

MISSOULA COUNTY REGIONAL LAND USE GUIDE

ADOPTED BY THE MISSOULA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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TEXT OMISSION, CORRECTED BUT NOT FILED, PAGE 6

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Missoula County adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1975, which included development and conservation objectives and land use designations in planning areas throughout the County. Regional plans have subsequently been completed in four areas, which provide more specific or updated land use guidance. These plans cover the Lolo (2002), Missoula Urban Area (1998), Swan Valley (1996), and Seeley Lake (1989) regions.

In 1999, the state legislature passed Senate Bill 97, which replaced the term comprehensive plan with “Growth Policy,” and established specific standards that a Growth Policy must meet, including the requirement that it apply to the entire jurisdictional area of the Planning Board. The legislature also created a new class of plan, the neighborhood plan, that can address one or more elements of the Growth Policy in greater detail. In Missoula County, neighborhood plans include regional, vicinity, and issue plans. Concurrent with adoption of the Growth Policy, existing regional, vicinity, and issue plans are adopted as amendments to it.

This document identifies land use objectives and land use designations for areas of the County not covered by regional plans. It will function as a regional plan for those areas until new regional plans are adopted. The planning area objectives and land use designations have been incorporated verbatim from the 1975 Plan into this document. They only apply to areas not covered by other regional plans. Adoption of new regional plans will replace pertinent sections of this document. The area covered by this document and associated land use designations are shown on the attached map.

PLANNING AREA OBJECTIVES

BONNER PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide for the planned expansion of the U.S. Plywood operation, to minimize adverse impact on surrounding land uses, while strengthening the economic stability and viability of the area.
- Buffer the interstate highway system from adjacent land uses.
- Develop a new school site for School District #14 which will be consistent with community needs and overall planning.
- Develop community water and sewer facilities which guide density of development and maintain public health.
- Improve Highway 200 to provide safe movement of traffic on this major transportation route. Correct the dangerous situation at Rainbow Bend to save lives and reduce injury and property losses.
- Up-grade streets within developing areas for additional traffic, and thus protect public health and safety and to minimize public maintenance and improvement costs.
- Develop needed recreation facilities and programs, such as women's softball fields.
- Improve the Bonner Reservoir as a recreational area and natural habitat.
- Control off-road vehicle use in residential and critical environmental areas.

CLINTON PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve safety of the transportation network, including railroad crossings on important roads and cattle guards at interchanges.

- Up-grade streets and roads within developing areas and thus protect public health and safety and minimize public maintenance and improvement costs.
- Assess and meet expanding school needs.
- Develop small employment centers within the Clinton area to reduce commuting to Missoula, and to expand the local tax base.
- Encourage continued local convenience commercial development, and strengthen local shopping services.
- Encourage ownership of the land in residential development, and thus develop community stability and pride of ownership.
- Control multi-family development to provide for a quality living environment and public services at minimal costs.

TURAH PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve safety and maintenance of County Route 46, including railroad crossings and traffic control signs.
- Assess and meet the needs of school facilities within the Turah area as the population increases.
- Encourage large lot residential development to maintain rural atmosphere and ensure open space.
- Encourage local convenience commercial development in locations near population concentrations.

SEELEY LAKE PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop walks and/or bikeways for pedestrian safety within the community of Seeley Lake.
- Improve road maintenance and snow removal within the area.
- Promote formation of adequate community fire protection.
- Consider development of a community sewer system to meet the expanding needs of the area.
- Promote community-based recreation programs and facilities, such as teen centers and Senior Citizen programs.
- Develop an adequate solid waste disposal system to serve the community and surrounding area.
- Develop a broad economic base to provide employment as the population increases. Capitalize on recreational development to expand employment opportunities.
- Investigate the possibility of having leases on public lands changed to fee ownership which will provide tax support for services needed by the residents, and will extend authority of the community on controlling development.

POTOMAC-GREENOUGH PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a Community Hall and promote community-based recreation activities.
- Assess the needs for a new school as demand increases.
- Coordinate with public agencies on access and public use of lands and water, to maintain environmental quality and to protect private property.
- Minimize adverse impacts by regulating the rate of growth to coincide with the capability of the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the area.
- Encourage continued operation of agriculture, and control development which limit agricultural production.
- Coordinate road maintenance and snow removal with the needs of area.

FRENCHTOWN-NINE MILE PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide additional access to the Clark Fork River from the northern portions of the County.
- Develop a community park within the Frenchtown area, and promote community-based recreation activities.
- Assess the need for expansion of the school to meet population demands.
- Promote land ownership in residential development.
- Correct the safety problem on the road between the elementary and secondary schools.
- Promote incentives for continuation of agricultural operations, and minimize adverse impacts of residential development on adjacent agricultural areas.
- Encourage local convenience commercial development in locations near population concentrations.
- Encourage the preservation of the historical heritage of the area.

EVARO PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the Evaro Hill section of U.S. 93 for safe movement of traffic on this major transportation route.
- Provide adequate highway shoulder development along U.S. 93, for use by pedestrians and cyclists as pathways, and for slow moving farm equipment.
- Encourage local convenience commercial development in locations near population concentrations.
- Encourage large lot residential development, to maintain rural atmosphere and ensure open space.
- Improve the community center in the old Evaro School.
- Encourage the preservation of the historical heritage of the area.
- Encourage cooperative efforts with the Flathead Indian Reservation and Lake County, to address and solve the problems and needs of the total area.

HELLGATE PLANNING AREA

OBJECTIVES:

- Purchase right-of-way and upgrade Mullan Road to provide safe movement of traffic and lower maintenance costs, and control residential access onto Mullan Road, thus improving safety, and provide for safe and efficient movement of traffic at the intersection of Reserve Street and Mullan Road.
- Provide additional access across the Clark Fork River to the Big Flat area, and between Mullan Road and old Highway 10, and improve the Harper Bridge and approach roads.
- Encourage small local convenience commercial developments in locations near population concentrations.
- Concentrate industrial growth in well-planned industrial parks and existing industrial areas.
- Encourage clustering of residential development, thus allowing agricultural land to remain in production.
- Preserve the historical heritage of the area.
- Coordinate the development of the Johnson-Bell Airport and surrounding area to minimize land-use conflicts.

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan for the rural area of Missoula County is based on the analysis of biological, physiographical, and hydrological capabilities, existing land use, population forecasts, development trends, availability of public services and facilities, citizen input, the goals and objectives, and the planning standard's policies. While the plan cannot eliminate existing problems, it can set the groundwork to minimize the conflicts already present and provide a framework to stimulate well-planned development and a healthy environment for a more viable and livable community.

In order to define the direction a community should take in future land use development, it is necessary to designate the types of land use and decide upon their location. This provides a foundation for the provision of public services and for the planned expansion of development with the necessary assurances to provide a secure, livable environment for the citizens of Missoula County.

The following designations for land use have been made to allow flexibility in the actual design, while giving general direction to guide development.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

OPEN AND RESOURCE LAND

The plan recognizes the role natural resources play in the life style of the citizens of Missoula County. In order to promote orderly development and protect the resource that stimulates that development, the designation of Open and Resource Land is made to protect areas of important natural resource production and extraction (i.e. forestry and agriculture); to protect areas of natural hazard (i.e. steep slopes and floodways); and to reserve land for the future where development during the time frame of this plan would be premature and costly. While Open and Resource Land is not a primarily residential designation, residential development of no more than one dwelling per forty (40) acres would be in keeping with the intent of the classification.

The development of agricultural, recreational, and forestry activities with their usual associated uses should be encouraged within these areas.

RESIDENTIAL

RURAL LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

One dwelling per ten acres is the maximum density of this designation. Most development of this type will be in areas wishing to maintain a rural atmosphere. Agricultural and horticultural activities are secondary to the residence but are an important quality of this classification. This designation also provides less impact than higher densities, where environmental protection is needed for fragile areas or where more intense activities cannot be supported due to physiographic, hydrologic, biologic, and economic conditions. Where possible, clustering of dwelling units is encouraged to maintain undivided open land to remain undisturbed or in active resource production.

RURAL MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

A maximum density of one dwelling per five acres in this designation allows for more intense development while reserving a certain amount of open land to maintain a rural character. This type of designation will still provide some environmental and economic protection in areas unable to support more intense development due to physical and socio-economic constraints.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Health regulations and laws will establish densities where individual wells and septic tanks are used. This designation has a maximum density of two dwellings per acre. Single family development is promoted in areas serviceable or potentially serviceable by public water and/or sewer facilities, and in areas capable of supporting high population densities without environmental or economic degradations. This designation is primarily encouraged within activity centers to reinforce these important community focal points.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Six dwellings per acre is the maximum density for areas designated primarily for single family residences. Some viable mixing of low rise multi-family and well-planned mobile home parks would be suitable where this intensity of development has adequate community facilities to provide a livable residential environment without physical and socio-economic constraints.

COMMERCIAL

LOCAL COMMERCIAL

Local or neighborhood commercial areas should provide for everyday shopping needs for local residents. It is necessary for these areas to be located within the activity centers to reinforce their role as communities. They range from three to ten acres in size, depending on the size of the area and population served. Within the rural areas of Missoula County, local commercial areas have been shown abstractly by activity circles to allow flexibility in establishing local commercial centers in areas not now developed sufficiently enough to indicate actual locations.

GENERAL COMMERCIAL

General or auto-oriented commercial areas provide for a larger and more specialized market than the local commercial. Included in this designation are bars, supper clubs, truck stops and motels to name a few. The orientation of the development should be to an arterial or major highway.

INDUSTRIAL

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

Light manufacturing and bulk storage activities are included in this designation, as are planned industrial parks. Smaller and more intense industrial uses in isolated rural areas would be included within this category because of the minimal impact on surrounding land uses.

HEAVY INDUSTRIAL

General manufacturing and extractive industries are included in this designation. The location within these areas for industries using hazardous materials or producing excessive noise, smoke, heat, or noxious matter should be regulated with special care and consideration for public health, safety or general welfare.

PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC¹

FACILITIES

Institutions, Structures, and other public and quasi-public facilities such as schools, community halls, churches, and fire stations are included in this designation.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS

Public and quasi-public open spaces, such as parks, trails, and cemeteries come under this designation. Also floodplains and steep slopes in areas of higher population density would be included.

¹ The section was unintentionally omitted from the original approved and recorded document. It is included here as a correction.

PLANNING AREA DESIGNATIONS

SEELEY-SWAN

SEELEY LAKE PLANNING AREA

Like the Swan Valley, the Seeley Lake area has many natural amenities. Also, the region has more water surface than the Swan Valley with its many lakes. The area has very few small private ownerships compared to the total acreage, and Burlington Northern owns much of the land within the planning area. A large portion of the small private ownership within the planning area has already been platted for development. The unincorporated community at Seeley Lake has a central water system capable of expansion.

The plan recommends a density of up to two dwellings per acre adjacent to the community of Seeley Lake, where the central water system is available. Much of the land adjacent to the community lies within the Double Arrow Ranch. The meadow bordering the highway is an important amenity as an entrance to Seeley Lake and provides the first vista of the Swan and Mission Mountains. It is recommended in the plan to maintain the meadow as open space with the higher density of two dwellings per acre designated for the remainder of the ranch within areas having suitable soil, hydrological, and topographic conditions for development. The only other area designated for two dwellings per acre are the lands adjacent to the other lakes. The designation is recommended to encourage the development of community sewer systems to protect the water quality of the lakes. Final development of the frontage should preserve the fragile nature of the shore line, leaving it open for access to the water edge. The areas close to Seeley Lake, but not reasonably accessible to the community water system, are designated for one dwelling per five (5) acres to minimize the adverse impact on the environment. Areas further removed from the community and lacking good publicly maintained access have been designated as the same type of development proposed for the Swan Planning Area of no more than one dwelling unit per ten (10) acres.

The Community Activity Center for Seeley Lake should be the site of additional local commercial development. The new commercial development should fill in the existing commercial areas to provide a convenient central shopping area for the community and its seasonal residents.

Diversified industrial uses should be encouraged to provide stable employment and a broader tax base for the community. Additional industrial uses should be developed within the industrial area of the present lumber mill site.

It is also recommended that public land lease home-sites be converted to private ownership to broaden the tax base of the community for the support of public facilities and services. The orderly development of the community of Seeley Lake is contingent upon inclusion of year-round homesites within the jurisdiction of the local governing body and within the authority of the community, in order to supply public facilities and services at a reasonable cost.

BLACKFOOT-CLARK'S FORK

POTOMAC-GREENOUGH PLANNING AREA

The Potomac and Greenough areas include several large ranches in a relatively stable agricultural area. A large portion of the land in the region is owned by U.S. Plywood (Champion International) and the Lubrecht State Forest. The area has a very limited tax base, with agricultural uses providing a large share off the support for public services. The citizens of the planning area have indicated a reluctance to encourage further residential development; therefore, the plan proposes designation of the existing land uses with very limited expansion of residential land uses.

CLARK FORK RIVER VALLEY PLANNING AREA

The Clark Fork River Valley, from where it enters Missoula County until it reaches the City of Missoula, is characterized by a narrow valley shared by two railroad mainlines, Interstate 90, frontage roads, the Clark Fork River, several transmission lines, a pipeline, and scattered agricultural and residential development. The area has developed as a utility-transportation corridor with many adverse effects on the prior land uses. However, the region does have attraction for urban development due to the ease of access to Missoula and the high amenity value which still exists, despite the crowded utility and transportation facilities transversing the area. This is due to the presence of the high mountains lining the narrow valley which minimize the present adverse impacts. Much of this mountainous area is in public ownership and will be exempt from urban development, thus providing the main counterbalance to development on the valley floor.

Due to development pressures, much of the land having direct access to publicly maintained roads has been designated for a maximum density of two dwellings per acre. Areas not as accessible have a limited density of one dwelling per five.

The Community Activity Center for Clinton should be the site of additional convenience shopping commercial to supplement expanded residential development. Also, an industrial base should be encouraged at this location to provide a more stable tax base and local area employment.

Additional rural activity centers should be developed in the area of concentrated residential development. These should include the areas at Donovan Creek, Turah and the Turah Interchange, and Piltzville.

The Blackfoot River area has a high amenity value which has encouraged development. The region also has restrictive access due to the river and the small land areas suitable for development. The narrow confines of the lower Blackfoot River have been designated for residential development at a density of two dwellings per acre. Clustering at this density will allow for preservation of the natural amenities found throughout the area.

MISSOULA VALLEY

VARO PLANNING AREA

The presence of the Flathead Indian Reservation within the Varo Planning area has significant influence on the planning of development. The present jurisdictional problems between the county, state, federal and tribal governments have slowed the process of effectively dealing with land use controls. This plan presents only the recommendations for land use designations for land on the county tax roll. The residents of the area have indicated a great concern for expanding residential development in an area of limited tax base and questionable physical capabilities. The plan recommends development of the regions already committed for residential use at the maximum density of one dwelling per ten acres. Additional development should not be encouraged until jurisdictional and land capability problems are resolved. The rural activity center for Varo should revolve around the present fire station and community hall.

FRENCHTOWN-NINE MILE PLANNING AREA

In recent years the foothills at the lower end of the Missoula Valley have seen increased large tract development. There are presently over 5,000 acres divided for residential development. Much of this land has not been developed and the full impact to the area has not been felt. Due to the large extent of the present divided, but undeveloped areas, no new development has been designated until the existing area has been built up and the impact on the community adequately assessed.

The Huson and Frenchtown Activity Centers should be the location of any new development. A

residential designation of up to two dwellings per acre in areas adjacent to Frenchtown and Huson will strengthen the communities and provide a base to support convenience shopping commercial which should also be located within the activity centers.

The area around the pulp mill of Hoerner-Waldorf and around the airport should be the sites of additional industrial expansion. These regions have been designated as light industrial; however, heavier industrial uses could be included if proper safeguards were initiated.

HELLGATE PLANNING AREA

The Hellgate area borders the urban area, and this has been the cause of some pressure for development. However, this portion of the valley does contain some of the best agricultural land within Missoula County.

A designation of a maximum density of two dwellings per acre is made at the indication of the larger land owners of the area. This designation negates the agricultural value of the area and brings an obligation on the part of the citizens of Missoula County to develop a program to protect the remaining prime agricultural land in other areas of the county facing development in the future. This protection should come in an equitable fashion to stimulate a continuation of agricultural operations.

Many of the creeks feeding the main rivers around the City of Missoula have development constraints characterized by poor access and small land areas suitable for development. Where access allows development, a maximum density of one dwelling per five acres is proposed. These areas also have significant importance as wildlife regions and higher densities of development in these small valleys would seriously disrupt the wildlife habitat and movement.

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2002-087

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE MISSOULA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY.

WHEREAS, M.C.A. 76-1-601 was revised by the 1999 Montana Legislature to require that the planning board of a jurisdictional area prepare and propose a Growth Policy in place of the previous requirement that the planning board prepare and propose a Comprehensive or Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1975, with updates and amendments, that met the requirements of M.C.A. 76-1-601 et seq prior to 1999; and

WHEREAS, the 1975 Missoula County Comprehensive Plan did not comply with the requirement for a Growth Policy as adopted by the 1999 Montana Legislature; and

WHEREAS, the Missoula County and the City of Missoula have a Consolidated Planning Board whose jurisdiction is the county, of Missoula; and

WHEREAS, none of the other amendments to the 1975 Missoula County Comprehensive Plan include the jurisdiction of the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, a Growth Policy has been prepared and proposed by the Office of Planning and Grants (OPG) in its capacity as staff for the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, after public notice in the Missoulian, a newspaper of general circulation, on June 23, 2002 and June 30, 2002, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board held a public hearing on July 9, 2002 to hear and consider recommendations and suggestions elicited at the public hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board unanimously recommended approval of the Missoula County Growth Policy, with revisions, to the governing bodies of the jurisdictions represented by the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board unanimously recommended approval of all plans previously adopted as amendments to the 1975 Missoula County Comprehensive Plan to be adopted as amendments to the Missoula County Growth Policy, as authorized by M.C.A. 76-1-601 (3), by the appropriate jurisdictions within the jurisdictional area of the Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, after public notice in the Missoulian, a newspaper of general circulation, on July 14, 2002 and July 21, 2002, the Missoula County Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing on July 31, 2002, to consider the recommendation of the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board that it adopt a resolution of intent to adopt the Missoula County Growth Policy with amendments, pursuant to M.C.A. 76-1-604; and

WHEREAS, the Missoula Board of County Commissioners passed a Resolution of Intent (2002-076) on July 31, 2002 to adopt the Missoula County Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, the Resolution of Intent was published in the Missoulian, a newspaper of general circulation, on August 11, 2002;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners hereby adopts this Resolution to Adopt the Missoula County Growth Policy, in its final form, as proposed by the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board and amended by the Board of County Commissioners; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Missoula County Board of County Commissioners adopts the Missoula County Regional Land Use Guide and all plans previously adopted as amendments to the 1975 Missoula County Comprehensive Plan as amendments to the Missoula County Growth Policy, as authorized by M.C.A. 76-1-601(3), as listed in the attached exhibit; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that within three years of adoption of the initial Missoula County Growth Policy, a full review of the document will take place. Thereafter, at least every five years a full review will take place following the same guidelines. Within 12 to 18 months after adoption of the Growth Policy, a Growth Policy Subcommittee of the Planning Board and OPG will develop and recommend to Planning Policy Committee an inclusive citizen process for reviewing the Growth Policy to fully address implementation of the goals and objectives of the Growth Policy document. To build Missoula County's capacity to look to the future while implementing its Growth Policy, language must be included to address changing developments in specific areas, including for example, transportation, air and water quality, open space and parks, housing and the economy.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 26th day of August, 2002.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Missoula County, Montana

Vicki M. Zeier
Vicki Zeier, Clerk and
Recorder

Jean Curtiss
Jean Curtiss, Chair

Barbara Evans
Barabara Evans, Commissioner

Bill Carey
Bill Carey, Commissioner

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CONTENT:

Colleen M. Jurdall
Deputy County Attorney