

*Growth Policy Update*

# **BEAVERHEAD COUNTY**



September 2022



# BEAVERHEAD COUNTY

## Growth Policy Update

September 2022 - Draft

Please note that this draft of the Growth Policy update is based upon the advice and guidance of the Beaverhead County Planning Board and the Beaverhead County Planning Department.

Prepared for the:  
Beaverhead County Planning Board

Prepared by:



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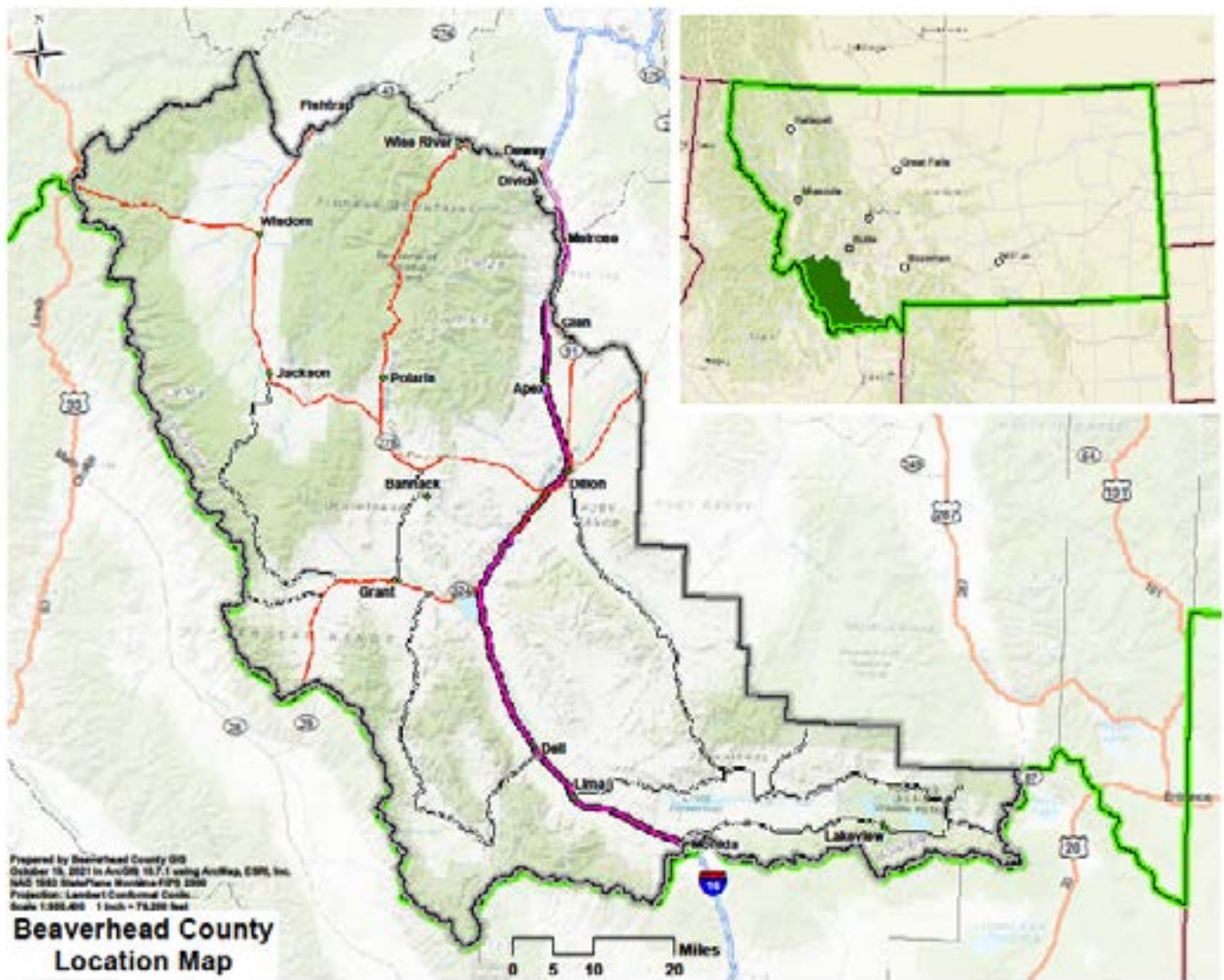
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# VISION

▼ Map 1 - Location of Beaverhead County





# VISION



The residents of Beaverhead County seek sustainable economic and residential growth that protects our natural and historic resources while preserving our values, qualities, and culture. These include values such as independence, freedom, and self-sufficiency; qualities such as working together to create shared communities; and a culture which balances our individual rights with shared obligations to our cities, towns, communities, and neighbors. This is a vision that recognizes our reliance on, our agriculture community and is a vision which provides the best in public service, promotes a thriving economy, and fosters a cohesive community to everyone who calls the County home.

## VISION GOALS

- A beautiful and healthy natural environment for future generations.
- Thriving and diverse communities.
- Fair and efficient public services.
- Broad economic opportunities for all residents.
- Thoughtful residential growth and development.
- Housing options for all residents.
- Equal access to recreational opportunities.
- Safe communities for families and visitors.
- Beautiful and productive agricultural areas that provide a high quality of life.

## VISION DIRECTION

- Monitor local and State economic and land use trends to determine appropriate policies, regulations, and procedures for the County.
- Use these trends to create balanced and livable communities.
- Educate and advise elected and appointed officials for informed and consistent decision making.
- Strive to provide economic opportunities for all residents while maintaining our rural and agriculture heritage.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This update of the County Growth Policy is meant to help the County Commission and residents make decisions regarding the economy, infrastructure, services, and land use. Ultimately, the update is meant to allow the County to achieve proactive goals instead of reacting to individual events and using short-term fixes.

Issues of concern to County residents range from simply obtaining adequate healthcare services to the even more challenging task of improving the economy of the County. Overwhelmingly residents have indicated that economic development and healthcare are the two most critical issues that need to be improved in the County. Specifically, residents want to see additional job opportunities, better maintenance of the ambulance service and additional healthcare options such as 24-hour emergency medical services. It is important to note that the County has a limited influence on economic factors.

This document contains nine sections that provide the rationale for understanding and achieving the goals listed in this document. These sections include:

Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking advantage of opportunities and overcoming challenges does not happen by chance. County residents must be willing to set practical and achievable goals to make things happen.</li></ul>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of the County, its location, features, and history.</li></ul>
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A brief description of the County's population and demographics.</li></ul>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of the County's current economic situation and a vision for addressing issues and capitalizing on economic opportunities and challenges.</li></ul>
Local Services and Public Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of the infrastructure and services available in the County including those that the County operates and maintains.</li></ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of the current housing stock in the County.</li></ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of land use in the County, including topics such as the impacts of flooding and wildland fires and the County's administration of its subdivision regulations.</li></ul>
Resident Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This section describes the process used to gather advice and guidance from County residents on the issues of importance to them.</li></ul>
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A description of the actual steps the County may take to achieve the Goals and Objectives in this document.</li></ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the goals and objectives that the County would like to achieve to address the opportunities and challenges identified in the Growth Policy. The specific actions that the County will take to achieve these goals and objectives are found in the Action Plan section of this document. It is important to note that these goals and objectives are meant to include the incorporated community of Lima and unincorporated communities such as Dell, Jackson, Polaris, Wisdom, and Wise River.

## PROPERTY RIGHTS

The County must follow state and federal laws, particularly with regards to land use, but the County will do so by ensuring that the property rights of residents are protected and honored.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PR-1: Balance the legal requirements of state and federal law with the property rights of County residents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In regulating land use the County will find an appropriate balance between the regulatory requirements of law, the best interests of residents and private property rights.</li><li>Land use and development reviews conducted by the County shall provide equitable and fair treatment of all residents.</li></ul>

## COMMUNICATIONS

Good business and land use decisions are based upon access to accurate information. The County will work to provide readily accessible land use information to residents.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>C-1: Provide up to date land use and infrastructure information to County residents and visitors.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensure all applicable County plans, regulations i.e., the Growth Policy, Subdivision Regulations are up to date and accessible on the County's website.</li><li>Ensure that all of the County's regulatory review processes are clearly identified and explained via the County website and hardcopy documents.</li><li>Develop an online mapping service to provide information on the location of things such as: natural hazards, subdivision and residential construction activity, conservation easements, highly productive agricultural lands and infrastructure and services such as roads, bridges, electrical and Broadband service, and emergency service providers, etc.</li></ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## ECONOMY

The County's residents need economic opportunities to prosper in a constantly changing global economy. Therefore, the County will work to strengthen and diversify its economy.

### Goals

- E-1: Work with partners such as Beaverhead Development Corporation and Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development and others to maintain and expand existing businesses and industries throughout the County and to attract new enterprises.

- E-2: Maintain and expand agricultural operations in the County.

### Objectives

- Provide all County residents with the most modern telecommunications infrastructure possible, including Broadband internet service, fiber optic access.
  - Ensure the County has a highly skilled and trained workforce.
  - Ensure a predictable local regulatory land use review process.
  - Provide the infrastructure (roads, bridges) and local services (healthcare, emergency service, education) necessary to encourage economic development.
  - Identify potential locations for a new business/industrial park.
  - Continue to support the work of the Beaverhead Development Corporation.
  - Continue to lobby the legislature and the state's Congressional delegation to support the sustainable and responsible development of natural resources in the County.
  - As applicable, sponsor or assist with the development of applications for funding from the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) or the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program for infrastructure needed to support business expansion.
  - As applicable, sponsor or assist with the development of applications for funding from programs such as USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program or Montana's Big Sky Trust Fund (BSTF) Program to finance equipment purchases or workforce training assistance.
- 
- Encourage federal, state, and private assistance or development programs that will improve the viability of the County's agricultural operations.
  - Support the development of value-added agricultural operations and other processing facilities to help strengthen livestock and hay growing operations in the County.
  - Support applications for funding from programs such as Montana's Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) or USDA Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) to help producers create new products, create, and expand marketing opportunities and increase producer incomes in the County.
  - Discourage residential development on highly productive agricultural land.
  - Minimize conflicts between agricultural operations and new residential developments.
  - Promote the use of conservation easements to maintain family agricultural operations.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## Goals

- E-3: Promote the City of Dillon as a regional economic center.
- E-4: Maintain and enhance access to public lands and recreation.
- E-5: Encourage new residential and commercial development in or adjacent to existing communities.

## Objectives

- Identify potential locations within or adjacent to the City for a new business/industrial park.
- Work with the City to promote and enhance the character of the City's business district.
- Maintain and expand the operation and programs at the University of Montana Western (UMW).
- Encourage educational and training programs at UMW that support the County's business sector.
- Support public access to public lands and state waters in the County.
- Encourage the development of private and public sector recreation projects.
- Ensure public access is a review criteria when the County Commission considers the abandonment of any road right of ways or easements.
- Support local, state, and federal funding policies that will enhance the recreational and natural values of the County.
- Support increased funding for the state park facilities within the County.
- Use the County's Future Land Use Map to encourage new development to locate adjacent to existing communities.
- Work closely with the City of Dillon to encourage commercial development proposals to locate in or annex into the City.
- City of Dillon services should not be extended to developments outside the City limits without annexation or a waiver of protest to future annexation.
- The County will discourage "Strip Commercial" development in and adjacent to its communities. Strip development means linear commercial development that includes the following characteristics: broad road frontage, predominance of single-story buildings, limited reliance on shared road access, limited connection to any existing settlement, limited connection to surrounding land uses, lack of coordination with surrounding land uses, and limited accessibility for pedestrians.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## INFRASTRUCTURE: ROADS, BRIDGES, BUILDINGS

Well maintained infrastructure is necessary to ensure the health and safety of County residents and help promote economic growth. Infrastructure managed by the County can range from roads and bridges to buildings and equipment such as the graders, trucks, and patrol cars.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I-1: Provide County residents with safe and cost-effective infrastructure i.e., bridges, roads, and buildings.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop a County Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) that will identify needed projects, prioritize projects, and determine the costs of needed projects.</li><li>Adoption of the CIP by the County Commission and ensuring that it is used for annual budgeting purposes.</li><li>Identify funding sources such grants and loans to supplement the County's general funds to maintain and upgrade County infrastructure.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I-2: Ensure the County's unincorporated communities have adequate facilities and services including emergency services, water-sewer, schools, and community/youth centers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Include the infrastructure and equipment needs and priorities of unincorporated communities in the proposed Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).</li><li>Support unincorporated communities with the upgrade and maintenance of water and sewer infrastructure through state and federal grant and loan funding.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I-3: Ensure emergency services in the County have adequate personnel, facilities, and equipment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Include emergency services facilities and equipment in the proposed Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I-4: Upgrade or replace the Sheriff Department's Detention Center.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Include this project in the CIP.</li></ul>

## LOCAL SERVICES

Quality of life for County residents depends upon many factors, particularly the provision of services such as law enforcement, senior services, fire protection, healthcare, education, emergency services and solid waste disposal.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LS-1: Ensure that County residents have access to adequate and efficient healthcare and emergency medical services.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish 24-hour emergency medical service in Dillon.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LS-2: Better market the services of the Human Resources Council to County residents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inform County residents about the Council's services by using radio and newspapers.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LS-3: Address the issues identified in the Community Assessment of Healthcare completed by Barrett Hospital.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Follow the recommendations of the steering committee working on addressing health concerns in the County.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LS-4: Ensure that all of the County's unincorporated communities have adequate services such as fire protection, emergency medical, social, recreation, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improve incentives to ensure that community services in the County have adequate staff and/or volunteers i.e. training, equipment, facilities, compensation etc.</li></ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## LAND USE

To be successful, the County will need to work to attract new residents and businesses. Nonetheless, new development should take place in areas with limited natural hazards such as floodplain or wildfire and where it is efficient for the County to provide services.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LU-1: Ensure the County Subdivision and Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations comply with state statute and meet the practical needs of County residents.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations.</li><li>Develop and adopt Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LU-2: Encourage new residential and commercial development in areas with minimal hazards such as flooding, wildfire, slope, and shallow groundwater.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New subdivisions will not be approved within flood prone areas.</li><li>New subdivisions will be discouraged in areas of high to severe wildfire hazard unless mitigation steps are taken to reduce the risks including fuels management and standards for road access.</li><li>Update the County Sanitation Regulations to reflect better information on topics such as well locations, water availability, soil conditions, and shallow ground water.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LU-3: Discourage new residential development in areas with limited public services unless they are recognized as having well established recreational facilities and services such as the upper Grasshopper Valley, Lima, and Wise River.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations to better address service issues for rural subdivisions.</li><li>Consider the development of agricultural zoning to limit rural development.</li><li>Update the County Sanitation Regulations to reflect better information on topics such as well locations, water availability, soil conditions, and shallow ground water.</li><li>Develop an online mapping service to provide information on the location of things such as: natural hazards, subdivision and residential construction activity, conservation easements, highly productive agricultural lands and infrastructure and services such as roads, bridges, electrical and broadband service, and emergency service providers etc.</li><li>New subdivision roads will be maintained by property owners within each subdivision.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LU-4: Reduce the risk of wildfire in the County and minimize losses to residents and property owners.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implement the actions identified in the Grasshopper-Wise River Fire Management Plan and the Beaverhead County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.</li><li>Support the commercial harvest of timber on public and private lands.</li><li>Encourage the USFS and BLM to undertake controlled burns on lands managed by each agency.</li><li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations to ensure the Design and Improvement Standards adequately address the hazard of wildfire.</li><li>Market Fire Wise educational information to homeowners in areas of the wildland urban interface.</li><li>Ensure County fire departments and the County periodically review fire protection mutual aid agreements with state and federal agencies.</li></ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## Goals

- LU-5: Ensure that new residential, commercial, and industrial projects requiring review under County regulations are provided with a predictable and fair review process.
- LU-6 Encourage development within the one-mile area of the City of Dillon to either annex into the City or install infrastructure to City standards.
- LU-7: Continue to mitigate the impact of noxious weeds upon the County's agricultural operations and natural environment.

## Objectives

- Ensure all applicable County plans, regulations i.e., growth policy, subdivision, sanitation, floodplain, workforce housing are up to date and accessible on the County's website.
- Consider waivers of the right to annexation for subdivisions within one mile of the City.
- Work closely with the City of Dillon to encourage commercial development proposals to locate in or annex into the City.
- City of Dillon services should not be extended to developments outside the City limits without annexation or a waiver of protest to future annexation.
- Improve communication and coordination between the agencies who have agreed to the Interagency Weed Management Program.

## HOUSING

Safe and maintained housing is essential for the well-being of each County resident. The County will need to identify ways to provide such housing for all residents.

## Goals

- H-1: Provide housing options for all of the County's residents.

## Objectives

- Support well planned efforts to provide adequate affordable housing for low income and senior residents.
- Better understand the County's housing market and resident's housing needs.
- Identify locations for new housing where services can most economically and efficiently be provided.
- Identify governmental, corporate, and private funding sources available to developers for the construction of low to moderate income housing.
- Support grant and loan applications for the rehabilitation of existing housing units designated for low to moderate income and senior residents.

# INTRODUCTION



Located in southwestern Montana, Beaverhead County is a place of productive livestock ranches, significant natural resources such as hay production, timber, mineral resources, abundant wildlife, and scenic beauty. Like many of its neighboring counties, Beaverhead County faces unique opportunities and challenges associated with a global economy.

In 2020, the County had an estimated population of 9,453 people. There are two incorporated municipalities in the County, the City of Dillon, and the Town of Lima. Dillon serves as the County seat. Beaverhead County ranks number 1 out of 56 counties in the State of Montana for total land area and covers almost 5,542 square miles of land. The County contains significant amounts of publicly owned land under the management of the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the State of Montana. The County is bordered by four different counties: Madison to the east, Silver Bow on the north and Anaconda-Deer Lodge and Ravalli to the northwest. The state of Idaho forms the southwestern and southern boundary of the County. Originally the County seat, the community of Bannack was also Montana's first territorial capital and is now a popular ghost town and state park.

The primary waterways in the County are the Big Hole River, and the Beaverhead River, both of which are blue ribbon trout streams. Other significant streams in the County include the Red Rock River and Wise River. Clark Canyon Reservoir which supplies water to the Beaverhead River which is a critical asset for agricultural operations in the County providing irrigation as well as recreation.

Agriculture, recreational fishing and hunting are the largest combined employment sector in the County. In 2018, Beaverhead County was the top cattle producing county in Montana with an estimated 150,000 head of cattle in the County. The County is ranked #5 in beef cow inventory nationally and the County is also the top hay producing county in Montana. One of the world's largest talc mines is located in Beaverhead County and talc from southwest Montana is used in ceramics, paint, paper, plastics, cosmetics, rubber, roofing, flooring, caulking, and agricultural applications.

Dillon is home to the University of Montana Western, which has a current enrollment of approximately 1,500 students. Originally a center for training teachers, it has evolved into a modern university offering a variety of associate and bachelor's degrees. Major employers in the County include UM-Western, government entities such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management which are centered around the City of Dillon. It is important to note that the economic influence zone for Dillon and the County extends well beyond southwest Montana and into Idaho.

## GEOGRAPHY

The geography of the County is a mix of river and stream valleys, mountains, and upland steppe. Elevations in the County vary from 4,498 feet where the Beaverhead River leaves the County to 11,154 foot Tweedy Mountain in the Pioneer Mountains. The Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers are the largest waterways located in the County, with tributaries such as the Red Rock River and Wise River. These waterways provide irrigation water for crops and water for recreation, fish, and wildlife.



# INTRODUCTION

## CLIMATE

The climate of the County is considered “Continental,” with cold and dry winters, cool and moist springs and falls and hot and dry summers. The average daily high and low temperatures for the Dillon Airport from 1940 to 2013 are displayed below.

(1893-2016)	Average Daily Temperatures at Dillon Airport
January	▪ High: 32.2 degrees F
	▪ Low: 11.1 degrees F
July	▪ High: 83.3 degrees F
	▪ Low: 49.1 degrees F

Western Regional Climate Center, 2021

Like most of Montana, Beaverhead County’s climate can be one of extremes, but is generally mild and dry. Average annual precipitation at the Dillon Airport is approximately 9.69 inches, while in the community of Wisdom the average annual precipitation is 11.97 inches and at Lakeview in the Centennial Valley it is 19.54 inches. Most of the precipitation in the County falls between April 1st - October 30th, May, and June are the wettest months.

Land Ownership in the County (Acres)		
Private Ownership	1,100,666	31.1%
Federal Lands	2,100,619	58.9%
State of Montana	355,395	10.0%

U.S. Geological Survey, Gap Analysis Program. 2018.

Protected Areas Database of the United States (PADUS) version 1.3

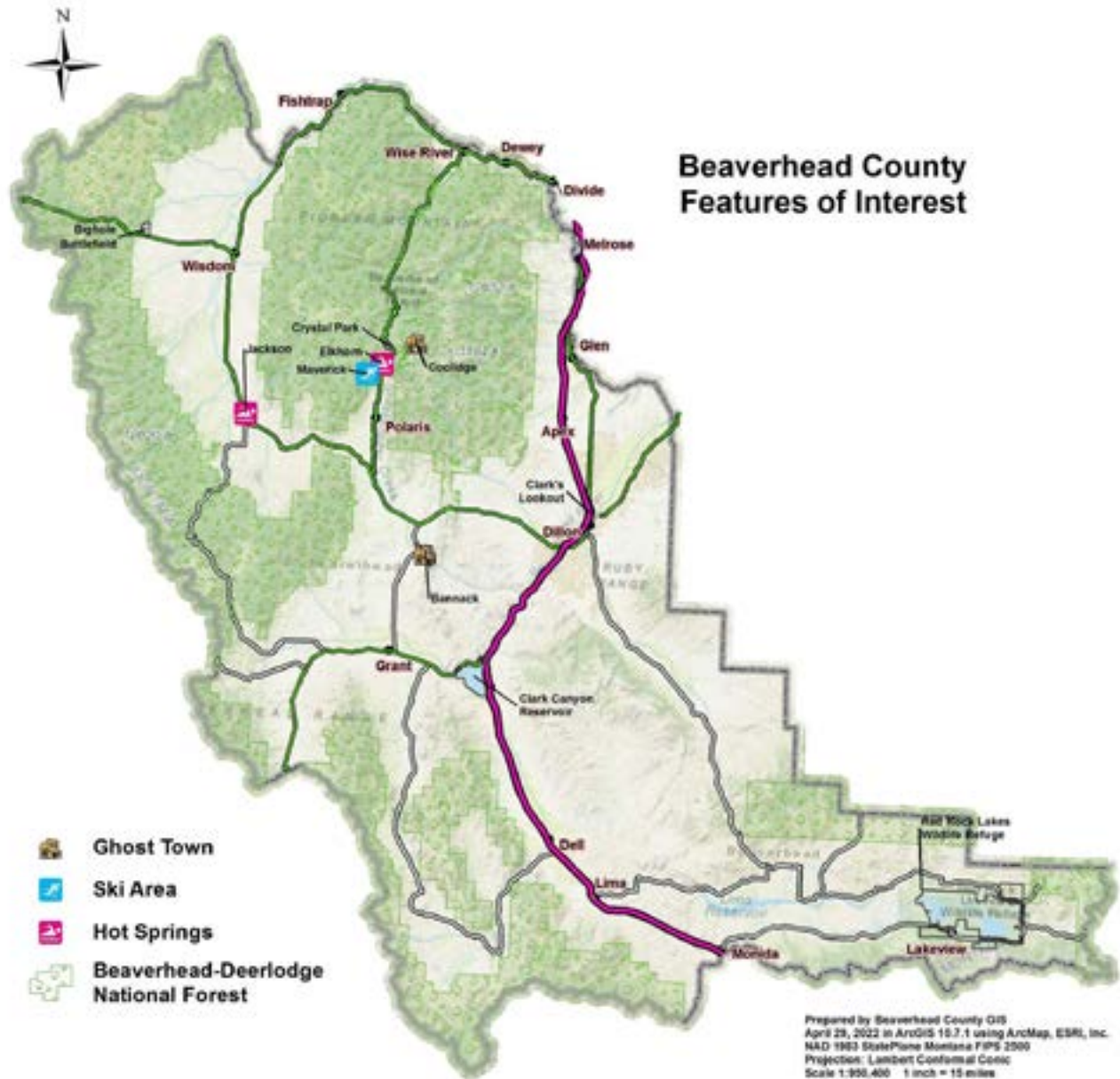
## LANDOWNERSHIP

Beaverhead County encompasses 3,566,679-acres of land. Of that 1,100,666-acres are privately owned and 2,456,014-acres are publicly owned. Ownership of public lands is held by three main entities, the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the State of Montana.

The large amount of public land in the County has significant impacts, particularly from an economic and land management standpoint. Public lands do not directly contribute to the property tax revenues of the County as do privately owned lands. In addition, public lands are managed under rules and regulations created in either Helena, Montana or Washington, D.C. The state legislature and United States Congress do not necessarily have the same priorities for land management as County residents.

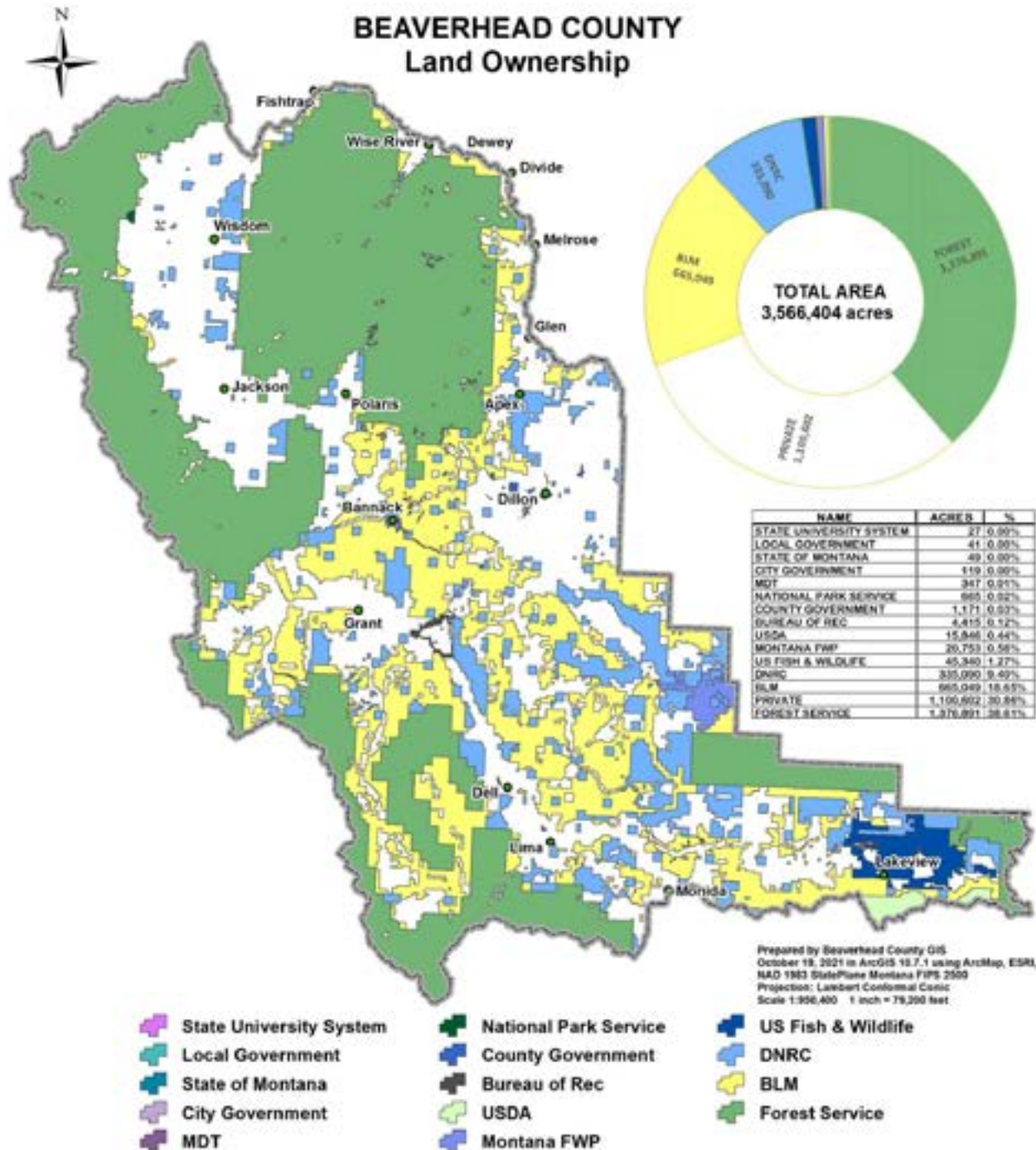
# INTRODUCTION

▼ Map 2 - Features of Beaverhead County



# INTRODUCTION

▼ Map 3 - Public Lands in Beaverhead County



# INTRODUCTION

## VEGETATION

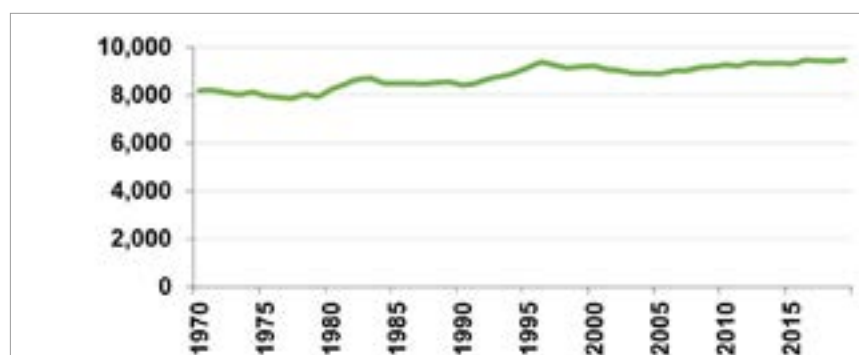
The predominant vegetation types in the County are forest, grassland, shrubland and mixed crops.

Vegetation Types in the County (Acres)		
Forest	1,070,004	30.0%
Grassland	1,676,339	47.0%
Shrubland	321,000	9.0%
Mixed Cropland	392,335	11.0%
Other Types (water etc.)	35,812	3.0%

NASA MODIS Land Cover Types. 2006.

## COMMUNITIES

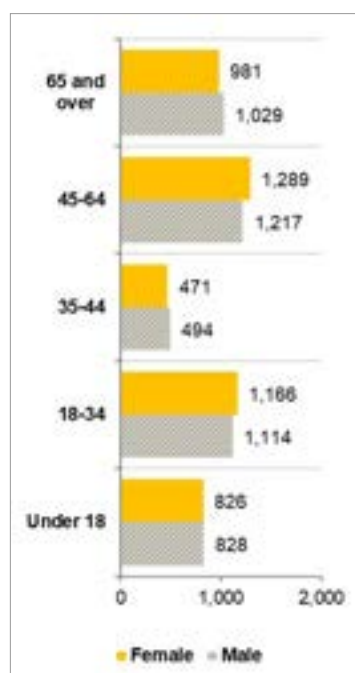
The municipalities of Dillon and Lima are the only incorporated municipalities in the County. In 2020, Dillon and Lima had populations of approximately 4,261 and 180 people, respectively. Dillon is the County seat, and the City updated its Growth Policy in 2016. The population of Dillon makes up approximately 45 percent of the County's entire population. Unincorporated communities in the County include Dell, Jackson, Polaris, Wisdom, and Wise River.



## POPULATION

Since 1970, the County has experienced a gradual increase in population. The County saw a 15 percent rise in population over that time span. In 1970 the County's population was 8,207 people, by 2000 it had increased to 9,204 people. In 2019, there had been a slight increase to 9,453 persons.

▲ **Figure 1 - Population Trends, Beaverhead County (1970-2019)**  
(Census Bureau, 2019 Washington, D.C.)



In 2019, the median age of County residents was 43 years of age. This was a slight increase from 2010 when the median age for residents was estimated at 42.5 years of age. The County has seen an increase in the number of people in the age group 18-44 years of age and age group 65 years of age and over. Of concern is a dramatic decline in the number of people in the age groups under 18 years of age and 45-64. Between 2010 and 2019, these age groups saw an estimated loss of 207 and 257 people, respectively.

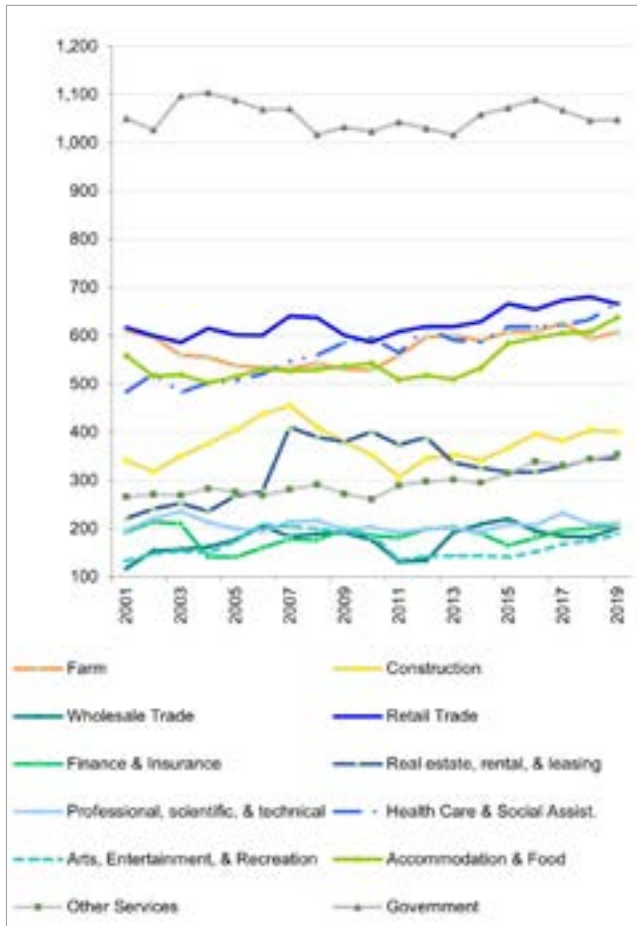
A decrease in the number of young and middle-aged people and an increase in the senior population should be watched closely. Significant changes in these demographics may affect the ability of the County to provide services to seniors and to also ensure a stable and experienced workforce for the County's businesses and industries.

◀ **Figure 2 – Population Age Breakout by Gender for Beaverhead County, 2019**  
Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps))



# ECONOMY

In 2019, the economy of Beaverhead County was relatively diversified. The top five (5) employers included government, healthcare, retail farming/ranching and accommodations/food.



▶ **Figure 3 - Top Employment Sectors in Beaverhead County 2001-2019**

U.S. Department of Labor. 2020. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).

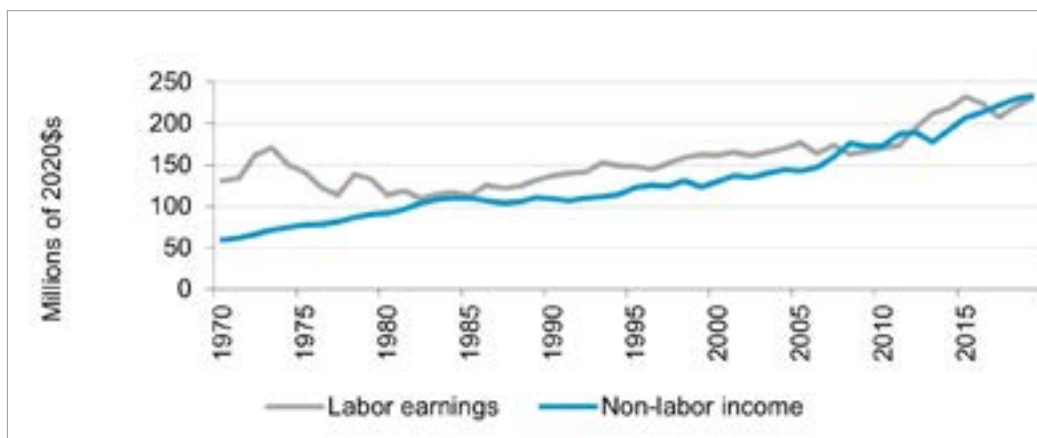
In 2020 the four industry sectors with the largest earnings in the County were government (\$63.7 million), farm/ranch (\$36.0 million), healthcare (\$33.7 million) and retail (\$26.7 million).

## LABOR AND NON-LABOR INCOME

From 1970 to 2019, labor earnings in Beaverhead County grew from \$130.8 million to \$229.9 million (in real terms), an almost 50% increase. During the same time, non-labor income in the County grew from \$59.4 million to \$233.3 million (in real terms), over a 50% increase. Non-labor sources of income include dividends, interest, rent and transfer payments such as Social Security, and Medicare.

## PER CAPITA INCOME

From 1970 to 2019, per capita income in the County increased from \$23,189 to \$49,005. The per capita income for the entire State of Montana was \$32,625 in 2019. Per capita income is a measure of income per person. It is total personal income (from labor and non-labor sources) divided by total population. Per capita income is considered one of the most important measures of economic well-being for communities.



▶ **Figure 4 - Components of Personal Income, Beaverhead County 1970-2019**

U.S. Department of Labor. 2019. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).



# ECONOMY

Total personal income is a measure of the total annual gross earnings of an individual from all income sources, such as: salaries and wages, investment interest and dividends, employer contributions to pension plans, and rental properties.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture has always been one of the economic strengths of Beaverhead County. In 2019, 608 persons were engaged in agricultural operations. Cash receipts from agricultural operations in that same year were over \$144.9 million, with \$77.2 million from livestock and almost \$67.7 million from crops (adjusted for inflation), with the remaining balance from other income sources.

Almost fifty percent (50%) of farm and ranch jobs and their associated income belong to owner-operators, not paid laborers. This is a situation that has increased over 50 years from 1970 and 2019. Farm and ranch income have declined over that same period, dropping from \$41.4 million (adjusted for inflation) in 1970 to \$36 million (adjusted for inflation) in 2019.

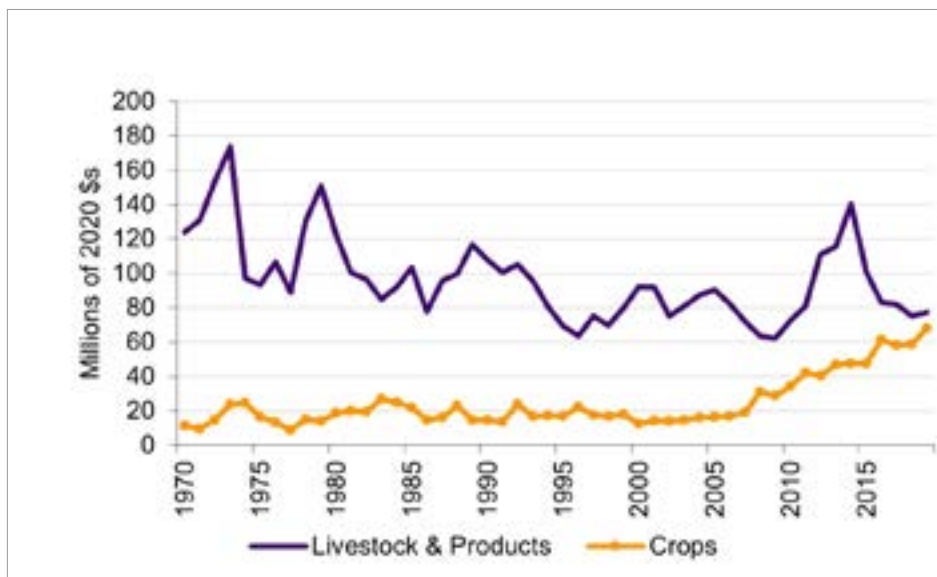


Figure 5 - Cash Receipts from Agriculture in Beaverhead County 1970-2019

U.S. Department of Labor. 2020. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).

Cash receipts from the sale of crops in the County increased over the four plus decades, from \$11.3 million in 1970 to \$67.7 million in 2019 (adjusted for inflation). With regard to livestock, cash receipts decreased from \$123 million (adjusted for inflation) in 1970 to \$77.7 million (adjusted for inflation) in 2019. As mentioned earlier, the County is the top cattle producing county in Montana with an estimated 150,000 head of cattle in 2018. The County is also the top hay producing county in Montana.

Opportunities to expand agriculture in the County through the creation of value-added products exist. There has also been some discussion of establishing a local meatpacking plant to process locally raised beef.

The Dillon area has also become a hub for solar power generation with several solar farms in various stages of development.

## CITY OF DILLON: REGIONAL TRADE CENTER

With a population of about 4,261 and the County seat, Dillon is the regional trade center for southwestern Montana. The City serves as the gateway to destinations such as Maverick Mountain Ski Hill, Bannack State Park, Barrett's Rock, the Beaverhead River, Big Hole River or the Red Rock Wildlife Refuge.



## BEAVERHEAD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

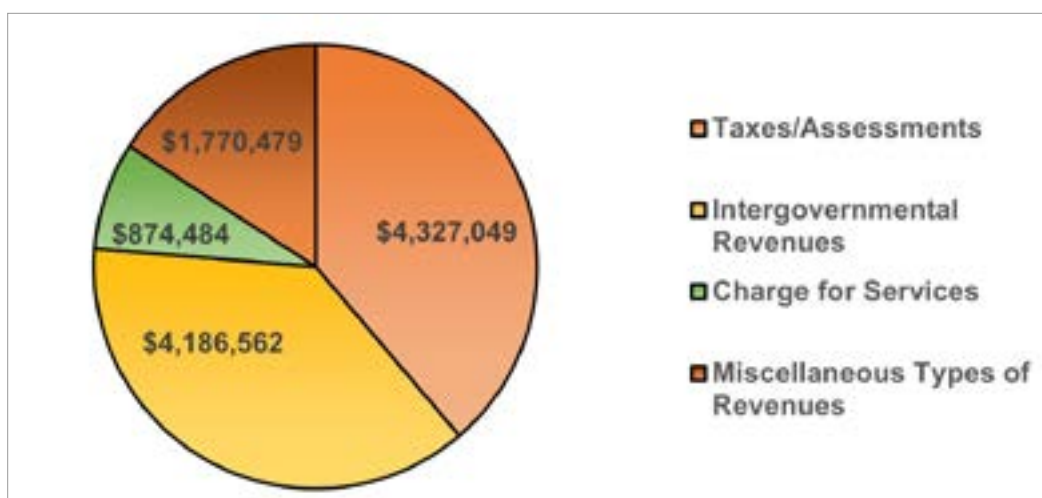
Beaverhead Development Corporation is located in Dillon has been in existence for approximately 17 years and primarily works with local community development groups businesses and industry and social services organizations. The Development Corporation is the economic development agency for the County and Dillon. The Corporation's primary mission is the retention, expansion, and advancement of commerce and employment in the County. The Corporation is in need of more reliable funding sources to ensure it can effectively continue its work on economic development.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

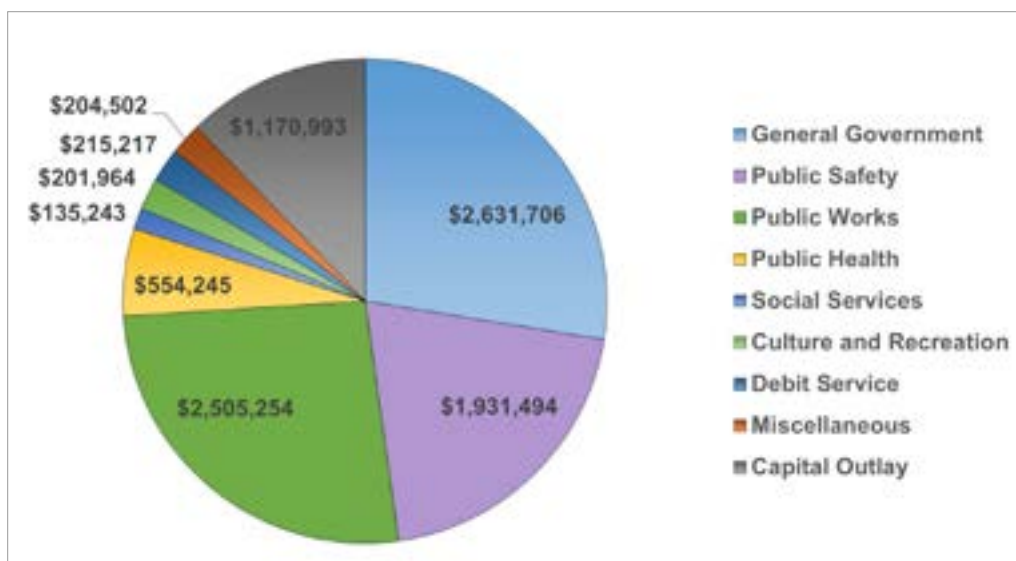
Providing services and maintaining infrastructure in an efficient and economic manner is the primary function of Beaverhead County. Services provided by the County include but are not limited to law enforcement, emergency and senior services and weed control. Infrastructure that the County is responsible for maintaining includes buildings, roads, bridges, and equipment such as road graders and patrol cars for the Sheriff's Department. Providing these services, infrastructure and equipment requires the County to collect enough revenues to cover their costs.

Based upon data from the Local Government Services Bureau of the State of Montana, in 2017 the County generated a total of \$15,137,440 in governmental revenues. The three largest sources of revenue in that year were from State and Federal intergovernmental payments (\$7,508,104); taxes and assessments (\$6,352,070) and charges for services (\$908,688).



▶ **Figure 6 - Beaverhead County Governmental Revenues in 2020**  
Financial Statements-  
Beaverhead County, Montana  
Department of Administration,  
Local Government Services  
Bureau 2020.

The County's four main expenditures were for general government (Commissioners, County Attorney, Clerk etc.), public works (roads and bridges), public safety (law enforcement), capital projects.



▶ **Figure 7 - Beaverhead County Governmental Expenditures in 2020**  
Financial Statements-Beaverhead  
County, Montana Department of  
Administration, Local Government  
Services Bureau 2020.

## STRATEGY FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Beaverhead County does not currently have a capital improvements plan (CIP) that prioritizes the operation and maintenance of its infrastructure and equipment. A CIP would prioritize capital improvements and equipment and provide a schedule for completing projects or purchasing equipment, and list options for funding the construction or acquisition. While capital improvements are typically defined as infrastructure projects or equipment purchases, CIPs should also consider the operation and maintenance of infrastructure and equipment.

If the County pursues a CIP in the future, it should include the following information:

- An ongoing inventory of existing infrastructure.
- An evaluation of needs based on state and federal requirements and infrastructure deficiencies.
- Opportunity for residents to provide input on priorities.
- A process for analyzing and prioritizing projects.
- Identification potential project funding sources.

Infrastructure owned and maintained by the County includes:

- Airports
- Roads
- Bridges
- County Fairgrounds
- Old and new landfill sites and transfer stations
- Buildings including the airport, courthouse, law enforcement center, library and those housing the road and weed departments and museum.

Until such a plan is created, this section of the Growth Policy serves as the County's strategy for the maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure.

## AIRPORTS

### *Dillon Airport*

The Dillon Airport is county-owned and located five miles northeast of Dillon. The Dillon Airport covers 202 acres and has two asphalt runways: 17/35 is 6,500 by 75 feet and 4/22 is 3,599 by 60 feet. In 2019 the airport had 10,500 aircraft operations, averaging 28 per day: 90% general aviation, 8% air taxi and 2% military and 21 aircraft were based at the airport, all single-engine. Phase 1 of a major rehabilitation effort is scheduled for 2023 including rehabilitation/reconstruction of runway 17/35 and a portion of runway 4/22 and a parallel taxiway T/3 will be redone. A small apron expansion is proposed to accommodate future fixed base operator hangar expansion and a hangar access taxi-lane to accommodate more Group II size hangars being built. The the Airport Master Plan Study is scheduled for update and will address runway visibility issues and examine potential new configurations for the runway and airport.

### *Dell Airport*

This is a public-use airport located approximately one mile northwest of Dell and is owned by the Montana Department of Transportation Aeronautics Division. The Dell Flight Strip covers an area of 147 acres. It has one runway designated 14/32



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

with an asphalt surface measuring 7,000 by 70 feet . In 2019, the airport had 950 general aviation aircraft operations, an average of 79 per month.

## *Wisdom Airport*

This is a public use airport located approximately two miles south of Wisdom. It is owned by Beaverhead County and provides general aviation service. The Wisdom Flight Strip covers an area of 36 acres. It has one runway designated 14/32 with an asphalt surface measuring 7,000 by 70 feet.

## COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS

The County Commission and Planning Board would like to improve its communication and relationship with County residents and will work to undertake the following steps to do so:

- Improve and better market the County website, and the availability of information on website.
- Ensure that all board and major County activities and meetings are noticed in a timely manner with local newspapers and social media etc.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL-AMBULANCE SERVICES

Given the size and transportation network of the County it would be impossible to provide emergency medical service (EMS) to the entire County with one ambulance service. Thus, EMS in the County is provided by four separate volunteer ambulance services, including: Lima Ambulance, Wisdom Ambulance, Grasshopper Ambulance and Beaverhead EMS.

All of these services are staffed by volunteers and all of the services suffer from a shortage of volunteers. This is caused by the complexity of maintaining emergency medical training (EMT) licensure, the challenges of missing work and simply a decline in volunteerism. All of the services are operating with minimal staff/volunteers.

While Lima, Wisdom, and Grasshopper have few ambulance runs annually, they nonetheless all have long transport times to deliver their patients to the nearest healthcare facility. In contrast, in 2020 Beaverhead EMS had 615 emergency calls. In 2021 this number has increased to over 800. This has created a significant strain on the organization's volunteers. Beaverhead EMS is considering a move toward staffing through a combination of full-time employment and volunteer staffing.

## FAIRGROUNDS

The Beaverhead County Fairgrounds is comprised of seventeen (17) buildings, a rodeo arena, covered horse stalls, and livestock pens. The facility is used for a variety of community events. The Beaverhead County Fair is held at the fairgrounds each year bringing in rodeo, music performances, vendors, a carnival, 4-H and FFA livestock shows, fair exhibits, and spectators from across the state. The arena is rented out throughout the year for various rodeo events, 4-H horse programs, Ramblin' Rose performances, and concerts. The livestock pens and covered stalls are rented out year-round for overnight stalling of animals. The Dillon Jaycees also hosts various meetings and events at the fairgrounds. The Beaverhead County 4-H hosts meetings, events, and extension programs in their building. Fair buildings are also rented out for weddings, birthday parties, dance classes, boat and RV storage, and other various functions.

The most pressing need identified for the fairgrounds is expanded parking. Currently, the 4-H and FFA members are allowed to use John Erb's field during the fair to park vehicles, trailers, and campers. Nonetheless parking on Railroad Street and within the fairgrounds is not sufficient for participants and attendees at the County Fair. This is highlighted by



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES



the fact that overflow parking for the Fair encompasses 20 blocks on the southeast side of Dillon. Finally, aged buildings and facilities continue to need maintenance and repairs to be fully functional.

## FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Fire protection in the County is provided by seven (7) volunteer departments: Dillon, Grant, Grasshopper Valley, Jackson, Lima, Wisdom, and Wise River. These departments are responsible for structure fires, initial attack on wildfires, occasional emergency medical calls as well as extended wildfire suppression and support. The departments are also charged with implementing community wildfire risk reduction strategies and plans. They also work closely with the ISO (Insurance Service Organization) to determine and improve the preparedness of the County's communities fire emergencies. The departments have a close working relationship with the County law enforcement agencies, County Disaster and Emergency Services, the various Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the state and federal agencies operating in the County.

Similar to the County's EMS services, adequate staffing/volunteers is a major concern for the departments. As the County's population continues to grow there will be a greater need for more volunteer fire fighters. In addition, the departments face funding challenges to obtain needed turnout and safety gear for volunteers and to maintain equipment and facilities.

## PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

Beaverhead County Public Health (BCPH) has three (3) full-time staff and one (1) part-time Breastfeeding Peer Counselor. The Public Health Director for BCPH also serves as the Beaverhead County Health Officer. Although the department is small it accomplishes many tasks with limited resources including:

- Family planning
- Immunizations
- Facilitation of the PREP program within the Dillon schools
- Emergency preparedness
- Communicable disease prevention/investigation
- WIC
- Rural school health fairs
- Tobacco prevention services provided through Madison County.

BCPH works very closely with law enforcement, disaster and emergency services, the County schools, UM Western, EMS, the fire departments, Barrett Hospital, SW Montana Community Health Center, the local Mental Health Advisory Council, and the County Local Emergency Planning Committee.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## BARRETT HOSPITAL & HEALTH CARE

Barrett Hospital and HealthCare is a modern Critical Access Hospital with a high degree of sophistication in diagnostic equipment, technology, and highly trained professionals. Located in Dillon, the hospital has board certified family and internal medicine providers, experienced surgeons (general, orthopedic, urology, gynecology, and podiatry), caring and experienced nurses, full time hospitalist care, obstetric, newborn, and pediatric care, and full time 24/7 Emergency Department provider coverage. In addition, the hospital has radiology and laboratory diagnostic services.



## LANDFILL

Beaverhead County provides landfill services for the residents of County and portions of Madison, Butte-Silverbow, and Anaconda-Deerlodge Counties. The landfill is licensed by Montana DEQ for residential, business wastes and construction demolition waste. Its operations are managed by a Solid Waste Board with members from various areas of the County. The landfill operates seven (7) remote canister disposal sites located in Dell, Grant, Mill Point, Jackson, Wisdom, Wise River-Dewey, and Glen. Waste from these sites is picked up weekly or more often depending on the volumes. Residents from neighboring counties that obtain service are under agreements with Beaverhead County and pay fees similar to Beaverhead County Residents. Currently the landfill employs four (4) full time operator/truck drivers, one (1) part-time secretary, one (1) part time manager and occasionally temporary litter pickers.

The landfill itself is an open trench system, which requires digging trenches to deposit the solid waste and eventually cover all the solid waste. A typical trench lasts 2 ½ to 3 years. Recycling is being done on a limited basis depending on markets and trends. Items currently recycled include steel-white goods, and cans. The landfill also operates a burn pile where untreated wood waste is burned annually to save space in the regular landfill trenches. In 2021 the landfill experienced an approximate 12 percent increase in volumes at the landfill.

Additional population growth in the County and surrounding area will require the landfill to add additional employees which will increase landfill costs. Also increased hauling and operating expenses will occur, including the need for trucks and equipment.

The current estimated life of the existing licensed landfill (76 acres in area) is approximately 35 years. The landfill budget includes set aside money for future closure costs and post-closure costs to meet Montana DEQ and EPA standards. The County does own additional land adjacent to the existing landfill for future growth.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## **LIBRARY**

The Dillon Public Library serves all of the County with a service area population of over 9,000 residents. The library was “Library of the Year” for the state of Montana for two years in a row. The library offers an amazing variety of services including:

- Standard services such as books, eBooks, movies, audiobooks, and internet and Wi-Fi access, technology assistance, copies, and faxes.
- Check out for Hotspots, Chromebook’s, iPads, and Go Pro cameras.
- Unique services such as a “backpack program” with packs trail maps, a fishing pole and tackle, binoculars, and passes to the Montana National Parks April to October.
- Online classes (over 500) through Universal Class.
- Dillon newspapers online from 1885-2018 we are the only library that is this current in Montana.
- Story time on Thursdays for preschool children.

The library is on the National Historical Registry and the building is well known throughout the community and state and elsewhere. The age of the building also means that there it is in need of many upgrades including:

- Heat in the basement in the children’s room.
- Ventilation needs to be rerouted.
- A new HVAC system.
- New gutters.
- Updated technology assistance and fiber optics.
- Additional storage.
- Improve communication between the City and the Library.



## **BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MUSEUM**

The Beaverhead County Museum collects and preserves the natural, physical, and human history of the County and to ensure this history is made accessible to all people. There are many issues that need to be addressed at the museum including:

- Secure and adequate storage.
- Repair and painting of the exterior.
- Boardwalk needs board replacement and maintenance.
- Gazebo needs picnic tables and maintenance of the structure.
- Strip and polish the museum floor.
- Cleaning of the windows in all buildings.
- Extend waterline to the flowerbeds.
- Repair waterline on the south end of the depot.
- Upgrade information and technology equipment such as a projector for the theatre.
- Replace the sod on the roof on the cabin needs sod.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

- The schoolhouse needs heat and a security lock.
- Repair of Hamilton Fountain.
- Repair and/or replace wood rails around the museum.

## BEAVERHEAD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION PLAN (BC-CRP)

The current plan is modeled after the Federal ‘SCORP’ (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan) template. The Plan has six high-level goals and recommendations which include:

- Promote outdoor recreation opportunities for all Montanans.
- Enhance public access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities.
- Support the economic vitality of communities and the state.
- Improve quality of life through outdoor recreation experiences.
- Adapt outdoor recreation for a changing environment.
- Honor Montana’s outdoor legacy.

The reason the BCCRP is modeled on a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is that a SCORP is required of every state to be eligible for the Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) Program. Thus, it was felt that a plan mimicking the Montana SCORP would make the County more competitive in obtaining LWCF funds. You can view the current trails plan at: <https://beaverheadcounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Recreational-Trails-Master-Plan.pdf>

Current project priorities for funding and completion include:

- Trails identified in the 2016 Trails Master Plan:
  - Trail D – Sweetwater Loop (6.89 miles)
  - Trail E – Laknar Loop (2 miles)
  - Trail F – Schular Lane Trail (0.60 miles)
  - Trail G – Laknar Lane & Pioneer Drive (1.1 miles)
  - Trail H – Pioneer Dr & Hwy 91 North (1.1 miles)
  - Trail I – Pioneer Drive & Beaverhead River (2.75 miles)
  - Trail J – West Park to Ten Mile: (0.50 miles)
  - Trail K – Southside Road and South Atlantic Via Western: (0.30 miles)
  - Trail L - Blacktail Road to Smith Rd: (2.50 miles)
  - Trail N – Southside Boulevard to Poindexter Slough (2.30 miles)
  - Tail O – Poindexter Slough, Hwy 278 to Downing Lane and Blacktail: (6.0 Miles)
  - Trail P – Noble to Overland (0.40 miles)
- The development of a new 2022 City-County Recreation Plan that covers both jurisdictions and includes:
  - The support and input of all residents.
  - Identification of recreational needs on a county wide scale.
  - A better understanding that recreation is a major economic driver for both the City and County.
  - Formal recognition and identification of the various recreational trail routes across the County.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## ROADS AND BRIDGES

The Beaverhead County Road Department oversees and manages approximately 1,800 miles of roads and approximately 132 bridges.

The Road Department's main shop is in Dillon at the Fairgrounds. There are also shops in Lima (45 miles to the south) and in Wisdom (60 miles to the north.)

The department has a crew of 6 (six) employees in the Dillon shop, 3 (three) in the Lima shop and 2 (two) in the Wisdom shop. There is also 1 (one) secretary for the entire Department in the Courthouse.



The property taxes paid by residents living outside of Dillon and Lima fund the Road Department and are paid only by County residents and generated approximately \$480,000 for Fiscal Year 2022. The property taxes to fund the Bridge Department are paid by all County residents, including Dillon and Lima and raised approximately \$260,000 for Fiscal Year 2022. Thus, the Road Department is also responsible for maintaining all bridges in Dillon and Lima.

The Department receives about 2 (two) million dollars in nontax revenue annually. These dollars include SRS (Secured Rural Schools), Local Option Vehicle Tax, State Fuel Tax, New Gas Tax, and grant funds such as the Montana Coal Enhancement Program.

The County has less than 100-miles of paved road and most of these are located near the City of Dillon. The following are the priority paving projects for the Department:

- Extend millings or pavement on Sweetwater Road to the junction of Carter Creek Road.
- Overlay Schuler and Webster Lane.
- Continue pavement overlay on Blacktail Road to and through the Matador Headquarters.
- Pavement or millings on Flynn Lane to connect Flynn and Blacktail Road.
- Pave and reconstruct Ten Mile Road to the County Landfill shop.
- Pavement overlay on Scenic Byway (approximately 50 miles).

The location and availability of gravel sources is a major concern for the Department. The Department has budgeted to crush 10,000 yards of gravel for each of the County shops in FY 2022. This gravel budget will replace the budget for pavement resurfacing this year. The Departments goal for gravel is to crush 20,000 - 30,000 yards of gravel per year, while also still maintaining funds for pavement, machinery, bridges, and manpower.

As mentioned earlier, the Department is responsible for the maintenance and replacement of 132 bridge structures. The Montana Department of Transportation inspects major County bridges (over 20 feet long) which is approximately 80 bridges in the County. The County has approximately 50 minor bridges (under 20 feet in length) which the County must inspect. Over the past 12 years, the Department has replaced 23 bridges at the rate of about 2 (two) per year. Nonetheless, the Department wants to increase the replacement rate of its deficient bridges.

## RURAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (RID)

The County has a policy under which it will not extend or expand services to rural residential developments, particularly subdivision at public cost. This includes the maintenance of any new roads for subdivisions. The County is open to assisting residents in subdivisions in the creation of Rural Improvement Districts (RID) or Rural Special Improvements Districts (RSID) to fund the maintenance or improvement of subdivision roads. RIDs and RSIDs are statutory mechanisms that allow residents to create taxing districts to raise funds for the maintenance or improvement of roads.



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## SCHOOLS

Beaverhead County has six (6) rural schools, which is a tiny remnant of the original 40 schools that once existed in the County. As of the 2021-2022 school year, each school has its own board and facility, and provide educational services to a total of 58 students from grades kindergarten through eighth grade as of the beginning of the. Each school has a lead teacher, while the County Superintendent of Schools provides management of the schools.

All of the rural schools in the County face problems including isolation, older facilities, and difficulty in attracting quality teachers due to low pay, weather, distance, and lack of social amenities.

### *Reichle Elementary School*

The Reichle Elementary School has one main building with two classrooms and two teachers. A small multi-purpose room, library, garage, and playground serve the needs of 20 students in the small town of Glen, MT, and the surrounding area. The student enrollment includes all nine grades K-8 and the school, is located 31 miles from the Dillon. Students arrive either by family transportation or by school bus provided by Beaverhead County.

### *Wisdom Elementary School*

Wisdom Elementary School, the county's most remote school has the most modern and well-equipped building. One teacher, (along with two part-time paraprofessionals) utilizes the two classrooms, provides instruction to nine students, ranging from two first graders to an eighth grader. The school has a separate library, cafeteria, small kitchen, separate office space, and a teacherage that provide housings for the teacher; Wisdom is the only school to do so. A playground, a basketball court and other facilities surround the school. The community's high school students travel the 65 miles back and forth each day to Beaverhead County High School (BCHS) in Dillon.

### *Wise River Elementary School*

The school in Wise River has one main building with two classrooms and one auxiliary building housing the library. Two teachers provide instruction in two classrooms, with a playground, and running track used for recess and physical education. The school serves nine students (grades 1-6) and is 54 miles from Dillon.

### *Jackson Elementary School*

Jackson Elementary School, another fairly modern brick building, has two classrooms and a multi-purpose room, small kitchen, and separate office. One teacher provides instruction to seven students (grades K-7) this year. A fenced playground is used for recess and physical activity. There is a gate which can be closed and locked. (The school site is on Montana Highway 278.) Jackson, which is the site of a hot springs resort, is 47 miles from Dillon. The high school students who attend BCHS ride the same bus as do the students from Wisdom.

### *Grant Elementary School*

The Grant School is the smallest (in student population); just three students (a kindergarten student, a second grader, and a seventh grader) attend the school in the tiny community of Grant. The school's main building houses the two classrooms and multi-purpose room, but a separate building has the library. A bus barn, auxiliary building, and playground compliment the school. The Grant School is 32 miles from Dillon. Just one teacher, with over 20 years' experience, provides the instruction.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## *Polaris Elementary School*

Polaris Elementary School boasts Montana's Teacher of the Year for 2020-21. The school consists of one main building, one crowded classroom, and a separate small library. A separate small kitchen (often used as a meeting room for one-on-one instruction) completes the physical plant. Ten students fill the classroom to capacity, so much so that Polaris School Board Members have made plans to build a second classroom, nearly doubling the size of the facility. Two teachers and two part-time paraprofessionals provide instruction for 11 students, ranging from a first grader to an eighth grader. The school is located 33 miles from Dillon.

## SENIOR CENTERS AND PROGRAMS

The Renaissance Senior Care (RSC) provides care to the elderly, particularly those who suffer from memory loss and Alzheimer's/ Dementia. RSC provides residents with services such as 24-hour staff to supervise all residents, home-cooked meals and dietitian designed meals, assistance with personal needs including bathing and dressing and promoting individual dignity and respect. Housekeeping and laundry services, medication assistance, nursing oversight and assessments to be assured that loved one's health is being closely monitored. The facility provides families who take care of their loved ones at home to be able to bring them here to our facility for short term periods of time to provide their families with breaks and time for themselves.

## SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

The Beaverhead County Sheriff's Office is charged with keeping the peace, upholding the State laws, the operation of the jail, emergency dispatch, search and rescue, and civil processes. The Department is also responsible for supporting the courts with security and prisoner transport. The Department participates in and provides support for the Beaverhead County Tactical Team and the Southwest Montana Drug Task Force.



Current needs for the Department include:

- Additional staffing
- Capital improvements include additional cells and a secure elevator to move prisoners to the jail located in the basement.
- Better radio communications and facilities.
- Court approved storage and garage facility for processing evidence and impounding of vehicles and for proper storage of court evidence and storage of forfeited vehicles.

## WATER AND SEWER DISTRICTS

### *Jackson*

The Town of Jackson has a municipal water system that was recently upgraded to meet Montana DEQ and EPA standards. Jackson is served by a municipal wastewater treatment system that consists of treatment tanks and a pump vault. The system pumps treated effluent to a large drainfield located on the hill to the Northeast of the town. The system is known to have problems with groundwater infiltration from leaking connections and water running into the treatment tanks. There is also no current mechanism to remove trash from the tanks, which can cause plugging and failures of the system pumps. The groundwater issues and possibility of trash being pumped into the drainfield could cause the drainfield to fail.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## *Wisdom*

The community of Wisdom does not have a municipal water system. Resident's potable water supplies come from individual or shared wells. The community is served by a municipal wastewater treatment system that is composed of a pump vault that accumulates wastewater and pumps it to a treatment pond and irrigation pivot that disperses the treated effluent. The pond and pivot are located to the East of the Town. The system has issues with ground water infiltration due to leaking pipe connections and sumps.

## **WEED DISTRICT**

The Beaverhead County Weed District was founded in 1946 to bring together those responsible for weed management within Beaverhead County to develop common management objectives and coordination efforts along logical geographic boundaries. The Weed District follows the Early Detection, Rapid Response model to accomplish the following goals:

- Prevent the introduction, reproduction, and spread of designated noxious weeds into and within Beaverhead County.
- Reduce the extent and density of established noxious weeds to a point the natural resource damage is within acceptable limits and, wherever possible, eradicated.
- Implement the most economical and effective weed control methods for the target weed.
- Implement an integrated management system, using all appropriate methods or a combination of methods, which includes Education/Awareness, Prevention/Early Detection, Inventory, Treatment, and Monitoring.



The District supports seven established cooperative weed management areas (CWMAs), which focuses on collaborative management between landowner, private or public, boundaries to prioritize prevention and take proactive management approaches to weed treatments. CWMAs have active participation from private landowners, agencies, nonprofits/ community groups, and the Weed District. The seven CWMAs are: Argenta, Beaverhead River Corridor, Big Hole Watershed, and the Upper Red Rock.

The District faces many challenges including:

- Inconsistency among all partners including the District on how weed management programs are run and monitored.
- Inconsistent interpretation of state Weed Law between counties that border Beaverhead County. The District is fortunate to have a supportive Weed Board, County Attorney, and Commissioners, allowing the District to uphold the law but it difficult along the border of other county's where the interpretation of the law is laxer.
- Increase in a population of people who do not understand the impact of noxious weeds. Thus, education is necessary and the District needs additional support for education efforts.

The District has several important needs including:

- Bathroom or wash area for employees.
- Additional funding to maintain services in light of increasing costs.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

▼ Map 4 - County Roads and Bridges



# HOUSING

## AGE OF HOUSING

Beaverhead County's housing stock is diversified by age. Data from the Census Bureau, American Community Survey, estimated that there were 5,344 residential housing units in the County in 2019. Of the total number of residential structures identified in 2020, 887 were built prior to 1970, 976 were constructed between 1970 and 1979 and 546 between 1980 and 1989.

Age of Residential Structures in Beaverhead County (2019) (American Community Survey)		
Year Built	Number of Units	Percentage
2010 or later	187	3.5%
2000 to 2009	684	12.8%
1990 to 1999	820	15.3%
1980 to 1989	546	10.2%
1970 to 1979	976	18.3%
Older than 1969	887	16.6%

Generally, the older a home is, the more maintenance and upkeep it requires. Older homes are also often less energy efficient, and the increased cost to heat them in the winter can add to the overall cost of housing. Low-income families are more likely to live in older homes as they have a lower market value. Thus, increased costs for maintenance and utilities can be a significant economic burden for them.

Of the total housing units existing in the County in 2019, a substantial portion were identified as being vacant. American Community Survey data estimated that 1,352 or 25.3 percent of all housing was vacant. The vacancy of these structures can affect their long-term condition, as vacancy is generally related to a lack of maintenance and upkeep.

In addition, the County contains a considerable number of seasonal housing units. The 2019 data shows that there are approximately 962 or 18 percent of the total number of housing units.

## HOUSING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is an expressed need for additional housing options in the County. The current housing costs, due to spill over from residential development in Gallatin and Madison Counties have risen considerably and are making affordable housing almost non-existent the City of Dillon and in Beaverhead County itself.

In order to better understand all of these issues and opportunities, the County and the City of Dillon will consider undertaking a detailed housing assessment and plan. Such an analysis, would help identify the most effective steps and projects and ensure that limited resources are used effectively to address housing availability and affordability in the County.



# LAND USE

The County's Land Use and Planning Department provides technical planning assistance as well as land use and development services in Beaverhead County. The department provides advice and guidance to the following advisory and decision-making bodies:

- County Commission
- Town of Lima
- County Planning Board
- County Airport Board

## LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

No one can deny the fact that there is tremendous growth happening in Beaverhead County. Why is it occurring? Why are so many people moving to the County? It is for a variety of reasons. Beaverhead County offers a wide variety of outdoor experiences such as fishing, hunting, camping, hiking and more. It offers all this in a beautiful backdrop of great scenery. It offers an uncrowded environment with a strong agriculturally based economy. This is the appeal of the County.

For residents the issue comes down to two opposing forces: residential growth and quality of life. These forces can be at odds with one another. Thus, it is the goal of residents to preserve as much as possible the character of the County while managing growth, so it becomes an asset and not a burden.

Based upon the comments received from County residents during the Growth Policy Survey, the County Planning Board feels that the County may need to take a close look at considering adopting zoning regulations to assist in reducing residential sprawl and to encourage higher density subdivisions that have smaller lots, shared water, and sewer resources and are easier to provide services to.

The current regulatory framework for water and wastewater permitting has often resulted in property owners installing wells or septic systems in incorrect locations on their lots and thus creating a chain reaction of water and septic problems with the adjacent lots. Many residents think that the County should consider adopting a formal building or development permit to assist property owners, developers and builders by reducing the problems caused by unmanaged building and development.

Roads located within subdivisions are not the maintenance responsibility of the County. Nonetheless, the County will examine different options for helping property owners find ways to fund the maintenance of their roads. For example, the County has adopted a process to create Rural Improvement Districts (RID) to help residents pay for the maintenance of roads, particularly within subdivisions.

There is also a need to ensure that physical and legal access can be provided through subdivisions to adjacent land in order to create connected road networks. This issue should be addressed in the future update of the County Subdivision Regulations. In addition, road and bridge standards should be reviewed in the future update of the County Subdivision Regulations to better address safety and emergency needs.

The County should continue to promote the development of trail and recreation facilities by working closely with the Beaverhead Trail Coalition. This could include funding the construction of trails and paths, pursuing funds such as grants, pursuing trail/recreation easements and promoting pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between subdivisions and communities such as Dillon.

Currently fire protection water supplies are only required for subdivisions containing three (3) or more lots. As part of the update of the County Subdivision Regulations the County will examine options for providing more effective water supplies for all subdivisions to ensure fire departments can effectively respond to fire emergencies.



# LAND USE

Standardized restrictive covenants should be considered for all new subdivisions, to ensure that property owners are protected and people living within a subdivision follows the same rules to meet the goals of the County Subdivision Regulations. The importance of functional homeowner's associations (HOA) is critical to the success of residents governing their property within subdivisions.

Livestock stocking rate for new subdivisions should be reviewed and updated as part of the update of the County Subdivision Regulations. Many of the subdivisions in the County cannot support a large numbers of livestock, thus the review of subdivisions should reflect this, and as appropriate livestock should not be allowed at all.

The County prides itself on conserving wildlife resources. The County's economy and residents rely on abundant wildlife resources for jobs and food. With this in mind, a future update of the County Subdivision Regulations should consider requiring wildlife-safe fencing and a recognition of and protection of wildlife corridors, water resources and vegetation.

The County Subdivision Regulations require that approved family transfer exemptions be held by a recipient for a minimum of 18-months before being sold. That period of time may need to be increased. The impact of family transfers on land use needs to be better explained to residents so they can understand that family transfers can create identical impacts as a subdivision but undergo no review for things such as local services, public health, and safety etc. The first step toward this could be requiring that an applicant for a family transfer exemption fill out an exemption form similar to the current subdivision exemption form.

Conservation easements are commonplace in the County. Easements can serve as an effective method to keep farm or ranch operations in the family and to keep them in agricultural production. The County needs to promote conservation easements that benefit the agricultural community. In addition, easements should be discouraged in areas close to communities in order to ensure that easements do not remove lands from development that would be ideal for higher density development.

Beaverhead County and the City of Dillon are developing a good working relationship by meeting on a monthly basis at the County Commission meetings. The City and County are also working together on the review of subdivisions within the City growth area to ensure subdivisions have access to water and sewer and to encourage the creation of smaller lots and higher density and to reduce residential sprawl.

## MAPPING OF LAND USE, LIMITATIONS AND HAZARDS

There is a real need to provide better land use information to County residents, the Planning Board, County Commission, and potential new residents. One effective way to do this would be to develop an online GIS mapping service that would be readily available to anyone via the County website. The online mapping service might provide information on the following:

- Guidance where the County can most economically and efficiently provide required services.
- Recommended housing densities to show where future residential developments would be preferred.
- Identification of the most productive agricultural lands are located.
- Identify the natural hazards including wildfire, high groundwater, flooding, or excessive slope.
- Provide a build out analysis to examine where development is currently occurring and where it is most likely to occur in the future.

# LAND USE

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The County Planning Board understands that the County's quality of life and dramatically increasing land values will only encourage the subdivision and development of agricultural lands well into the future. Nonetheless, the Planning Board wants to conserve agricultural land use by minimizing residential development in areas that are valuable for agriculture and difficult to provide public services to. In order to do this the Board would like to guide residential development toward existing communities and along major transportation corridors. Because of this, the Board has developed a future land use map (FLUM) that is meant to encourage this type of development. See Map 5 on the following page.

## SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Subdivision regulations are meant to address issues related to the division of land for new residential and commercial development. This includes ensuring accurate surveying, providing legal and physical access, provision of utilities, parkland requirements, right-of-way location and mitigating hazards.

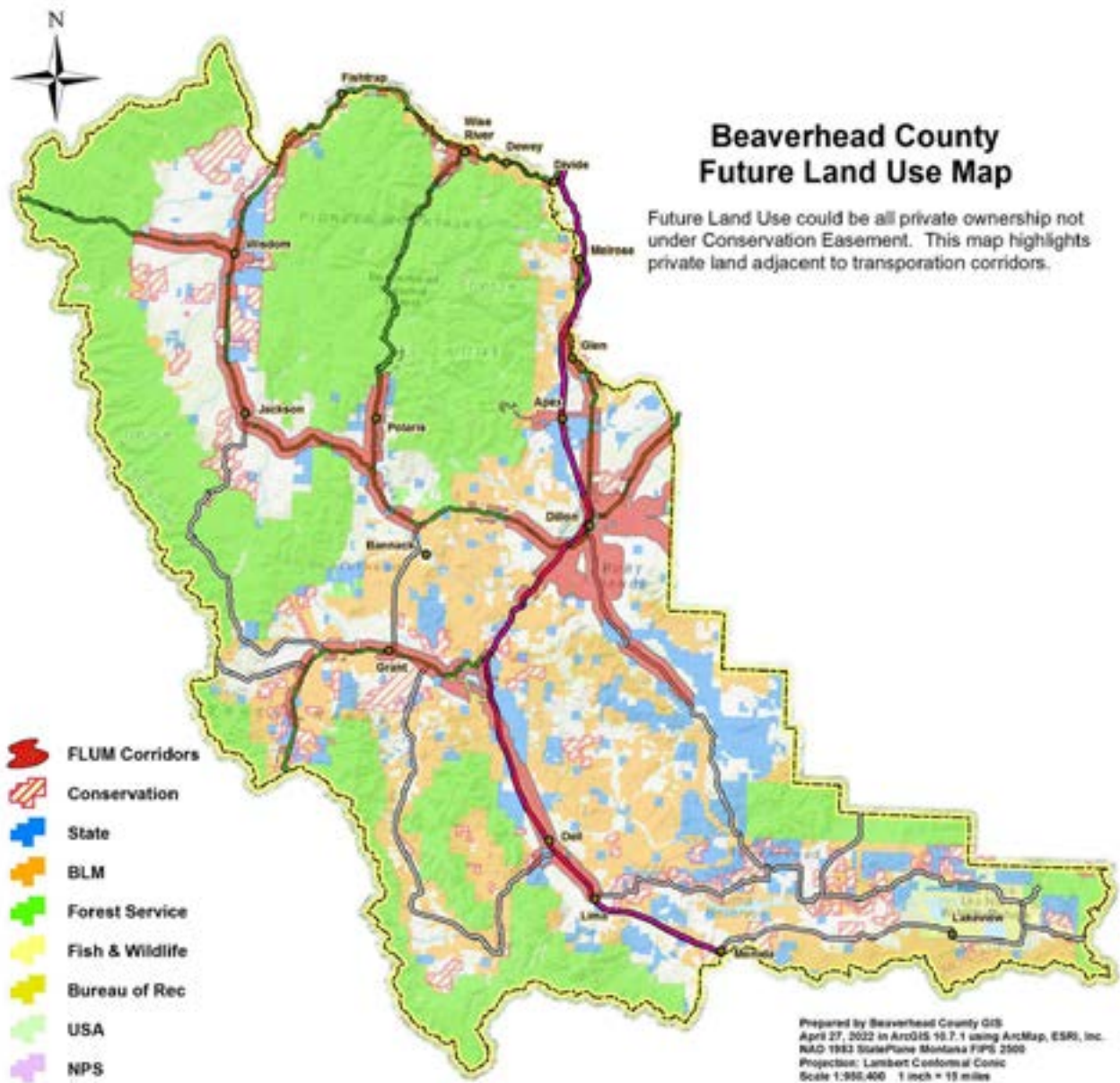
The current County Subdivision Regulations were last updated in 2010 and do not currently comply with all of the statutory changes made by the Montana Legislature since that time. Upon adoption of the Growth Policy update, the County will begin the process of updating the subdivision regulations.

The update of the regulations should at a minimum address the following issues:

- Address the costs of providing public services.
- Providing effective fire protection water supplies.
- Better legal and physical access that protects public health and safety.
- Bridge design standards to meet fire protection standards.
- Road connectivity between subdivisions.
- Reimbursement of costs to previous subdividers for infrastructure they installed but is used by a new subdivider: roads, fire protection water supplies etc.
- Rural Improvement Districts (RID) for the maintenance of new subdivision roads.
- Annexation waiver or special improvement district (SID) waiver for subdivisions adjacent to or near the City of Dillon.
- Mobile home park standards.
- Practical standards for conserving wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Establish livestock stocking standards.
- Establish standardized County covenants.
- Better address family gift exemptions.

# LAND USE

▼ Map 5 - Future Land Use Map (FLUM)



# LAND USE

## CITY OF DILLON PLANNING AREA

When subdivisions are proposed within the one-mile planning area of the City of Dillon the County may consider requiring that property owners waive their right to protest annexation and/or wave their right to protest a special improvement districts (SID's) for the extension of City services and infrastructure. Subdivisions located within the one-mile planning area may be required to pay for the extension of services and infrastructure improvements meeting City standards.

## BUILDINGS FOR LEASE OR RENT REGULATIONS

State statute (Title 76, Chapter 8, Montana Code Annotated) requires every jurisdiction in the state to adopt regulations addressing the lease or renting of buildings for residential and commercial purposes. The exception to this requirement is if certain criteria are met, such as the existence of zoning regulations in the jurisdiction. Since there are no zoning regulations in effect in the County, regulations for the lease or rent of buildings must be considered for adoption in the near future, particularly as housing continues to be developed to meet the rental demand.

## FLOODING AND FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS

Flooding is a fact of life in Beaverhead County, particularly along the Big Hole River. The County administers Floodplain Regulations for those areas that have identified floodplains. They include:

- Big Hole River
- Beaverhead River
- Blacktail Creek
- Town of Lima

Maps showing the location of identified floodplains in the County are available in the office of the County Planner. The County Floodplain Regulations were updated in 2015 using the State of Montana's Model Floodplain Regulations.

## BIG HOLE RIVER CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS ORDINANCE

The ordinance is intended to protect water quality and quantity, the floodplain and riparian resources and promote orderly development along the Big Hole River. The ordinance established standards and a permitting process for all new construction. The ordinance was adopted due to the fact that the County does not have any zoning and/or a building permit process.

## WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITIES ORDINANCE

The ordinance is meant to accommodate the increasing need for telecommunications in the County while protecting the public health and safety and protect the visual environment of the County. The ordinance only address cellular communication towers, does not include wind generation or solar power projects. The County will consider updating the ordinance to include such projects.

## ZONING REGULATIONS

Lengthy conversations have been taking place amongst County residents about the potential need for the development and adoption of zoning regulations to better manage new residential developments. Some of the issues that have come to light with past residential development include:

# LAND USE

- The incorrect installation of septic systems and wells
- Conversion of agricultural lands to residential uses
- Lengthy delays in new residential development being placed on the County tax rolls
- Incorrect addresses or no addresses for new homes, which impact emergency response times

In light of these issues, the County may consider adopting a development permit process using the state zoning statutes. Such a permitting process could help property owners and builders to install septic systems and wells correctly, ensure new homes are correctly provided physical addresses for emergency service responses and notify the Montana Department of Revenue of new construction that should be included in the property tax rolls.

## SANITATION REGULATIONS

The County uses the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) standard and the County wastewater regulations for the permitting of on-site wastewater treatment systems and groundwater wells. The County's sanitation rules are stricter than the DEQ's and do include enforcement provisions. However, administration and enforcement of the regulations has proven to be difficult to enforce as such matters are typically not a priority for the court system. Many of the sanitation violations are related to the construction of homes without an approved sanitation permit being issued. The adoption of a County development permit process could help address these issues.

## SAND AND GRAVEL RESOURCES

Access to sand and gravel is important for the construction and maintenance of streets and roads as well as the construction of new homes and businesses. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Program there are approximately thirty-five (35) permitted gravel pits in Beaverhead County. The County does not have any regulations that govern the development of gravel pits, and no such regulations are anticipated in the future.

## WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

According to the 2017 County Predisaster Mitigation Plan:

*"The wildland urban interface (WUI) in southwest Montana is widespread. Private land is widely dispersed throughout the County and much of it is adjacent to federal and state lands. Several subdivisions have been developed next to federal and state lands of which have vast amounts of timber. Resorts, dude ranches, and other businesses are also within the wildland urban interface. Because of the location of private lands and rural developments in relationship to federal and state lands, wildfires could prove to be disastrous for many Beaverhead County residents."*

According to the Beaverhead County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2005), the following areas of the County are considered high hazard:

- Elk Lake Lodge
- Red Rock riparian corridor
- Beaverhead riparian corridor
- Big Hole riparian corridor
- Lemhi Pass to Bar TT Ranch
- Lower Grasshopper Creek
- Upper Rattlesnake, Trout, and Birch Creeks
- East Pioneer Mountains, eastern portion, and Interstate 15 corridor



# LAND USE

- Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway between Wise River and the Grasshopper Valley
- Steele Creek
- Southwest Big Hole Valley (especially the vicinity of Van Houten Campground and Skinner Meadows)
- Big Hole Battlefield National Monument, State Highway 43, and Trail Creek corridors
- Poindexter Slough.

Additional communities in the WUI at risk from wildfire include:

- |           |            |              |
|-----------|------------|--------------|
| ▪ Argenta | ▪ Grant    | ▪ Monida     |
| ▪ Bannack | ▪ Jackson  | ▪ Polaris    |
| ▪ Dell    | ▪ Lakeview | ▪ Wisdom     |
| ▪ Dewey   | ▪ Lima     | ▪ Wise River |
| ▪ Dillon  |            |              |

The development of rural housing in the WUI increases the complexity of fire suppression and raises a host of issues including:

- Safe ingress and egress for fire fighters.
- Safe evacuation routes for residents.
- Communication between fire fighters and with residents.

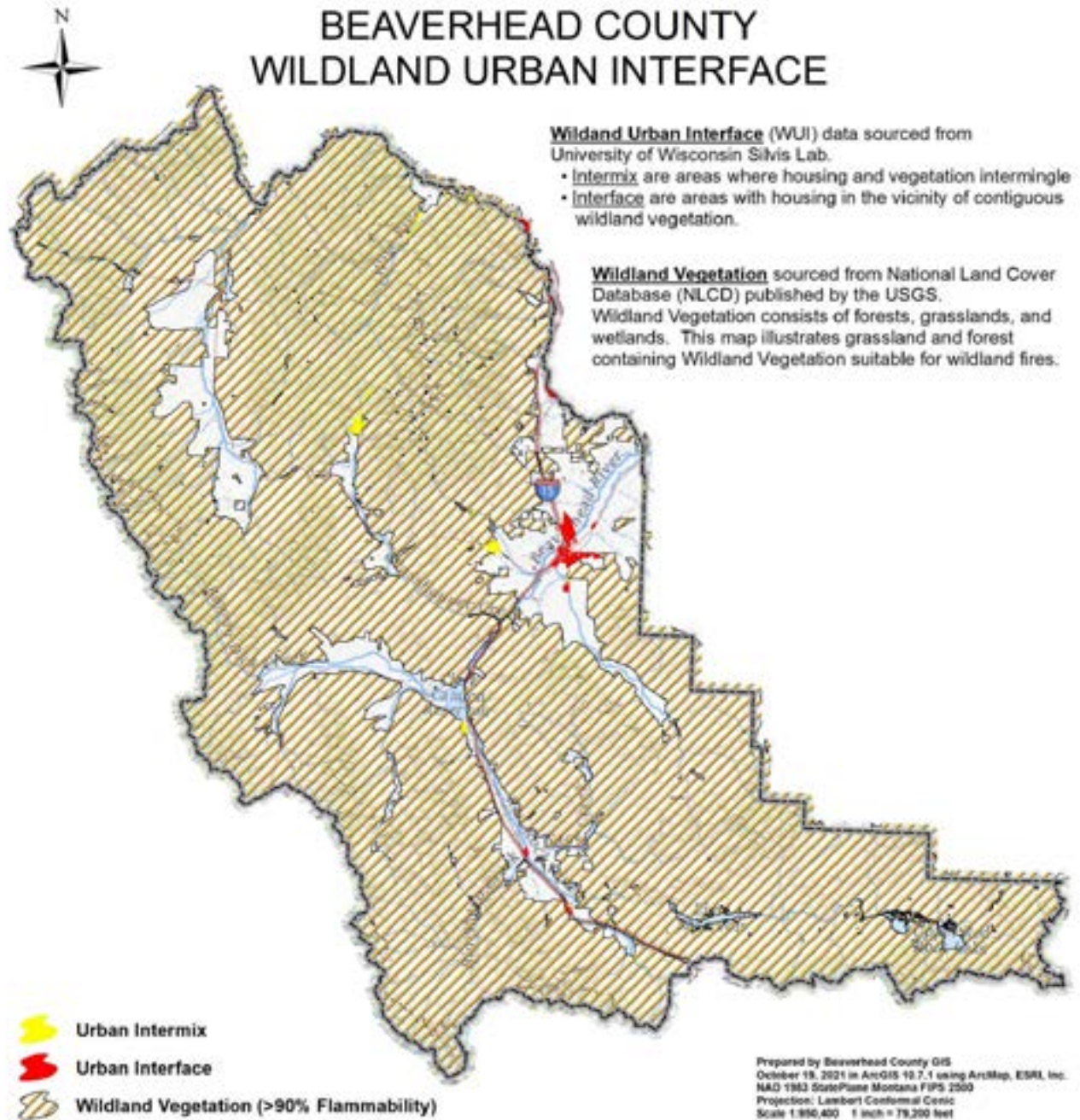
To reduce the potential impact of wildfire, the County has actively promoted fuels reduction projects in areas with the highest risk for wildfire. In fact, the County would like to see a much more aggressive approach to the commercial harvest of timber on private and public lands. In addition, the County would like public land management agencies such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to also be much more aggressive about undertaking controlled burns on public lands in order to reduce fuel loading.

During the coming update of the County Subdivision Regulations, the Planning Board and the County Commission will consider addressing WUI issues in more detail including such fire protection water supplies, road construction, improved access, limiting dead-end roads, and requiring defensible space for residential structures.

The County's fire departments and the County Commission should also review and if necessary, update existing mutual aid agreements with State and Federal agencies that provide wildland fire protection in the County.

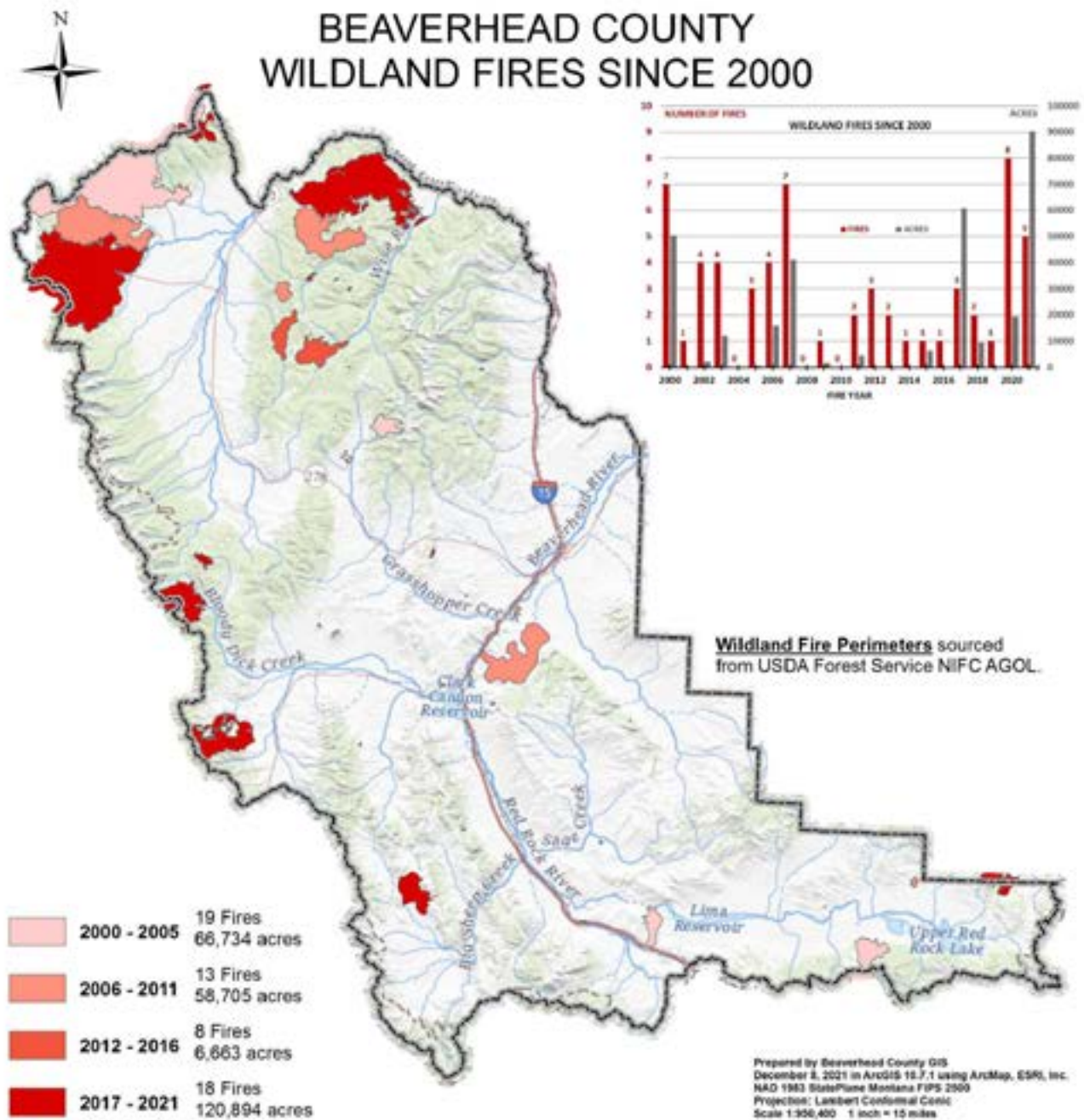


▼ Map 6 - Wildfire Risk in the County



# LAND USE

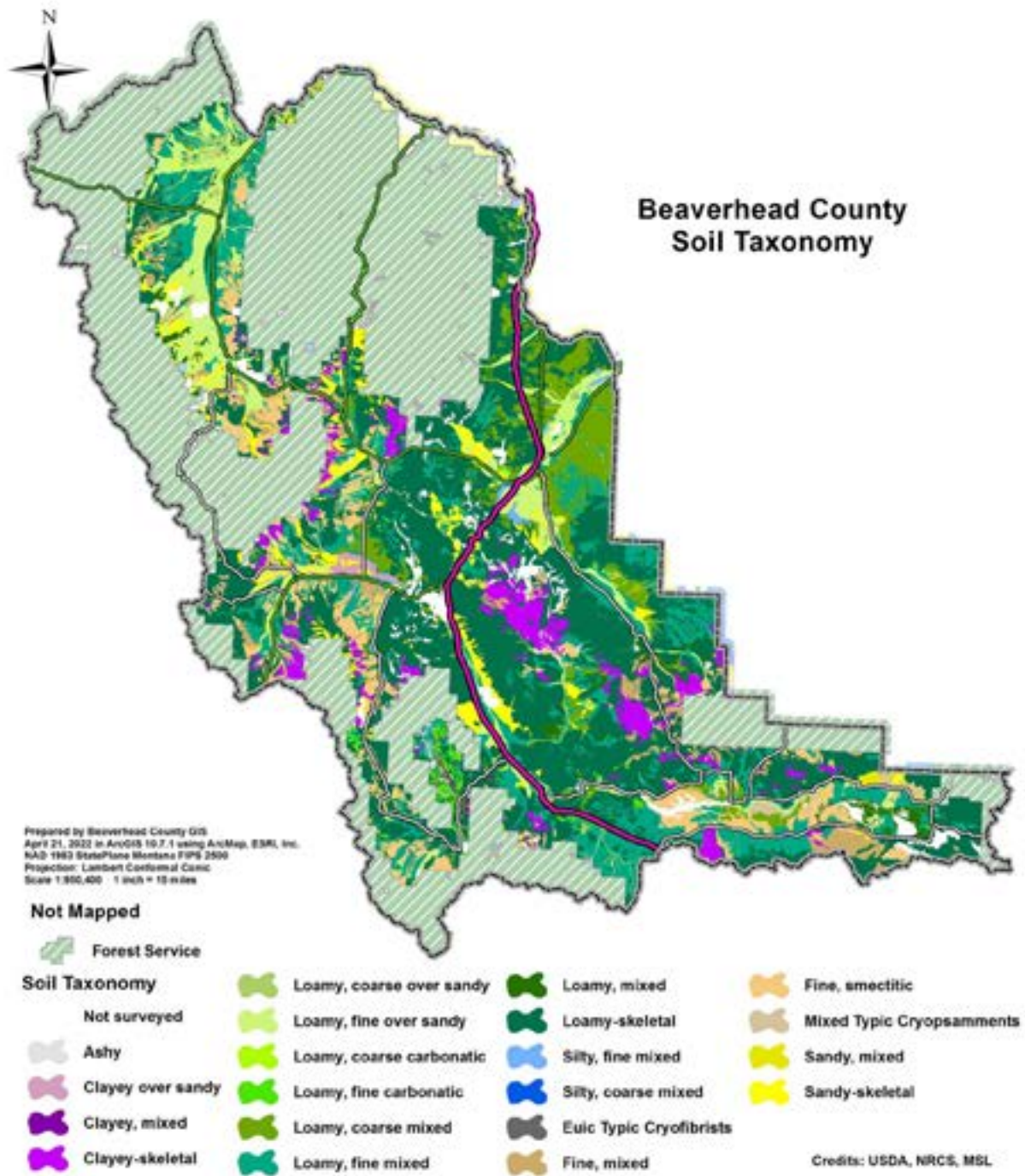
▼ Map 7 - Large Wildfires in the County and Surrounding Area (2000-2019)





# LAND USE

## ▼ Map 8 - Soils



# RESIDENT OUTREACH



The update of the County's Growth Policy has been based upon extensive resident advice and guidance over the last few years.

The County Planning Board created a community survey to assist in gathering advice and guidance from residents about what opportunities and issues are their priority. The survey was available to residents in a hardcopy format and online. Four hundred and thirty-nine (439) people completed the survey.

The survey results included the following:

- A majority of the respondents lived either in the City of Dillon or nearby.
- Quality of life, a rural lifestyle and access to public lands were the County's best assets.
- Lack of job opportunities, economic development and retail shopping were the greatest weaknesses.
- There is a tentative level of support for limiting or restricting residential development depending upon hazards, agricultural uses, and scenic values.

The County Planning Board has held many public meetings to gather resident input on the update of the Growth Policy. Between January 2018 and June 2022, the Board held thirty-seven (37) public meetings to work on the update. The Board held its statutory public hearing on [INSERT DATE] to recommend adoption of the Growth Policy to the County Commission.



# ACTION PLAN

Implementation of goals identified in this Growth Policy will take time and resources. Most important of all implementations will require a commitment by County residents and the County Commission to follow through on the guidance provided by the document. Implementation of this plan also includes meeting the statutory requirements for subdivision review, cooperation between the County and the City of Dillon and Town of Lima and the review and update of the document in the future. The objectives listed in each table correspond with the objectives by topic identified in the Goals and Objectives section of this plan.

Property Rights			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
PR-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update County regulations based upon statute and minimum requirements to achieve the County's goals.</li> </ul>	County	
PR-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide residents with clear and concise summaries of the County regulations, including the application and review processes.</li> </ul>	County	

Communications			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
C-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the County website to be more user friendly.</li> </ul>	County	
C-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a GIS mapping land use analysis and create an online land use mapping services.</li> </ul>	County	

Economy			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
E-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to provide fiscal support to the Beaverhead Development Corporation.</li> </ul>	County and Southwest Montana Development	
E-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct GIS mapping land use analysis and create an online mapping services.</li> <li>Consider the use of zoning regulations to protect the economic viability of agricultural operations.</li> <li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations to better protect agricultural operations from the impacts due to new residential development.</li> </ul>	County and Residents	
E-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a feasibility analysis to identify the properties most suitable for a business/industrial park in and around Dillon.</li> </ul>	County and City of Dillon	

# ACTION PLAN

Infrastructure			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
I-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a comprehensive County Capital Improvements Plan.</li> </ul>	County	

Local Services			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
LS-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an assessment of emergency medical services in the County to identify the best approaches to improving service.</li> </ul>	County and City of Dillon	
LS-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research the funding of emergency services through levies and assessments.</li> </ul>	County	

Land Use			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
LU-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations.</li> </ul>	County	
LU-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and adopt Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations.</li> </ul>	County	
LU-2.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the County Subdivision Regulations.</li> <li>Conduct a GIS mapping land use analysis and create an online mapping services.</li> </ul>	County	
LU-2.b			
LU-2.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update the County Sanitation Regulations</li> </ul>	County	
LU-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a rural improvement district policy and adoption process.</li> </ul>	County	
LU-3.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue community conversations about whether adoption of a development permit or zoning regulations are appropriate for the County.</li> </ul>		
LU-4.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mutual aid agreements for fire protection will be reviewed and updated if necessary.</li> </ul>	County, County fire departments, USFS, BLM and MT DNRC	
LU-7.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize and schedule twice a year meetings between the signatories to the Interagency Weed Management Program to discuss how to improve weed management in the County.</li> </ul>	County, USFS, BLM and MT DNRC	

Housing			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
H-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a housing assessment and plan for the County and other communities.</li> </ul>	County, City of Dillon, and Headwaters RCD	
H-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a GIS mapping land use analysis and create an online mapping services.</li> </ul>	County	

# ACTION PLAN

## SUBDIVISION REVIEW

The Montana Code Annotated requires that the County Commission provide a statement in the Growth Policy explaining how they will:

- define the review criteria found in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A. i.e., impacts upon agriculture, local services, public health, and safety etc.; and
- evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.

## DEFINITION OF 76-3-608 CRITERIA:

Beaverhead County will use the following definitions as found in the Subdivision Regulations for each of the criteria listed below.

- **Agriculture:** All aspects of farming or ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry; and any practices including carbon sequestration, forestry or lumbering operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.
- **Agricultural Water User Facilities:** Those facilities which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands for the production of agricultural products. These facilities include, but are not limited to water diversions, canals, ditches, wells, pumps, head gates, pipes, and other water conveying facilities.
- **Local Services:** Local services are defined as any and all services that local governments, public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.
- **Natural Environment:** The natural environment is defined as the physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, sound, light, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance.
- **Public Health and Safety:** The prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of well-being for the community at large. Conditions that relate to public health and safety include but are not limited to disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding, fire or wildfire hazards, rock falls or landslides, unstable soils, steep slopes, and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high-pressure gas lines; and air or vehicular traffic safety hazards.
- **Wildlife:** Those animals that are not domesticated or tamed, or as may be defined in a Growth Policy.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** The place or area where wildlife naturally lives or travels through.

## EVALUATION OF SUBDIVISIONS BASED UPON 76-3-608 CRITERIA

Subdivision applications and subdivision review by the County Planning Board will include documentation and an analysis of as to whether and to what extent the proposed subdivision will impact agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety as defined in this Growth Policy.

The County will evaluate each proposed subdivision with regard to the expected impacts upon each of the criteria, and the degree to which the subdivision applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse impacts. This evaluation will be based upon the subdivision application, staff review, and reports and information gathered from public hearings and other sources of information as deemed appropriate.

Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the County will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the Beaverhead County Subdivision Regulations, the County Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

# ACTION PLAN

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURE

- a. How many acres would be removed from the production of crops or livestock. Acreage will be obtained from Department of Revenue tax records?
- b. How many acres of prime soils or soils of statewide importance would be removed from County's agricultural base? Maps and land capability classifications developed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service shall be used to determine the agricultural significance of land.
- c. Can the un-subdivided remainder(s) continue to be used for farming or ranching unit by evaluating the use of the remainder and adjoining properties?
- d. What would be the potential conflicts between the proposed subdivision and adjacent agricultural operations including:
  - Interference with the movement of livestock or farm machinery
  - Interference with agricultural production and activities
  - Maintenance of fences
  - Proliferation of weeds
  - Increased human activity
  - Harassment of livestock by pets

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURAL WATER USER FACILITIES

- a. Will the proposed subdivision impact the location and proximity to a ditch, canal, headgate, sprinkler system, watering tank or developed spring?
- b. Could the potential subdivision create nuisance complaints or problems for agricultural water user facilities?
- c. Would the water user facilities pose a safety hazard to subdivision residents?
- d. Ownership of water rights and the historic and current use of the facility on the proposed subdivision shall be examined. Easements to protect the use of water user facilities on or accessed through a subdivision shall be considered.
- e. Allocation of water rights, if applicable, within a subdivision shall be considered.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS UPON LOCAL SERVICES

- a. How will increased demand on services and need to expand services be affected by the proposed subdivision?
  - Ambulance Service
  - Fire Department

# ACTION PLAN

- Parks and Recreation
  - Law Enforcement
  - Schools
  - Solid Waste Management
  - Road and Bridge Management
- b. How will the proposed subdivision affect the cost to provide services?
- Current and anticipated tax revenues
  - Cost of services for the subdivision

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- a. Are there any expected alterations of any streambanks? Any draining, filling, or alteration of any wetland?
- b. Would cuts and/or fills on slopes be needed for road or building construction?
- c. Will there be significant removal of vegetation that could be contributing to soil erosion or bank or slope instability?
- d. Will the subdivision design maintain significant open space?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. Are there potential man-made hazards to residents of the subdivision from high voltage lines, high-pressure gas lines, highways, roads, railroads, or railroad crossings, nearby industrial or mining activity?
- b. Will the subdivision create unsafe traffic conditions?
- c. Are there natural hazards such as flooding, high winds, wildfire, or site issues such as high-water table, expansive soils or excessive slopes that would create hazards or building challenges?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- a. Is the subdivision located in critical wildlife areas such as big game wintering range, calving areas, migration routes, nesting areas, wetlands, or habitat for endangered or threatened species?
- b. Will resident activity impact wildlife?

Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the County will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the County Subdivision Regulations, the County Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.



# ACTION PLAN

## PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURE-SUBDIVISIONS

The Beaverhead County Planning Board conducts their meetings open to the public following the public notice requirements as prescribed by state code. Major subdivisions and those minor subdivisions treated as major subdivisions are subject to public hearings. Minor subdivisions shall not have public hearings.

The Beaverhead County Planning Board shall provide public notice of proposed subdivisions following the notice requirements as prescribed by statute. Public hearings are required for major subdivisions and subsequent minor subdivisions. Hearings are not permitted for first minor subdivisions.

Public hearings held by the Planning Board shall use the following format:

1. The Beaverhead County Planner reads into the minutes the property developer's proposal.
2. The Beaverhead County Planner presents an itemized list of Findings of Fact and any subsequent actions the developer must abide to as listed in the Beaverhead County Subdivision Regulations.
3. Once the planner's report is read into the meeting's report, the planning board members enter into deliberation and discussion regarding the planner's report.
4. At the end of the discussion, the Board Chair opens the meeting to public input which may take the form of 'For,' 'Against' and 'Neutral' comments. (Depending on the number of public desiring to make comment, the Board Chair may determine a reasonable comment time period.)
5. Once the 'For,' 'Against' and 'Neutral' comment period has ended, each Board Member will be given time to ask for (using equal comment time) any 'For,' 'Against' and 'Neutral' comments from the public.
6. Once the Board / Public discussion has ended, the Board Chair will close the public input period.
7. At this point, the Board will make motions to amend or accept any Findings of Fact presented in the Planner's Report as per Board vote.
8. The Board will then vote to accept the Planners Findings of Fact as written or as modified.
9. The board may then make motions to cite any new Findings of Fact into the report. Each new Findings of Fact will be included into the Planner's Report only after a vote by the Board.
10. The Board will then vote to accept or deny sending the Planner's Report to go before the County Commissioners.

## CODE OF THE WEST: BEAVERHEAD COUNTY

In order to help people moving to the County make educated and informed decisions before they purchase property in the County, the County Planning Board has developed an updated version of the "Code of the West." The Code is meant to provide insight as to how new residents might build in ways that can help to preserve the natural beauty and rural character of the County. A full version of the County's Code can be found on the County's website.

# ACTION PLAN

## HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION AND COVENANTS

In the County, after the filing of the final plat, subdivisions are considered self-regulating through the use of a local Homeowner Association (HOA) that meet the standards of Title 35 of the Montana Code Annotated. When a subdivider/developer proposes to create a new subdivision, a list of restrictive covenants (rules) and HOA bylaws that would govern land use within subdivision must be presented to the County Planner and Planning Board for review prior to approval of the subdivision by the County Commission. Covenants are meant to address issues within a subdivision ranging from land use, livestock, home construction, to home occupations, future subdivision, road maintenance. Because the County does not have any zoning regulations to govern land use, HOA's and covenants are a valuable tool for residents to manage land use within their subdivisions.

## COORDINATION WITH THE CITY OF DILLON AND TOWN OF LIMA

The County will coordinate its efforts to implement this Growth Policy with the City of Dillon and Town of Lima in the following ways:

- Create a City-County Growth Task Force to address residential development issues within the City's one-mile planning area.
- Continue to have the City and County Planning Boards review subdivision applications within the City Planning Area.
- Develop cooperative strategies to encourage thoughtful growth within the City Planning Area.

## COORDINATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

There are many local, state, and federal agencies and organizations within the County that provide public services or management of lands. Examples include the Jackson Water & Sewer District, Fire Districts, Montana Department of Transportation, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, Bureau of Land Management and United States Forest Service.

To the best of its ability, the County Commission and the County Planning Board will notify the appropriate organizations and agencies about projects taking place in the County.

## CONDITIONS AND TIMING FOR REVIEW AND REVISION

To be a useful and relevant document that will assist the County in making decisions regarding the issues it faces; the Growth Policy will need to be periodically reviewed and updated.

The document will be reviewed every 5 years from the date of its adoption. The County Planning Board will be the entity responsible for reviewing the Policy and will make any recommendations regarding revisions or changes to the County Commission. Future reviews will include an evaluation of every section of the Policy. It is anticipated that a full update of the Policy will be necessary within 10 years of its original adoption.

The Growth Policy may also be revised when a situation or issue has been identified by the public that necessitates changes or when changes are deemed to be in the public interest by the Planning Board or the County Commission. It is also possible that Legislative changes to the Growth Policy statutes may require significant amendments or changes. Finally, amendments to the Policy may also be necessary when litigation in the Commission or elsewhere in Montana sets legal precedent that is clearly contrary to the stated goals, objectives, or implementation strategies in the Growth Policy.

# SOURCES

## *Introduction*

1. National Weather Service
2. Beaverhead County
3. United States Census Bureau

## *Population Characteristics*

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System
2. United States Census Bureau

## *Economy*

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System
2. Montana Department of Commerce, Housing Division
3. Montana Department of Transportation

4. Northern Plains Resource Council
5. United States Department of Agriculture

## *Local Services & Public Facilities*

1. Beaverhead County
2. Montana Department of Transportation

## *Housing*

1. American Community Survey, Census Bureau

## *Land Use*

1. Beaverhead County
2. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
3. Montana Department of Revenue
4. Montana State Library

## RECOMMENDED READING SUPPLEMENT

1. Code of the New West (Beaverhead County)



[www.greatwesteng.com](http://www.greatwesteng.com)

**BILLINGS**

6780 Trade Center Ave.  
Billings, MT 59101  
Phone: (406) 652-5000  
Fax: (406) 248-1363

**BOISE**

3050 N. Lakeharbor Ln.  
Suite 201  
Boise, ID 83703  
Phone: (208) 576-6646

**GREAT FALLS**

702 2nd Street South, Suite 2  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
Phone: (406) 952-1109

**HELENA**

2501 Belt View Drive  
Helena, MT 59601  
Phone: (406) 449-8627  
Fax: (406) 449-8631

**SPOKANE**

9221 N. Division St.,  
Suite F  
Spokane, WA 99218  
Phone: (509) 413-1430

