



# NENA NEWS

WINTER  
2020

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## City Commission Moves to Incentivize Pole Yard Development Despite Board of Health Request to Postpone

**D**espite more than 50 letters of opposition by Bozeman citizens, the City Commission provisionally voted 4—1 on November 10 to create the Pole Yard Urban Renewal District (URD). The issue is scheduled for a 2nd vote on November 24 as a “consent item,” **which means the Commission is not required to discuss the issue further.**

The 87 acres currently owned by Idaho Pole was contaminated for many years first by the BNSF railroad and later by Idaho Pole, which together dumped toxic chemicals into the ground as part of their wood-treating operations. The site was placed on the Superfund National Priorities list in 1986, and partially de-listed in early 2020—although a recent 5-year review by EPA concluded that groundwater contamination remains at the site.

The EPA claims that public health will continue to be protected as long as “institutional controls” remain in place, which limit activity on the site. Those limits include:

- **No residential development unless approved by EPA and DEQ;**
- **No excavation to saturated soil or groundwater without a soil management plan approved by EPA and MDEQ; and**
- **No use of groundwater for any purpose.**

A key potential problem with the proposed URD is the fact that new development would likely require significant disturbance of polluted soils, create likelihood of increased pollutant exposure at the site, and likely increase the transmission of harmful pollutants through local groundwater.

For these reasons the City-County Board of Health (BOH), which has been intimately involved in the Idaho Pole Superfund Site since it was first identified, asked the City Commission **not** to create a URD at this time because “numerous questions remain about the status of contaminants on the site and the process for assessing the safety of possible uses of the site and construction/development on the site.” They are not opposed to a URD, but asked to “slow down this process until the City can determine with more certainty what types of uses would

be protective of human health.” They believe the currently configured zoning puts human health at risk and that a special zoning district should be created. They are also concerned about future liability issues.

I-Ho Pomeroy was the only Commissioner to side with the Board of Health and vote “no” on the URD Ordinance.

According to City staff, Scout DAC, LLC—“the prospective purchaser of the Idaho Pole property”—has made significant initial investments in their 3-phase development vision, including contributing more than \$10,000 to the “quiet rails study” and paying \$21,500 of the consultant fee to write the Pole Yard URD Plan. The developer’s concept plan is now being revised after City staff responded with 16 pages of comments. The EPA informed NENA that the developer is also performing the EPA-required Phase 1 environmental assessment now, the outcome of which may determine whether they continue to invest in redevelopment.

NENA has been working diligently to raise neighborhood issues of concern with the Commission. Public health and safety are paramount, but other issues include traffic impacts and injury to businesses that depend on the railroad and would be negatively impacted by large-scale development.

Because the significant public health concerns expressed by the Board of Health have not been addressed, removal of the URD ordinance from the November 24, 2020 consent agenda pending further review might temporarily pause the process and allow for more time for consideration of these legitimate issues. While NENA is not presenting an official position, interested community members can contact the City Commission at [agenda@bozeman.net](mailto:agenda@bozeman.net).

**Virtual Public Meeting on Idaho Pole Superfund Site**  
**Thursday, December 3 beginning at 6:30 p.m.**

This meeting will include a site update from EPA and DEQ followed by a question and answer period. Find the link to join the meeting at [www.epa.gov/superfund/idaho-pole](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/idaho-pole)

**Thank you to KENYON NOBLE for sponsoring this issue of NENA News.**  
Their donation covered the cost of mailing vs hand-delivery, helping keep our volunteers and neighbors safe!

## Message from the NENA President & VP

Hello neighbors—

As the NENA President and Vice President we hope to bring positive energy, integrity, organization, and a few good ideas to NENA. We both moved to Bozeman in the mid-90s. Now, in addition to riding, we are married and raising families in Bozeman's Northeast Neighborhood. We sincerely look forward to working with our community to make good things happen. We'd love to hear from you at [NENABozeman@gmail.com](mailto:NENABozeman@gmail.com)!

We are already making progress. We have adapted our bi-annual meetings to address public safety by making them virtual. We have already scheduled NENA's first **Virtual Townhall Meeting**, which will be with the developers of the Brewery and Tinworks Projects on **Thursday, January 14, 2021, 6pm–7pm**. We've improved NENA file organization and efficiency by uploading them to Google Drive.

Improving communication is a priority. There are approximately 1,100 households within NENA but only 200 names on our email list. If you have not been receiving communications, go to [NENABozeman.org](http://NENABozeman.org) and click **JOIN**. Encourage your neighbors to do the same! We created a NENA **Facebook** page and **Instagram** account. Please like, follow, comment, and share. We improved our database so that we can now communicate with separate committees that focus on specific objectives. You can learn more by clicking on **OBJECTIVES** on the site. To sign up for a committee, click on **PROFILE** and then **Edit Profile**. Finally, the site now has an **Events Calendar** and an interactive **NENA Boundaries** Google Map.

We are researching ways to raise and better manage funds for the organization. Expenses include mailing, admin., website, and events. If you want to donate to NENA, please visit the website and click on **DONATE**.

NENA continues to have an impact on issues that affect our daily lives. Public comments and participation recently helped confirm the Front Street Connector Trail. Our Idaho Pole Project Committee is doing an excellent job of keeping everyone informed on this important issue, and NENA members have consistently provided public comments and testimony to the City Commission. NENA is a relevant community organization because of our member participation.

Thank you and please take care—

Reno Walsh, *President* & Jeremy Mistretta, *Vice President*

Please attend the **VIRTUAL**  
**NENA WINTER MEETING**

**THURSDAY, DEC. 17**  
**6:00-7:00 PM**

Click on **EVENTS** at [NENABozeman.org](http://NENABozeman.org) to learn more.

## MSU Students Study Neighborhood Character

by Dr. Susanne Cowan

A service-learning class at Montana State University is studying neighborhood character in NENA in order to understand how to best protect the area's unique qualities. Professor Susanne Cowan is leading a group of 13 graduate students from architecture, engineering, and public policy in developing techniques to document the architectural forms, urban patterns, public spaces, and social behaviors that are special in NENA.

In particular, the students are interested in how alleys, backyards, and front yards shape the character of NENA. This is part of a study to see how a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District could be applied to NENA. This is just one of several courses which will work with NENA as part of the Community Engaged and Transformational Scholarship (CATS) program at MSU, which develops partnerships between the campus and the City of Bozeman. Professor Cowan is working with Dani Hess, the Neighborhoods Coordinator at the City of Bozeman, Professor Sarah Church at MSU, and several other city employees and NENA members. The students have written survey questions which will help to advance their research on neighborhood character and attitudes towards change. Please answer the survey questions at this link: [https://montana.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eEFzUOvzXOFFAIT](https://montana.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eEFzUOvzXOFFAIT)



photo by Leah Belair

# NE Bozeman Environmental Initiatives



Wetland Preserve Nature Center illustration by Jakub Galczynski.

## Audubon Wetlands Update

by Chris Nixon, President, Sacajawea Audubon Society

The Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) and Confluence Consulting has generated a 25% conceptual wetland restoration plan for the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Currently the public can view the wetland area from the footpath along the former railroad berm. Please stay on the gravel path and restrain dogs to protect wildlife. Temporary fencing will be installed to prevent access across the construction area through the wooded wetland (recent sewer installation) so that natural regeneration can take place. SAS will be providing periodic updates at [sacajaweaaudubon.org](http://sacajaweaaudubon.org) and [bozemanwetlands.org](http://bozemanwetlands.org)

## Safety Center Goes Solar

by Natalie Meyer, Bozeman Sustainability Program Mgr

Construction at the Bozeman Public Safety Center is underway and is set to finish in April 2022. The project has come in under budget and the City Commission requested that additional funds be committed to improving the building's sustainability. The building's plans have been scaled up to a 252kW solar array. In its first year of production, it will generate 271 megawatt hours—a value of \$23,035. Battery storage will ensure that the building will have power even if there is a power failure. “We’re really

interested in making this building efficient and resilient,” Meyer said. “So it’s about saving energy but it’s also about being prepared for the future.”

## Bozeman Brewing Earns EcoStar

by Kristen Hilleren, Bozeman Brewing Co.



Sustainability is the heart of Bozeman Brewing. This mentality is embodied throughout our operations from aluminum packaging to something more unexpected, our cold air recapture system—using ambient air instead of refrigeration to keep beer frosty. Composting, donating spent grain to local cattle ranches, and using 40% less water than the industry standard to make our beer are all ways this is exemplified. But the shining star is the 182 solar panels covering our roof (providing 30% of annual power usage). These initiatives, along with myriad others, have earned us an EcoStar award from MSU two years running.

## Bozeman Creek Improvements

by Takami Clark, Big Sky Public Relations

As part of the **Rouse Avenue–Main to Oak project**, Montana Department of Transportation has made two key improvements to Bozeman Creek. First, two new concrete box culverts were installed under the road, allowing the creek to flow freely without causing erosion. Rocks and native streambed materials placed in the bottom of each culvert mimic a natural environment for fish. The aging storm drain was also replaced, with hydrodynamic separators that remove debris from the storm water before it discharges into Bozeman Creek. Visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/rouseoakmain/>

## 2-Phase Development Proposed for Brewery Site



Thinktank Design has been working on a project in conjunction with Tinworks (Cottonwood + Ida) that is slated for the former Brewery site. The proposal is a mix of residential units above commercial spaces, with an on-site parking garage that will serve residents as well as 84 spaces leased by the Tinworks development and parking demand beyond the site. Wood slat screening will conceal and integrate the garage into the site.

The plan has over 8,000 square feet of commercial spaces that could be used by artists and artisans. The for-rent residential units include 12 row houses and 13 lofts, with the intent of providing housing in the “missing middle.” Phase 1 will need to be completed

prior to final occupancy of the Tinworks PUD, which is now a 2 yr build time (planned start in May of 2021; completion in May of 2023). The Brewery project would start later, in summer/fall of 2021, and also be completed in May 2023.

Visit [NENABozeman.org](http://NENABozeman.org) and click on **NEWS** for more information and to **see the master site plans**. Questions and comments can be directed to Erik Nelson at [erik@thinktankarchitects.com](mailto:erik@thinktankarchitects.com).



## Front St. Pathway a Go!

by Matt Marcinek, GVLТ Community Trails Program Manager

The NE neighborhood is soon to have a long-anticipated pedestrian/bicycle pathway connecting at Oak St and Rouse Ave. Starting at the Depot Trail on N Wallace, the new **Front Street Pathway** will follow the unused Front St right-of-way, cross Bozeman Creek, and connect with Rouse. The project includes constructing a new 50-foot bridge crossing the creek and creating an asphalt, multi-use path that connects with the Story Mill Spur Trail, Story Mill Community Park, and the Path to the “M.”

Gallatin Valley Land Trust extends its thanks to NENA neighbors for supporting the pathway—a cooperative project of GVLТ and the City of Bozeman. Initially approved for funding from the Trails, Open Space and Parks



*GVLТ rendering of completed pathway.*

bond in 2015, the project was delayed until MDT completed the Rouse Ave project. NENA support was critical to approval of additional funding by the City Commission, who agreed that this project is an important link in the City’s trail system. Construction is anticipated for summer 2021.

## Quiet & Safe Rail Crossings

The “best-case scenario” is that the Quiet Zone could be implemented at the Wallace St., Rouse Ave. and Griffin Dr. crossings following the completion of the funded Griffin Drive project in late 2021. The Train Horn Rule requires engineers to sound train horns at least 15 seconds, and no more than 20 seconds, in advance of all public grade crossings. Horns must be sounded in a pattern of 2 long/1 short/1 long blasts.

Improving one intersection, in this case at Griffin Drive, could be enough to no longer require trains to blast their horn at the other two crossings. The NE Urban Renewal District is in a position to fund improvements to the Wallace Ave. crossing if required. The Montana Department



of Transportation controls the Rouse Ave. crossing. While improvements might not be necessary, MDT may choose to require them, citing increased liability if the intersection is left as is. The scale and cost of these potential improvements and the lack of an identified funding source could result in an indefinite hold on progress for the project.

The city will publish an update at the end of March 2021. Questions should be sent to David Fine, Economic Development Specialist with the City of Bozeman: [dfine@bozeman.net](mailto:dfine@bozeman.net)



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