Missoula Area Land Use Element

An Amendment to the 2016 Missoula County Growth Policy
Missoula County Community and Planning Services

Adopted
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Resolution

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Introduction

Adopted in 2016, the Missoula County Growth Policy is an official public document guiding future social, physical, environmental, and economic growth and development of the county. The Land Use Designations Map is an important piece of the growth policy used as the policy foundation for making decisions on land use issues. Originally adopted in the 1970s, the land use map has been updated in portions of the county over time through the adoption of area plans, but there has never been a comprehensive update. The 2016 Missoula County Growth Policy identified updating the land use map as a high priority. This document and the corresponding land use map, land use designations, and implementation strategy are intended to be adopted as an element of the Growth Policy and update a portion of Land Use Designation Map.

This document, called the Missoula Area Land Use Element, is a long-range planning tool, guiding growth over a 20-year horizon. It is a visual and written description of the desired future character of land use in the community. While the land use element is a policy document, it contains a list of actions such as zoning amendments and infrastructure improvements as recommended implementation steps. The map and its associated text is not intended to be static; rather, it is meant to evolve over a 20-year horizon (roughly 2019 to 2040) and changes may be necessary.

The Missoula Area Land Use Element contains 15 land use designations which describe places with similar goals, characteristics, uses, and mobility considerations. The designations are meant to be general. As with the map, the land use designations do not describe the current conditions of the area; instead, they describe a desired future condition.

There are many considerations and factors that go into developing a plan for the future of a community, but the foundation of this plan is based on three pillars: our values, our ideas on growth and development, and the realities facing our community (page 12). The values and ideas on growth and development came from the community through a robust and thorough outreach process. The realities are facets of our community that affect land use that must be considered.

These three pillars support the "One Community" approach, which is a vision for how Missoula County should approach planning for the county's jurisdiction in the Missoula area. This approach to planning is rooted in the idea that within this place we call Missoula, residents don't see a "county" Missoula and a "city" Missoula, they see Missoula as one place. A core part of this planning approach identifies five roles for Missoula County in creating a community that has desirable places to live, work, and recreate (page 4).

Land use planning needs to be strategic. Our values and our ideas on growth need to be tied together through a set of strategic imperatives. The imperatives in this document describe strategies that integrate the values, ideas on growth and realities into the fabric of the land use designations and the land use map (page 19).

The Missoula Area Land Use Element is a forward thinking document. The map and text describe a vision, but this vision is only policy that helps guide the county's decision making process. For the community to realize its vision, action must be taken. That is why the document contains an implementation strategy. These steps described in the implementation strategy will help this vision come to fruition.

Our Greatest Assets

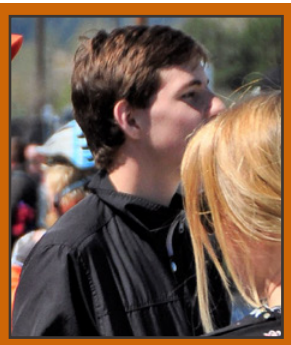
Our People

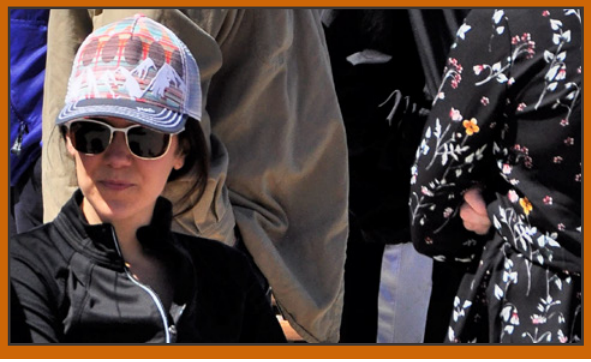
People and their values shape the community

One of a community's greatest assets is its people. They are the leaders, the visionaries, the thinkers, and your neighbors. People have skills and abilities to empower, build, and act as agents of change. They provide the social capital, community organizations, and institutions that educate, offer a voice, and provide for community members in need. Each person has unique and dynamic ideas about our community and how it might change. Together these ideas make up the community's values, and these values help determine how the community takes shape.

Missoulians take pride in the unique character of their community. Many positive changes have come through the hard work and vision of our residents: the resurgence of downtown, Milltown State Park, and the acquisition of Mount Jumbo as public land. If the people of Missoula did not value investment in local merchants, the Clark Fork River, or seeing elk from their offices, these important places would not be what they are today.

Our values guide the choices we make as individuals and drive the missions of many organizations and businesses working within our community. Our values help make the places most important to us that much more special. Our values affect where and how the community grows, and those values play out on the land.





"I value quality, thoughtful growth that maintains the quality of life in the County, open space, great transportation facilities including integrated pedestrian, bicycling, etc."

Workshop Participant

Our Land

Land in all its forms has value

Land is a community's second greatest asset. Our values set the foundation for how to use our land, such as for housing, employment, and transportation. Because land is limited, it has a monetary value. When land is improved, not only does the monetary value change, but community uses, benefits, and values are also affected. How communities use land evolves over time; those changes can be incremental or transformative. The future use of land influences the sustainability and prosperity of a community. Applying the land use map to the built environment is crucial in shaping whether a community functions effectively and how services can be delivered efficiently.

Bridging our Assets

The land use map is one tool to bring the community's greatest assets together. It serves as a visual representation of our values as well as a blueprint for our community as it grows and evolves. It is central to the strategic, continued development of our community by guiding land use regulations, development patterns, investment in public infrastructure, and connection to local services.

The Big Idea

"One Community"

Missoula transcends jurisdictional lines. It is a community composed of centers, corridors, neighborhoods, and natural spaces with unique characteristics and identities. These places enable our lifestyles, diversify our economy, and give the community its sense of place.

The community is connected through opportunities. Wherever a resident lives, there are opportunities to access jobs, transportation choices, services, education, housing and amenities; opportunities to experience urban spaces and open places; and opportunities to call a place home, to eat locally-grown food, and to access clean water.

To its residents, Missoula isn't "the county Missoula" and "the city Missoula." It is one community.

The "One Community" Approach

The "One Community" planning approach recognizes that even though Missoula is divided by two jurisdictions, how we think about the future of our community shouldn't be dictated by these divisions. We should think and plan for the future by always remembering that a community is like an ecosystem, where everything is connected. It is easy to base the foundation for planning upon jurisdictional lines, but that approach does not recognize the connectivity of the broader community.

The "One Community" approach provides the guide and vision for how Missoula County will address its role in planning for the future of the broader community within its jurisdiction. In terms of adopted policy and state law, this county document has no jurisdiction over lands within the city, just like the city's planning documents have no jurisdiction within the county. But nonetheless, to the extent that these documents complement each other, the better the entire community is served.

The foundation and vision of the "One Community" approach, based upon five components, considers how the responsibility of planning for the community's future is shared. These five components describe Missoula County's role in planning for the future our community. Together with the city's vision, they provide guidance and give direction for the future of the greater Missoula area.

Components of the "One Community" Approach

- Coordinate on the Edges
- Plan for the Physical Framework Needed to Facilitate Unique Neighborhoods
- Provide for Rural Neighborhoods
- Protect Public Health and Safety
- Preserve Working Lands, Agricultural Areas, and Naturally-Functioning Systems

Coordinate on the Edges

Missoula County's role is to facilitate development patterns and efficient use of infrastructure in a consistent and congruent manner with the City of Missoula.

Most of the new growth within Missoula County occurs in the Missoula Valley, and most of that growth occurs within the City of Missoula or on its edges. A large portion of the growth on the city's edges will happen in areas that are now outside the city, but when developed they will likely be annexed into the city. As the city expands its footprint, there is a transition from county land use planning and regulations to city planning and zoning. Typically, in the edge areas, the city requires annexation in exchange for its services.

The county's role is to plan for development patterns harmonious with the city's growth policy to help facilitate congruent development and promote the efficient use of infrastructure. In these edge areas, aligning the "Our Missoula Land Use Map" (city growth policy) and county's land use map is an important consideration for coordinating growth. Examples of these edge areas include portions of Miller Creek and west of Reserve Street between South Avenue and 3rd Street (Figure 1).

One specific area where the community can benefit from additional coordinated planning is the area east of the airport between West Broadway and Mullan Road. This area has long been targeted by both the county and city as a location for future growth. Located on the edge of the city and directly adjacent to a range of infrastructure and transportation options, this large block of undeveloped property presents the opportunity to form unique public-private partnerships to plan, fund, and develop infrastructure necessary for development.

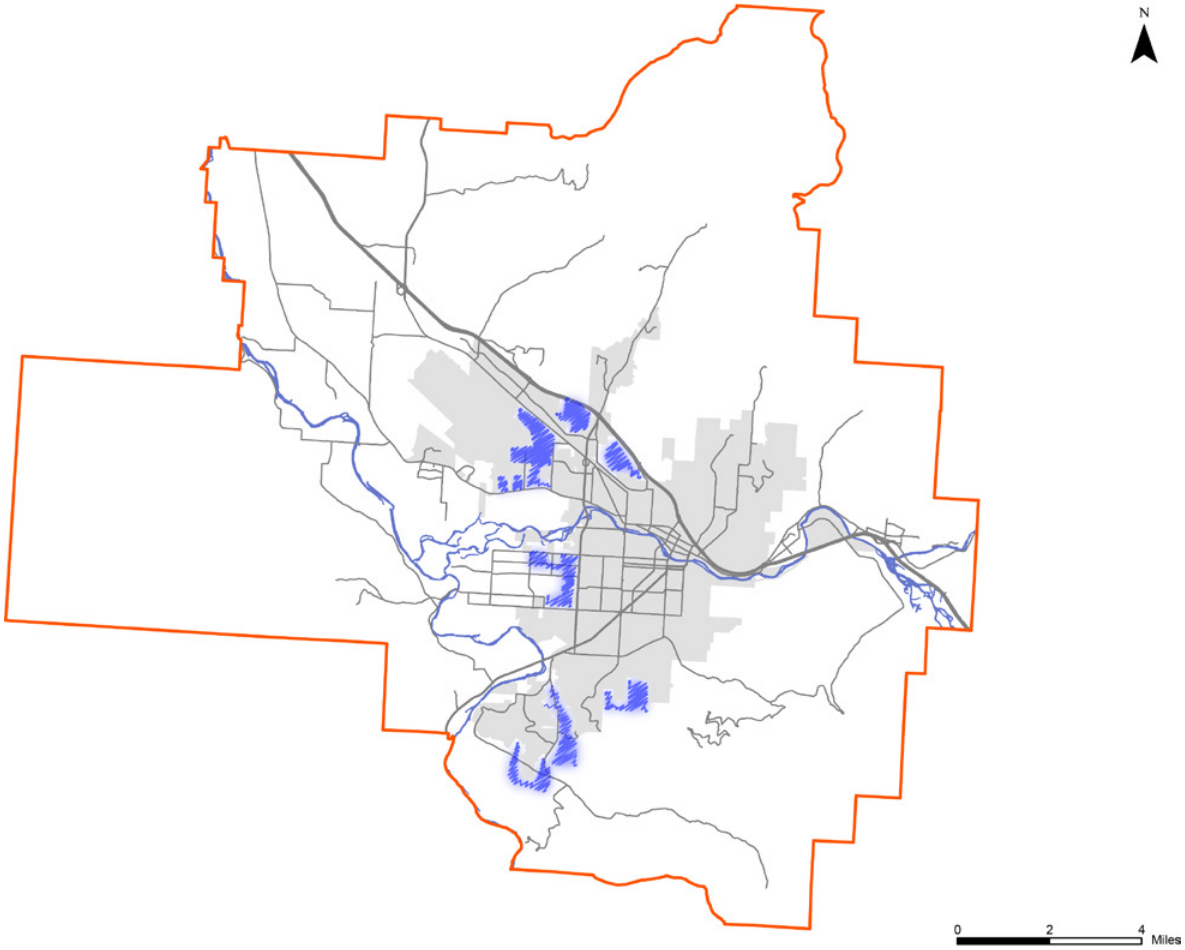


Figure 1: Conceptual representation of potential locations for coordination.

Plan for the Physical Framework Needed to Facilitate Unique Neighborhoods

Missoula County's role is to enable the evolution of existing and emerging neighborhoods to capture their distinct identity and sense of place.

Outside of the city, there are both existing and emerging neighborhoods, places like East Missoula, West Riverside, and the Wye (Figure 2). These neighborhoods have higher levels of infrastructure and services than other locations in the county, enabling more housing choices and a greater variety of services. Neighborhoods contain essential elements of a livable community, such as walkability, a mix of housing types, businesses, and opportunities for employment. They also have distinct identities.

Working with residents, the county's role is to enable the growth and development of neighborhoods through the implementation of the land use map. In some neighborhoods, like Bonner or East Missoula, change may occur incrementally; in others, like the Wye, it could be transformational. In all cases, investment in infrastructure through a variety of sources, including private-public partnerships, will be necessary. The county will need to ensure neighborhoods are well-connected with other parts of the community with roads, through non-motorized connections, and in some cases through transit.

Quality-of-life improvements will be of the utmost importance. It is the county's role to ensure these places are desirable and equitable places to live. This means ensuring neighborhoods are in locations with services like rural fire, schools, parks, trails, and access to open lands.

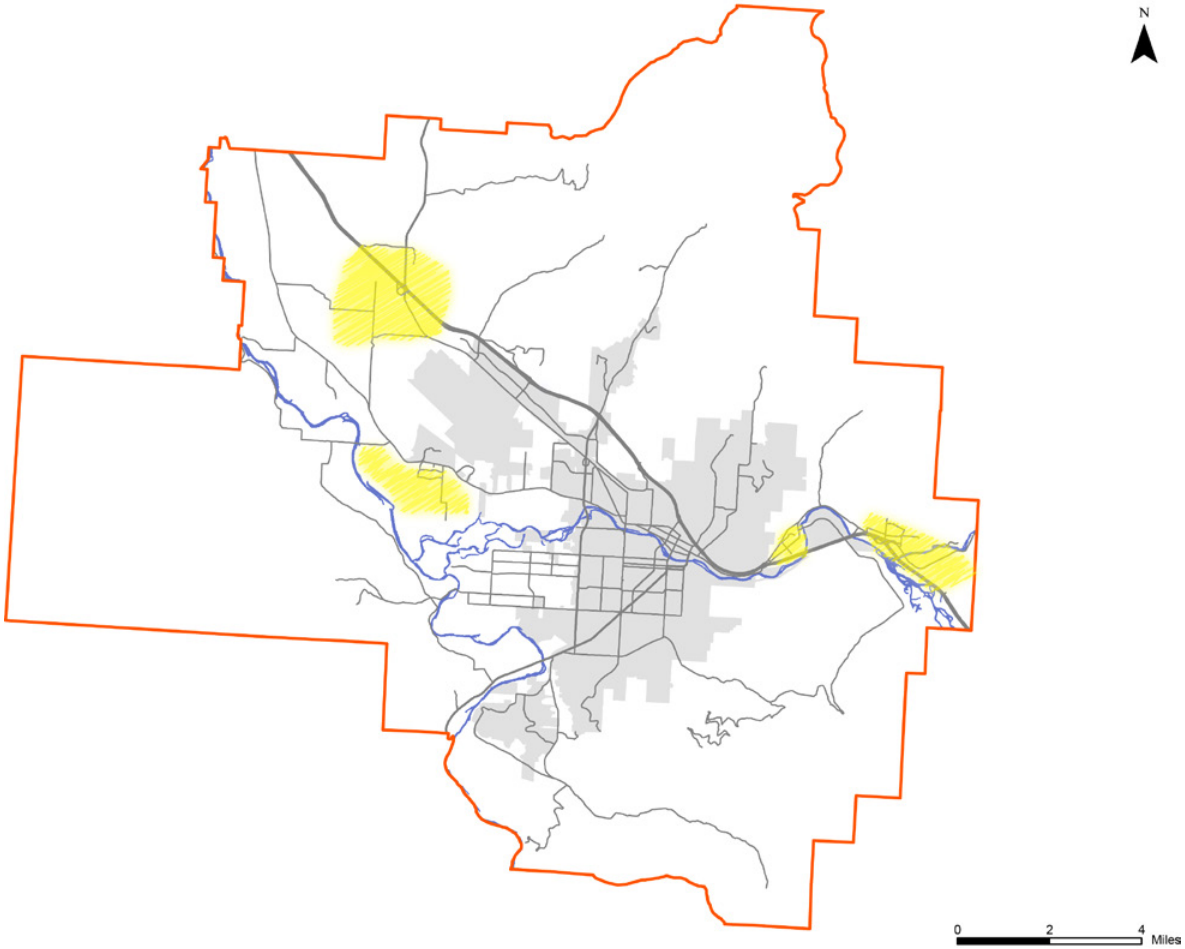


Figure 2: Conceptual representation of neighborhoods.

Provide Locations for Rural Neighborhoods

Missoula County's role is to provide places for rural lifestyles close to town.

Housing preferences differ; not everyone wants to live in town. Rural neighborhoods, with larger lots and fewer services, offer housing choices close to town, yet with a country feeling. Rural neighborhoods are places that mix housing, entrepreneurial activities, agriculture, ranching and timber lands. The role of rural neighborhoods is to provide a type of housing and lifestyle not found in the urban setting. Rural neighborhoods do not require the level of infrastructure and investment that more populated areas of the community do. Water and wastewater treatment are typically provided on-site. Locations of rural neighborhoods include Big Flat, north of the Wye, Target Range, and Miller Creek (Figure 3).

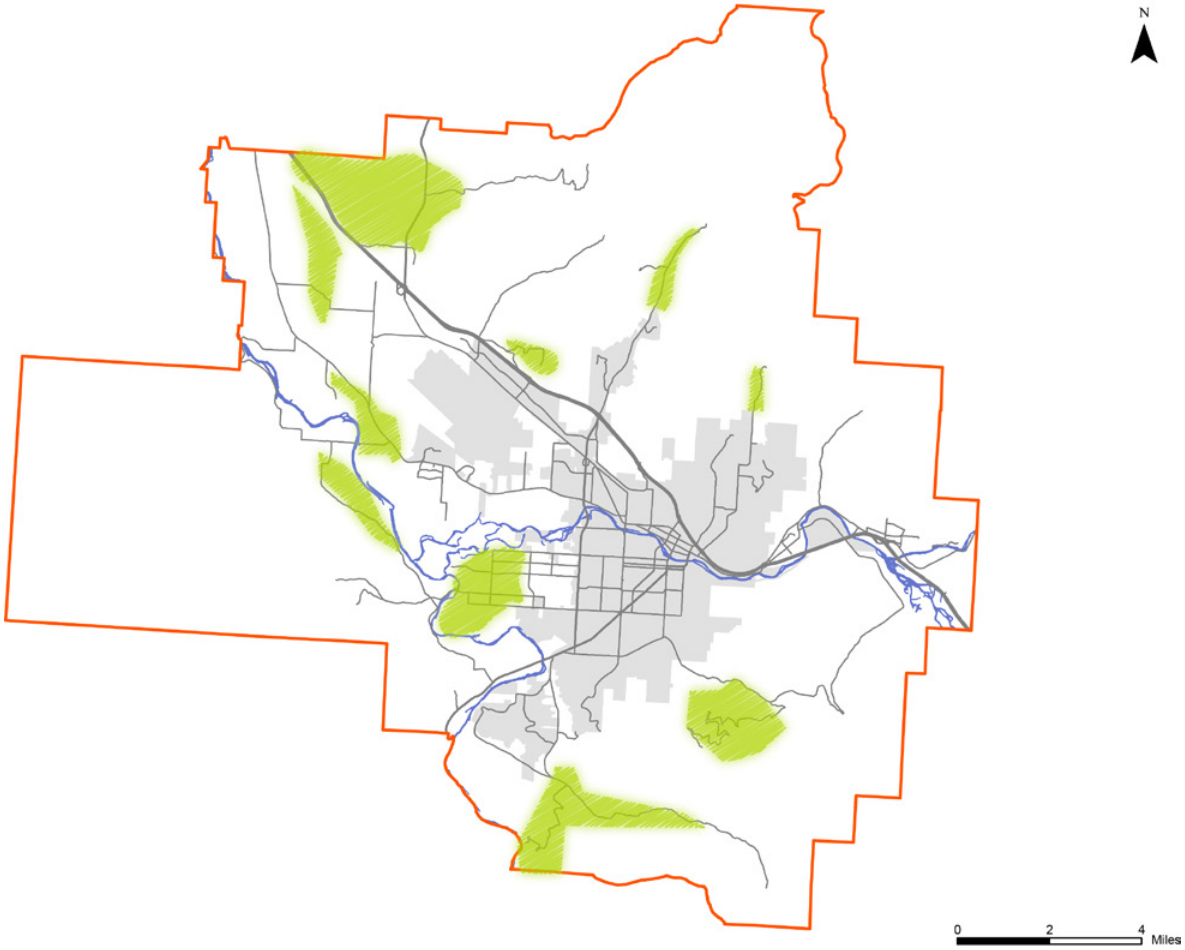


Figure 3: Conceptual representation of rural neighborhoods.

Protect Public Health and Safety

Missoula County's role is to steer future growth away from areas where hazards are likely to exist.

Development in the wrong places can lead to public health and safety issues, as well as significant expenditures of public funds to manage and mitigate disasters. Floodways, floodplains, and elevated wildfire risk are the main hazards in the planning area (Figures 4 and 5). In 2017, major fires directly affected large parts of the county. The following spring, the Clark Fork River reached the highest stage since 1908. The land use map is an opportunity to proactively mitigate risk to public health and safety by steering future growth and development away from hazardous areas.

Moreover, existing hazards will be exacerbated by climate change. Missoula County's summers are becoming hotter and drier, resulting in more frequent and severe wildfires and a longer wildfire season. At the same time, our winters and springs are projected to get warmer and wetter, leading to more frequent rain-on-snow events that cause the most destructive floods. Missoula County is currently engaged in a climate resiliency planning process with the city and Climate Smart Missoula, the outcome of which will include recommendations for how land use planning in the city and county can help make our community more resilient in the face of these changes.

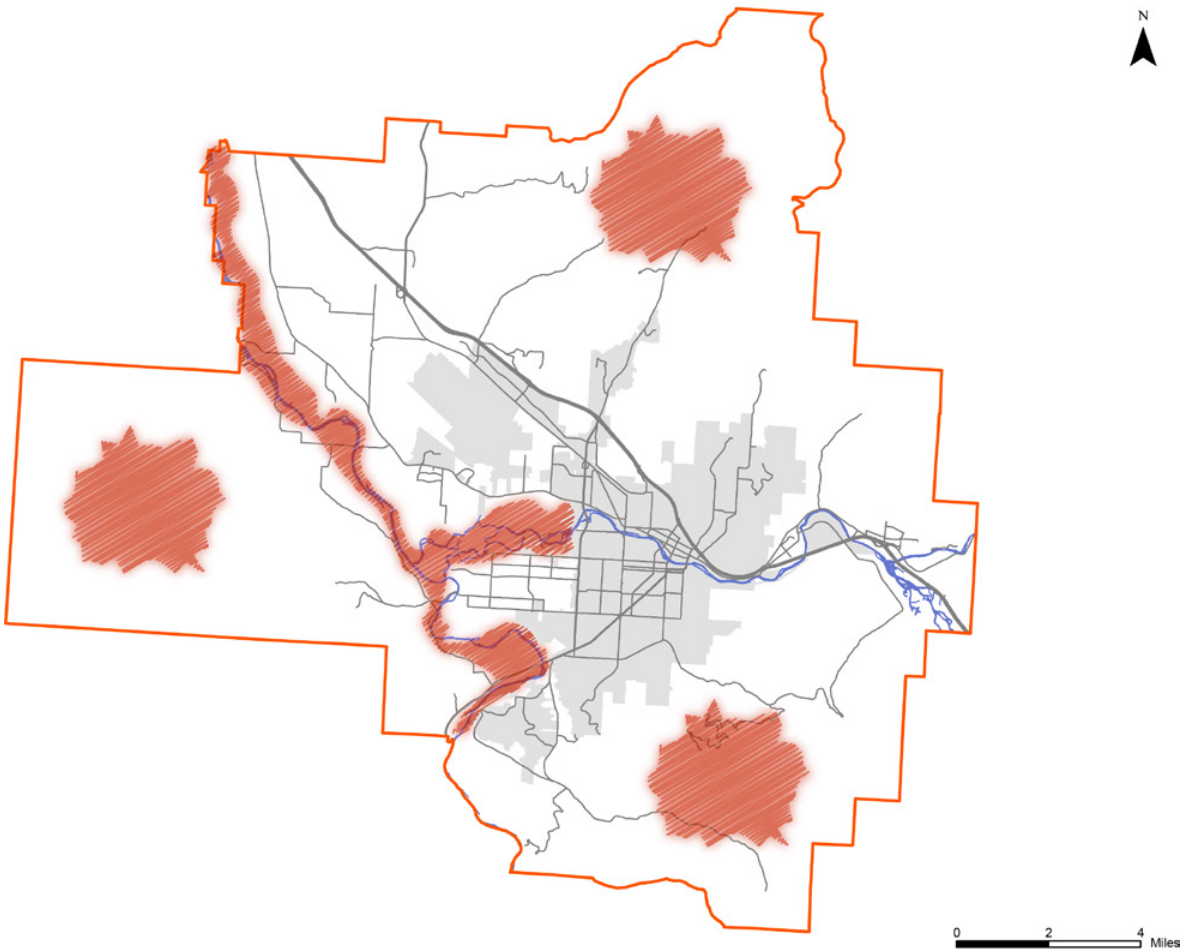


Figure 4: Conceptual representation of areas with hazards.

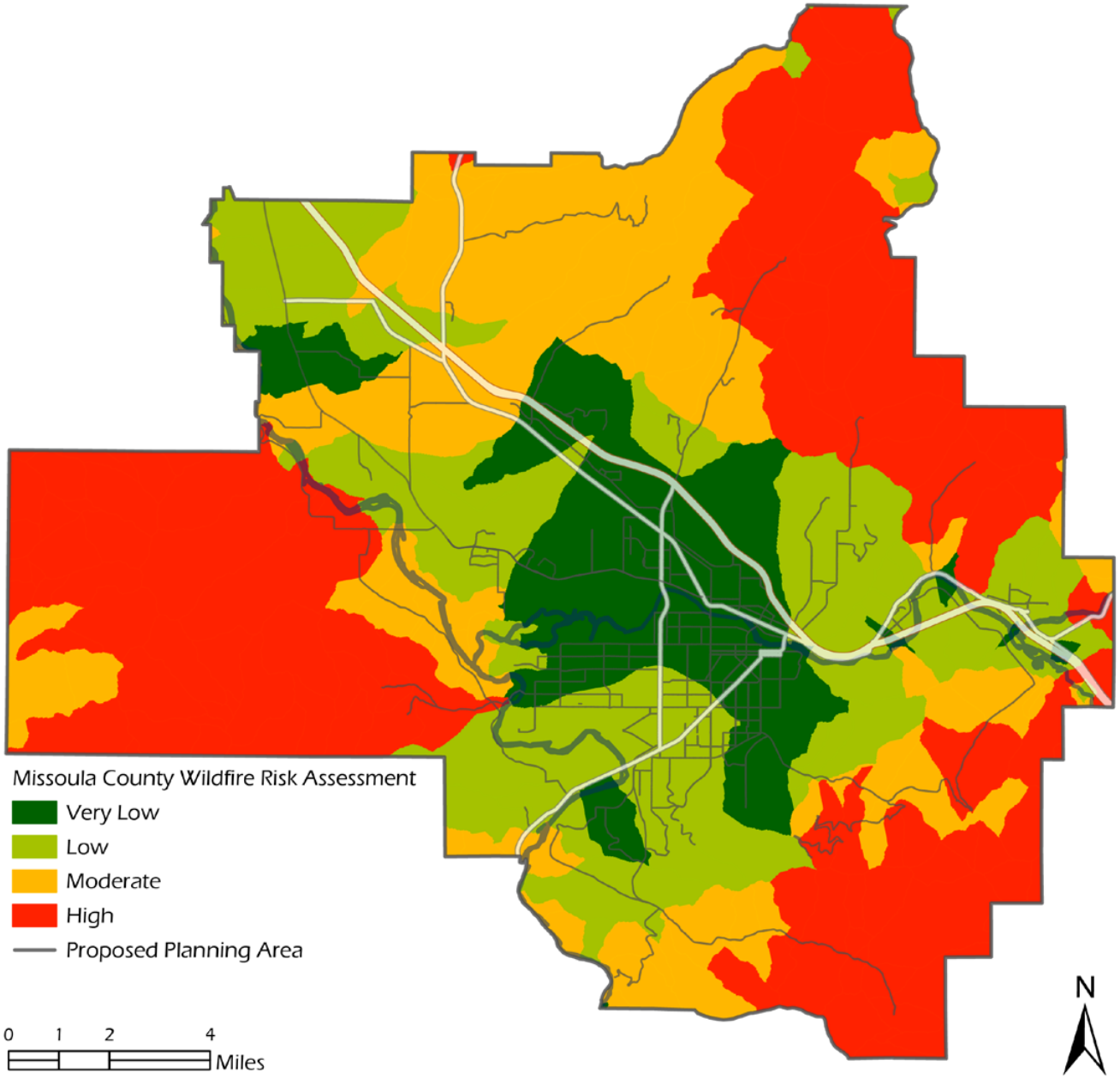


Figure 5: Wildfire risk in the planning area.

Preserve Working Lands, Agricultural Areas, and Naturally-Functioning Systems

Missoula County's role is to guide the development of working lands, agricultural areas, and natural areas to preserve their ability to function.

Missoula County recognizes the importance of quality of life, outdoor recreation, viewsheds, wildlife habitat, water quality, and local food production. Less developed areas, while not as critical for housing or providing significant employment opportunities, are critical to maintaining our values and quality of life (Figure 6). Managing the intensity of development in these areas and providing access to public lands are important roles for the county.

The role of the county must include the protection of three important habitats found in the Missoula area. First, stream corridors and associated riparian areas that are the most ecologically important and imperiled habitats for fish and wildlife species in western Montana should be protected. Second, important grassland habitats that are relatively rare in western Montana but provide critical resources for game and nongame wildlife communities, many of which are declining in North America, should be protected. Third, geographic funnels and terrain features (*e.g.*, riparian corridors, ridgelines, timbered draws, passes) that naturally guide wildlife to certain areas in harsh weather conditions and during seasonal movements and migrations should be accommodated.

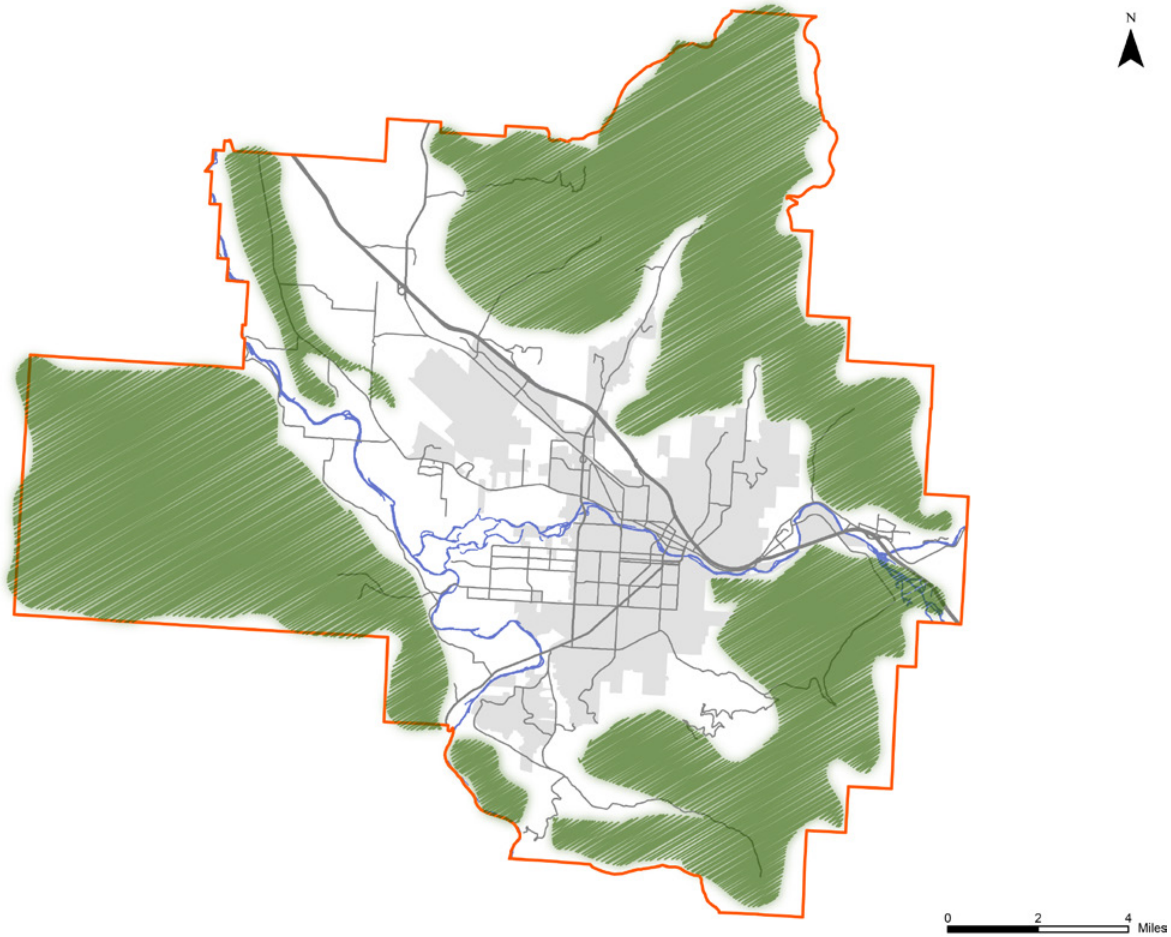


Figure 6: Conceptual representation of areas of working lands and natural landscapes.

The Foundation

The Missoula Area Land Use Element serves as a visual representation of the community's values, ideas on growth and development, and the realities facing our community as it grows and evolves. In developing the element, CAPS staff held 15 public workshops, open houses, and visioning sessions in neighborhoods from Bonner to Frenchtown. Planners spoke with community councils, homeowners' associations, and community organizations. Planners also interacted with dozens of stakeholders representing housing advocates, trail advocates, small farmers, conservationists, developers, and state and local agencies. This outreach effort engaged the community in a discussion about values and ideas on the growth in the planning area. Together with the realities our community faces, these three facets (values, ideas, and realities) form the foundation of the land use map.

"Every neighborhood has to have its own character. These should be identified by those who live there now, and enhanced and preserved through planning."

Online Comment

Values

The land use map is a visual representation of the community's values, and it would therefore be impossible to develop a land use map without having a discussion about what those values are. Land use planning is often based in values. Valuing open space, farmland, wildlife, walkability, and affordability all translate into how you plan for the future of a community. This outreach process started by asking the community about values: What are they? What is the most important value? Can you identify where your values might be found on a map? Below are the predominate themes that emerged from that process.

Housing

Additional housing is needed throughout the planning area, specifically housing that is affordable for a range of income levels. In a land use map, this translates to providing for a range of housing types.

Existing Infrastructure

Focus development toward areas with existing infrastructure or toward those areas with the potential to expand or improve infrastructure to accommodate density and a mix of uses.

Agriculture

Establish an agricultural-specific land use designation and incorporate protection of small agricultural operations into planning tools.

Open Space

Protect open space for wildlife habitat, recreation, and agriculture. Cluster development to protect important resources, such as agriculture and habitat.

Multi-Modal Transportation

Integrate land use and multi-modal transportation options, including road enhancements, bus service, and pedestrian and bike facilities.

Water Quality

Protect surface water and groundwater.

Community Identity

Maintain unique neighborhood character.

Ideas

In addition to a discussion about values, the outreach process identified community members' ideas on planning for growth and development within the planning area. Along with the values and realities, these ideas help form the foundation of the land use map. Through the outreach process, the following themes were identified.

Cluster

Cluster housing and development to preserve open space, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, wetlands and riparian areas, public access, and agricultural lands.

Walkable Neighborhoods

Create neighborhood centers that include a mix of uses and walkable environments.

Infrastructure Planning

Identify areas where infrastructure is needed. Closely evaluate land uses in the immediate vicinity of the airport and consider some of the existing characteristics and infrastructure available in this area to serve future development.

Live-make Neighborhoods

Develop a "live-make" land use concept to allow small shops, artist studios, and manufacturing associated with a primary residence that are more intensive than the customary home occupation.

Connectivity

Increase motorized and non-motorized connectivity between neighborhoods, recreation areas, and to the city. Allow for the continued function of natural systems and fish and wildlife movement corridors.

Rural Character

Retain areas with rural residential character.

Avoid Hazards

Restrict development in areas prone to flooding and areas of elevated wildfire risk.

Realities

Realities are factors and trends we are experiencing that are unique to our community, and they must be considered in the development of a land use map. Recognizing these realities will help us develop a land use map that allows our community to respond to changing conditions.

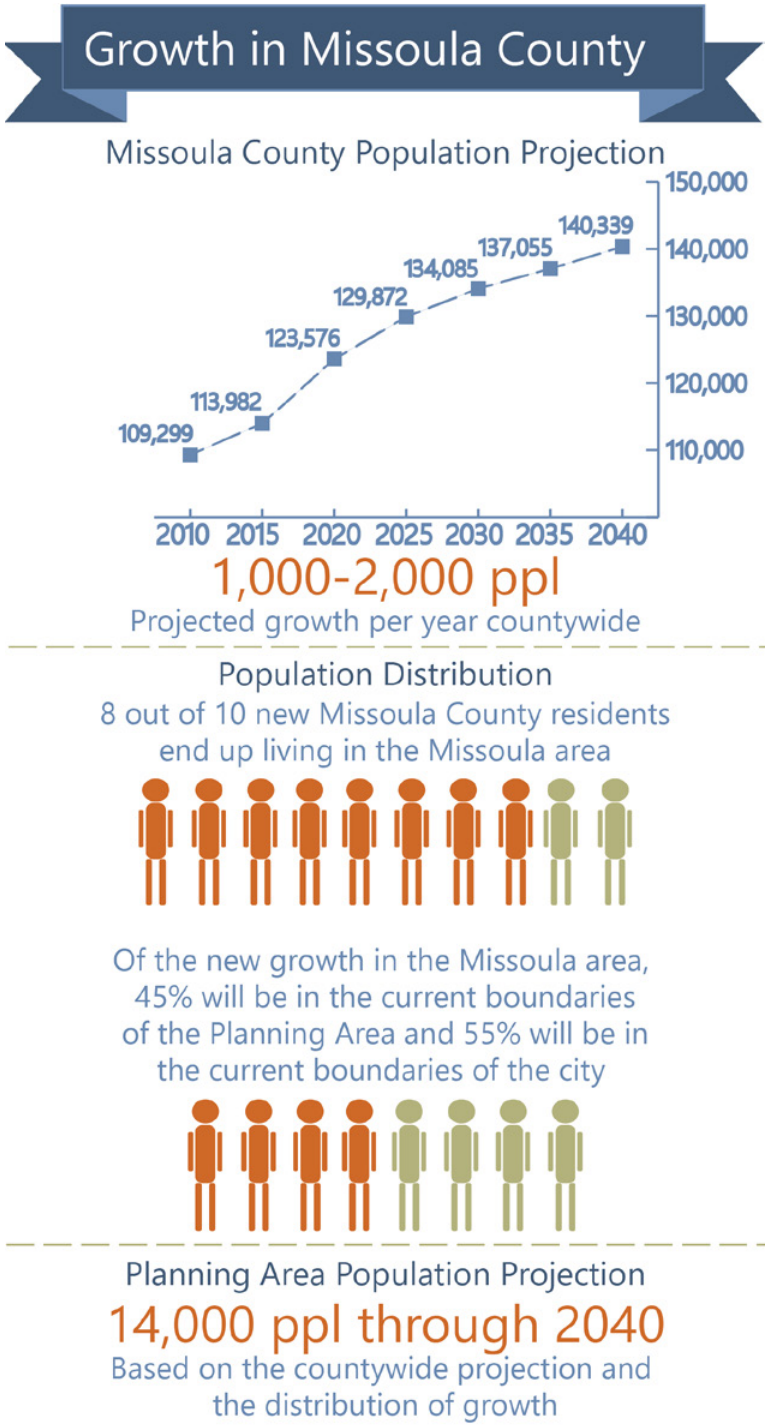
Growing Population

When Missoula County first adopted a land use map in the 1970s, there were about 58,000 people living here. Since the adoption of the original map, Missoula County has continued to grow, doubling in population to over 117,000. In the next 20 years, Missoula County is expected to grow by another 30,000 people, and most of that growth, around 87%, will happen in the Missoula Valley. Some of this growth will happen within the City of Missoula; some will happen within the county planning area outside the city limits.

Based on population projections and recent growth patterns, the planning area could grow by more than 14,000 people by 2040. Furthermore, changes in the City of Missoula Growth Policy may affect growth patterns. The City of Missoula has adopted an "Inward Focus" policy, and, depending upon implementation, the ratio of development happening within city limits compared to the surrounding county may shift to a greater percentage of growth within the city. The upcoming 2020 census will likely have data to measure if the growth patterns are in fact shifting inwards.

The reality is Missoula and the surrounding areas will grow, somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 to 2,000 people per year. Missoula is a great community with a high quality of life, a major university, and a diversifying economy. With an increasingly footloose economy, Missoula and its surrounding neighborhoods will continue to attract new residents.

As the community grows there will be a need for additional housing, places to work, recreate, shop and other amenities typically found in a community of this size. As growth occurs, commercial, industrial and residential land use will be the primary drivers of change to our built environment. Trends affecting development patterns for these three land use types were key considerations in developing the land use map.



Land Use Trends

Commercial Trends

- Focus on availability of infrastructure as the key to locating office, retail, and commercial land uses
- Recognize that most new major commercial developments will likely be annexed into the city
- Acknowledge that future retail development will likely incorporate amenities, entertainment, and mixed-use
- Identify general locations for small-scale, mixed-use development to serve existing neighborhoods

Industrial Trends

- Utilize existing industrial areas more efficiently and effectively
- Locate new industrial areas near existing infrastructure, housing, and emergency services
- Understand that industrial uses increasingly need commercial components
- Encourage entrepreneurship through live-make environments

Residential Trends

- Within the planning area, anticipate a need for around 300 new housing units a year
- Accommodate an adequate supply of housing to avoid the map itself becoming a constraint
- Allow for a wide variety of housing types and densities
- Allow the market to react to changing housing needs
- Plan for the extension of public water and sewer to support development needs

Geography

Unlike communities in other parts of the country, the physical geography of Missoula plays a significant role in where and how we grow. The slopes of the mountains around the community define our edges to the east, north, and west. The rivers are another consideration. The floodplains and the associated waterways of the Clark Fork and Bitterroot rivers split the valley in half and limit the ability to develop north-south transportation corridors. These physical features direct where the community can expand, naturally limiting where future growth can and cannot occur.

The physical characteristics of the valley have the biggest influence on the directions the community can grow. Generally, the physical characteristics of the valley push options for future expansion of the developed area northwest along the Mullan Road and I-90 corridors. We must be judicious about where and how the community grows with respect to the constraints imposed by the landscape.

Infrastructure and Services

The intensity of development is predicated on the level of infrastructure, with the transportation network and water and wastewater treatment systems being key considerations. Generally, densities greater than two dwelling units per acre require connection to public water and public wastewater treatment.[1] Without public water and sewer treatment, density in residential areas and the scale of commercial development is restricted.

With few exceptions, Missoula County does not own and operate water and sewer infrastructure within the planning area; this has historically been driven by the City of Missoula. As a result, the potential for densities greater than one dwelling unit per acre within the planning area is restricted without expanding or developing water and sewer systems. Water rights are another factor affecting land use patterns. The availability of groundwater for future growth and development is limited by the legislative closure in the Bitterroot River basin and a lack of water availability in the lower Clark Fork River basin.

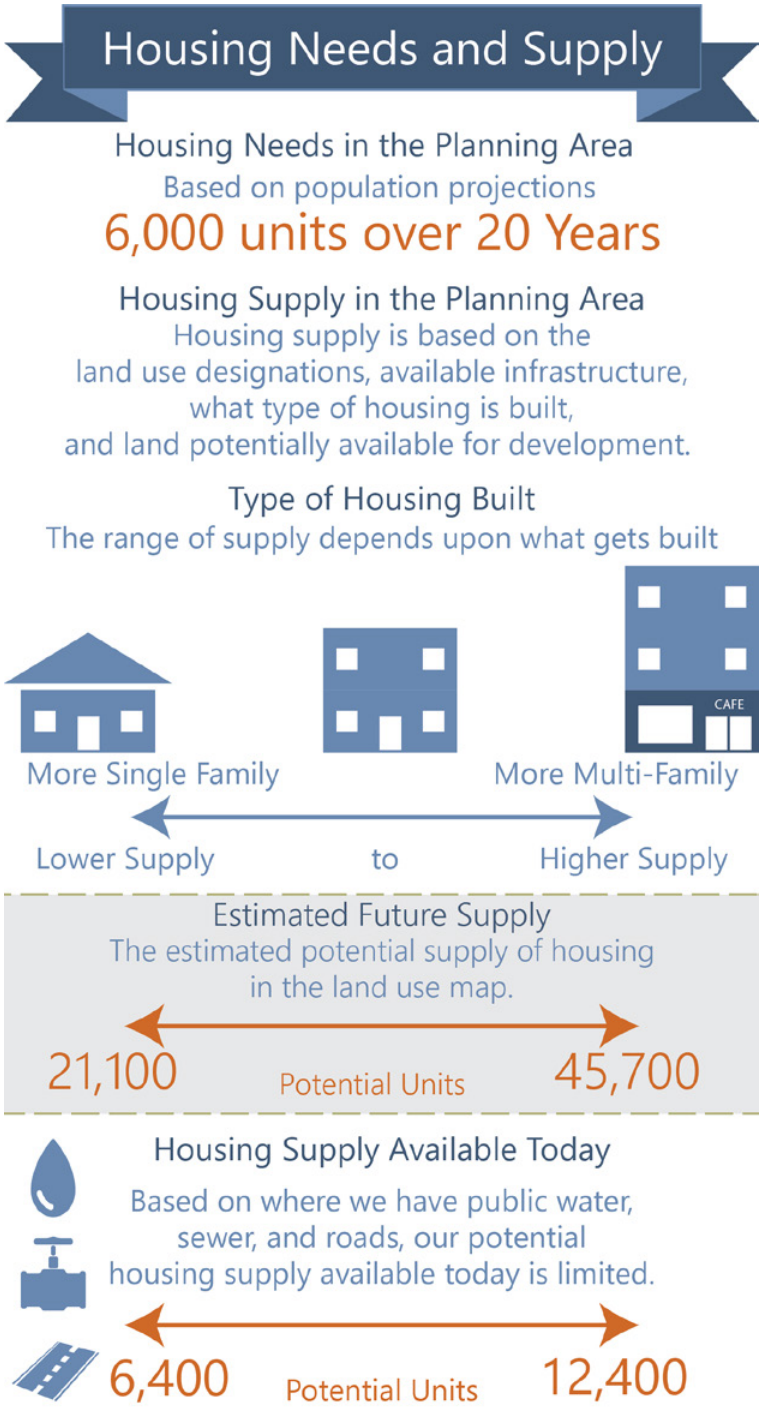
Transportation is another component of infrastructure related to where and how a community grows. Missoula's transportation network is multi-modal: a combination of roads, bus lines and non-motorized facilities, though travel by car is the predominate mode. The management of our transportation network is shared between the Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula County, and the City of Missoula. Today, key roads and intersections are at or near capacity, constraining opportunity for future development. Funding to address these concerns is in short supply, and money to build new roads is currently almost entirely reliant on federal grants through a competitive nationwide process.

1 All references to public water or public sewer systems within this document refer to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's definition of public systems, which is tied to the amount of use of the system, not the ownership.

Housing Prices

The cost of housing in the Missoula market has emerged as one of the most pressing community challenges. Increased housing costs are affecting both renters and homebuyers. One metric for determining if housing costs are too high is measuring how many households in the community are cost-burdened, meaning renters and homeowners pay more than 30% of their income on housing. Countywide, 37% of all households are considered cost-burdened. Within city limits, that percentage increases to 41% of households. Renters are more likely to be cost-burdened than homeowners. The percentage of cost-burdened households in Missoula County and the City of Missoula is higher than comparable communities, as well as state and national averages.

The median sale price of homes in the Missoula urban area has increased by nearly $100,000 since 2010, from $200,500 in 2010 to $290,000 at the end of 2018. According to the 2018 *Making Missoula Home* report, nearly half of homes are out of reach for entry-level professionals and working-class residents. Rentals are also difficult to find. Due to vacancy rates of rentals hovering around 2%, the price for rentals has followed a similar upward trajectory.



Our Environment

Our built environment is both affected by and affects our natural environment. Land use patterns need to include an over-arching approach to maintaining the ecological integrity of the area and consider the naturally functioning systems of the Missoula Valley. In addition, as our climate changes, our lifestyles and community will be affected in a number of ways. These realities need to be considered in how our community evolves over the course of the next 20 years.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Home to elk, deer, moose, bighorn sheep, bears, mountain lions, and an array of bird life, as well as nongame wildlife species and world-class fisheries, the Missoula Valley has a diversity and abundance of fish and wildlife species. The opportunities for fishing, hunting, photography, bird-watching, and general wildlife viewing are some of the most powerful reasons people want to live in this area. Wildlife living on the valley floor and along the rivers and stream riparian areas, as well as wildlife trying to move through the valley, face obstacles as the community grows. Therefore, land considered important for wildlife as well as areas across the valley floor for recreation and wildlife passage must be considered in land use planning decisions and allow harmonious overlap with human development and recreational plans into the future.

Climate Change

We are already experiencing the impacts of climate change in Missoula County, and those impacts are projected to intensify over the coming decades and touch every sector in our county. Changes are likely to include reduced low elevation snowpack, earlier spring snowmelt, more frequent and intense droughts and wildfires, and impacts to agriculture, recreation, and human health. Many of the values and ideas that guide this land use plan, such as multi-modal transportation and walkable neighborhoods, will reduce our community's contribution to climate change by reducing fossil fuel use. Climate change will also exacerbate natural hazards such as wildfire and flooding, as described on page 9. Missoula County is currently partnering with the City of Missoula and Climate Smart Missoula to develop a Climate Resiliency Plan, which will identify and prioritize vulnerabilities and recommend strategies intended to address the vulnerabilities. These strategies may inform future planning efforts and future updates to the land use map.

Imperatives

Imperatives are essential strategies to address our realities and recognize our values.

Ensure the Community's Values are Represented in the Land Use Map

In Missoula, residents want the community to be affordable, they want trails and access to recreation areas, they want access to locally-grown food and quality health care, and they want areas for wildlife among a host of other values. These values will at times complement one or another, and at times they will conflict. The land use map is a puzzle that integrates these on the landscape. Compact development patterns and a logical expansion of urban services are the best strategies for balancing the community's values. Keeping these values at the forefront of the mapping process means we can provide room for housing and employment while ensuring that our working lands and natural systems remain a part of the community fabric.

Imperative: Incorporate Community Values

The values of the community, which are discussed on page 13, are incorporated into this plan in two ways: 1) into the descriptions of the land use designations and 2) within the map.

Imperative: Facilitate Compact Development Patterns

The key to balancing our community's values in the face of a changing built environment is for the land use map and designations to facilitate compact development patterns and a mix of uses supported by public water and sewer.

"I would like to see a 'recreation corridor' to Bonner and East Missoula that includes a trail and connections to recreation and open spaces."

Online Comment

Provide for a Variety of Housing Types

Missoula's housing prices have steadily increased over the past few years. A 2018 report focusing on housing affordability stated there is a lack of housing priced to meet the housing demand and few prospects necessary to increase the supply to meet future needs without interventions. The land use map is not by itself a solution to the housing issue, but it can affect potential housing supply and housing types.

Housing supply is reflected in the land use map as areas designated for residential use at various densities. Too little supply will constrain the market, and too much supply might conflict with other community values.

Housing type is reflected in the land use map through the descriptions of the land use designations. The idea is to provide for housing of all types and densities within the planning area, allowing the housing market to evolve and respond to economic changes. This means the land use map should have areas for every housing type, from single-family homes on large lots all the way to multi-unit dwellings.

The land use map can set the stage to increase the potential to meet housing needs. Neighborhoods with a mix of housing types, including "missing middle" units, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and multi-unit buildings meet different needs of the community. Under current conditions, new single-family home construction, even on smaller 5,000 square-foot lots, is not affordable for a Missoula family earning the median household income. In the urbanized area, single-family homes priced less than $200,000 are almost non-existent, decreasing from 41% of home sales in 2012 down to 8% in 2017. Multi-unit buildings, including duplexes and townhomes, are part of the solution to meet the community's housing needs.

In the land use map, a broad approach to increased housing supply and types will allow the market to evolve with changing conditions and allow development of housing at price points where it can be economically produced. Even if new housing is moderately-priced, it can increase the overall affordability of a community through a concept called "filtering," where an increased supply of housing at a mid-ranged price point allows some people in lower-priced homes to then move to the higher-priced homes, thus increasing inventory of lower-priced homes.

Imperative: Provide Adequate Area for Housing Supply

The land use map must have enough land area designated for housing that can meet our future demands.

Imperative: Promote a Wide Range of Housing Types

A range of housing types and price points are needed to meet our future housing needs and to allow the market to respond to changing conditions.

Use, Plan, and Expand Infrastructure

Where appropriate, Missoula County must become proactive in planning for and developing infrastructure in order to successfully implement the land use map. Near the edge of the city, which is where growth is likely to happen in the near term, much of the required infrastructure is in place. But in areas targeted for higher residential, commercial and industrial growth over the long term (the 10 to 20-year horizon), not all the infrastructure is in place, and additional investments will be necessary.

Use the Infrastructure We Have in Place Today

In recent history, Missoula County has not taken a lead on using infrastructure to guide growth within the planning area. As a result, the area served by public water, public sewer, and our transportation network is limited. While not the only infrastructure necessary to serve the community, these three infrastructure types are the most critical. The areas that have these three pieces in place are key to accommodating near-term growth over the next 10 years or so.

The areas with these three key infrastructure types are primarily found adjacent to the city, in places like Miller Creek, Orchard Homes, Mullan Road, and east of the airport. Focusing the near-term growth toward our existing water and sewer infrastructure accomplishes two things: 1) it maximizes the infrastructure we already have in place, resulting in better economic use of the investments the community has already made, and 2) it accommodates the near-term population growth, allowing the county to plan for the next generation of infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate long-term growth.

Plan for Areas to Expand Infrastructure to Accommodate the Growth of Tomorrow

Looking at our long-term population growth over the next 10 to 20 years and where we currently have the infrastructure necessary to accommodate new growth, it becomes clear that the infrastructure in place today will need to be expanded. There are many places within the planning area where we have two of the three key infrastructure pieces. With some additional investments, bringing in the third piece will greatly increase the area's development capacity.

Missoula County must work with public- and private-sector partners to identify strategies and develop the missing infrastructure pieces in underserved areas. Infrastructure improvements are large investments that require the county to carefully consider the fiscal impact and maintenance obligations over time. With sound planning and fiscal responsibility, infrastructure is a fundamental tool for implementing this plan.

Imperative: Use the Infrastructure We Already Have in Place

Focus near-term growth in areas where we already have water, sewer, and roads in place. This will capitalize on the investments we have already made while accommodating near-term housing and job growth.

Imperative: Plan for New Infrastructure

Proactively plan for extending infrastructure into underserved areas that can support additional growth. Develop strategies to build and manage this infrastructure in order to accommodate projected long-term growth.

Emphasize Community Character and Quality of Life

Community character and quality of life are important considerations when planning for the future of a community. The health and happiness of community members can be connected to a community that is unique, authentic, and has a sense of place. In today's footloose economy, building community character and quality of life is an essential economic development strategy.

Missoula no doubt has high standards for community character and quality of life. The different neighborhoods in the planning area also have a unique sense of place and would like to keep their distinct identities. The land use map emphasizes character and quality of life which can be accomplished through many avenues, such as building walkable places with a mix of uses, creating neighborhoods that are interconnected with the greater community, and developing housing types for people with different incomes, while protecting our natural environment, wildlife, and access to public lands.

Surrounded by rugged peaks from six mountain ranges and two wilderness areas, in a basin dissected by three rivers and multiple streams, Missoula is nestled in the area known as the Five Valleys. Our community is home to an abundance of vulnerable native fauna and fish. As Missoula has evolved into a hub for mountain and river recreation, tourism based on the surrounding natural amenities is a major economic driver and a reason why our community is known as a desirable place to live for outdoor enthusiasts. As the community grows, actions will be necessary to maintain local and large-scale wildlife movement corridors and protect areas for wildlife in an otherwise urbanizing landscape. This will certainly be a worthwhile investment in the future of the Missoula Valley.

Imperative: Emphasize Character and Quality of Life

Emphasize pedestrian friendly environments, mix of uses, interconnectedness, mix of housing types, our natural environment, wildlife, and access to public lands.

Implementation

The land use map and the corresponding land use designations describe desired future conditions. They are an aspiration we strive toward, and they won't happen without action.

Missoula County and its partners must work on implementation through a series of strategic steps over the next 20 years. This strategy focuses on three themes: Codes, Infrastructure, and Coordination. Within each theme individual steps are described, along with desired outcomes, the level of priority, and timing recommendations.

Codes

Update the Missoula County Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, and Zoning Map.

Infrastructure

Build and manage infrastructure to proactively guide where and how growth occurs.

Coordination

Work with the City of Missoula to plan for growth in areas adjacent to the city.

"If community water supply was extended west to the Wye area of Missoula, you could see greater commercial & industrial growth. This is a large limiting factor for growth in this area of the county."

Online Comment

Codes

The land use element has two components: the text describing the land use designations and the map showing where on the landscape the designations are placed. The map and the land use designations are not regulatory tools. They provide a general policy foundation for regulatory tools, and those regulatory tools will be used to implement the text and the map. Tools like the Missoula County Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations can implement the details from the text, and the zoning map can implement the land use map.

Update the Missoula County Zoning Regulations

This updated land use map and the corresponding land use designations provide the policy foundation for a comprehensive update to the zoning regulations. Updating the zoning regulations will align the zoning code with the community's vision and goals laid out in this document and the Missoula County Growth Policy. Updates will also address health and safety concerns, like development in areas at risk to wildfires or flooding. The county has already initiated this action.

Outcome – The zoning regulations are revised to be aligned with the community's vision and values described by the land use designations.

Priority – High

Timing – Immediate

Update the Missoula County Subdivision Regulations

As development occurs, the subdivision regulations are an important tool for implementing some of the character and transportation components of the land use designations. Urban places require different levels of infrastructure than rural areas. Therefore, the subdivision regulations should be updated to align tiered infrastructure standards to the land use designations. For example, Section 3.4 of the Missoula County Subdivision Regulations describes the different road standards needed in urban and rural settings. This section should be updated so the application of urban and rural road standards is determined by what land use designation the subdivision is within, aligning the intensity of land use with the appropriate type of transportation systems. Other potential updates include improving clustering provisions or improving wildland fire protections.

Outcome – The infrastructure and design standards in the subdivision regulations reflect the community's vision and values described in the land use designations.

Priority – Medium

Timing – Immediate

Update the Zoning Map

The land use map represents a desired future condition for the community, and the zoning map is the most effective tool to implement it. The land use map and the zoning map do not need to align all at once, but as the zoning map changes over time, it should move toward the land use map, not away from it. The changes to the zoning map can happen incrementally over time with the requests coming from private citizens, or comprehensive changes can be made by the county.

Missoula County should pursue proactively updating the zoning map where appropriate. There are certain locations where the existing level of infrastructure can support the proposed land use designations with limited or no additional investments. These areas should be proactively rezoned through a county-led effort, an important step to increase the opportunity for new housing units and business ventures. Other areas with potential for proactive efforts include unzoned areas, areas with public safety issues like flooding and wildland fire, and areas where the public has identified desired changes.

Outcome – The zoning map is in better alignment with the land use map, increasing housing supply, protections for agricultural areas and wildlife habitat, public health and safety, and providing increased predictability on where growth will occur which will allow the county to better align capital improvements.

Priority – High

Timing – Initiate after updating the zoning regulations

Infrastructure

Missoula County will need to become proactive in planning for and developing infrastructure in order to successfully implement the land use map. Near the edge of the city, which is where growth is likely to happen in the near term, much of the required infrastructure is in place. But in areas targeted for higher residential, commercial and industrial growth over the long term (the 10 to 20-year horizon), not all the infrastructure is in place, and additional investments will be necessary.

Guide Growth by Proactively Planning and Building Infrastructure

How the county develops the framework necessary to improve infrastructure could take on different forms in different locations. The tools to accomplish this task will need to be methodically explored and will require close collaboration with partners. Being proactive in planning, building, and managing infrastructure in the areas adjacent to the City of Missoula is a shift in planning strategy for the county, but necessary to manage future growth.

Outcome – Missoula County uses infrastructure to proactively guide where and how growth occurs.

Priority – High

Timing – Long-term

Increase Capacity for Funding Capital Projects and Ongoing Maintenance

The infrastructure projects necessary to implement the land use map will be expensive, likely to the tune of tens of millions of dollars. As the improvements are installed and development occurs, revenues will increase, but the improvements will also generate ongoing costs for maintenance and upkeep. The feasibility of each project will need to be determined, as well as how to pay for the capital costs and ongoing maintenance. Missoula County will need to augment the existing tools at their disposal to help facilitate the extension of infrastructure necessary to implement the land use map.

Outcome – Missoula County has increased capacity to build and maintain the infrastructure necessary to guide where and how growth occurs.

Priority – High

Timing – Long-term

Potential Infrastructure Outcomes

This list does not rank, prioritize, or evaluate the feasibility of projects. Their inclusion in this list does not mandate or guarantee commitments to their construction or exclude pursuing other projects.

Expand water service on Mullan Road

Upgrade and improve the existing county-owned and operated water district in the El Mar Estates area to expand service south of Mullan Road and west of Cote Lane.

Expand or develop water service to the Wye

The lack of public water at the Wye, both north and south of Interstate 90, is constraining the development potential of an area long planned for future growth. Extending existing water systems or developing new water systems is needed to address the constraints. Options for new or expanded water service exist and could be developed through a variety of alternatives that need greater analysis.

Complete a road grid east of the airport and west of Reserve Street between Mullan Road and Broadway

Adjacent to the City of Missoula and the city's water and sewer infrastructure, this area is constrained primarily by a lack of a road grid. A road grid in this area would help accommodate additional growth and provide new north-south alternatives to North Reserve Street.

Improve the existing road network south of the Wye

Roads such as Roller Coaster Road and Deschamps Lane need to be brought to a higher standard to accommodate future growth.

Develop a solution to wastewater treatment in the Bonner, Milltown and West Riverside neighborhoods

The Bonner, Milltown, and West Riverside neighborhoods primarily rely on individual septic systems to treat wastewater. Many of these systems are aging or were installed before permitting standards existed. This situation limits the options of property owners and constrains the development potential of the area. The community should continue to explore solutions to wastewater treatment in the area.

Expand access to public water systems in the Bonner, Milltown and West Riverside neighborhoods

The Bonner, Milltown, and West Riverside neighborhoods are mostly served by individual privately-owned wells, but there are a few privately-owned public water systems. These public systems could be expanded to accommodate future growth.

Complete infrastructure improvements in the North Reserve-Scott Street area

The North Reserve-Scott Street area is constrained by lack of infrastructure improvements despite its relatively close proximity to the urban core. The county could work with the city to complete improvements.

Improve Highway 200 in East Missoula

Highway 200 through East Missoula lacks access control, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and other non-motorized safety elements. The East Missoula community envisions a future where the highway is better defined and safe for pedestrian use.

Potential Infrastructure Funding Sources

This list does not rank, prioritize, or evaluate the feasibility of funding sources. Their inclusion in this list does not mandate or guarantee their use or exclude other funding opportunities.

Grant Funding - Grants are one method to fund infrastructure improvements, such as roads, water, and sewer. Grants come from a variety of sources, including federal or state programs and private foundations. They can be used for large projects, like building a connected street grid near the airport, or for smaller projects like assistance for residents with lower incomes.

Align County Expenditures with Planning for Future Growth: Capital Improvements Planning - Every year, Missoula County invests in the community through expenditures on roads, parks, trail development, open land preservation, and more. These expenditures are necessary for enabling growth and improving the quality of life for residents. In the future, this map should be used by decision-makers to help strategically prioritize these investments through capital improvements planning within the planning area.

Pursue Creation of Districts that Allow Use of Tax Increment Financing Tools to Maximize Industrial Areas - Many of the areas designated for industrial use lack "shovel-ready" sites due to infrastructure constraints. Tax increment financing (TIF) can fund the infrastructure necessary to get lands "shovel-ready." With the right infrastructure in place, the efficiency of the land use increases, bringing more industrial lands on line. For example, the efficiency of industrial lands by the Wye could be improved through the extension of infrastructure financed by TIF districts.

Public-Private Partnerships - Public-private partnerships can be used in situations where a private sector interest overlaps with the county's interest to finance, build, or operate infrastructure. These partnerships can increase the leverage a community has to complete expensive projects. Examples include the donation of right-of-way for transportation projects, or the expansion of privately-owned water systems. These partnerships can help meet community goals like increased housing supply or expanded employment centers.

Special Improvement Districts - County governments can create special improvement districts to build, repair, and maintain certain infrastructure improvements. These districts can pay for the construction of a specific improvement, like a sewer project, or ongoing maintenance of an improvement, such as roadway maintenance.

General Obligation Bonds - A general obligation bond is a mechanism to finance large projects that are paid back over time through taxation. These bonds can be used to finance a wide variety of projects including infrastructure like roads, sewer, or water systems. General obligation bonds need voter approval.

User Fees - User fees can be used for capital improvements of public facilities like water systems or wastewater treatment plants. The user of the facility is assessed a fee that is used to pay off the debt of the system and for ongoing maintenance and operation.

Impact Fees - Impact fees are assessed on new development for the purpose of financing public facilities attributed to new growth. The fees can be an effective tool for proactively addressing infrastructure necessary to accommodate new growth where that growth is anticipated. Missoula County has not adopted impact fees. To use this tool the fees would have to be studied and then enabled by the county.

Coordination

Much of the growth that occurs within Missoula County is at the fringe of the City of Missoula's city limits. As the city expands its footprint, there is a transition from county land use planning and regulations to city planning and zoning. In areas adjacent to the City of Missoula, coordination between the two jurisdictions will contribute to the implementation of the land use map.

Urban Growth Commission

The City of Missoula and Missoula County jointly participate in the Urban Growth Commission (UGC), an entity comprised of city and county elected officials and community development staff. The UGC provides an opportunity for the two jurisdictions to discuss land use planning issues of shared interest. The UGC is advisory and can forward issues and recommendations to their respective departments or jurisdictions. The UGC can play an enhanced role as a sounding board for ideas and issues related to cooperation to promote orderly urban development on the city's fringe.

Outcome – Planning issues and projects of value to the City of Missoula and Missoula County are discussed in an open public forum, increasing the public's awareness of cooperation between the two jurisdictions and improving coordination on planning and projects.

Priority – Low

Timing – Ongoing

Memorandum of Understanding

A non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the city and county that enumerates the shared interests and values of the two jurisdictions would document the expectations and roles each jurisdiction has in managing the growth of the community and articulating the "One Community" approach. The details of the MOU could guide a shared planning direction, while allowing the two jurisdictions to pursue their individual goals and objectives.

Outcome – Missoula County and the City of Missoula have a firm understanding of what issues or values are shared between the two jurisdictions in the Missoula area, improving land use planning projects and coordinating infrastructure improvements and standards.

Priority – Low

Timing – Near-term

Joint Master Planning

The Community Mixed-Use land use designation east of the airport represents an opportunity for the county to work with the city, landowners, and other stakeholders to plan the logical and productive transition of this area into a vibrant, livable, mixed-use neighborhood while addressing many of the community's most pressing needs, such as housing supply and locations for new employment centers. This planning process could identify critical infrastructure improvements, such as road grids, sewer, water, stormwater, non-motorized facilities, locations of urban agriculture, parks, and detailed land use typologies in advance of development. This effort would facilitate orderly development at higher densities with a broad mix of uses and develop a sense of place through public-private partnerships. It could make the community more competitive for federal grants that assist in financing infrastructure.

As development occurs, this area will most likely be annexed into the city. Agreements between the city and county may need to be formed if infrastructure is constructed prior to annexation to ensure that designs meet the appropriate city and county specifications.

Outcome – Missoula County and the City of Missoula have developed a shared vision for growth and investment in the area east of the airport for supporting housing, employment, transportation, environmental, and recreational goals.

Priority – High

Timing – Immediate

Relationship to Other Plans

Land uses, demographics, and the community's values and ideas about growth and development are always evolving. There are many plans that address these issues in Missoula County. Some are specific to a location, called an area plan; some are specific to an issue, called an issue plan. This Land Use Element primarily focuses on land use at a 40,000-foot level. It doesn't incorporate all of our transportation considerations or evaluate the detailed data on our changing environment; there are other plans that will. For example, the county is currently drafting its first Climate Resiliency Plan. This plan is collecting the best available data and public input, and developing actions to address climate change in Missoula County. The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization, a joint city-county entity that plans for our transportation network, will update the transportation plan in the next few years. These plans that guide decision making in the county are intended to work together and inform one another. After the resiliency plan is adopted, it will have recommendations regarding adaptation strategies that may warrant amendments to the land use map. When the transportation plan is updated, it will use the land use designations in this plan for their modeling, to help identify future transportation improvements. This cyclical relationship will need to continue in order to capture the never ending changes in our community.

Outcome – Relevant planning documents interact and inform each other and provide a better picture of the community's values, ideas, realities and goals relating to a broad scope of work.

Priority – High

Timing – Ongoing

Monitoring and Amendments

No community is static—it is always evolving and changing. The land use map is designed for a 20-year horizon, but adjustments may be necessary from time to time.

Changing Conditions

Chapter 8 of the Missoula County Growth Policy details factors that would necessitate an update to the land use map. For example, the 2020 Decennial Census data will be released, providing insight to the accuracy of the population projections and the assumptions of where that growth is occurring on the landscape. If the projections and assumptions are too conservative, the land use map may need to be updated to reflect the higher than anticipated growth. Factors to be considered when determining whether amendments to the land use map are warranted include:

- Changes in the legal framework regarding growth policies or implementation measures
- Significant changes to existing conditions or projected trends
- Public and stakeholder input suggesting the need to make changes
- Knowledge of specific amendments that would improve the land use map's usefulness so that it may better serve the public
- New, or revisions to, area and issue plans that fall under the legal authority of a growth policy

Private Party Requests

Private parties may request to amend the Land Use Element. Typically, the requests are specific map amendments to support a proposed development. Amendments could also include text changes to the land use designations. Public review of amendments is required by state law. Any amendment would be evaluated for the entirety of the change. For example, a change to the text of the Residential land use designation would be evaluated for its impacts through the entire planning area. Proposed private party amendment requests include an application fee and are reviewed using the following criteria:

- The amendment substantially complies with the applicable guiding principles, goals, and objectives of the growth policy and accompanying Land Use Designation Map, except for what is addressed in the amendment request
- The amendment is consistent with the applicable goals, objectives, and land use designations of the applicable area plan (if any), except for what is addressed in the amendment request (Note: Growth policy and area plan amendment requests may be reviewed concurrently.)
- The amendment is designed to meet a need that is otherwise not being met
- The amendment will provide substantial public benefit to the surrounding community
- The change proposed is the best means of providing the public benefit

Land Use Designations

Land use designations are descriptions of desired future conditions. They, like the map, are an important piece of the policy direction guiding land use decision-making for Missoula County over the course of the next 20 years. Each designation possesses a unique combination of goals, land uses, characteristics, levels of intensity, and mobility considerations.

Elements of a Land Use Designation

Goals describe the long-term purpose in relation to other places within the county.

Land Uses generally describe the type of land use that's most prevalent within a place.

Characteristics provide context on how the built environment appears.

Intensity describes the level of development, such as the gross units per acre or general descriptions of building scale.

Mobility and Access ties the land use to general descriptions of what type of transportation systems are desirable for the location.

"This land is perfectly situated to be a neighborhood center with retail/professional/ living above commercial. It has great access and is contiguous with a large population. Just what we need!"

Online Comment

Representing Our Vision for Growth

Altogether, the land use designations reflect and balance the community's values, ideas about land use, and the imperatives necessary to achieve the community's vision for the future. They provide a range of development types - from areas where development is restricted, to rural areas, to urban centers.

Promoting compact development patterns and a logical expansion of urban services are keys to balancing our growth and our values. Not all of our values are compatible with an expanding built environment. By encouraging compact development patterns, we encourage a mix of uses, different transit options, and greater housing choice. At the same time, we reduce the land area necessary to accommodate a growing population, thereby protecting fish and wildlife habitat, open lands, and agriculture.

In contrast to the areas identified for future growth, the land use designations are also designed to ensure our values of agriculture, wildlife habitat, clean water, and open spaces are represented. For the first time, the county has created a designation for Agriculture based on strong public support for protection of agricultural land with irrigation facilities. Clustering is a recommended tool that can be used in lower density designations, Agriculture through Residential, to financially incentivize landowners to preserve or provide a public amenity or benefit, such as agricultural soils, wetlands, trails, or access. Landowners may be eligible for additional housing units beyond the recommended density of the designation if such protections or provisions are provided.

Within these designations are some new ideas on land use that came from the outreach process. Along with Agriculture, the Live/Make designation is a new approach that allows light manufacturing, such as small-scale workshops, manufacturing, or artist studios in residential areas.

Land Use Designations Quick Guide

Land Use Designation	General Use Description (See full description for details)
Open, Resource, and Recreation	Open
Agriculture	Agriculture and low density residential
Working Lands	Agriculture, timber, and low density residential
Rural Residential and Agriculture	Low density residential, agriculture, and timber
Rural Residential and Small Agriculture	Low density residential, agriculture, and timber
Residential	Single-family residential
Neighborhood Residential	Single-family and multi-family residential
Planned Neighborhood	Single-family and multi-family residential
Neighborhood Center	Mixed-use, single-family, and multi-family residential
Commercial Center	Commercial and multi-family residential
Live/Make Neighborhood	Single-family residential and small manufacturing
Community Mixed-Use	Mixed-use, single-family, and multi-family residential
Civic Employment Center	Public purpose
Industrial Center	Industrial
Heavy Industrial Center	Industrial

Primary Considerations of the Land Use Designations and Land Use Map

The following is a list of the primary considerations used to develop the land use designations and the land use map.

- The community's values and ideas about growth and development
- Planning documents like growth policies, neighborhood plans and transportation plans
- Trends in development and land use
- Population projections
- Existing and planned infrastructure
- Public services like emergency services and schools
- Physical characteristics of the landscape
- Natural features like floodplains and wildlife habitat
- Existing entitlements, such as zoning and individual property rights
- Existing development patterns

Agricultural Soils

10,000 Acres

Natural Resources Conservation Service soil classifications of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance where small scale or larger farming could occur.

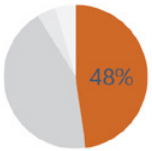
Strategies to Address Soils

Protect: Protect agricultural uses with low densities, clustering, and incentives.
Mitigate: Mitigate impacts to small agriculture through clustering, incentives, and encouraging agricultural uses.
Incorporate: Use Master Planning to promote urban agriculture and support agricultural history.

95.5%

Percent of the two NRCS soil classifications where one of these three strategies is employed

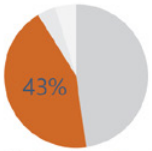
4,750 Acres



Protect

Land use designations that protect:
Open, Resource, and Recreation
Agriculture
Working Lands

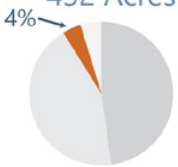
4,304 Acres



Mitigate

Land use designations that mitigate:
Rural Residential and Agriculture
Rural Residential and Small Ag.
Residential

432 Acres



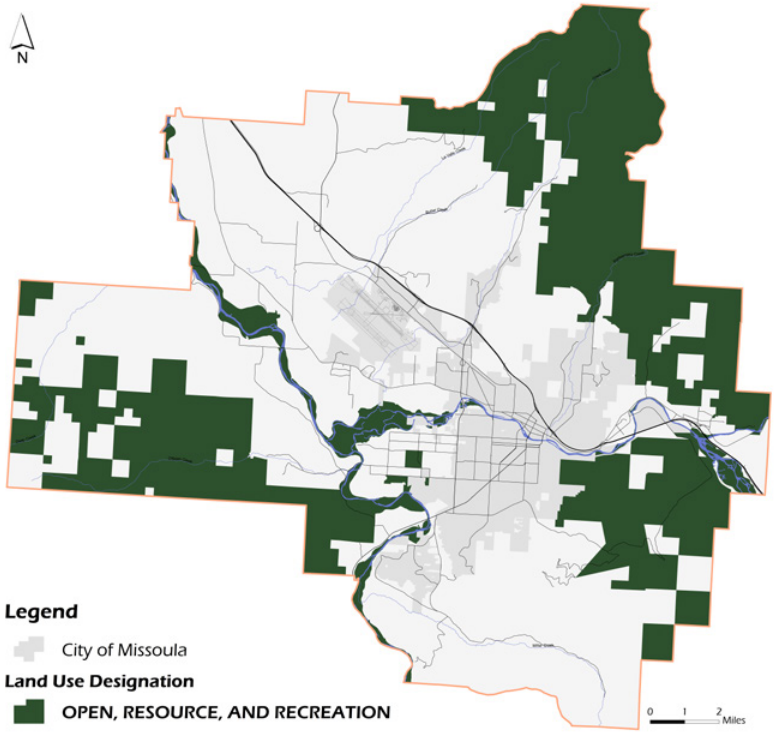
Incorporate

Land use designations that incorporate:
Community Mixed Use

OPEN, RESOURCE, AND RECREATION

GOALS

- Protect the continuing function of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movements corridors, and water quality and quantity.
- Allow for agriculture, grazing, timber production, and recreation access.
- Protect public health and safety in areas with identified hazards that restrict development, such as floodways.



Open, Resource, and Recreation is 59,175 acres, 38.8% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Lands uses include open lands, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, range lands, timber lands, and recreation areas.

Open, Resource, and Recreation is primarily intended for publicly-owned lands. It is also used for areas with identified hazards that restrict development, such as floodways.

CHARACTER

This area is mostly comprised of natural areas and undeveloped landscapes set aside for open space, wildlife habitat, agriculture and range, timber production, and recreation.

Buildings, utilities, and impervious surfaces are limited.

Where development is appropriate, improvements should be sited to avoid or accommodate sensitive areas, such as floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, native grasslands, wildlife movement corridors, agriculture lands, soils, steep slopes, and natural landscapes and waterways.

INTENSITY

Development is limited, but structures for administrative purposes may be acceptable.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Arterials, highways, and local roads may be present through this designation.

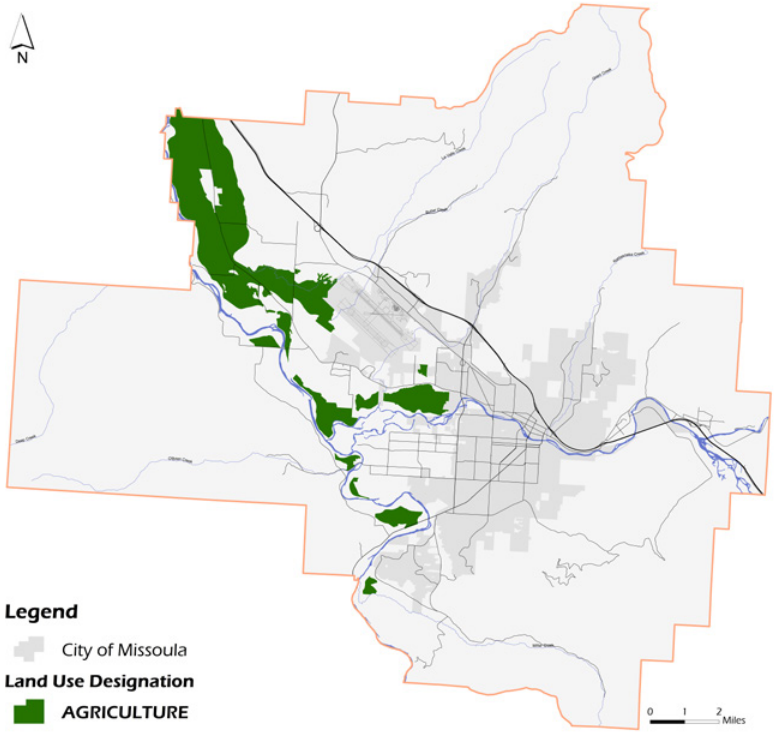
Local road and trail networks, when present, are typically managed by the agency managing the landscape.

If trail networks are present, they are typically managed by the agency managing the landscape.

AGRICULTURE

GOALS

- Support economic diversity and contribute to the health of the county by providing for the local and regional production of agricultural products.
- Allow for large-tract agricultural systems where agricultural soils and irrigation facilities are present.
- Protect the continuing function of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movements corridors, and water quality and quantity.
- Protect public health and safety in areas with identified hazards, such as floodplains.



Agriculture is 8,661 acres, 5.7% of the planning area.

Photo Credits:
By James Van Hemert
By Carolyn Torma
USDA-NRCS, Tim McCabe;

LAND USES

Land uses include agriculture, residential, and activities incidental to agriculture such as production, preparation or sale of products produced on the property, employee housing, and agritourism if the agricultural operator lives on site.

CHARACTER

Development is designed to protect important resources such as agricultural lands, sensitive natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and avoid hazards such as floodplains and wildfire. Conservation design sets aside a major portion of a site for preservation, clustering development on the remaining portion.

Residential buildings are predominately single-family dwellings.

INTENSITY

Base residential density of one unit per 40 acres.

Density bonuses may be available if development is clustered to protect important resources such as natural landscapes and waterways, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, or if public facilities such as public access or trails are provided. When applied through conservation design, density bonuses increase according to the percentage of the area permanently protected.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Lower densities are likely to produce auto-centric travel.

Arterials and highways may provide direct access to properties within this designation.

Local roads are in a grid pattern, usually following section lines or are irregular depending on topography.

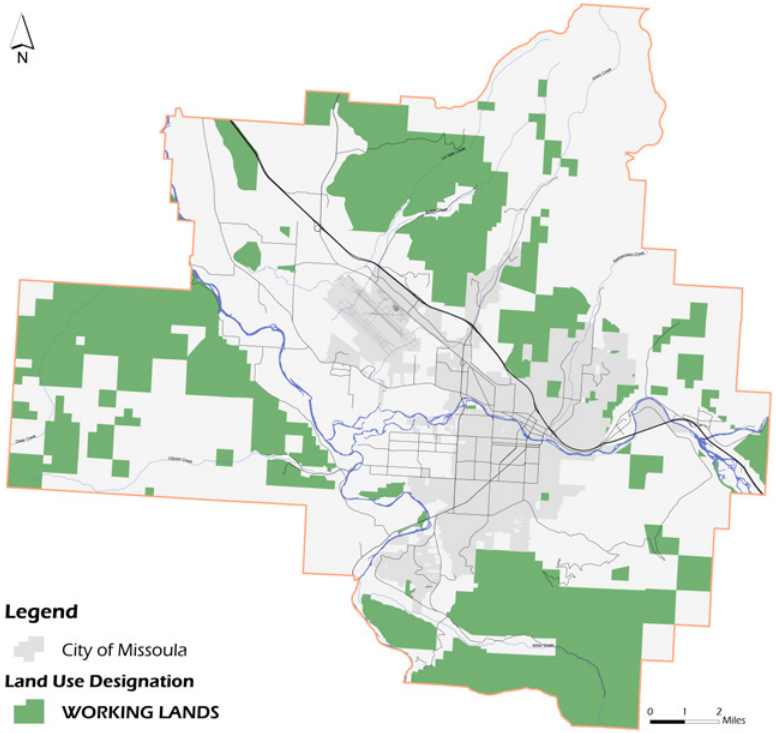
County and private roads may or may not be paved.

Non-motorized facilities, typically located along arterial and collector roads, provide connectivity to schools, parks, recreation facilities, and other communities.

WORKING LANDS

GOALS

- Provide opportunities for rural lifestyles and generating income from natural amenities.
- Protect the continuing function of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movements corridors, and water quality and quantity.
- Protect public health and safety in areas with identified hazards, such as floodplains and areas with elevated wildfire risk.



Working Lands is 51,460 acres, 33.8% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land uses include residential, agricultural, activities incidental to agriculture, grazing, timber production, natural resource-based industries, and recreation.

Secondary uses may include home-based manufacturing, fabrication, commercial kitchens, and artist studios.

CHARACTER

Working lands are rural areas with limited infrastructure and few services. They include areas that contain both pristine natural landscapes and waterways and lands historically stewarded by people.

Residential development in this area is scattered low density or clustered into areas with fewer land use constraints. Most of the undeveloped area is in agricultural production, range land, timber land, or in a relatively natural state.

Development is designed to protect important resources such as agricultural lands, sensitive natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and avoid hazards such as floodplains and wildfire. Conservation design sets aside a major portion of a site for preservation, clustering development on the remaining portion.

INTENSITY

Residential density ranges between one unit per 160 acres to one unit per 40 acres.

The appropriate density depends on site considerations, such as the transportation network, emergency services, presence of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, hazards, and applicable area plans.

Density bonuses may be available if development is clustered to protect important resources such as natural landscapes and waterways, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, or if public facilities such as public access or trails are provided. When applied through conservation design, density bonuses increase according to the percentage of the area permanently protected.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Lower densities are likely to produce auto-centric travel.

Arterials and highways may provide direct access to properties within this designation.

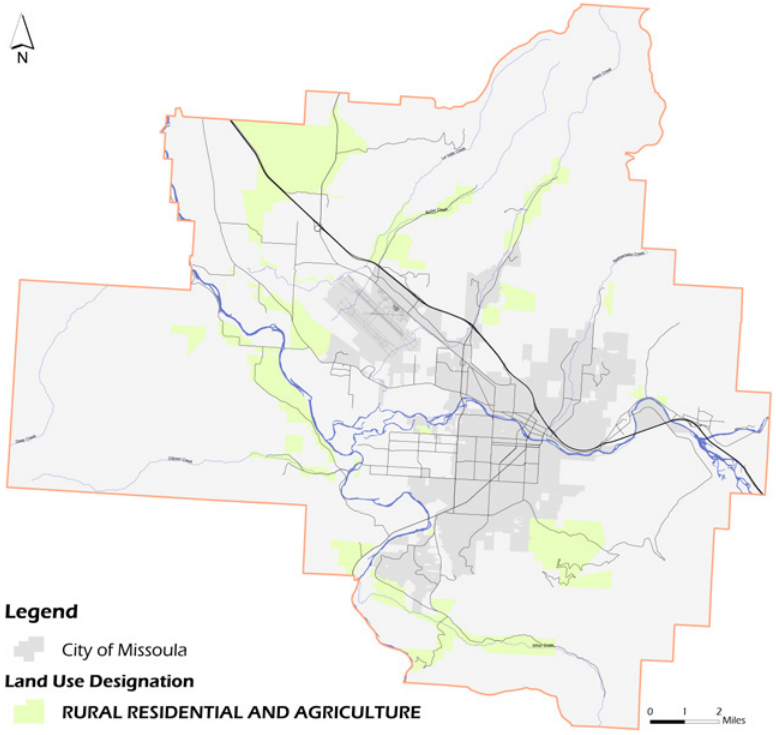
Local roads are few, unpaved, and may have limited maintenance, unless otherwise regulated.

Non-motorized facilities, typically located along arterial and collector roads, provide connectivity to schools, parks, recreation facilities, and other communities.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURE

GOALS

- Preserve natural landscapes and waterways, while providing for rural residential uses in areas with proximity to higher levels of infrastructure and services than Working Lands or Agriculture land use designations.
- Support economic diversity and contribute to the health of the county by providing places to produce food on small farms.
- Protect public health and safety in areas with identified hazards, such as floodplains and areas with elevated potential for human-wildlife conflicts.



Rural Residential and Agriculture is 15,658 acres, 10.3% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land uses include residential, natural areas, agriculture, grazing, and timber production.

Secondary uses may include activities incidental to agricultural activities occurring on site, such as small-scale production, preparation or sale of products produced on the property, and agritourism if the agricultural operator lives on site. Secondary uses may also include home-based manufacturing, fabrication, commercial kitchens, and artist studios.

CHARACTER

Residential development in this area is scattered low density or clustered into areas with fewer land use constraints. Most of the undeveloped area is in agricultural production, range land, timber lands, or in a relatively natural state.

Development is designed to protect important resources such as agricultural lands, sensitive natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and avoid hazards such as floodplains and wildfire. Conservation design sets aside a major portion of a site for preservation, clustering development on the remaining portion.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

INTENSITY

Residential density ranges between one unit per ten acres and one unit per two acres.

The appropriate density depends on site considerations, such as the transportation network, emergency services, presence of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, hazards, and applicable area plans.

Density bonuses may be available if development is clustered to protect important resources such as natural landscapes and waterways, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, or if public facilities such as public access or trails are provided. When applied through conservation design, density bonuses increase according to the percentage of the area permanently protected.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Lower densities are likely to produce auto-centric travel.

Arterial, collector, and local roads are present.

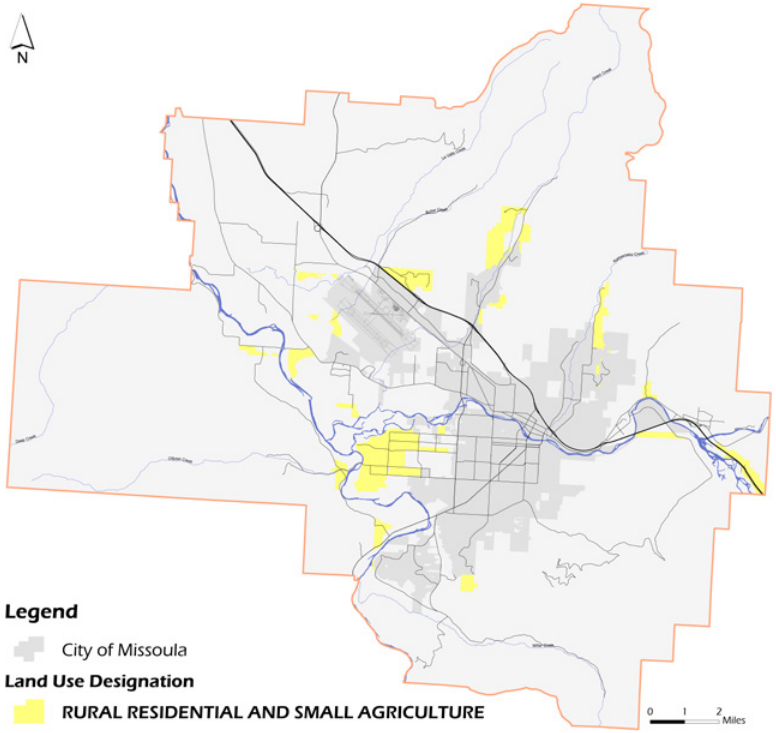
Local roads are in a grid following section lines or are irregular, depending on topography. County and private roads may or may not be paved.

Non-motorized facilities, typically located along arterial and collector roads, provide connectivity to schools, parks, recreation facilities, and other parts of the community.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL AGRICULTURE

GOALS

- Provide for low-density housing in areas without public water or sewer.
- Preserve rural and semi-rural characteristics, such as larger lots, small-scale agricultural uses, and natural landscapes and waterways.
- Accommodate fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors in areas with higher development density.



Rural Residential and Small Agriculture is 4,808 acres, 3.2% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land uses include residential, natural areas, agriculture, and grazing.

Secondary uses may include activities incidental to agricultural activities occurring on site such as small-scale production, preparation or sale of products produced on the property, and agritourism if the agricultural operator lives on site.

CHARACTER

This designation is characterized by a uniform pattern having one principal residential building per lot. Agricultural uses and buildings can be the primary use of the property, or secondary to a principal residential building.

Residential buildings are predominately single-family dwellings. Residential buildings are sited in relation to well isolation zones, septic systems, and drain fields.

Development is designed to protect important resources such as agricultural lands, sensitive natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and avoid hazards such as floodplains and wildfire. Conservation design sets aside a major portion of a site for preservation, clustering development on the remaining portion.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

INTENSITY

Residential density ranges between one unit per acre and two units per acre.

The appropriate density depends on access to public sewer or water, the transportation network, presence of natural landscapes and waterways, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and applicable area plans.

Density bonuses may be available if development is clustered to protect important resources, such as natural landscapes and waterways, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, or if public facilities such as public access or trails are provided. When applied through conservation design, density bonuses increase according to the percentage of the area permanently protected.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Lower densities are likely to produce auto-centric travel.

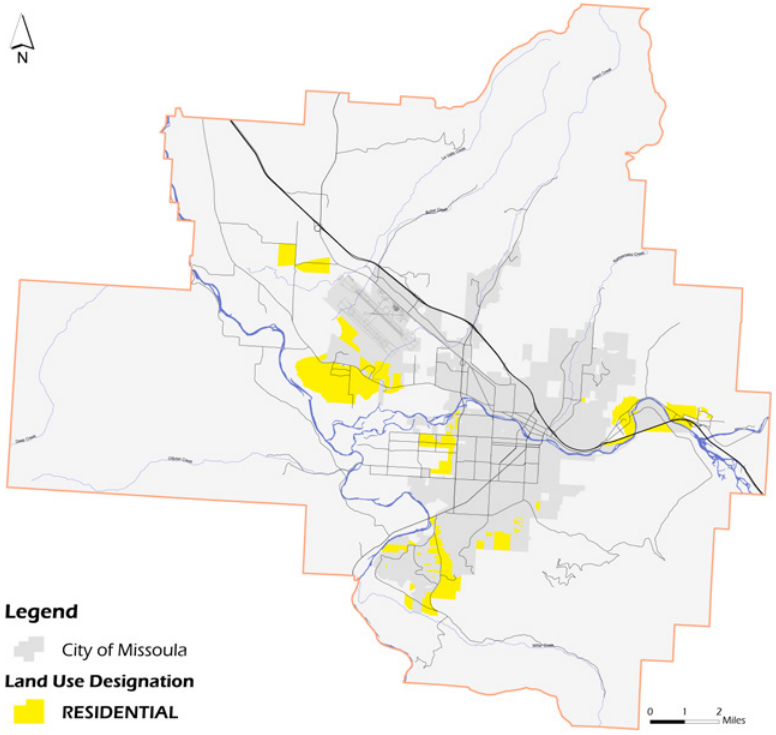
Arterial, collector, and local roads are in a traditional grid pattern or irregular pattern, depending on topography. Most local roads are paved.

Non-motorized facilities, typically located along arterial and collector roads, provide connectivity to schools, parks, recreation facilities, and other parts of the community.

RESIDENTIAL

GOALS

- Accommodate a range of housing options that contribute to countywide housing diversity.
- Preserve and enhance the residential character of existing neighborhoods.
- Provide for compatible in-fill housing where land uses are in transition.



Residential is 5,038 acres, 3.3% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land use is predominately residential. Secondary uses may include small-scale commercial in limited locations.

CHARACTER

This designation is characterized by a uniform pattern having one principal residential building per lot.

Buildings are predominately single-family dwellings with some two-family dwellings.

Multi-family dwellings may be appropriate when applied through clustering to protect a resource or provide a public benefit, or through density bonuses to create permanently affordable housing.

Commercial buildings should be sited along arterial or collector roads providing clusters of limited commercial activity with a compatible intensity level, scale, and form to the adjacent neighborhood.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

INTENSITY

Residential density ranges between three units per acre and 11 units per acre requiring connections to public sewer and water.

Density bonuses may be available if development creates permanently affordable housing, or if development is clustered according to conservation design principals to protect important natural landscapes and waterways, agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors, or if public facilities such as public access or trails are provided.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

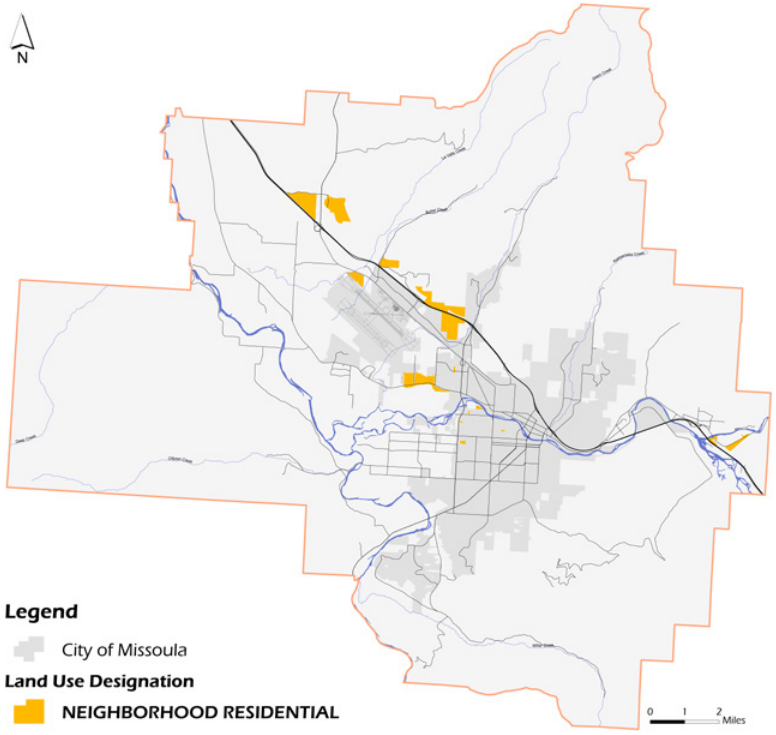
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

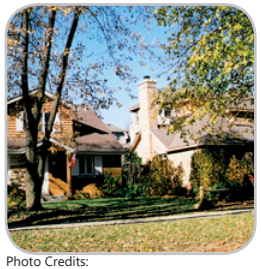
NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

GOALS

- Accommodate a range of residential options that contribute to countywide housing diversity.



Neighborhood Residential is 1,436 acres, 0.9% of the planning area.



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CAPS

LAND USES

Land use is predominately residential. Secondary uses may include small-scale commercial in limited locations.

CHARACTER

A mix of building types provides for a range of housing options accommodating housing preferences and household size.

Single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings are the primary building types.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

Parking and utilities for multi-family and commercial buildings should be oriented toward the rear of buildings away from the street and front facade.

Commercial buildings should be sited along arterial or collector roads providing clusters of limited commercial activity with a compatible intensity level, scale, and form to the adjacent neighborhood.

INTENSITY

Residential density is eight units per acre or greater, requiring connections to public sewer and water.

The ability to achieve higher densities may be limited by site considerations, such as lot size, setbacks, floodplain, and slope.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

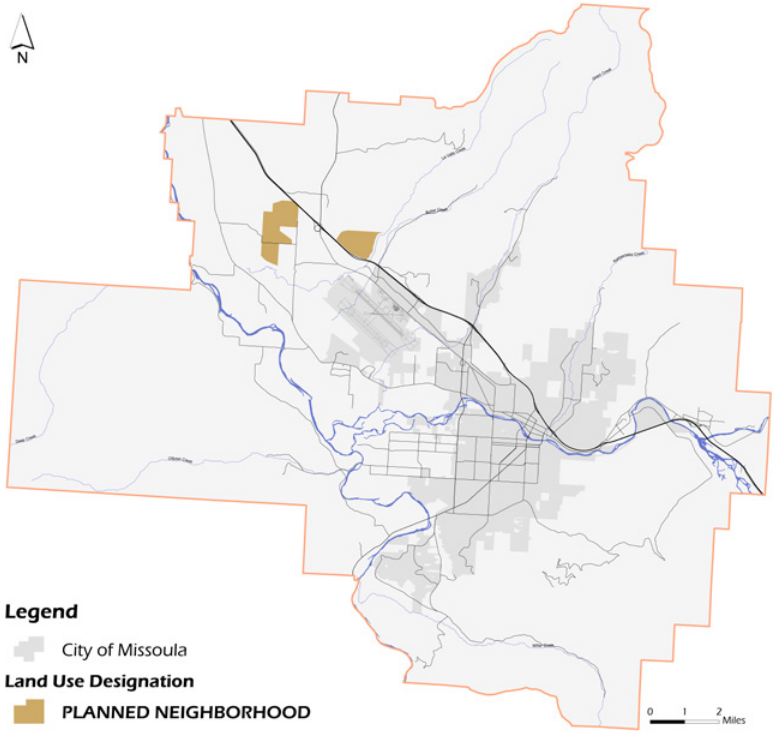
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

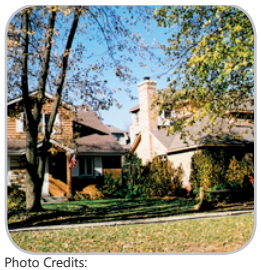
PLANNED NEIGHBORHOOD

GOALS

- Preserve development potential that accommodates a substantial portion of future growth until infrastructure is in place or planned.
- Accommodate a wide range of residential options that contribute to countywide housing diversity.



Planned Neighborhood is 1,245 acres, 0.8% of the planning area.



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CAPS

LAND USES

Land use is predominately residential. Secondary uses may include small-scale commercial in limited locations.

Master planning the area may be necessary to determine location of facilities, such as parks, open space, agriculture, roads, non-motorized facilities, storm water, water, and sewer.

CHARACTER

A mix of building types provides for a range of housing options accommodating housing preferences and household size.

Single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings are the primary building types.

Parking and utilities for multi-family and commercial buildings should be oriented toward the rear of buildings away from the street and front facade.

Commercial buildings should be sited along arterial or collector roads providing clusters of limited commercial activity with a compatible intensity level, scale, and form to the adjacent neighborhood.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

INTENSITY

Residential density is eight units per acre or greater, requiring connections to public sewer and water.

The ability to achieve higher densities may be limited by site considerations, such as lot size, setbacks, floodplain, and slope.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

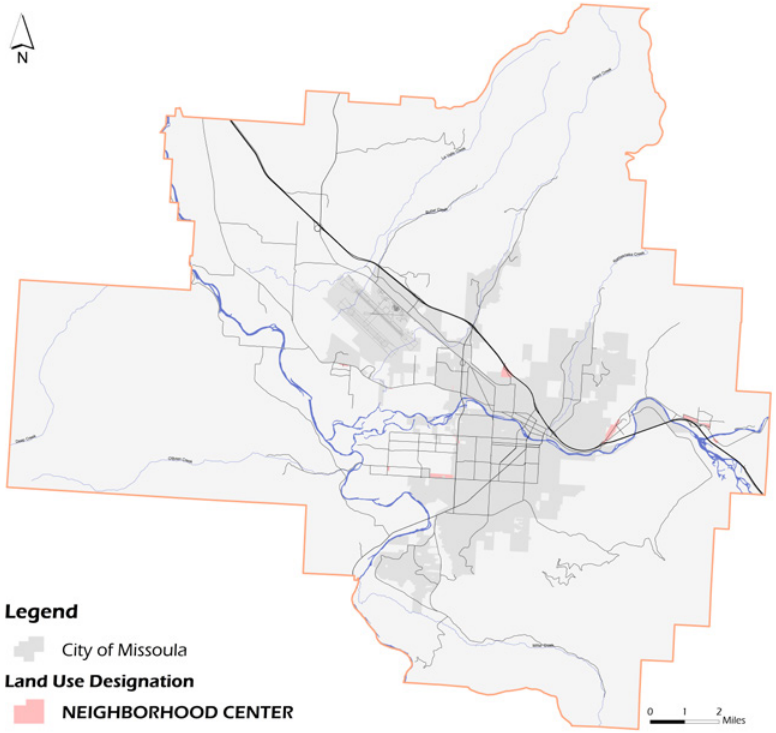
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

GOALS

- Designed to be a neighborhood focal point and center of activity, providing opportunities for retail, service, and employment.
- Provide services to residents within a five to ten-minute walk.
- Accommodate higher intensity residential choices that contribute to countywide housing diversity.



Neighborhood Center is 267 acres, 0.2% of the planning area.

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Photo By Brian Brown https://vanishingnorthgeorgia.com/2014/09/25/historic-main-street-storefronts-cedartown/

LAND USES

Land use is a mix of residential, neighborhood services, offices, retail, and institutional uses.

CHARACTER

Mix of uses can be both horizontally and vertically integrated, having shared walls, ceilings, and floors.

Parking and utilities for multi-family and commercial buildings should be oriented toward the rear of buildings away from the street and front facade.

Building design is sensitive to its relationship to adjacent uses.

Neighborhood Centers are typically located on arterial or collector roads.

INTENSITY

Residential density is eight units per acre or greater, requiring connections to public sewer and water.

The ability to achieve higher densities may be limited by site considerations, like lot size, setbacks, floodplain, and slope.

Commercial and mixed-use buildings may range from small (1,000 square feet) to an anchor size (45,000 square feet). A grocery store is a typical anchor.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

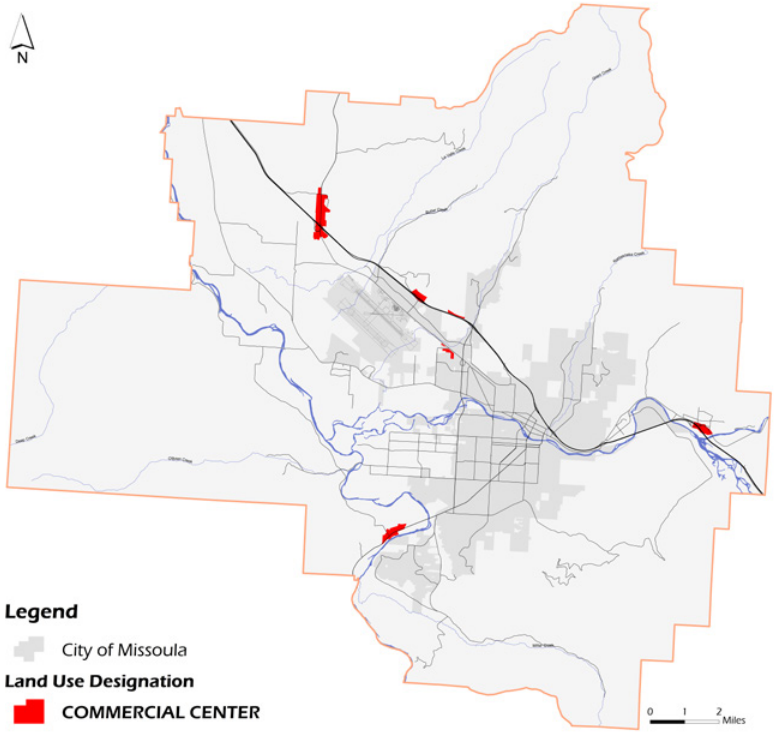
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

COMMERCIAL CENTER

GOALS

- Provide opportunities for retail, service, and employment.
- Provide for a mix of primarily commercial and higher intensity residential choices in a well-connected, walkable pattern.



Commercial Center is 540 acres, 0.4% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land uses primarily consist of auto-oriented retail, lodging, offices, food service, and automobile service.

Secondary uses may include residential.

CHARACTER

Buildings are typically single-use or small to large shopping centers.

Parking and utilities for multi-family and commercial buildings should be oriented toward the rear of buildings away from the street and front facade.

Overtime, these areas are expected to redevelop and experience infill, transitioning to a more vertically mixed-use place.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

INTENSITY

Buildings generally range from small (1,000 square feet) to large (80,000 square feet or more).

Residential density is eight units per acre or greater, requiring connections to public sewer and water.

The ability to achieve higher densities may be limited by site considerations, such as lot size, setbacks, floodplain, and slope.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Typically located along arterial roads and near interstate interchanges.

Although specific land uses on these roads may be auto-oriented, a variety of modes should be accommodated, including pedestrian, bike, and transit facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

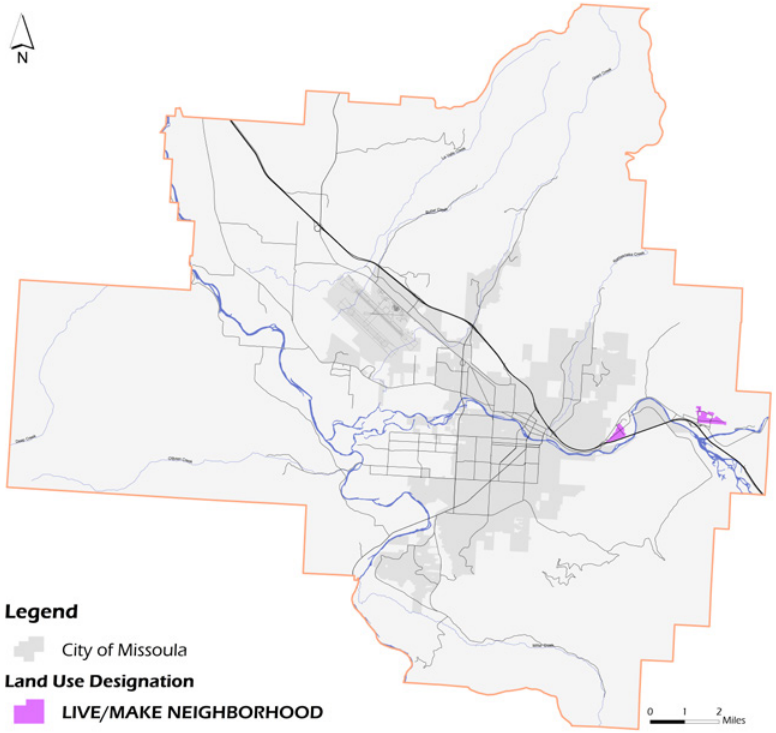
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well connected-grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

LIVE/MAKE NEIGHBORHOOD

GOALS

- Contribute to economic diversity in the county by providing places for entrepreneurs and artisans to live and work, create, or make in a manner that respects the predominately residential character of the neighborhood.



Live/Make Neighborhood is 215 acres, 0.1% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land use is predominantly residential.

Secondary uses associated with residential use include small-scale manufacturing, fabrication, commercial kitchens, and artist studios.

On-site retail is not appropriate.

Outside of the resident(s), very few to no employees work on site.

CHARACTER

Residential buildings are predominately single-family dwellings with some two-family dwellings.

Multi-family dwellings may be appropriate when creating permanently affordable housing.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

Business buildings must be associated with a primary residence, either on the property with the residence or adjacent to it under the same ownership.

Business buildings require additional buffering and design considerations to mitigate impacts.

INTENSITY

Residential densities range between three units per acre and 11 units per acre.

Business buildings are typically small in scale (1,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet).

Density bonuses may be available if development creates permanently affordable housing.

This level of density requires access to public sewer and water.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

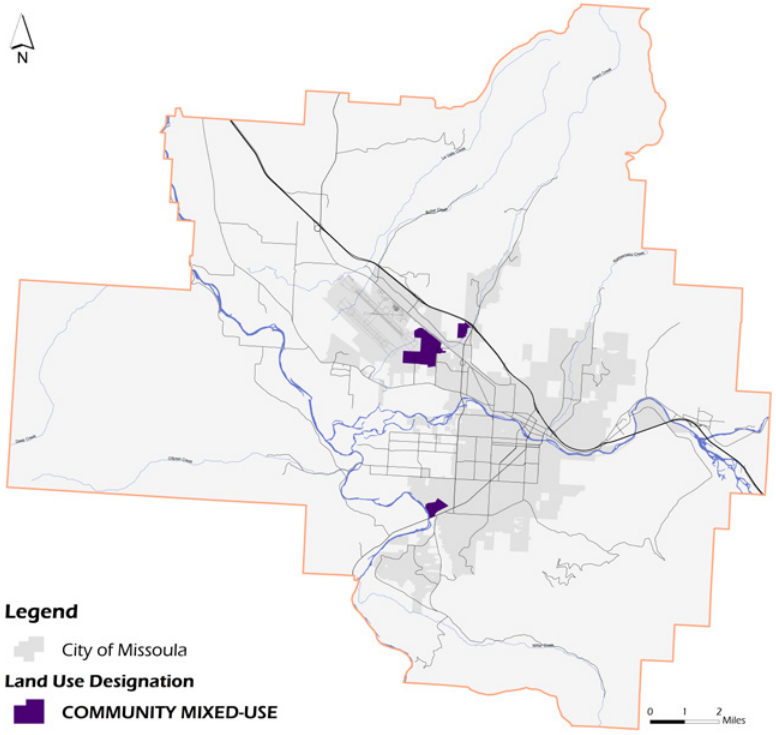
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

COMMUNITY MIXED-USE

GOALS

- Accommodate a substantial portion of future growth.
- Provide for a mix of primarily residential, commercial, and civic activity in a well-connected, walkable pattern.
- Provide opportunities for retail, service, and employment.
- Accommodate higher intensity residential choices that contribute to countywide housing diversity.



Community Mixed-Use is 708 acres, 0.5% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

Land use is a mix of residential, neighborhood services, offices, retail and institutional uses.

Master planning may be necessary to determine location of facilities, like parks, open space, agriculture, roads, non-motorized facilities, storm water, water, and sewer.

CHARACTER

Currently, these areas are primarily undeveloped but adjacent to appropriate levels of infrastructure and services.

A mix of building types will provide for a range of housing options and mix of uses.

Single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings are the primary residential building types.

A mix of uses can be both horizontally and vertically integrated. Building design is sensitive to its relationship to adjacent uses.

Building fronts and entrances are oriented towards the street. Parking and utilities for multi-family and commercial buildings are oriented toward the rear of buildings away from the street and front facade.

Commercial uses are typically located on arterial or collector roads.

INTENSITY

Average residential density is 15 units per acre.

Commercial and mixed-use buildings may range from small (1,000 square feet) to an anchor size (45,000 square feet or greater if vertically integrated).

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

A mix of land uses and access to nearby destinations and amenities encourages walking, biking, and transit use.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speed and traffic volume increase.

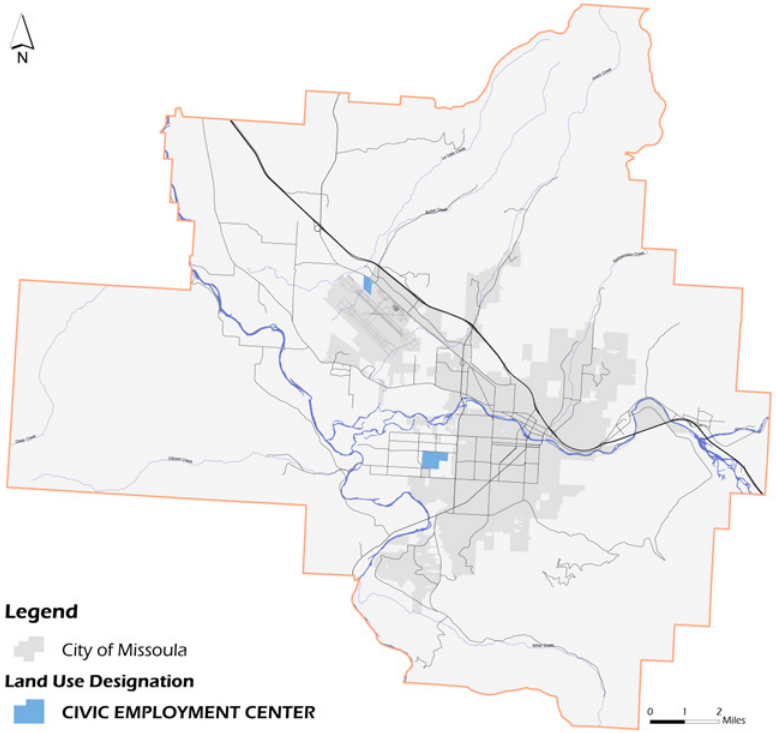
Arterial and collector roads are in a traditional grid pattern, or irregular pattern depending on topography.

The local street network disperses traffic through a well-connected grid system, or an irregular system depending on topography, with short block lengths.

CIVIC EMPLOYMENT CENTER

GOALS

- Provide for facilities that offer a public service or a variety of services stemming from a primary public need.
- Accommodates a concentration of jobs for a range of employment types.



Civic Employment Center is 266 acres, 0.2% of the planning area.

Photo Credits:
By © Günter Seggebäing, CC BY-SA 3.0. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/20140601_124943_Josephs-Hospital%2C_Warendorf_%28DSC02194%29.jpg
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LAND USES

Land use is primarily civic/institutional uses which may be comprised of offices, flex space, light manufacturing, or distribution. Examples include airports, educational institutions, or health care facilities that require a significant amount of space for various activities. Depending on the purpose, residential uses, such as assisted living facilities, may be appropriate.

CHARACTER

These areas are typically master planned with a clear design and purpose for the primary user.

Depending on the purpose of the primary user, setbacks or buffers from adjacent land uses should be required.

INTENSITY

Buildings support the need for distinct types of activities dependent upon the purpose of the primary user.

Building types and sizes will vary depending on the purpose of the primary use.

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Civic Employment Centers are typically located along arterial roads with connectivity to other areas in the community by transit and non-motorized facilities.

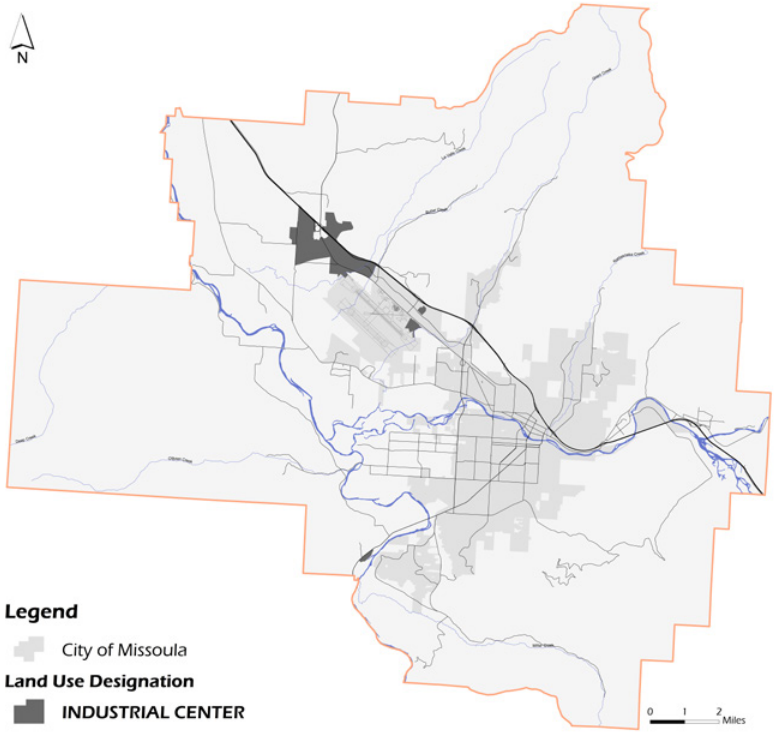
Roads to and from this area should provide non-motorized facilities alongside or separated from the road. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

Roads within this area may provide non-motorized facilities depending upon the purpose of the primary user and the land use being accessed.

INDUSTRIAL CENTER

GOALS

- Contributes to the county's economic base by providing places where people work, create, build, store, and distribute goods and services.



Industrial Center is 1,666 acres, 1.1% of the planning area.

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Photo by RickLawless. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/a/a7/BTEC_Facility_exterior.jpg
Photo by Tony Webster. Portland Main Post Office - Truck Distribution Facility/Warehouse. https://www.flickr.com/photos/diversey/17903227122
Photo by Atomic Taco, Chandler Valley Studios / Scranton Business Park. https://www.flickr.com/photos/atomictaco/8917727444

LAND USES

Land use is a mix of office, research, studios, manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution.

CHARACTER

Buildings are typically single use but may host a mix of uses that integrate horizontally rather than vertically, having shared walls rather than shared ceilings or floors.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

Development is sited away from streams, riparian corridors, and wetlands to protect sensitive natural features and waterways and fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors.

INTENSITY

Building size varies depending on context and need and could range from small (1,000 square feet) to very large (over 150,000 square feet).

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

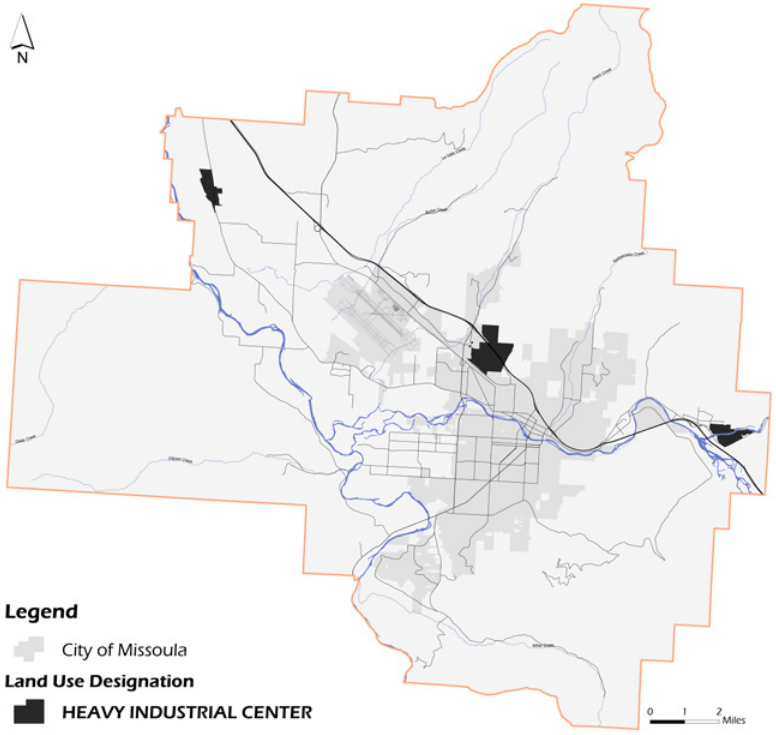
Industrial Centers are typically located along arterial roads, near or adjacent to rail, with connectivity to other areas in the community by transit and non-motorized facilities.

All roads should provide non-motorized facilities. Additional separation for non-motorized facilities, such as protected or buffered bike lanes, boulevard sidewalks, and enhanced crossings, are needed when vehicle speeds and traffic volume increase.

HEAVY INDUSTRIAL CENTER

GOALS

- Contributes to the county's economic base by providing places where people manufacture, process, store, and distribute goods and services.
- Accommodates uses that may have impacts, such as noise, odors, clutter, or hazardous materials that require separation from other land uses.



Heavy Industrial Center is 1,210 acres, 0.8% of the planning area.

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LAND USES

In addition to Industrial Center uses, land uses include solid waste, power generation, processing, pipeline terminals, and similar uses.

CHARACTER

Heavy Industrial Centers may have uses that are incompatible with other land uses.

Buffers should separate this land use from less intense land uses.

Buildings are sited with a minimum distance from streets and lot lines.

Development is sited away from streams, riparian corridors, and wetlands to protect sensitive natural features and waterways and fish and wildlife habitat and movement corridors.

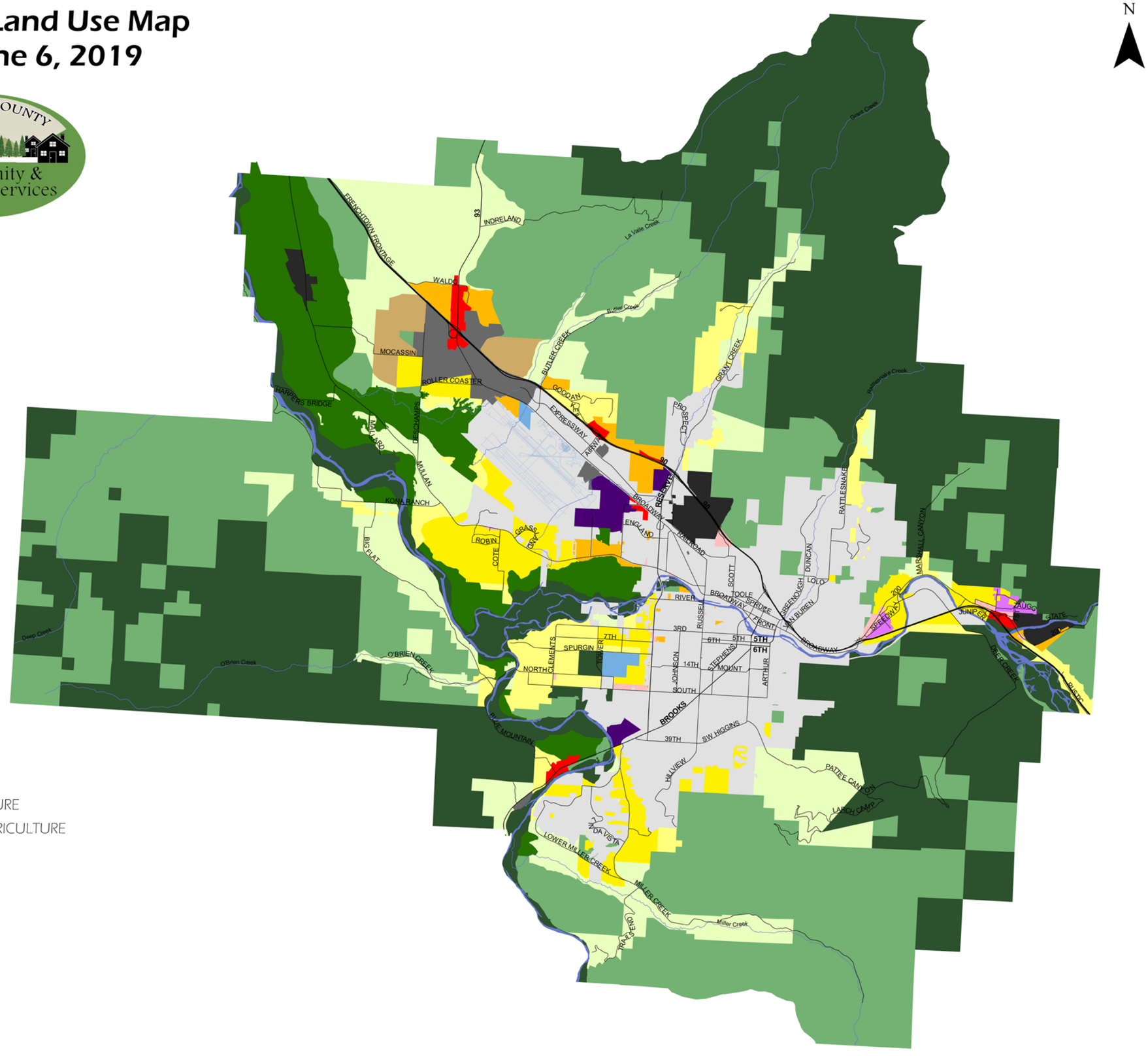
INTENSITY

Building size varies depending on context and need and could range from moderate (20,000 square feet) to very large (over 150,000 square feet).

MOBILITY AND ACCESS

Heavy Industrial Centers are typically located along arterial roads, near or adjacent to rail, with connectivity to other areas in the community by transit and non-motorized facilities.

Missoula Area Land Use Map
Effective June 6, 2019



Legend

City of Missoula

Land Use Designation

- OPEN, RESOURCE, AND RECREATION
- AGRICULTURE
- WORKING LANDS
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURE
- RURAL RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL AGRICULTURE
- RESIDENTIAL
- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL
- PLANNED NEIGHBORHOOD
- NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
- COMMERCIAL CENTER
- LIVE/MAKE NEIGHBORHOOD
- COMMUNITY MIXED-USE
- CIVIC EMPLOYMENT CENTER
- INDUSTRIAL CENTER
- HEAVY INDUSTRIAL CENTER

This map was created by Missoula County Community and Planning Services staff. The information on this map is for reference only. No reliance should be placed on the completeness or accuracy ofinformation without first consulting original records and personally verifying the accuracy of any and all information displayed on this map.

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