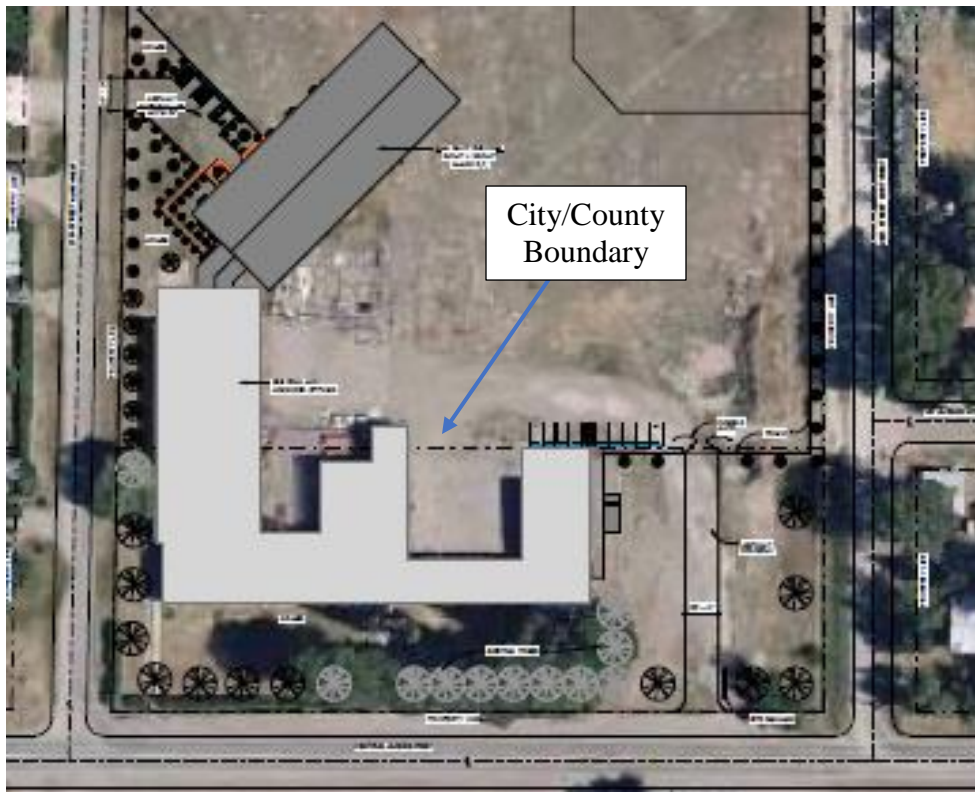


LITTLE RUSSELL REJUVENATION PROJECT ZONING INFORMATION

Oddly enough, the Little Russell property is partly in the City and partly in the County.



The property in the County is zoned as Urban Residential (UR), which does not allow for a maintenance and storage building on the school property. However, by Montana Law, school districts (and other state agencies) are allowed an exemption to zoning laws as long as a hearing is held.

Pursuant to MCA 76-2-402. Local zoning regulations-- application to agencies. Whenever an agency proposes to use public land contrary to local zoning regulations, a public hearing, as defined below, shall be held.

(1) The local board of adjustments, as provided in this chapter, shall hold a hearing within 30 days of the date the agency gives notice to the board of its intent to develop land contrary to local zoning regulations.

(2) The board shall have no power to deny the proposed use but shall act only to allow a public forum for comment on the proposed use.

76-2-401. Definitions. As used in 76-2-402, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Agency" means a board, bureau, commission, department, an authority, or other entity of state or local government.

After reviewing the Montana Code Annotated, the County interpreted the school district to be an "agency" that is proposing to use public land contrary to local Cascade County Zoning Regulations.

The County followed the law and held a hearing on Thursday, January 9, 2017 at 9:00 am in Room 105 of the Cascade County Courthouse Annex. Invitations to the hearing were mailed by the County to residents.

GFPS presented information and public comment was taken from citizens in attendance. The District noted the following comments from the residents:

- Vehicles double-parked on Central Ave. West are hazardous
- Don't want an industrial area
- Upkeep and oversight of the area is important
- Increased traffic is a concern
- Increases in big truck traffic are a concern
- Backhoes, dump trucks, and snow plows are a concern
- Trailer noise is a concern
- Dust due to traffic on the streets is a concern
- Should make it a park because neighborhood needs one
- Sell it so can be made into a housing development and purchase a different property for B&G.
- Lowered property values and an increase in crime are a concern
- The fence may create dangerous intersections

The District response to each is:

- Vehicles double-parked on Central Ave. W.: The District will provide off-street parking for employees, visitors and district vehicles. There will be no need for parking along Central Ave. W.
- "Industrial" designation: GFPS will not be manufacturing at this site. Most of the work will take place off-site at the schools. The site will be used to house the Buildings and Grounds department.
- Upkeep and oversight of the area: Superintendent Lacey will monitor the site to ensure that it meets standards of upkeep and maintenance.
- Increased traffic: There will be an increase of approximately 23 people coming and going. That will equate to approximately 100 additional trips to and from the property per day. There will be a trip in to work in a personal vehicle and then the dispatch to a school in a district vehicle in the morning with the reverse in the afternoon. Employees will be reminded to follow all speed limits. They will turn off of and on to Central Ave. W. so the streets will not be utilized.
- Increases in big truck traffic: The District does not own big trucks (like the gravel trucks that drive by the site numerous times per day). There will be limited number of trips of mid-size delivery trucks.
- Backhoes, dump trucks, and snow plows: The District does not own large machinery like this. The snow plows are mounted on pickups.
- Trailer noise: There will be limited amounts of trailer noise as the trailers usually are hauling something (like mowers). When trailers are loaded they make less noise.
- Dust due to traffic on the streets: Central Ave. W. is paved and the main access to the site will be access from the avenue. 26th Street (to the west) is fully paved and will have the only street opening for travel into the site. 25th Street is partially paved but it has no opening for travel into the site so there is no reason for district vehicles to travel along this street. 1st Ave. NW is gravel, but given the access to the site, there is no reason for district vehicles to travel along this avenue. The site will be sufficiently graveled to reduce dust from on-site traffic.
- Include a portion as a neighborhood park: Due to liability and expense reasons this is not possible. The District's mission does not include providing neighborhoods with park space. It was mentioned that a park currently exists but is not well cared for by the City or County. It is suggested that residents discuss this with the proper governmental agency.
- Sell it/purchase other land: The Board felt strongly about using land already owned for the Facility Plan purchases. This saves taxpayers money as there is no taxes required for the acquisition of land.
- Lowered property values and an increase in crime: The District disputes the reality of this claim. Reclaiming abandoned buildings has been proven over and over again to do the opposite.

- The fence may create dangerous intersections: The fence has been angled in order to provide appropriate line of site for vehicles traveling the speed limit. The District will inform the County about the community members' requests for a stop sign at the intersections along 1st Ave. NW.

In summary:

- The District is within its legal rights to rejuvenate the Little Russell site.
- The District communicated its intentions clearly during the 6-month bond levy campaign.
- The ballot language clearly stated the intentions of the District regarding Little Russell. The levy passed with 62% approval.
- The District will work with the County and City to secure all necessary permits as the process moves forward.

This website has all past and current information about the project:

<http://gfps.k12.mt.us/content/little-russell-site>.

You are welcome to share your thoughts by sending an email to: little russell@gfps.k12.mt.us or by mailing information to: Superintendent Tammy Lacey, P.O. Box 2429, Great Falls, MT, 59403.