

DATE: 4/7/2023  
TO: Missoula Midtown Association  
FROM: Margaret Raimann, Erin Reome, and Martin Glastra van Loon (SERA Design)  
SUBJECT: Midtown Alternatives Compass Evaluation (Task 4.4 Scenario Testing)

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The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize SERA's evaluation of the Midtown alternatives as part of the broader Midtown Master Plan project. The alternatives are ideas for transformation of Midtown's future development, public realm improvements (e.g., streetscape enhancements, improved bike and pedestrian crossings, new or expanded open spaces, etc.), and overall identity. The plan alternatives served as a preview of the range of potential elements that could be included in the final plan alternative, with the intention of reflecting the stated community vision and goals and to spark further community input and ideas for advancing the final plan alternative. Given these parameters, the goal of the development of the plan alternatives was not to choose one alternative, but to choose elements from the alternatives based on community and stakeholder support.

To better inform discussions with the project team, SERA's evaluation compared each plan alternative's desired uses, connectivity/mobility improvements, and urban design using the Project Compass developed at the outset of the Plan. The process of developing and evaluating the plan alternatives included background analysis, engagement touchpoints with the community, and qualitative analysis.

## Project Compass

The Project Compass is a tool to visually represent the community's vision and goals for the Master Plan. To develop a preferred alternative for the final plan, SERA used the Project Compass to evaluate the draft plan alternatives, along with drawing key themes from community feedback, discussions with the Project Management Team, and review by the consultant team.

The broad themes of the Compass include affordability, community, nature, identity, connectivity, and safety (Figure 1). Each broad theme has subcategories that reflect the objectives of the Project Management Team, Steering Committee, and the community. Because the draft plan alternatives were intended to provide preliminary ideas for the future transformation of Midtown, the project team determined that the six broad themes would provide a sufficient framework for evaluation of each alternative. The final plan alternative and implementation plan will allow for a deeper understanding of how the Compass subcategories are addressed.

The Midtown Missoula Association (MMA) can use the Project Compass a living document to check against the Plan's vision and goals throughout implementation. The MMA may need to modify the Compass as new objectives arise as part of implementation efforts. However, during the process of developing the Midtown Master Plan, the Compass continued to align with the feedback from the Midtown community.

Figure 1. Project Compass, Missoula Midtown Master Plan



In addition, the consultant team completed further analysis to understand how the final plan could address issues of housing and business affordability. ECONorthwest developed a displacement risk analysis, attached as Appendix A to this memorandum.

## Compass Evaluation of Alternatives

SERA used the subcategories to describe the differences between each of the plan alternatives. The Project Compass includes:

**Three potential scores:** improved (●), better (●●), and exemplary (●●●). The qualitative evaluation revealed that each of the draft alternatives met a baseline of an “improved” score for each broad theme.

**Themes:** The themes are organized by three groups that reflect the vision for Midtown:

- Equity (affordability and community)
- Active transportation (safety and connectivity)
- Vibrant placemaking (nature and identify)

SERA used this Compass framework to evaluate the alternatives according to how the envisioned urban design elements would improve Midtown.

### Draft Plan Alternatives Evaluation

Each figure below shows the Project Compass evaluation for each draft alternative. The evaluation is shown visually in the gray spider chart overlaid on the Compass. The spider chart is pulled to a score for each broad theme in the compass, the inner magenta circle indicates a score of “improved” the middle magenta circle indicates a score of “better,” and the outer magenta circle indicates a score of “exemplary.” At the end of this memorandum Figure 10 shows a summary of the evaluation for all four alternatives.

## Southgate Triangle Center

**Focus:** Builds on existing community assets, keeping the heart of Midtown centered on Southgate Mall as the core area. Investment in development would focus on opportunities in the core area and areas directly adjacent.

### Evaluation Summary

**Equity:** Leverages existing community assets and promotes opportunities for affordable housing and local business growth.

**Active Infrastructure:** Works within existing and planned mobility network to provide safer bike/ped infrastructure and opportunities for more efficient connections.

**Vibrant Placemaking:** Enhances existing parks and natural systems in the core area, identifies new opportunities for open spaces in adjacent character areas, and rebrands core area as Midtown Central to enhance sense of place.

Figure 2. Compass Evaluation for Alternative 1, Southgate Triangle Center, Missoula Midtown Master Plan

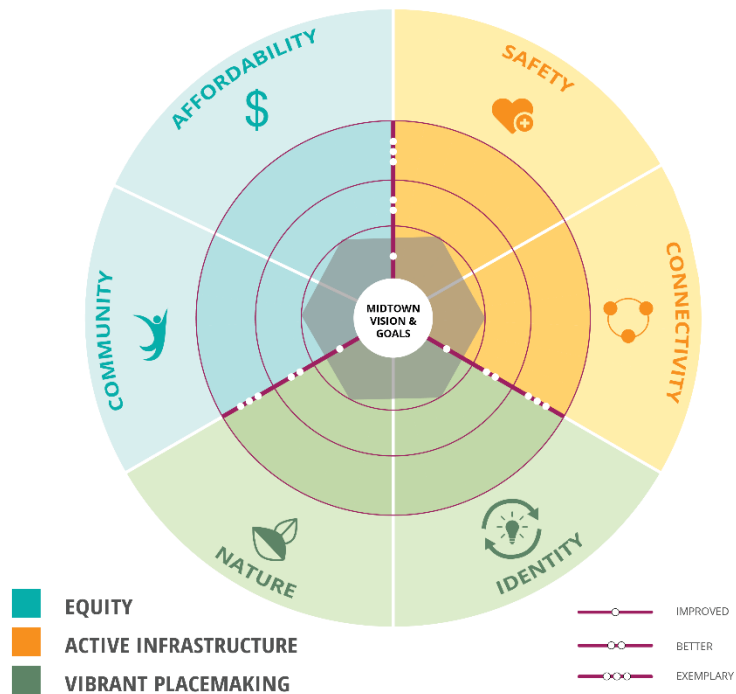


Figure 3. Alternative 1: Southgate Triangle Center



## Brooks Backbone

**Focus:** Extends the core area of change along the extent of Brooks Street in Midtown. This would provide better opportunities for investments in connectivity along the corridor as well as for additional affordable housing and commerce.

### Evaluation Summary

**Equity:** Promotes higher densities for housing and opportunities for local business growth along the entirety of Brooks Street. Connects existing destinations and community assets with gateways to Midtown.

**Active Infrastructure:** Builds safer crossings, lighting, and infrastructure for bikes/peds along existing corridors. Provides efficient movement through Midtown that works within plans for future BRT, and the Bitterroot Trail is a connected spine along the boundary of the core area.

**Vibrant Placemaking:** Allows for existing parks and natural systems to continue and provides additional open spaces in character areas outside core. Rebranding of Midtown Central brings a sense of place and identity to the existing assets.

Figure 4, Alternative 2, Brooks Backbone, Missoula Midtown Master Plan

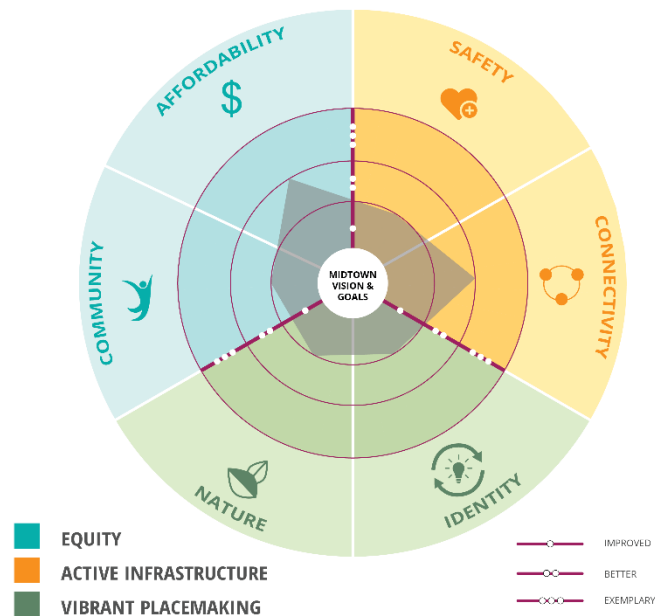


Figure 5. Alternative 2: Brooks Backbone





## Russell / South Center

**Focus:** Offers a reimagination of the iconic intersection at Brooks Street, South Ave, and Russell Street

### Evaluation Summary

**Equity:** Promotes higher densities in core change area with a greater focus on affordable housing and community economic development. Opportunities for local business growth. Strengthens community assets through development of Festival Street.

**Active Infrastructure:** Reimagines dysfunction junction to bring a safer multi-user experience to Midtown's busiest intersection. Promotes better connections for all users through dysfunction junction and a walkable urban core.

**Vibrant Placemaking:** Brings in Bitterroot Trail as key asset to the core area. Festival Street adds to Midtown's strong list of community assets.

Figure 6. Alternative 3, Russell / South Center, Missoula Midtown Master Plan

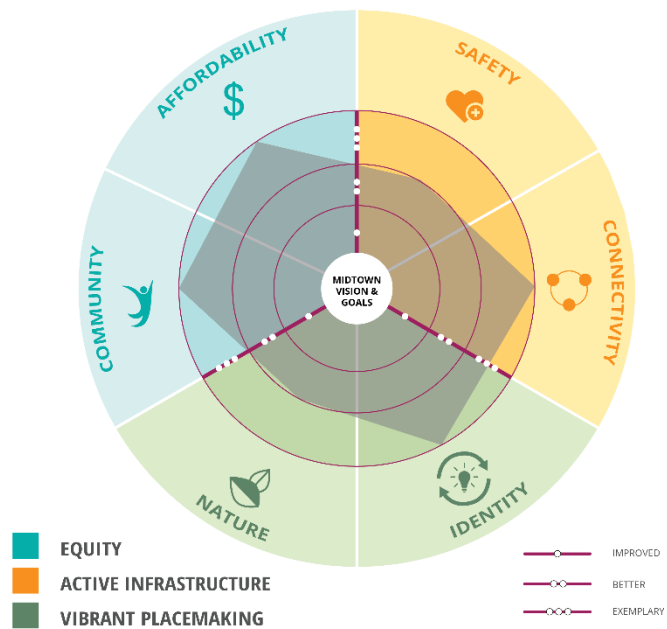
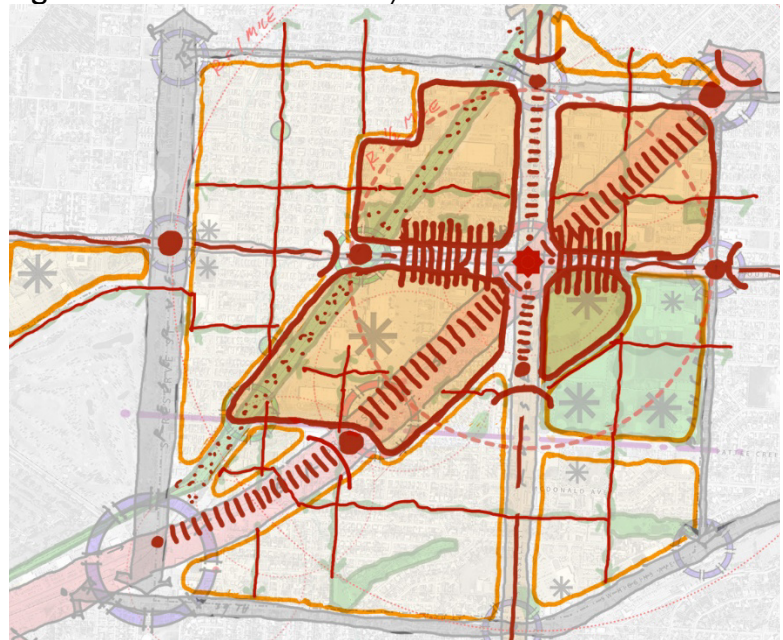


Figure 7. Alternative 3: Russell/South Center





## Evaluation Summary

Figure 10 presents the alternatives listed above according to each broad Project Compass theme. The qualitative evaluation (according to the scale shown in the Compass legend **Error! Reference source not found.**) offers one of the many tools used to develop the final plan alternative, supplemented by community outreach, conversations with key stakeholders, and further analysis (including the displacement risk analysis presented as an Appendix to this memorandum).

The purpose of this evaluation was to summarize the focus areas of each plan alternative and how the alternatives align with each broad theme in the Project Compass. The four plan alternatives present four different areas of focus, which affects the scale of development, types of streetscape improvements, and relationship to existing assets and open space. As a result, the final plan alternative will take key elements from this range of options to develop a more refined version.

The evaluation of each of the draft plan alternatives presented in this memorandum was a useful tool in development of the final plan alternative. In addition to the Compass evaluations, SERA reviewed and incorporated feedback from the January community workshop, targeted outreach conversations with key stakeholders, and conversations with the MMA and consultant team. This assessment will result in a refined plan alternative that will be incorporated into the final master plan, along with further discussion of the key components of the plan alternative (land uses, housing, economic development, mobility and connectivity, open spaces, etc.).