



*Expanded*

# North 27<sup>th</sup> Street Urban Renewal District

TIF APPLICATION



406.656.7273



BILLINGS DEPOT



BILLINGS DEPOT

 **BILLINGS DEPOT**  
*Historic* WEDDING AND EVENTS VENUE

*Hello,*

Thank you for considering the Billings Depot for the Tax Increment Financing Assistance.

We know you have many significant projects to consider and we're grateful for your time and review of our application.

The Billings Depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and spans four full city blocks along historic Montana Avenue in downtown Billings. It was built in 1909 to service three railroads and has greatly influenced the development of our City and the industry for the State.

In 2023, we were awarded a grant in the amount of \$414,000 from the State for preservation of our historic campus. We are graciously asking for \$132,500 in TIF assistance. This will help us reach the funding necessary to complete the project and serve as matching funds, so we can collect the full award of the grant from the State.

Included in this application you'll find our plan for campus renovations and letters of support from City organizations, all of whom work closely with the Depot in our collaborative efforts to drive transformational impact in our community.

This project is stand-alone and shovel-ready and can begin as soon as the remaining funding is secured. It will enhance the security, climate control, and safety of the property as well as help maintain the buildings' historic character and ensure its accessibility for future generations.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Graciously,

*Michelle Williams*

**Michelle Williams**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BILLINGS DEPOT



# Expanded North 27th Street Urban Renewal District

## TIF APPLICATION

- **Project Name:** Campus Impact Renovations
- **Date Submitted:** January 2024

### APPLICANT INFORMATION

- **Name:** Billings Depot Inc
- **Address:** 2310 Montana Avenue, Billings 59101
- **Phone:** 406.656.7273
- **Email:** MichelleWilliams@BillingsDepot.org
- **Date of Organization:** 1995

### Project Information

- **Building name:** Billings Depot Campus
- **Address:** 2310 Montana Avenue, Billings 59101
- **Legal Description:**

The Premises, located in Yellowstone County, Montana, is described as follows:

Commencing at the northeast corner of said Section 3; thence west along the north line of said Section 3 a distance of 884.5 feet to a point of intersection with the centerline of Lessor's main track or its Yellowstone 2nd Subdivision at Engineers Station 11902+95.1; thence southwesterly along said centerline a distance of 196.9 feet to Engineers Station 11904+92; thence northwesterly at right angles to said centerline to a point 100 feet southeasterly from the southeasterly boundary of Montana Avenue and the Point of Beginning; thence continuing northwesterly at right angles to said centerline to the southeasterly boundary of Montana Avenue; thence southwesterly along said boundary to its intersection with a southeasterly extension of the southwesterly boundary of North 24th Street; thence southeasterly along said extension a distance of 20 feet; thence continuing southwesterly along the southeasterly boundary of Montana a distance of 480 feet; thence southeasterly at right angles to the southeasterly boundary of Montana Avenue a distance of 80 feet; thence northeasterly parallel with the southeasterly boundary of Montana Avenue to the Point of Beginning.

### PROPERTY OWNER (IF PROPERTY IS NOT OWNED BY THE APPLICANT)

- **Property Owner (name or entity):** City of Billings & Billings Depot, Inc.
- **Property owner contact:** Michelle Williams, Executive Director
- **Phone:** 406.656.7273 • 469.358.0180
- **Email:** MichelleWilliams@BillingsDepot.org





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## Employment

- Existing FTEs: 3
- New permanent FTEs created by the project: 2

## Architectural Firm

- Firm name: A&E Design
- Address: 124 N 29th St STE 100, Billings, MT 59101
- Phone: (406) 248-2633
- Email: Robby Carmody: rcarmody@ae.design



## Contractor

### Bradford Roof Management (Roof)

PO Box 20502, Billings MT 59104  
406.252.2278

### Red Bear Contracting (Cement Walkways)

558 Elbow Creek Road, Roberts MT 59070  
406.318.6965  
Toolman169@gmail.com

### Refinish Shop (Doors & Floors)

3115 Drury Ln #1, Billings MT 59105  
406.272.2393  
refinishshopbillings@gmail.com

### TW Clark & Ridley Construction (The Post)

609 Charles St, Billings MT 59101  
406.545.0826  
sridley@twridley.com





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## Project Information

### DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

The Billings Depot was built in 1909 and continues to play a large role in the cultural and historic fabric of the Billings community. Maintenance and up-keep is vital in keeping the campus relevant, safe, and an attractive destination for cultural and heritage tourism, public and private functions, and business viability.

Since it's restoration in 2000, it has seen significant deterioration due to weather exposure and general use. The **Campus Impact Renovations** project: proposes to address a variety of infrastructure, maintenance, restorative, and energy efficiency issues, allowing the Depot to maintain the integrity of the historic buildings and increase public safety and security throughout the campus.

#### The project includes:

**Exterior Door Refinishing:** The existing doors of the main Depot building and The Post have degraded over time due to exposure and deferred maintenance. In addition to wood damage, the weather seals around the doors have almost completely worn away, allowing weather and rodents access to the building. Refinishing will bring the doors back to their former luster and significantly improve the buildings' energy efficiency and pest control.



#### **Concrete Walkway Repairs:**

A breakdown of the cement walkways around the Depot has caused significant gaps and now jeopardizes the foundation of our buildings. In addition, areas have begun to crumble and break away, causing signage to lean and creating pedestrian hazards. The project will restore damaged and degraded areas of concrete sidewalks and pathways throughout the Campus to ensure adequate accessibility and public safety.



**Roof Updates:** Due to hail and general weather, the paint on the roof is flaking, leaving the tiles exposed and in jeopardy of greater damage if left unattended. Additional snow spikes are also needed on three of the buildings to keep snow from falling onto the walking paths and potentially injuring pedestrians.





**The Historic Post Building Restoration:**

The Post is a small, 1,740 sq ft building, originally the historic mail building for the Depot. This has been used as a tenant space for some years and in 2018, this space was converted into the very first popup retail space for downtown Billings. As a popup retail environment, anyone can rent the space by the hour, day, week or month to launch a new business, host a networking event, sell handmade furniture, or even try out the downtown market for business expansion. The uses are unlimited.



A&E Design was responsible for the original restoration of the main Depot and will be the project lead for restoration of The Post.

Restoration of this space is meant to showcase the history of the building while making the space more energy efficient and more functional for the community. We'll be repairing damaged concrete flooring, refinishing wood doors and trim, resealing windows and doors, replacing existing lighting with period-accurate fixtures, repairing electrical, and creating a welcome area that feels like an old mailroom.

**Floor Repairs:** The floor in the baggage room is the original wood and we spend a lot of money to maintain and preserve it. However, due to the large number of events hosted at the Depot, there are some areas which are now in serious need of repair due to damaged wood planks and worn varnish. Part of this project is to repair the damaged areas of the floor to remove trip hazards and then refinish the entire surface to protect from further deterioration. The new coating on the floor is estimated to last 5-8 years once applied.





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### ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY IMPACT:

Once complete, this project will reflect a refreshed and enhanced campus image, encouraging a new audience to explore and occupy the area, which is beginning to appear neglected and unsafe.

The Campus Impact Renovations project: will address infrastructure, building updates, and restoration and maintenance. It involves renovations and updates which will enhance security, energy efficiency, and public safety so the Depot can maintain a state-of-good-repair and enhance future economic impact.

Economic impacts of the proposed project to the local and regional area as a result of the project completion include:

- **Residential housing** by improving quality of life and safe walkability of the downtown community helps bring new residents and businesses to downtown. It also supports the new residential developments of downtown and within the Historic Montana Avenue district.
- **Trades** associated with historic preservation work requires specialized skill sets from **local and regional contractors**, such as masonry cleaning/sealing and repainting, windows restoration, painting, roof restoration, electrical, millwork fabrication and carpentry skills, and concrete restoration and repair. Also, **new jobs and wage earners** in the areas of housekeeping, maintenance, catering, and service industry will all be utilized to support new services because of increased use of the Depot campus.
- **Educational opportunities** created through enhanced partnerships with local schools, colleges and career centers to support education, help develop skills necessary for a more advanced workforce and provide better access to the history of Billings.

The Depot is worked closely with Scheels, Big Sky Economic Development, Visit Billings, Visit SE Montana, and three colleges/universities to launch the first summer equipment rental popshop in The Post at the Billings Depot. This ran for only a few months in the summer but encouraged and supported workforce development, local tourism and economic development for Downtown Billings.

The completion of the Campus Improvement Project will allow the Depot to further strengthen this program as well as push further into others programming to provide greater support for tourism and community development.

- **Social structures.** As the perception and appeal of the historic Billings Depot Campus begins to change through this enhancement project, the use and interest of the Campus will reach a larger audience and also impact social behaviors
- A better sense of safety and security, rekindles interest in the Depot to attract a larger audience and **increase general use and visitation.** This also helps to support tourism, workforce development and economic impact
- As stated in Perceived Safety in Public Spaces from Stockholm University: *By offering publicly accessible space which connects other areas of the city, public spaces are vital for the existence of a well-functioning city. The way people perceive space determines the way space is used. One of the major factors that influences people's behavior is sense of safety. If people feel unsafe in an area, the behavior of people and sense of comfort is changed. The way people perceive their safety can tell a lot about the way people make use of certain parts of the city.*
  - o <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:826168/FULLTEXT01.pdf>





- **Public health and safety** improve by addressing deteriorated and failing buildings and site/sidewalk components, security camera and monitoring, and vagrancy and vandalism issues.
- Increased **tourism and out-of-town event bookings**. The planned restoration and campus updates will allow us to better serve travelers and accommodate needs of event planners that are currently available in larger cities.
- **Tenant acquisition and longevity** is dependent on the quality and maintenance of the space. As the City of Billings Public Works prepares to end its lease in 2024, the Billings Depot is actively seeking a new tenant to take its place. The ability to do this in a timely manner is dependent on our ability to maintain the campus to address areas of public safety, energy efficiency, and beautification.

#### DEPOT MISSION & OPERATIONS:

**The mission of the Billings Depot is to preserve and protect the historic campus and actively contribute to the growth, spirit and vitality of the Billings community.**

We are dedicated to collaborating with our community partners to ensure the work we're doing at the Depot aligns and supports the overall goals and planning efforts for the community. The Depot is also one of the founding members of the Historic Montana Avenue Association (HMAA). This group is made up of property and business owners along Montana Avenue, dedicated to the beautification, preservation, and economic development of this historic district. The Depot, in collaboration with the other executive members of this group, have already succeeded in gaining approval for the installation of new pedestrian crosswalks to support traffic calming and walkability. Streetlights have been updated in the district and private security has been hired to work alongside local law enforcement to further improve the safety and walkability of Downtown. The Campus Impact Renovations project directly aligns with the goals and initiatives of HMAA in the areas of preservation and beautification.

**The Billings Depot brings thousands of people to Downtown Billings each year.**

In 2023, the Depot hosted over 130 private events which brought over 13,000 people to Downtown. In addition, the Depot hosted 7 signature events, each attracting between 200 to 1500 people. During the months of April through October, the Depot also hosts up to 50 dinner tours through our partnership with Destination America, a tour group out of Las Vegas. There are ~50 guests on each bus tour from all around the world, stopping at the Depot for dinner and a presentation on the history of Billings.

The City of Billings grew up around the Depot and we continue to be a vital contributor to our community. We want to celebrate this history and ensure continuation of historic use through preservation and restoration efforts. We are dedicated to enhancing the community, remaining relevant so we can be strong partners and strategically leveraging our resources to support overall community goals in economic development and downtown revitalization.

#### PROJECT SCHEDULE:

This project is shovel ready and all contractors have been identified. The project will commence in phases throughout the year, dependent upon weather, financing, and event schedules. The full project can be completed within one year from the time funding is received.





## Project Details

### Land and site improvements

1. Cement Walkways \$140,000

**SUBTOTAL \$140,000**

### Construction/rehabilitation costs (use general construction trade divisions)

1. Floor repair and refinishing \$24,000

2. Main Depot exterior door refinishing and sealing \$50,400

3. The Post exterior door refinishing and resealing \$10,600

4. Restoration of The Post interior \$140,000

5. Roof updates \$195,000

**SUBTOTAL \$420,000**

### Fees

1. Architectural/engineering \$8,500

2. Permits \$1,500

**SUBTOTAL \$10,000**

### Total Project Development Costs

**\$570,000**



## Project Financing

### A. APPLICANT EQUITY

Cash Invested	\$0
Land & Buildings	\$0
Other	\$0

**SUBTOTAL \$0**

### B. LENDER COMMITMENTS *(Attach bank loan commitment letter, letters of credit or other documentation)*

None

**SUBTOTAL \$0**

### C. TIF ASSISTANCE - ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

MCA

Citation (Office use only)

_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____

**SUBTOTAL \$**

### D. OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

#### Board Contributions

**\$8,500**

- Northwestern Energy
- Bravera Bank
- Valley Credit Union
- Ryan Duffy
- A&E Design

#### Grands Received

**\$429,000**

- Montana Historic Preservation Grant
- Billings Community Foundation
- The Foundation for Montana History (pending)

#### Sources of funds summary (post totals from above)

A. Applicant Equity	\$0
B. Lender Commitments	\$0
C. TIF Assistance	\$132,500
D. Other Funds	\$437,500

#### Total Project Financing

**\$570,000**





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## Certification

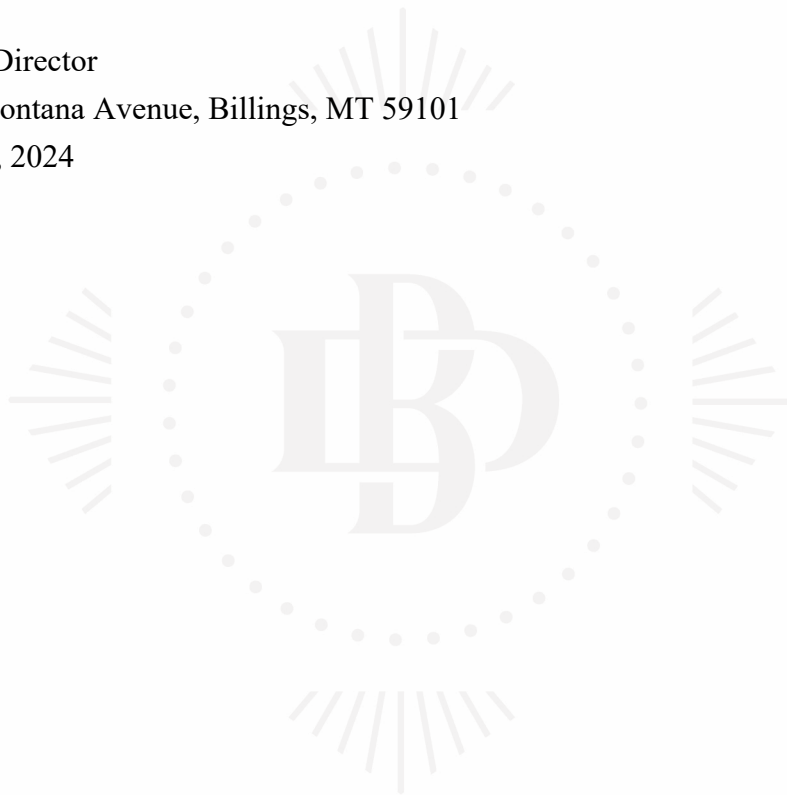
I (we), Michelle Williams, Billings Depot Inc., the APPLICANT, certify that the statements and estimates within this application as well as any and all documentation submitted as attachments to this application or under separate are true and correct to the best of my (our) knowledge and belief.

### Signature:

Title: Executive Director

Address: 2310 Montana Avenue, Billings, MT 59101

Date: January 12, 2024





## Letters of Support

Provided in support of the Campus Impact Renovation project in 2022 for securing the Montana Historic Preservation Grant. There have been no changes to this project since their submission.



P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103  
P 406.657.8433

[billingsmt.gov](http://billingsmt.gov)



February 2, 2022

**Re: Grant Application to Montana Department of Commerce for  
Facility Improvements to Billings Depot**

To Whom It May Concern:

The City of Billings owns the building known as the Billings Depot, or simply the Depot, located within the historic area of downtown Billings on Montana Avenue. It is an historic building that was renovated and restored many years ago and is currently leased and managed by the Billings Depot, a non-profit organization. Many popular private events and corporate meetings are held each year at this facility as supervised by the Billings Depot organization. I have reviewed and familiarized myself with the proposed improvements to the facility and fully support the grant application to accomplish these crucial improvements.

Do not hesitate to contact me if there are any questions.

Very truly yours,

Kevin Iffland  
Assistant City Administrator, City of Billings

cc: Michelle Williams, Executive Director, Billings Depot



January 14, 2022

CITY OF  
**Billings**  
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Bill Cole, Mayor  
P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103-1178  
Phone 406.657.8296  
FAX 406.657.8390

Montana Historical Preservation Grant Committee  
Community Development Division  
Montana Dept. of Commerce  
301 S. Park Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Historic Billings Depot

Dear Committee Members:

I write in strong support of the Billings Depot and its application for funds to repair and restore this historic landmark that generates great economic and cultural activity in downtown Billings.

The projects described in the grant application will maintain and protect the historical and architectural integrity of the Depot campus and improve safety and security. They will also stimulate economic development, promote community pride, and encourage statewide tourism in collaboration with community partners like the City of Billings, Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce & CVB.

The Billings Depot is fundamental to our city's history. The City of Billings was founded in 1882 by the land-development subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railroad and named after the president of the railroad, Frederick Billings. Before becoming a railroad magnate, Billings played a major role in developing San Francisco and California after the 1849 goldrush and helped found the University of California, among many other accomplishments.

The Billings Depot served three major railroad networks that intersected here at the turn of the last century. The Depot has hosted presidents, dignitaries, and many historical figures over the years. In 1991 the Hollywood movie *Far and Away* was filmed there. The Depot received historic designation because it represents an important period of Billings'

[billingsmt.gov](http://billingsmt.gov)





history and has had a large influence on the types of businesses that grew up along the famous Montana Avenue.

Today, the Billings Depot continues to be a major supporter of our local economy and an important part of our cultural identity. Operated as an event center in partnership with many city organizations and nonprofits, thousands of people visit the Depot each year for business events, community celebrations, weddings, fundraisers and musical performances.

The Depot is a cornerstone of Billings and helps anchor our downtown's position as the geographic and cultural center of our community. Downtown is where the City of Billings presents its best face to the public. Local residents, regional visitors, and national and international tourists base their impressions of Billings on what they see downtown. Maintaining and revitalizing the historic Billings Depot campus will promote economic growth and foster pride in our rich local history.

The Depot's reputation for community collaboration and project execution is top notch, but it needs additional financial resources to complete the identified projects, which I am confident will be completed as promised.

Respectfully,

William A. Cole, Mayor  
City of Billings





January 12, 2022

Montana Department of Commerce  
Attn: Montana Historical Preservation Grant (MHPG) Committee  
301 South Park Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear MHPG Committee Members:

This letter is submitted to you as confirmation that Visit Billings, the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Billings, is a supportive partner in the Historic Billings Depot's efforts to apply for, and obtain, a 2022 Montana Historical Preservation Grant.

The Billings Depot is a major partner in tourism for Billings and Montana. From hosting unique events that attract visitors from surrounding communities and states, to assisting Visit Billings with execution of familiarization tours, meeting and convention recruitment, and displaying the importance of historic preservation in Montana, the economic impact of this venue to Yellowstone County is crucial as Montana's largest community.

The Billings Depot sits along historic Montana Avenue which is right off the Interstate 90 corridor. The venue elevates the significance of the railroad industry today, and historically. Preserving this historic depot is extremely important locally, regionally, and nationally. Continued renovation and restoration efforts will help ensure this treasure remains available for Montana residents and Billings' visitors. During its 100+ year history, the Depot has been the center of the community. The staff and board of directors for the Billings Depot work tirelessly with strategic partners in the region building cohesive plans for downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and economic development. Today, the Depot remains the historic center of the community and Visit Billings is a proud partner.

Awarding a Montana Historic Preservation Grant to the staff and board of the Billings Depot will allow leadership to increase public awareness and recognition of the nationally registered historical place while continuing to protect this key district in eastern Montana.

Thank you for your consideration.

Graciously,

*Alex Tyson*

Alex Tyson, IOM  
Executive Director  
Visit Billings (Billings CVB & Billings TBID)  
(406) 869-3726/Alex@VisitBillings.com





BIG SKY  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EDA • EDC CREATING MONTANA BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

January 11, 2022

Montana Historical Preservation Grant Review  
Committee  
Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Grant Review Committee:

Big Sky Economic Development is pleased to provide this letter in support of The Billings Depot Campus Impact Renovations: Historical Billings Depot Project.

Big Sky Economic Development (BSED) strives to sustain and grow Yellowstone County's vibrant economy and outstanding quality of life by providing leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development. The Billings Depot partners with Big Sky Economic Development's programs to grow our regional economy.

The Depot champions and supports many community endeavors by hosting training in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Mathematics (STEAM), or STEAM Fest, by launching educational programs for our youth to build critical skills needed for workforce development, short term popup retail space to support entrepreneurial growth, and creating a green space pocket park to beautify our community. The Billings Depot's project will elevate their ability to utilize the campus fully. Their projects and activities complement BSED's support of business and community development and furthers our work to build a foundation for a vibrant economy.

The Depot is a true leader in creating community collaboration through events and celebrating the rich history of The Depot. The Depot provides support to our Tourism industry which in turn creates/retains more jobs within the event industry. The Depot's project is a vision shared by our organization and others that supports the redevelopment, revitalization and historical preservation of our downtown core.

We believe that in bolstering the offerings of our downtown, we are making our community even more desirable when viewed through the lens of talent attraction and retention of workforce. The completion of this project will create a positive impact in both the near and long term. We respectfully ask that you give this project your full, thoughtful consideration.

Thank you for your time and charitable contributions to communities like ours.

Respectfully,

Steve Arveschoug  
Executive Director  
Big Sky Economic Development

GRANITE TOWER  
222 NORTH 32ND ST. SUITE 200  
BILLINGS, MT 59101-1948

P 406.256.6871  
F 406.256.6877

[BIGSKYECONOMICDEVELOPMENT.ORG](http://BIGSKYECONOMICDEVELOPMENT.ORG)



**downtown**  
*Billings*

January 11, 2022

Billings Depot - Historic  
Preservation Grant

Dear Ms. Williams:

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of the Billings Depot and their application for this Historic Preservation Grant. The Billings Depot is a valuable member of Downtown Billings and instrumental in providing an important layer of culture, art, and economic support to our vibrant community.

The Downtown Billings Alliance is honored to have The Billings Depot as a member of our Downtown Membership Association and partners regularly with the organization to further Downtown revitalization. This program aligns perfectly with the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan and our transformative goals, including "A Vibrant and Connected Downtown", "A Strong Downtown Identity", and "A Diverse Economic Engine". This historical asset is a valuable commodity to our community and The Billings Depot succeeds in bringing a lineup of exciting and diverse programs that enrich our downtown's historic arts & culture scene, driving tourism and visitors to our urban center. This organization is invaluable to not only the downtown core, but the city, and region as a whole.

The Billings Depot is a respected and beloved amenity to our community. This historic preservation grant will only enhance this venue and service and the Downtown Billings Alliance is honored to support their efforts. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Katy Easton  
CEO  
Downtown Billings Alliance

Downtown Billings Alliance - 116 N. 29th St - Billings, MT 59102 - 406-294-5060  
[www.downtownbillings.com](http://www.downtownbillings.com)





*Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board*

*A certified local government (CLG)  
Program representing four governing bodies:*

**City of Billings  
City of Laurel**

**Crow Tribe  
Yellowstone County**

January 11, 2022

Montana Historic Preservation Grant Review Committee  
Department of Commerce  
301 South Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Grant Review Committee:

On behalf of the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board (YHPB), we are pleased to provide this letter of support of The Billings Campus Impact Renovations: Historical Billings Depot Project.

The goal of the YHPB is to promote the preservation of historic buildings, sites and neighborhoods. Since its inception in 1993, the preservation of Montana Avenue and its buildings has been a priority for YHPB and the City of Billings. In the early 90's, business and property owners along Montana Avenue recognized that an investment in the historic Billings Depot was the catalyst to spur rehabilitation and economic development in this district. Several things occurred to make this happen. The business owners worked together to establish the Montana Avenue Historic District in 1978, and in the early 1990's property owners helped the City of Billings prepare a rehabilitation program for the Depot. As part of that rehabilitation plan, Community Transportation Enhancement funds were programmed for the Depot's rehabilitation, Montana Avenue sidewalks were improved, and a Montana Avenue Streetscape project beautified the roadway for the public. Since that initial investment, Montana Avenue has boomed again!

The Depot continues to be the anchor of the district and an economic driver for many of the businesses located around it. The Depot's continuing support of community endeavors by hosting training, business development opportunities, tourism and education make it a true economic powerhouse.

The YHPB believes strongly in the opportunity to continue the usefulness and importance of our historic buildings and districts. The completion of this project will continue the Depot's legacy as a positive example of what a historic building can contribute to its community.

Thank you for your time and consideration for this wonderful and important building in our community.

Respectfully,

*Lora Mattox*

Lora Mattox, AICP  
Historic Preservation Officer  
Planning & Community Services Department  
City of Billings

