

## Capital Improvements Program Money In The Bank

If public works improvements are important for your community's future, a well-developed Capital Improvements Program (CIP) will help you accomplish them faster, for less money and with greater public acceptance. The CIP becomes the process for assessing needs, prioritizing projects and obtaining funding assistance. It is like money in the bank.

A Capital Improvements Program, adopted and in-place, demonstrates a community's commitment to sound public facilities planning and development, and is an integral part of making informed decisions within a community. It is a strong component of the financial decision process and strengthens the community's opportunity for receiving public facilities grants and loans. The CIP helps focus initiatives to guide the community in structuring its own bonding and revenue programs so local money is put to the greatest benefit and most cost-effective use.

### CIPs:

- Identify interrelations between community facilities and planning components (i.e., land use, utilities, transportation, cultural)
- Communicate issues associated with community growth, decline or change
- Demonstrate the importance of maintenance, innovations and financing
- Receive ideas from, and disseminate ideas to, stakeholders
- Build public awareness, confidence and support
- Inventory/evaluate facility condition and needs
- Establish and document community needs
- Define long-term community objectives
- Prioritize and document projects
- Provide for dynamic planning
- Focus management initiatives
- Target financial resources
- Support funding applications
- **Increase project success**
- **Get results!**

**A CIP is the  
pipeline for  
infrastructure  
funding.**

### A Collaborative Process

Element	Responsibility
CIP Advisory Committee	Community
Public Involvement Process	Community and Consultant
Decision-Making Policies	Community and Consultant
Physical Inventory	Consultant and Staff
Condition Assessment	Consultant and Staff
Plan for Replacing and Maintaining Components	Consultant and Staff
Ranking System	Community and Consultant
Plan Adoption and Implementation	Community and Staff





**Long-Term (CIP) Planning:** A Capital Improvements Program determines the long-term needs for specific public works facilities and recommends project priorities. Funding to assist in the planning of capital improvements is available through the Montana Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. CDBG planning grants are intended for longer term planning like CIPs, and are also available to communities for broader, more general planning like growth strategies, neighborhood planning, hazard mitigation and grant writing. These grants are available by application (due in April) in amounts up to \$15,000. They require a like match from the community.

**Short-Term (Project) Planning:** The natural outgrowth of a CIP is the development of a specific facility improvement plan, such as a wastewater facility plan to upgrade a treatment plant. For these short-term, project-specific planning needs, the Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Renewable Resource Program offer grants for Preliminary Engineering Reports, typically in support of facility grant and loan applications. Project planning grants of up to \$15,000 are available upon application and require a like match from the community. Note that CIPs are not eligible for DNRC or TSEP planning grants; however, completing a CIP helps position a community to obtain the follow-on project planning grants.



CIPs require commitment of local funds and substantial local energy to put proper planning in place. It is well worth the expenditure and effort, as planning can yield hundreds-fold return on the investment. A \$10,000 to \$30,000 CIP planning effort can help yield millions of dollars in grants and loans and save years in delivering an improvements project.

Committing to dynamic, progressive planning efforts, and using available planning grants, will greatly assist a community in accomplishing its CIP projects and in providing needed services to its citizens. A Capital Improvements Program positions a community to be responsive to funding opportunities and less driven by emergency needs. With it, projects are better accepted and more easily implemented with fewer delays.

*Time saved is cost avoided.*

## Why Plans Work They answer the tough questions:

- Comprehensive:**  
Does it include desired components?
- Political:**  
Is it acceptable?
- Social:**  
Who wins? Who loses?
- Economic:**  
What are the costs? What are the benefits?
- Fiscal:**  
How much can we afford and who pays?
- Regulatory:**  
What is required?
- Intergovernmental:**  
What agencies are involved?
- Aesthetic:**  
What are community values and preferences?
- Environmental:**  
What is the impact?
- Management:**  
Who is in charge?
- Implementation:**  
How do we get it done?
- Timely:**  
Is it current?

## Why Plans Fail Common reasons are:

- Lack of objectives and focus
- Weak information and data
- Poor decision-making process
- Uncompromising and biased views
- Inadequate technical support
- Limited public involvement
- Lack of adequate funding
- Search for unrealistic "perfect" solutions
- Takes too long
- Gathers dust on the shelf
- Become outdated