

BRIARWOOD PARK MASTER PLAN

FEBRUARY 9, 2009



PREPARED FOR:

**CITY OF BILLINGS PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS
390 North 23rd Street
Billings, MT 59101**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Location and History

Briarwood Park is a 7.95 acre park located in portions of Section 27 and the NW ¼, SW ¼ of Section 26, T.15S., and R26E in the Briarwood subdivision with the Briarwood neighborhood. The park is bordered on the north by Briarwood Boulevard. Cardiff Street bisects the park into two sections. The section of the park on the western side of Cardiff Street is 6.01 acres and the section of the park on the eastern side of Cardiff Street is 1.94 acres. Briarwood Boulevard is not a complete street with curb and gutter east of Cardiff Street.

The property for Briarwood Park was acquired through the annexation of the Briarwood Subdivision into the City of Billings in February, 2002. The land is currently considered City Park land. Briarwood Park has had no development, and there is no current master plan on record.

The need for a master plan was determined due to the lack of park facilities in and around the Briarwood subdivision. The nearest park with playground facilities is 4.75 miles away at Ponderosa Park. Without a neighborhood park near the Briarwood subdivision, the residents must drive to another park and use a facility intended to serve a different neighborhood. Appendix E displays the location of developed and undeveloped neighborhood parks with relation to Briarwood Subdivision. This master plan is the first step towards defining the amenities desired by the residents on the Briarwood subdivision.

Parkland Improvements

In the Parks 2020 Master Plan, Framework A, “Essential Recreation Park Land,” Diagram 3, identifies this area as a neighborhood park that is in need for development. According to the diagram, a “Neighborhood Park” has a service area of ½ mile radius and typical size is 10-20 acres (see graphic to left). The projected user groups are neighborhood residents and subdivision residents. The design standards include open lawn areas, a playground, youth sports fields, picnic grounds with shelters and special recreation facilities.



Currently Briarwood Park serves as a regional stormwater detention pond for the Lower Blue Creek Drainage as stated in the Lower Blue Creek Drainage Storm Water Management Master Plan, November 2005. In the Storm Water Management Master Plan it is recommended that the spillway be lowered in elevation to beneath the low elevation of Briarwood Boulevard and adjustments to the culverts under the spillway to minimize downstream flow in 2-year events and 5-year events. The park will act as a detention pond with the capacity to hold storm water for up to a 50-year storm event.

During a 100-year storm event, storm water will cross the existing spillway and continue downstream.

Public Process

According to the City of Billings Park Master Plan Policy, two town hall meetings were held that discussed the development of the master plan. A property listing boundary was determined by the Parks Department that included 427 names and addresses of property owners. Each of the listings received notification for the public meetings through a postcard sent through the mail. In addition, public service announcements were distributed by the Parks Department. Meeting minutes are included in Appendix B of this document. Further public comment will be solicited at the City Parks and Recreation Board meeting as well as the City Council meeting, prior to official approval of this document.

Town Hall Meeting #1

The first town hall meeting was held on November 15, 2007 at the Briarwood Country Club. Sign in sheets indicated that 29 people attended the meeting. The agenda included the introduction of the project team, the planning process, purpose and status of the master plan, and soliciting public input. Written feedback included a survey to determine preferred activities and plan considerations, small group answers to specific questions and comment cards. Meeting minutes are included in Appendix B.

Activities and Plan Considerations

Sixteen responses were received regarding input on desired activities and plan considerations for the park. The following activities and plan considerations were identified as desirable by one or more responses:

<u>Sport Courts and Field</u> Frisbee Golf	<u>Common Amenities</u> Tot-Lot Playgrounds (ages 2-5) School-Age Playgrounds (ages 5-12) Flat, unprogrammed open space Sledding Dog Park
<u>Support Facilities</u> Trash Receptacles Benches Picnic Tables Interpretative Signs Picnic Shelters Restrooms Site Lighting (at access points only)	<u>Corridor Activities</u> Walking Pedestrian Bridges Running/ Jogging School Access Routes Recreation Biking Fitness Courses
<u>Vegetation Considerations</u> Native Grasses Native Meadows	<u>Wildlife Considerations</u> Birds – (seen as attraction) Deer – (seen as nuisance and attraction)

Wildflowers	Mountain Lions – (seen as nuisance and attraction)
Evergreen Trees	Dogs – (seen as nuisance and attraction)
Shrubs	Beavers – (seen as nuisance)
Shade Trees	Antelope – (seen as attraction)
Irrigated Lawns	Fisheries – (seen as attraction)
Ornamental Trees	

Small Group Discussion

The participants were asked to respond to seven prepared questions in small groups and record their individual answers on flip charts. Groups were encouraged not to come to a consensus or debate each other’s answers. Individual comments from each participant in the group were encouraged to be recorded.

From these discussions the design team learned that Briarwood Park is currently used for walking and viewing wildlife. The groups indicated their desire for these uses to remain along with the addition of a child play area and a relationship with the future elementary school. Creating links between the park and the future Blue Creek School and interpretative signage for plants were also recommended by the groups.

A main concern to the groups was that the park retain its natural beauty. Other concerns centered around pine beetle infestation, the loss of big trees and the potential for fire in the area. The groups want to balance the development of the park with the natural setting. This would include the cleaning up of trash in the park and the removal of noxious weeds.

Comment Cards

Blank comment cards were available to all attendees of meeting. Five cards were returned. Comments received varied from consider creating a small park area while maintaining the natural state of coulee, and to leave the park alone.

Preliminary Concepts

After the first town hall meeting and analysis of the comments received by the meeting participants 3 concepts were developed that represent a minimal, medium, and most developed ideas for the park. During the design development it was determined that the section of the park west of Cardiff Street was inaccessible and would be best left in its natural state. The three concept plans are shown in Appendix C.

Preliminary Concept A – Minimal (See Appendix C)

Preliminary concept “A” was based on the concept of providing access to Briarwood Park without filling in a portion of the coulee. A five foot wide curvilinear sidewalk was placed along Briarwood Boulevard to act as the main access to the park and to serve as a boulevard sidewalk. The curvilinear nature of the walk was meant to provide a relaxing walking experience and to be more aesthetically pleasing. An additional five foot wide sidewalk was placed along the west side of Cardiff Street to provide access from the private lots to Briarwood Park.

A loop section of the sidewalk was located in a level area in the park. This location was chosen due to the limited amount of impact it would have on the natural state of the park and its elevation being higher than the water elevation during a 100-year storm. The main features of this loop section were two scenic overlooks with seven foot long benches and an irrigated lawn.

Preliminary Concept B – Medium (See Appendix C)

Preliminary concept “B” provided amenities of a neighborhood park while maintaining much of the natural aesthetic. A level area for the neighborhood park was created by filling in a portion of the coulee along the northeast side of the spillway. Park amenities in this design included a multi-use trail, tot lot, irrigated lawn, twenty foot by twenty foot picnic shelter, picnic tables and a scenic overlook.

A multi-use trail was located along Briarwood Boulevard and curved into the developed park area creating a boundary for the area. The curvilinear aspect of the trail was to provide a more relaxing experience and to be more aesthetically pleasing. A five foot wide sidewalk led off the trail along Cardiff Street to provide access to the private lots.

A tot lot and irrigated lawn were located in the northwest corner of Briarwood Park between the residential developments on both sides of Briarwood Boulevard. The tot lot was to provide a different play facility that would not be at the proposed elementary school across from the park. The irrigated lawn was to provide open space for unprogrammed activities at the park.

Along the outer edge of the irrigated lawn were picnic tables and a picnic shelter to allow for both small and medium size gatherings. The picnic shelter was twenty foot by twenty foot and was meant to accommodate medium size gatherings for 20-25 people.

A scenic overlook was located on the west side of the spillway to provide views of the existing pond and vegetation.

Preliminary Concept C – Most Developed (See Appendix C)

Preliminary concept “C” provided amenities of a neighborhood park while also providing access into the natural environment of the coulee. There were three distinct areas in this concept: the bridge trail, the playground area and the spillway trail. Access to these areas was provided by a multi-use trail along Briarwood Boulevard west of Cardiff Street.

The bridge trail was a ten foot wide gravel trail. It ran from the multi-use trail along Briarwood Boulevard to an opening on the south side of the drainage channel in the coulee. It accessed two scenic overlooks and two picnic tables. Both scenic overlooks were provided with seven foot long benches to provide for seating for two adults and one child. At the terminus of the trail were two picnic tables with views into an open meadow.

The playground area was located east of the spillway. It was accessed with a six foot wide concrete sidewalk from the multi-use trail along Briarwood Boulevard and a connection to the spillway trail. The sidewalk looped around an irrigated lawn space

while providing access to two picnic shelters and a tot lot. The two picnic shelters were provided for medium size gatherings. The tot lot was located in the northwest corner of the play area to separate it from the existing culverts and drainage channel. The irrigated lawn area was provided to create open space for various park activities.

The spillway trail was a ten foot wide concrete trail that provided access to a scenic overlook and a secondary access to the playground area. The scenic overlook had two seven foot benches with view to the east and west of the spillway.

These concepts were presented at the second town hall meeting and commented on by attendees.

Town Hall Meeting #2

The second town hall meeting was held on March 6, 2008 at The Perfect Place. Sign in sheets indicated that 36 people attended. The agenda included review of the planning process, purpose and status of the master plan, presentation of master plan alternatives and soliciting feedback from attendees. The meeting minutes are included in Appendix B.

Small Group Discussion

Public input was solicited with the use of small groups and comment cards. Each group was asked to respond to a set of questions and then to report out their answers.

From the small group discussions the design team learned that the majority of the groups liked a combination of Plans A and B. The groups wanted to maintain the natural elements and current setting of the park. The groups recommended using a smaller size trail as the ten foot trail seemed too big and that Plan B seemed a good compromise between Plans A and C. A question from the small group discussion was the possibility of not developing a park, but providing a management plan that would conserve the natural environment.

Maintenance was the most commented on area in the small groups. The groups recommended that only animal proof trash receptacles be used at the park. A main concern in the maintenance of the park was the need for fire protection via fire breaks or thinning vegetation. The small groups also were concerned about the removal of noxious weeds from the park.

Other concerns for the groups were the possible need for bathrooms near the play area, speeds of traffic on Briarwood Boulevard near the park, and the size of a Special Improvement District (SID) tax area necessary to fund and develop the park.

Comment Cards

From the comment cards the majority of the responses were suggestions for the park plan including four responses against BBQ's in the park. Numerous responses stated the need

to balance the development of park space and maintaining the natural aspect of the park. A few responses stated a wish for no development in the park.

Final Master Plan

After reviewing the comments expressed at the second Town Hall Meeting, a final plan was developed that included elements from all 3 designs as well as concerns and ideas that came out of the second meeting. Items to be incorporated in the final master plan include:

- 5,000 square foot playground with shade structure over playground equipment
- A looped trail with a set distance calculated in miles
- The development should be kept to the northeast corner of the site
- A small shade shelter for only one picnic table
- Sensitivity to natural vegetation and wildlife

The Final Master Plan is shown in Appendix D.

The proposed Master Plan provides a park for the residents while maintaining the natural area of the existing parkland. The natural environment is conserved through proper management techniques. Major management items are weed control, fire mitigation, storm water management, utilities and wildlife corridors. These natural elements will co-exist with recreational use. The total area for developed park land is 0.46 acres or 6 percent of the 7.95 acre park. The plan is sensitive to wildlife by this limited development area. The result is a park that citizens can use while maintaining the sensitivity to the environment. The view sheds into the existing coulee are maintained along with the park development. View corridors are directed away from private lots.

Pedestrian Circulation System (Sidewalk)

A six foot sidewalk will extend from Cardiff Street to the eastern edge of the park along Briarwood Boulevard. The concrete sidewalk will meet the regulations set forth by the City of Billings. The sidewalk will create a 1/8 mile loop in the northeast corner of the site.

Shade Structure

A shade structure will be located on the west side of the playground. It will include one picnic table and trash cans. The shade structure will provide covered space for park users. A sample shelter is pictured to the right.



Site Furniture

Consistency will be important when choosing the site furnishings for this park (including benches and picnic tables). All furnishings should be both durable and functional, at the same time adding to the overall appearance of the park. Suggested length for benches would be a minimum of six foot made from pre-cast concrete. Trash receptacles will be provided by the Parks



Department. Color and finish should be consistent with other site amenities.

Playground

The park will include a playground surrounded by a thickened edge sidewalk, providing ADA accessibility and helping to retain the surfacing. Total square footage for the area will be approximately 5,000 square feet. Recommended play features would include various slides, bridges, climbers, and different height platform stations to provide maximum appeal for the target group.

Play Area Surface

A poured-in-place safety surfacing is suggested in lieu of wood chips or other surfaces for the recommended play area. This will provide a safe, durable surface for all park users and meets the current guidelines for accessibility.

Shade System

The National Parks and Recreation Association recommends shading playground equipment to help protect users from UV rays. The shade system helps to prevent the heating of playground equipment surfaces. A canvas shade system is recommended due to the ease of maintenance.



Deciduous Trees

The vegetation in all of the park lands will be quality nursery stock and wildlife appropriate species. Exact tree species will be detailed as part of the construction documents and approved by the City Forester. Deciduous trees will contain several different species to avoid a monoculture. The minimum recommend size for the deciduous trees is 1-1/2 inch caliper, although 2 inch caliper is desired. These sizes are the most readily available, are less susceptible to vandalism, and provide a more mature tree.

Coniferous Trees

Coniferous (evergreen) trees add winter interest to the landscape in addition to providing valuable screening and wind buffering capabilities. Evergreen trees are placed periodically throughout the site and will be planted to accommodate the future mature growth that does not block walkways. Evergreen trees should have minimum of five foot height.

Lawn Area

The majority of the park will remain in its native condition. Any areas of disturbance due to regrading or construction of the sidewalk will be reseeded with a native seed mix. The 15,000 square foot irrigated lawn will be seeded with an irrigated lawn mix.

Irrigation System

The improved park area will have an automatic irrigation system. The irrigation system shall comply with the City of Billings' Parks Department requirements for Maxicom

Central Controls. Domestic, potable water provided by the City of Billings will be the source for the irrigation. There is an existing water line located through the spillway and in the boulevard for Briarwood Boulevard.

Cost Estimate

In the appendix is a budgetary cost estimate for the Briarwood Park. The estimated total is approximately \$800,000. In order to implement the plan, Briarwood Subdivision will need to approve a Special Improvement District (SID) to develop the park. Residents within the benefited area will be assessed through the SID that may be based on a square footage allocation through their property taxes. A Park Maintenance District (PMD) would also need to be approved by the residents inside the SID boundary. The PMD would cover the cost of maintenance for the park. The City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), grant money and donations may be sought after to help offset the costs of some of the amenities of value to a neighborhood park.

BUDGETARY COST ESTIMATE

Project: Briarwood Park
Phase: Final Master Plan
Date: May 5, 2008
Prepared By: Peaks to Plains Design, PC

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	QTY	UNIT	UNIT COST	TOTAL
Shade Tree	2" Caliper	9	EA	\$ 250.00	\$ 2,250
Evergreen Tree	6' Height	4	EA	\$ 300.00	\$ 1,200
Unclassified Fill	Fill	11,986	CY	\$ 15.00	\$ 179,790
Topsoil	4" Depth	580	CY	\$ 24.00	\$ 13,920
Compost	2" Depth	281	CY	\$ 38.00	\$ 10,678
Site Grading	Fine Grading	54,437	SF	\$ 0.15	\$ 8,166
Playground	Includes: Play Structures, Surfacing and Shade Structure	1	EA	\$200,000.00	\$ 200,000
Sidewalk	5' wide, concrete	10,335	SF	\$ 6.50	\$ 67,178
Bench	6' long with back	3	EA	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 4,500
Trash Enclosure		1	EA	\$ 500.00	\$ 500
Picnic shelter	10'x10'	1	EA	\$ 14,126.00	\$ 14,126
Concrete Pad	Picnic shelter	100	SF	\$ 6.50	\$ 650
Picnic Table	6' long	1	EA	\$ 2,200.00	\$ 2,200
Seed	Irrigated Lawn Mix	15,078	SF	\$ 0.12	\$ 1,809
Native Seed	Disturbed areas only	32,359	SF	\$ 0.20	\$ 6,472
Irrigation System	SDF, 1-1/2" meter	1	LS	\$ 10,400.00	\$ 10,400
Irrigation System	POC 1-1/2", rotors, drip zone, maxicom components	1	LS	\$ 27,000.00	\$ 27,000
SUBTOTAL					\$ 550,838
MOBILIZATION & INSURANCE				10%	\$ 55,084
CONTINGENCY				15%	\$ 90,888
PROFESSIONAL FEES				15%	\$ 104,522
TOTAL					\$ 801,332

Note:

Cost are as of 2008, due to inflation and other market forces, actual prices may vary.

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 2007
PROJECT NAME: BRIARWOOD PARK MASTER PLAN
PROJECT NUMBER: 06039
MEETING PURPOSE: TOWN HALL MEETING 1

These meeting minutes reflect the written comments collected at the meeting. Thirty people signed-in as attendees of the meeting.

Participants were asked to complete three different methods of feedback with their thoughts on developing a park master plan for Briarwood Park. The first method was to individually indicate what activities and items should be considered for the park master plan. The second method was obtained by group responses to pre-set questions. The third method was individual comments obtained through comment cards.

Results of feedback method #1: Activities & Plan Considerations for Park Lands - 17 responses were received.

Category: Sport Courts & Fields. All but one respondent did not indicate that sport courts & fields should be a part of the plan. The one respondent marked Frisbee golf.

Category: Support Facilities. Nine respondents indicated a need for trash receptacles. Nine respondents indicated a need for benches. Seven respondents indicated a need for picnic tables. Four respondents indicated a need for interpretative signage. Two respondents indicate a need for picnic shelters. One respondent indicated a need for restrooms. One respondent indicated a need for site lighting at access points to the park.

Category: Vegetation Considerations. Eight respondents indicated their preference for native grasses. Six respondents marked wildflowers and native meadows, each. Three respondents marked evergreen trees and shrubs. Two respondents marked shade trees. Two respondents marked irrigated lawns and one respondent marked ornamental trees. It is important to note that several respondents indicated their desire to retain the existing vegetation. One respondent noted the presence of noxious weeds and invasive species currently existing in the park. In addition, one respondent noted to urge density and composition, as well as being fire-wise.

Category: Common Amenities. Five respondents each indicated a desire for tot-lot or school-age playgrounds. Two respondents indicated a desire for flat, unprogrammed open space. Two respondents indicated a desire a space for sledding. One respondent indicated a desire for a dog park.

Category: Corridor Activities. Walking was the most popular activity with eleven respondents. Running and jogging, school access routes and pedestrian bridges were each indicated by three people. Two respondents indicated a desire for recreational biking. One respondent indicated a desire for a fitness course.

Category: Wildlife Considerations. Six respondents indicated that birds were an attraction. Five respondents indicated that deer were an attraction, while one respondent indicated that deer were a nuisance. Two respondents indicated that the presence of beavers were an attraction. Two respondents indicated that mountain lions were an attraction, while three indicated they were a nuisance. Two respondents felt that dogs were an attraction, but two others felt they were a nuisance. One respondent indicated that antelope was an attraction. One respondent indicated that riparian wildlife was an attraction.

Category: Others (write in). This “park” area is gorgeous as is. It is not suited to beautification by sand boxes, playgrounds, etc. Minimal development, if any – the wildlife is wonderful, but a path around the “top” might be beneficial – the joggers and dog walkers might appreciate it. Foot traffic only. Native surfacing materials. Local access only – no parking. No modifications to surface water features. Biology program a new middle school. Default area – too steep to develop as residences. Cost developer nothing to take credit for “setting land aside.”

Results of feedback method #2: Group Participant Responses to Prepared Questions – 7 groups

1. **Do you use Briarwood Park?** Yes: 12 No: 6

Note: 3 groups did not respond to the question.

2. **If you use Briarwood Park, for what purpose and how often?** Most respondents indicated walking and walking to view wildlife was their current purpose for using the park. One group indicated their use to be weekly. Dog training occurs in the park. One group indicated that they were unaware that it was park land. Another group felt that the park does not currently get much use.

3. **What is your vision for the Park? What is it that you like about it best that you want to continue into the future?** Two groups indicated support to develop an area for children to play. Appropriate items to consider were trails, play equipment, rollerblading and sledding. Groups acknowledged the contextual relationship between the park and future middle school located across the street. One group suggested using the park for field projects for new middle school (i.e. species identification of plants/trees, wildlife habitat). Another group suggested reducing vegetation density (through thinning) to minimize fire hazard and protect improvements. Several groups indicated that they liked the natural growth and wildlife and would like to see that setting retained. Another group acknowledged that it is an unusable piece of space. The dike and berm have to stay as it is a part of a large storm water management system.

4. **What changes or improvements would you like to see in the Park corridor?** Existing vegetation is a concern, and one group suggested the thinning of vegetation and to eliminate non-native vegetative species (i.e. Russian/Canadian thistle, Russian Olive and other noxious weeds.) One group suggested planting trees to improve curb appeal. Another group suggested interpretative signage for plants. One group asked if it the best location for a park? Adding, that “we need useable space (i.e. athletic parks, child play areas).” Two groups addressed the need for improved access to the park from Briarwood (Boulevard) side down to coulee, with one of those groups clarifying that they want a trail, not a sidewalk. One group suggested a possible trail link between Blue Creek School and Riverfront Park. Two groups suggested small areas for children to play. One suggested a playground on the east side of Cardiff. Two groups suggested picnic/shade shelter on level ground on Cardiff piece with a garbage can and benches. Two groups want to make sure the park retains its natural beauty.

5. **What do you currently enjoy about living near/using Briarwood Park?** It provides a nice backdrop. Two groups commented that they enjoy the open space and nature. One group wrote that they didn't know the park was there and therefore, have never used the park. One group felt that there is a perception that the park is too steep to develop, it is a default area.

6. **What concerns do you have with the Park in terms of:**

Maintaining aesthetics: Concerns about pine beetle infestation, losing the potential for bigger trees. One group indicated they were not extremely worried about aesthetics. Nature setting is an asset.

Wildlife as a nuisance versus a benefit: Deer presence is a benefit to the park. The nuisance is with deer droppings, dog droppings and mountain lions. A benefit is healthy riparian system takes into account storm water system, which attracts related wildlife including frogs, insects, ducks, birds and fish. Wildlife is seen as both a nuisance and a benefit, but should be allowed to remain.

Pedestrian Circulation: Currently can't use the park as-is.

Level of Park Development: Try to balance. Keep any development as natural as possible.

Wildfire Suppression: No concern. Add fire hydrants on Cardiff or Briarwood Boulevard.

7. **Are there any additional maintenance considerations that you would suggest?** Clean up the trash and dog droppings. Use existing drainage water to water above grade plants. Spray the leafy spurge and knapweed (and other noxious weeds). Spray the pond for mosquitoes.

8. **Do you have any other suggestions for the Parks & Recreation Department as it guides the development of a master plan for Briarwood Park?** No need to spend lots of money. Keep moving forward. There are people who would like a true developed park system who live throughout the subdivision. I would like to help (name provided to P&R Department). Consider purchasing the church land.

Results of feedback method #3: Comment Cards – 5 cards

1. Most of the park should be left the way it is. Consider a small green area 10,000-15,000 SF for children's unstructured play (no playground with toys or swings). Consider a trail along Briarwood Boulevard to Connect the Blue Creek school site with Riverfront Park. Provide benches for moms and small children.

2. Collaborate with the "potential" new school site to eliminate the doubling of ideas or usage of funds.

3. Leave the area alone! We like it natural.

4. I like the concept of a park. It should be left natural with some minimal development. I like the idea of a small, flat, undeveloped area where a pick up soccer game could take place, if some wished. A few benches, potentially an interconnected trail (not concrete). Whatever happens, it should fit in with the current theme: wildlife, open space, native plant communities.

5. Yellowstone Valley Electric needs property for a new sub-station. The own approximately six acres of flat land along Blue Creek Road. Perhaps a land trade can be made. Maybe a second access can be negotiated for Briarwood through YVEC's lots also. Since this is between Briarwood and Cedar Park, both subdivisions could pay PMD's. It could be readily accessible by both subdivisions with paths connecting.

The above listed notes constitute the understanding by *Jolene Rieck* and **Peaks to Plains Design, P.C.** of the contents of the meeting, based upon written comments received at the meeting. Please advise the preparer, in writing, of any errors or omissions.