Visioning Activity

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# Appendix - Survey





# Appendix - Visioning Activity

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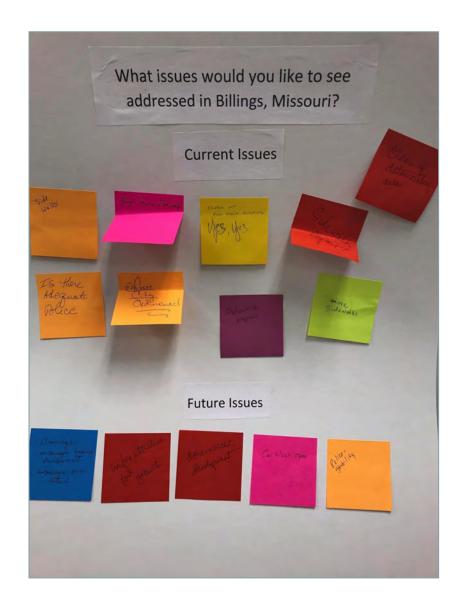


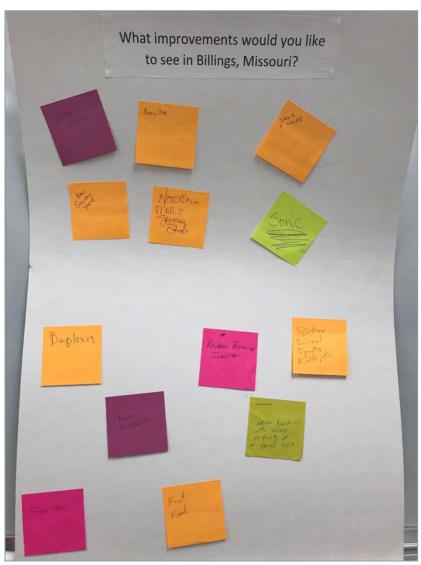


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# Appendix - Visioning Activity

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# Appendix - Visioning Activity

## City of Billings

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# Appendix - Visioning Activity







