

# DEFINING OUR FUTURE

East Helena Redevelopment Initiative  
East Helena, Montana

FINAL  
OCTOBER 2011



## OVERVIEW

On May 24, 2011, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 hosted a community planning charrette and open house to develop a vision for future redevelopment in East Helena, Montana. The charrette, a day-long planning workshop, provided a venue for community representatives and other key stakeholders to develop a preliminary vision, goals and priorities that can help shape and coordinate remediation, local planning and development at the East Helena Superfund Site. This document summarizes the outcomes from the community planning charrette and includes site background, future land use concepts, specific revitalization priorities and strategies, and recommended action steps. The following vision represents ideas from East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, community leaders and other interests and can help shape cleanup and future redevelopment processes.

## GOALS

During the charrette, participants divided into work groups to develop strategies for the following three focus areas:

- Land Use: Identify a vision for growth in East Helena that considers the undeveloped land annexed in 2009.
- Cultural Heritage: Develop a vision for the former Plant Manager's property that serves as a catalyst for celebrating East Helena's history and cultural heritage.
- Habitat and Recreation: Identify habitat restoration and recreational opportunities around the Prickly Pear Creek corridor that build upon existing parks, trails and creek corridors.

## CHARRETTE OUTCOMES

The outcome of the charrette is summarized in this document. The document contains several sections:

- Site Background p. 2-3
- Future Land Use Concepts p. 4-5
- Land Use and Development p. 6-7
- Cultural Heritage p. 8-9
- Habitat and Recreation p. 10-11
- Implementation p. 12



## Superfund Redevelopment Initiative

EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) and EPA Region 8 sponsored a reuse assessment and charrette process to develop a vision for future land use that can help shape cleanup and redevelopment efforts at the East Helena Site.

# SITE BACKGROUND

## EAST HELENA SMELTER SITE

The City of East Helena (pop. 2,114) has been closely tied to the Asarco Smelter. From 1888-2001, Asarco processed lead and zinc ore at the former smelter. The smelter functioned as the engine of the local economy and helped to define the community's cultural heritage.

Since the early 1980's EPA and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have conducted investigation and cleanup efforts to address contamination of soils and ground water throughout the facility and community of East Helena and Lewis and Clark County.

The site was placed on EPA's National Priorities List as the East Helena Site in 1984. Sometimes called the East Helena Smelter Site, the smelter was still operating when it was added to the Superfund list.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) provides the regulatory authority for the investigation and cleanup of the facility and ground water contamination that originated there.

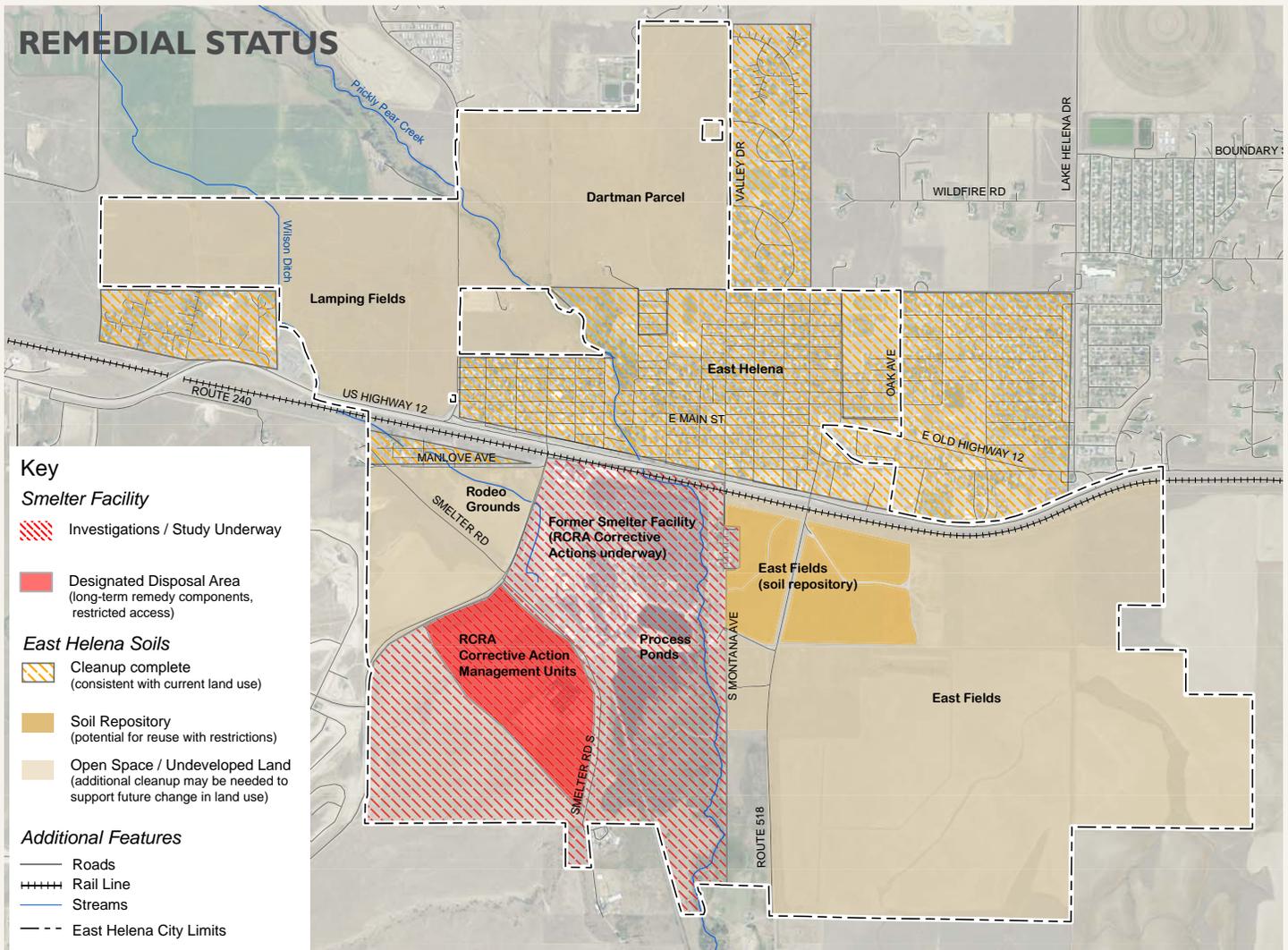
The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) provides the regulatory authority to clean up contaminated soil - primarily outside of the former smelter facility.

### Former Smelter Facility

Cleanup is underway at the former smelter facility to address ground water, process ponds, ore storage areas and slag pile. Near-term actions include: source area removal and stabilization and corrective measures studies.

### Residential Soils and Undeveloped Lands

This portion of the site includes approximately 2,000 acres of additional land located in East Helena and surrounding Lewis and Clark County. Cleanup efforts address residential, commercial, public and agricultural/undeveloped lands.



# JURISDICTION & OWNERSHIP

## Annexation

- In 2009, East Helena annexed all formerly Asarco-owned property outside its city boundary to support future growth and development.
- East Helena’s 2009 Growth Policy identifies undeveloped annexed lands as future urban areas for residential, recreational, public service and commercial land use.

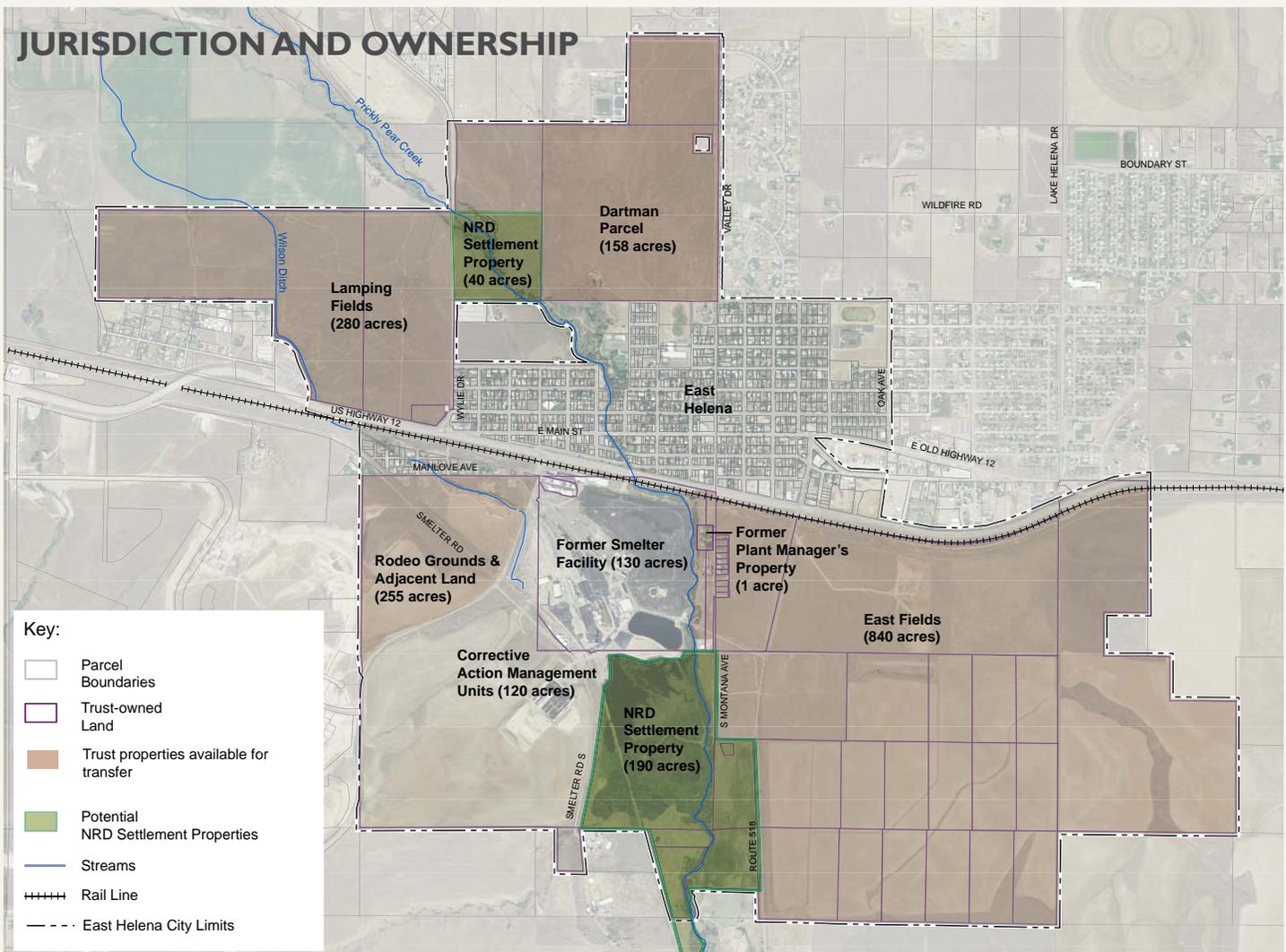
## Montana Environmental Custodial Trust

- As a result of Asarco’s bankruptcy, the Montana Environmental Custodial Trust (Trust) was formed in 2009. The Trust administers the formerly Asarco-owned properties and funds in compliance with RCRA Corrective Action requirements. As Trustee, the Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC manages this Trust.
- The Trust is responsible for land formerly owned

by Asarco, including the former smelter facility and properties throughout East Helena.

## Settlement Agreement for East Helena

- A 2009 Settlement Agreement allocates specific funds for cleanup associated with former Asarco sites in Montana. The majority of the settlement funds have been set aside for remediation, while additional funds for natural resource restoration are allocated to the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP), along with rights to acquire approximately 232 acres along Prickly Pear Creek.
- Beneficiaries of the settlement agreement for East Helena include: Federal agencies – U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of the Interior; and State of Montana agencies – Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program and Department of Environmental Quality.
- All land transfers must be approved by the beneficiaries.



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## Guiding Principles

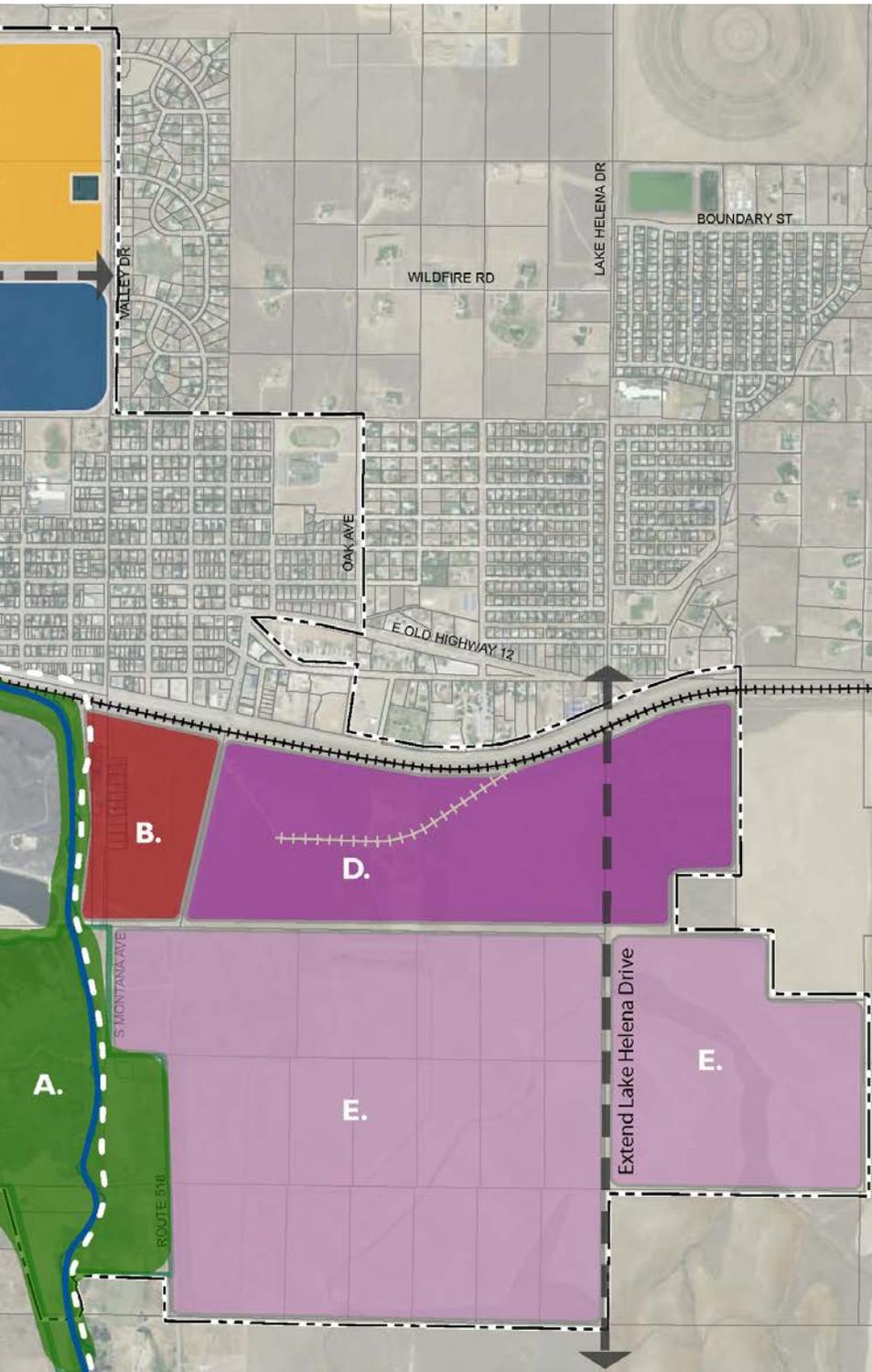
This concept plan integrates the key strategies developed during the community planning charrette. Sections on the following pages provide more detailed strategies and recommendations for each of the three focus areas: land use and development, cultural heritage, habitat and recreation.

Participants highlighted the following common themes and principles to guide a vision for the future:

- Jobs
- Livability
- Transportation
- Trails
- Creeks
- Connectivity
- Heritage

In addition, participants emphasized the need to facilitate redevelopment at key catalyst sites such as the Plant Manager's house, Lamping Fields, and parts of the East Fields and the desire to increase certainty in the development process.





## Focus Areas

Specific priorities are listed below for each focus area. More detailed strategies for each focus area are outlined in the following pages.

### Land Use & Development Priorities

**East Fields** - Establish an industrial park as a catalyst for economic development.

**Recreation & Heritage Corridor** - Support recreation and heritage-based commerce at the Plant Manager's property and Prickly Pear Creek corridor.

**Lamping Fields** - Develop commercial retail and office or professional uses.

**Dartman Parcel** - Expand public, institutional and residential uses.

### Cultural Heritage Priorities

**Plant Manager's property** - Preserve and restore the Plant Manager's property as a heritage museum and catalyst for community revitalization.

**Heritage & Recreation** - Extend heritage and recreational uses into surrounding area to support the reuse of the Plant Manager's property.

### Habitat & Recreation Priorities

**Regional Trail Network** - Establish a regional trail network connecting East Helena to Helena, Lake Helena and Montana City.

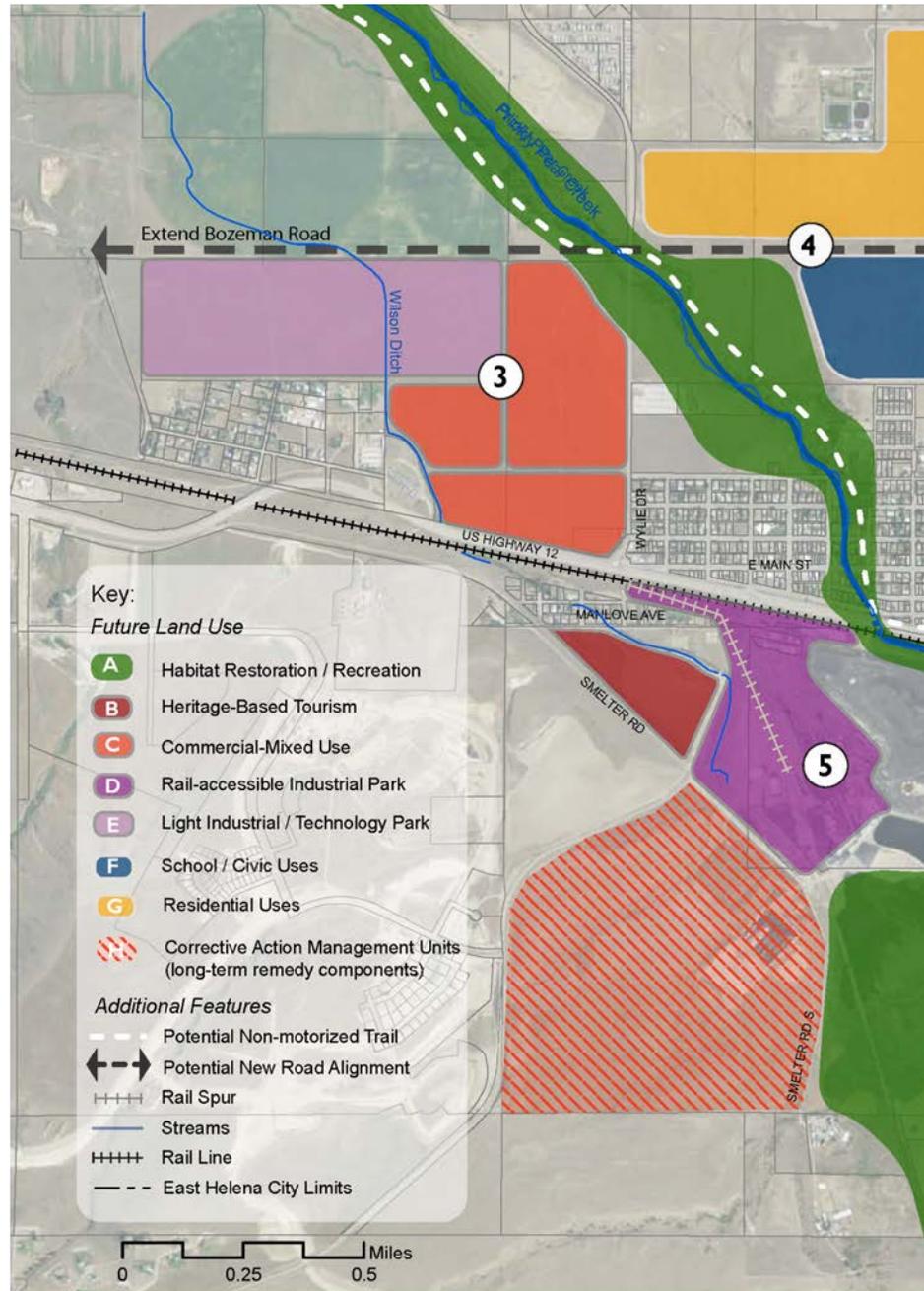
**Heritage & Recreation** - Restore the Prickly Pear Creek riparian corridor through East Helena.



# LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

## Opportunities & Principles

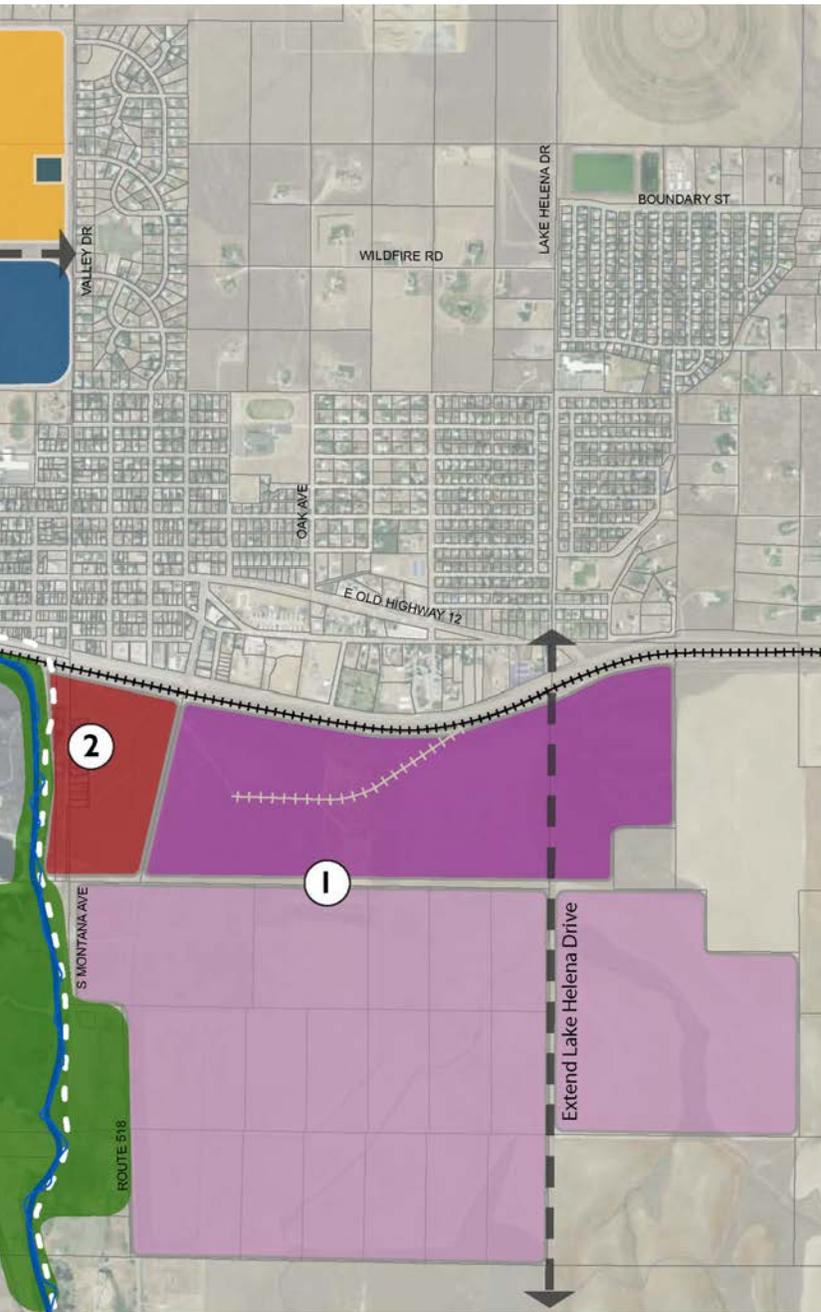
- Demonstrate that land in East Helena is available for reuse through targeted investments and remediation to attract development at catalyst sites.
- Promote expansion of commercial / industrial uses to create jobs and tax revenue.
- Develop master plans - integrating land use, density, circulation and access - for priority development areas to coordinate infrastructure investments and future growth.
- Market East Helena's strategic assets, including: available land with utilities, highway and rail access, proximity to airport, excellent school system, quality work force and community pride.
- Integrate renewable energy technologies into future growth plans.
- Accommodate population growth with new housing and services.
- Expand services and amenities for aging populations, such as health clinics, hospitals, drug stores and senior-friendly housing.
- Improve access and circulation north of Route 12 to support future growth.
- Enhance vehicular and pedestrian connections across Route 12.



### 1 East Fields

- Establish a rail spur to create a rail-accessible industrial park.
- Pursue light industrial development at southern portions of the East Fields in the near-term.
- Create industrial corridor that connects to new industrial uses in Jefferson County, immediately south.
- Evaluate opportunities for renewable energy generation facilities to supplement industrial park energy demand and provide a showcase for innovative economic development.
- Establish a tax increment financing (TIF) district to help fund rail spur and attract users to the East Fields.





## 2 Heritage Park Commerce Center

- Pursue recreational and heritage-based uses surrounding the former plant manager's property and Prickly Pear Creek corridor.
- Leverage recreational corridor amenities to establish tourism-based commerce (hotel, resort, restaurants, or outdoor recreation retailers).



## Potential Near-term Actions

- Complete zoning for newly annexed lands, and develop subdivision regulations for the City of East Helena.
- Integrate future land use vision into revised Growth Policy for East Helena.
- Establish institutional controls and a clear development process.
- Develop master plan and phasing strategy for East Fields that can guide: potential parcel consolidation options; tax increment financing to support infrastructure improvements and options for adding a potential rail spur on the northern portion of East Fields.
- Plan for right-of-way acquisition to extend Bozeman Road eastward to Valley Drive.
- Evaluate traffic circulation and access considerations for East Fields, including vehicular access to Route 12 and pedestrian access across Route 12.

## 3 Lamping Fields Commercial District

- Establish a commercial, retail, office district in the southern portion of the Lamping Fields that takes advantage of frontage along Route 12 and Wylie Drive.
- Extend Bozeman Road to enhance transportation linkage to airport and surrounding commercial areas, and the City of Helena.
- Consider light industrial uses adjacent to airport.

## 4 Dartman Public / Institutional / Residential

- Develop 60-acre site for new high school and athletic fields.
- Expand fire and emergency services in northwestern portion of Dartman field.
- Integrate new residential uses (single-family, multi-family and senior-friendly housing) with public and institutional uses.

## 5 Rail-ready Industrial Park (Smelter Facility)

- Consider adaptive reuse options for ore storage building (e.g., multi-modal transportation facility).
- Pursue slag recycling opportunities to generate income and remove waste products from the site.
- Coordination may be needed to ensure compatibility between long-term industrial use and the Rodeo Grounds.

# CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Opportunities & Principles

- Develop a heritage museum at the Plant Manager's property (most suitable for core area / existing buildings) to showcase the area's history including the mining industry, the ethnic heritage, the East Helena Rodeo, the Smelterites baseball team, local ranching and the town's origin as Prickly Pear Junction.
- Connect to cultural heritage opportunities in the surrounding area including: establishing a trailhead for the Indian Trail / Trade Route, developing a partnership and connection to Kleffner Ranch, and relocating the Manlove Cabin to Plant Manager's property or surrounding area.
- Natural heritage opportunities could include outdoor classrooms and environmental education (partnership with local schools), outdoor exploration (partnership with Exploration Works), natural heritage programs (in partnership with state programs), interpretive program space, and botanical garden.
- Recreational opportunities could include: picnic area, golf course, athletic fields (including baseball fields), fishing, tennis courts, basketball courts, space for holding sports tournaments, and RV park.
- Supporting uses that could help generate revenue to support the museum could include: venue space for weddings, meetings, East Helena Day celebration, family reunions, festivals, farmer's market, flea market. Other complimentary supporting uses include gift shop, visitor center and bed and breakfast.



## Plant Manager's Property Core Area

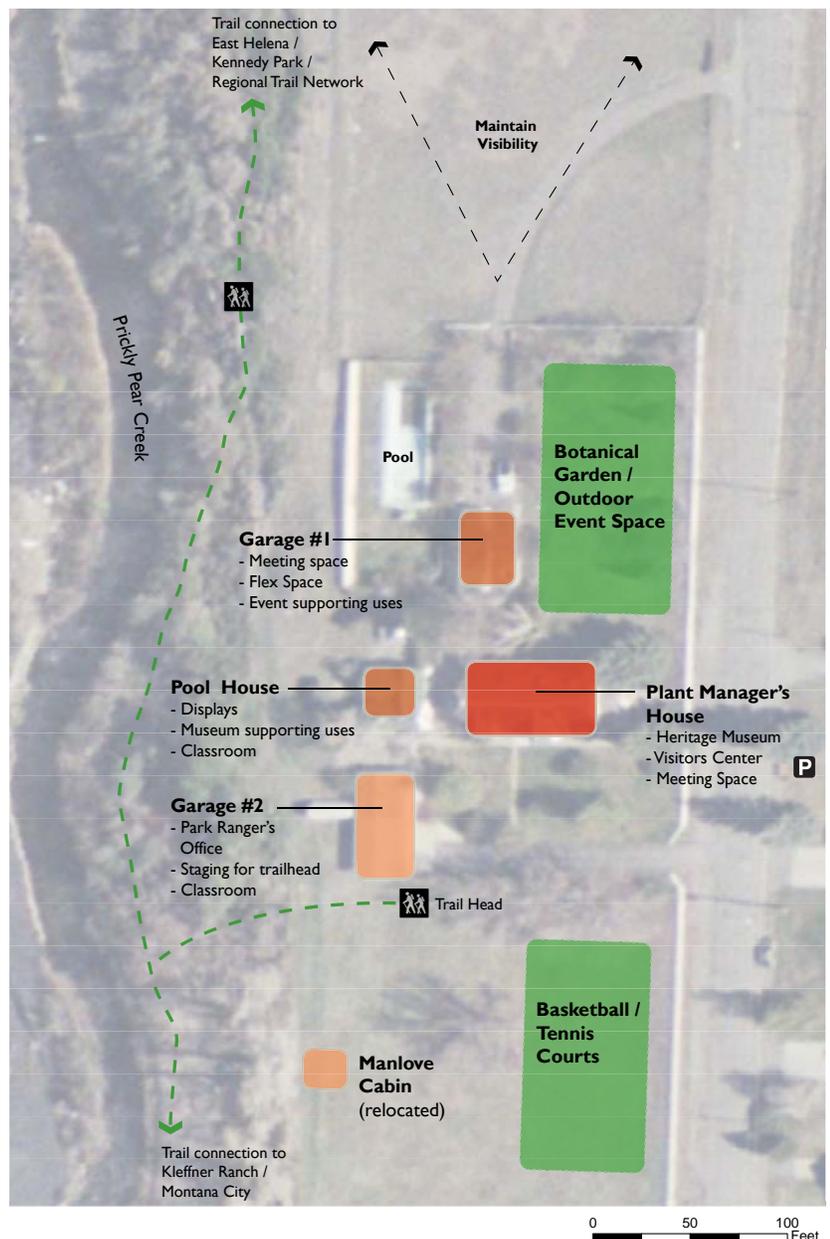
Participants identified the following range of suitable uses for the various buildings and outdoor spaces within the Core Area of the Plant Manager's property.

**Main house** - Anchor/interpretive center for area, office for museum or commercial uses, display areas, museum space, residence, bed and breakfast, classroom/meeting space.

**Garage 1** - with its attractive interior this space could potentially host: displays, meeting space, flex space, museum space

**Garage 2** - classroom, staging area for the trailhead, office space.

**Pool House** - uses to support museum and events.



## Community Heritage Strategy

Participants identified the following strategies to enhance the cultural heritage identity in East Helena.

### Connectivity -

- Integrate area with larger community, including trails north into town and south to Kleffner Ranch. North – south trail could align with former American Indian Trail / Trade Route. Former county road south of manager's property could be reused as a trail and link to the NRD Settlement property.
- Identify existing trail opportunities and planning efforts to enable better coordination.

### Coordination -

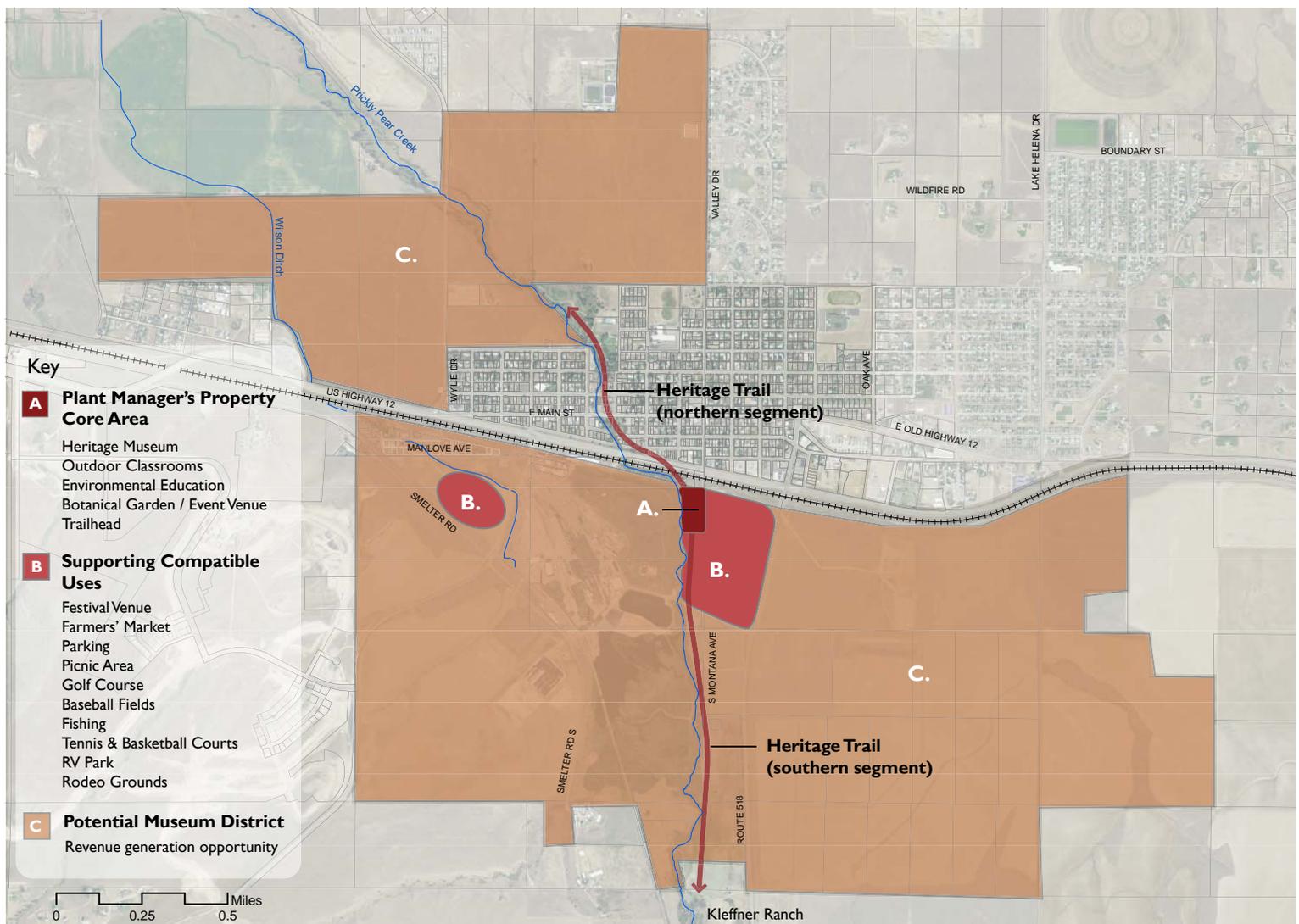
- Coordinate with surrounding counties.
- Coordinate with existing/established heritage and recreation resources.

### Education -

- Develop community-wide directional signage to direct residents and visitors to the area's cultural and recreational assets.

## Potential Near-term Actions

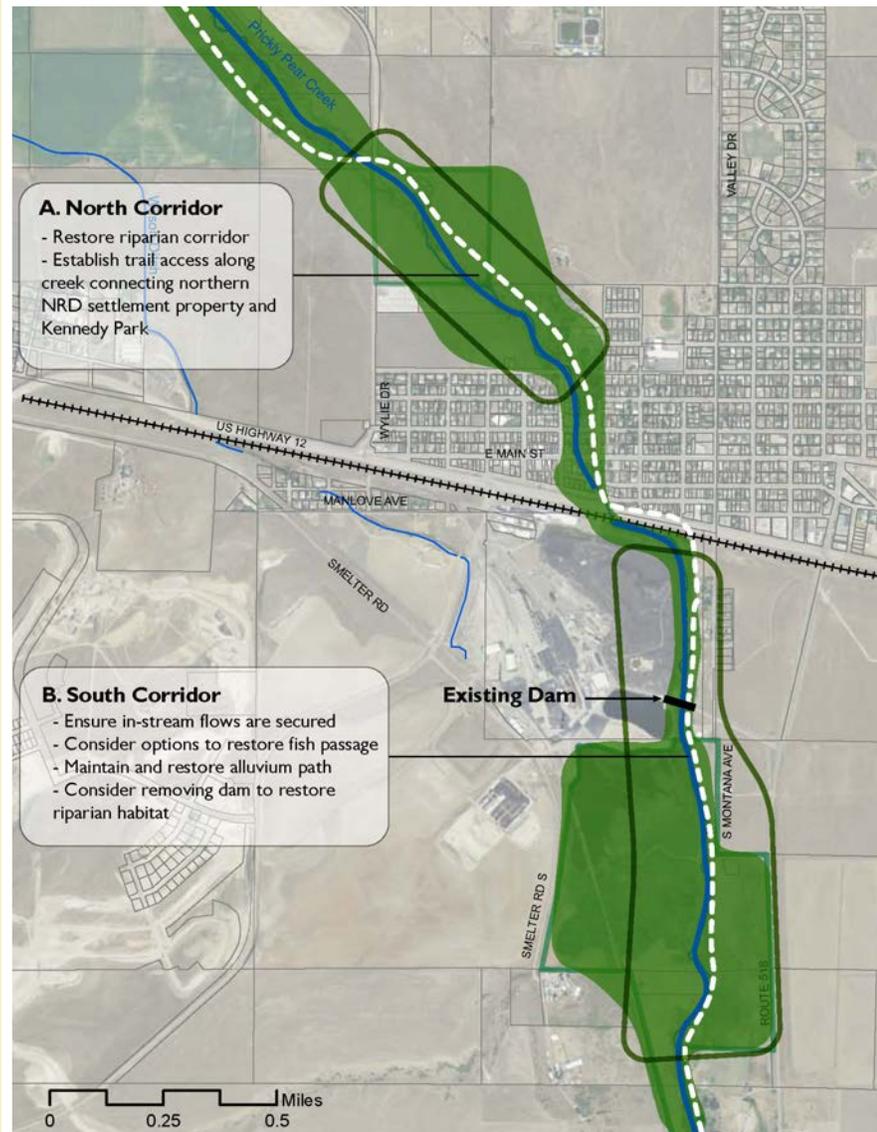
- Return property to use in order to maintain property and explore revenue opportunities.
- Explore Museum District assessment overlay to generate funds to support future museum.
- Host community open house at Plant Manager's property to maintain momentum and build community support.
- Develop historical society to support and guide revitalization of the area.
- Conduct building assessment and develop a master plan for the property and surrounding area.
- Raise funds to implement master plan.



# HABITAT & RECREATION

## Opportunities & Principles

- Increase multi-purpose trails to connect communities.
- Connect schools to outdoor learning opportunities.
- Promote healthy lifestyles including walking and biking.
- Promote outdoor recreational tourism and retail.
- Increase fish passage and habitat.
- Increase nature trails and access to the creek.



## Prickly Pear Creek Corridor Restoration & Trails

Participants outlined the following strategies to enhance trails and habitat along Prickly Pear Creek.

- Ensure in-stream flows are secured to sustain fish populations.
- Consider options to restore trout fish passage upstream of the dam at the plant access road.
- Maintain and restore where possible current alluvium path.
- Consider removing dam to return constructed wetlands to former riparian channel habitat.
- Maintain stream elevations at Kleffner Ranch.
- Restore riparian corridor and add trail access along South Montana Avenue and through southern NRD property.
- Install trail head parking at the Plant Manager's property.
- Consider bike/pedestrian improvements for crossing US Highway 12.
- Restore riparian corridor and add trail access through northern NRD property.

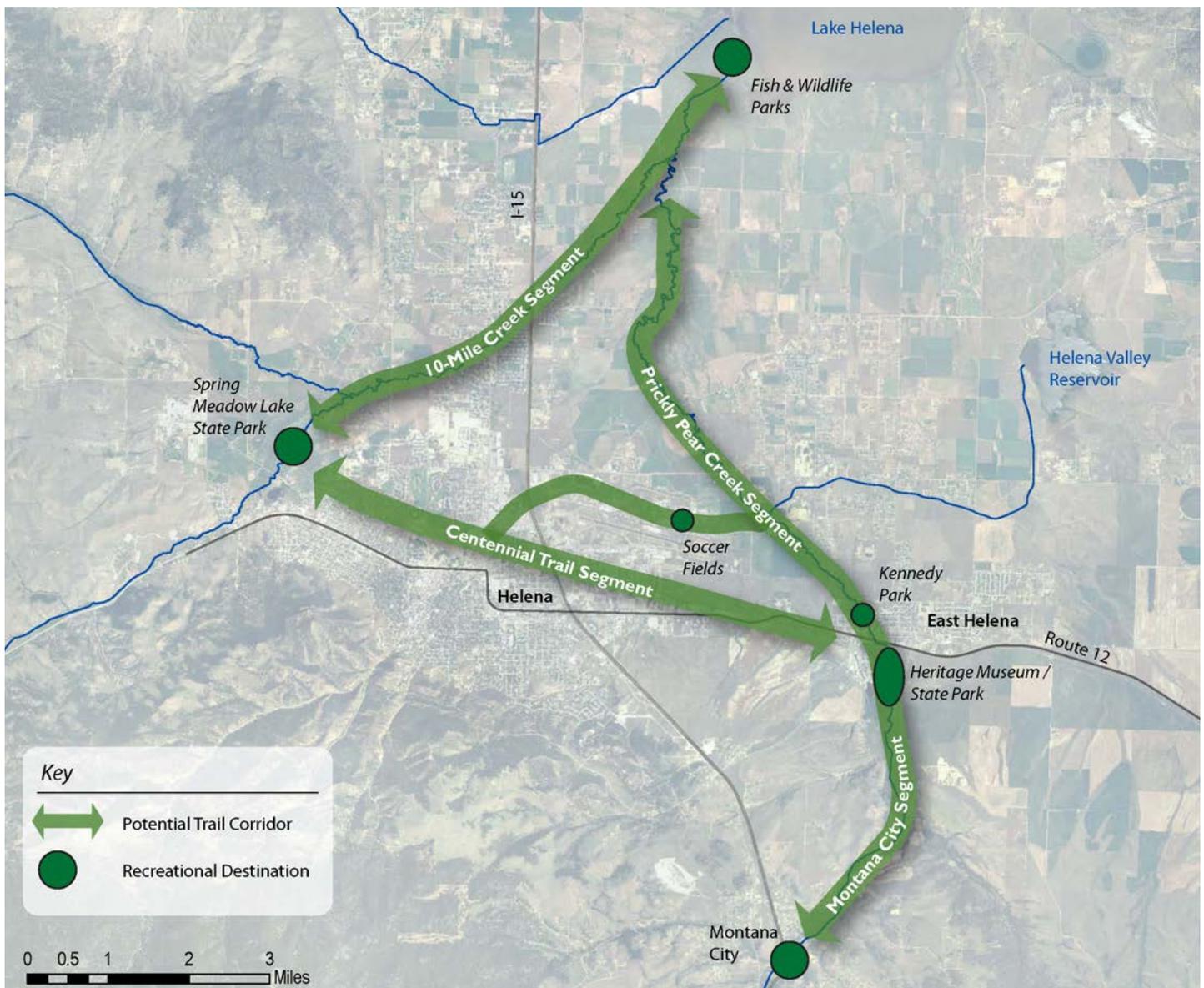
## Regional Trail Network

Participants identified the following strategies to create a regional trail network that would build off the Prickly Pear Creek corridor, connecting East Helena to regional recreational destinations.

- Build on existing multi-purpose Centennial Trail to connect East Helena and Helena.
- Integrate riparian trail plans into cleanup activities as possible through the Plant Manager's property and southern NRD property to begin to connect East Helena south to Kleffner Ranch, recreational opportunities such as Ash Grove Cement Plant, and further south to Montana City.
- Extend the nature trail in Kennedy Park north along Prickly Pear Creek to Lake Helena beginning with the segment running through NRD property.
- Consider extending a trail along Ten Mile Creek from Helena to Lake Helena to create a multi-purpose loop trail.

## Potential Near-term Actions

- Identify and designate a lead organization to champion the project.
- Contact initial partners to determine preliminary feasibility and resources.
- Develop a trail design.
- Share the vision with the larger community to build momentum.
- Confirm in-stream flow and water rights options.
- Prioritize trail and restoration segments along the corridor.



# MOVING FROM PLAN TO ACTION

## IMPLEMENTATION

Once a vision is in place, implementation can occur in phases with the assistance and resources of many partners. Community members have identified the Prickly Pear Creek corridor in East Helena as a near-term priority for trails and restoration. Landowners and funding sources may determine additional opportunities for early action. The Trust has commissioned separate redevelopment studies for its property in East Helena and anticipates that the studies will take the charrette outcomes into account along with market and site suitability considerations and be publicly available in 2012.

Partners for the implementation of revitalization projects may include the local cities and counties, district authorities, state agencies, local and national non-profits, businesses, private landowners, the Trust and community residents. Forming a committee of key partners may assist in prioritizing actions, leveraging resources, and facilitating implementation activities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The community charrette participants identified the following near term actions to facilitate implementation:

- Formalize redevelopment work group.
- Remediate plant manager's property.
- Establish clear development process and zoning.
- Develop master plan for Plant Manager's Property / East Fields Industrial Park.
- Restore Prickly Pear Creek and develop trails for priority segments.

Participants envision that the future use strategies outlined in this document will build on the following local assets:

- Family friendly, livable community with great schools,
- Community pride,
- Available land,
- Excellent transportation infrastructure, including highway, rail and airport, and
- Prickly Pear Creek as a community resource with a regional connection.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals and organizations contributed to the East Helena planning charrette and outcomes outlined in this report.

### *City of East Helena*

- Residents
- Mayor and City Council
- Zoning Committee
- Planning Board
- Public Schools

### *Lewis & Clark County*

- Board of Commissioners
- Environmental Services
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Planning Department
- Lead Education and Abatement Program
- City-County Health Department

### *Property Owners*

- Kleffner Ranch
- Montana Environmental Custodial Trust

### *Local Organizations*

- Montana Business Assistance Connection
- Prickly Pear Land Trust
- Helena Area Realtors
- Valley Bank

### *State and Federal Agencies*

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Montana Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program



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