

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10

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Missoula Downtown Historic District  
Missoula County, MT

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Downtown Missoula Historic District lies within the platted areas of the Higgins, McCormick, McWhirk and Old Town Additions.

The point of beginning (POB) for the district is located at the intersection of Toole Avenue and Milton Street. From the POB the boundary runs in a southeasterly direction along Toole Avenue (which changes to Railroad Street), to the intersection of Railroad Street and North Higgins Avenue. The boundary continues southeast from Higgins Avenue along East Alder Street, to the intersection of East Alder Street and East Spruce Street. At the corner of East Spruce and East Alder streets, the boundary continues southeast approximately 1-½ blocks to the west bank of Rattlesnake Creek. It runs south along the Creek to the East Pine Street intersection and then west one block to the intersection of Madison Avenue and East Pine Street. It continues south along Madison Avenue to the north bank of the Clark Fork River then west along the north bank of the river to the approximate point of where Levasseur and Clay Street intersect just north of the river. It runs north along Clay Street until reaching the alley behind the 200 block of East Front Street. It turns west at the alley of the 200 block and continues west and then north, to East Front Street (encompassing the buildings located on the east ½ of the 200 block of East Front Street). From East Front Street the boundary continues west to the intersection of North Higgins Avenue and West Front Street and then south to the north bank of the Clark Fork River. Continuing in a northwesterly direction, the boundary runs along the north bank of the river until coming to a general point that is in line with the west end of the 267 West Front Street property (located to the northeast of the river). The boundary runs northeast from this point to West Front Street, and then west along West Front Street to the intersection of West Front and North Orange Street. It continues north to the intersection of North Orange and West Pine Street. From this point the boundary runs west one block to Owen Street. At the corner of Owen and West Pine Street, the boundary runs north one block to the intersection of West Spruce Street and then turns west. It continues west along West Spruce Street to the west end of the 516 West Spruce Street property. It turns north, running along the outer edge of the 516 West Spruce Street property and jogs slightly east at the alley, continuing north along the west end of the 509 West Alder Street property. When reaching East Alder Street, the boundary turns west and continues along West Alder Street until coming to the POB located at the intersection of Toole Avenue and Milton Street.

**Boundary Justification**

The district is a significant concentration and continuity of buildings that are united historically and in part, aesthetically. It displays a broad pattern of historical development, to include residential, commercial, religious, civic, and parks, and encompasses 405 contributing buildings, 86 non-contributing buildings, and one district that is listed in the National Register. The Downtown District includes the contiguous, intact, historic resources which comprise the residential, commercial, governmental, and religious resources that document the development of Missoula from its earliest days through 1955.

The building's are connected by common associative attributes and serve as a direct link to all five of the previously nominated historic districts that immediately surround the downtown area. The Northside Railroad Historic District and the Lower Rattlesnake Historic District are located to the north; the McCormick Neighborhood Historic District and the Southside Historic District are located to south; the University of Montana Historic District is located to the east; the East Pine Street District is encompassed within the Missoula Downtown District; and west of the downtown is Missoula's Westside, a candidate for survey and study as a national historic district. None of these existing historic districts would be listed in the National Register of Historic places were it not for the continuous importance of the Downtown in the settlement and growth of the city and the region.

The National Register guidelines acknowledge that district boundaries are often defined arbitrarily rather than precisely encompassing a certain type or a particular physical development. Therefore, excluded from the district are other areas of historic downtown Missoula where small pockets of historic buildings and individual buildings have been isolated from the district either by non-historic construction, or visual changes in the character of the area (due to modern architectural styles and mainly, due to a decline in the concentration of contributing resources). For instance, the east and west boundaries of the district have been drawn at points where the

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district meets a large percentage of non-historic and other noncontributing buildings, making it a poor representation of the historic character of the town. The north and south boundaries are determined and justified as topographical (Clark Fork River) and cultural (historic Northern Pacific Railroad tracks) and are further defined by the northern boundaries of the University and Southside districts and the southern boundary of the Northside historic district.

Without the continuous sustained investment and reinvestment in Missoula's downtown by the economic forces in the downtown, there would be no city of Missoula. The city of Missoula began in the downtown, in what was filed in 1871 as the Original Town Site, Missoula, Missoula County. In the short period from 1865-1875, the original Town Site Plat and adjacent plats were filed, and a town was created. The downtown, including the Original Town Site, was home to the most important commercial and public enterprises in the Missoula region, and that important role has continued throughout the history of the City and the County of Missoula.