

Environmental Quality

The following is a list of pertinent existing policies extracted from current community planning documents including the 2005 Missoula County Growth Policy, and the 1998 Urban Area Comprehensive Plan, along with other general issue-based plans (like Transportation and Parks Plans as appropriate). The intent of this list is to provide an abbreviated and consolidated view of existing policies that relate to the focus group topic without necessarily having to sift through numerous plans. It is not an exhaustive list but is a quick reference and a resource. Full documents are available on the City's web site.

Potential Topics associated with the Focus Group theme: Agriculture, Hazards, Water, Floodplain, Urban Forest, Open Space, Climate Change, Wildland Urban Interface, Gravel/Sand.

2005 Missoula County Growth Policy

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GOALS

1. Create sustainable relationships between human activities and natural systems.
2. Protect the natural environment and improve it where degradation has occurred.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Integrate development patterns with preservation or enhancement of the environment.
2. Maintain and improve air quality in the urban area.
3. Minimize the impact of land development on surface and subsurface water.
4. Preserve the floodplain for flood attenuation, aquifer recharge, fish and wildlife habitat, buffer for pollutants and protection of public health and safety.
5. Promote natural stream function and stability.
6. Protect riparian corridors to provide wildlife habitat and movement areas and to buffer water bodies.
7. Preserve existing wetlands and restore historic wetlands wherever possible.
8. Promote best management practices for development and construction projects along wetlands and water bodies to reduce impacts to surface water quality and recharge zones.
9. Protect areas critical for wildlife survival and minimize impacts on less critical wildlife habitat.
10. Preserve critical plant communities such as species of limited distribution and riparian vegetation.
11. Preserve and enhance the urban forest.
12. Minimize the spread of noxious weeds.
13. Preserve areas with scenic open space value (river corridors, vistas). Increase opportunities for preservation of and appropriate use of natural areas and green spaces within and around Missoula.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN AND LAND USE GOALS

1. Identify where in Missoula County certain types of growth should or should not occur and how the integration of developed lands and open spaces can best be accomplished.
2. Provide for logical expansion of communities while maintaining environmental quality and keeping the expenditures for public services and facilities at a reasonable level.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND LAND USE OBJECTIVES

5. Preserve and enhance natural vegetation and encourage landscaping that will protect soils, air and water quality, visual amenities, other environmental features, and reduce conflicts between land use activities.
9. Balance the consideration of efficient public services, preservation of natural resources, continuation of agricultural opportunities, and availability of existing lands within the Missoula Urban Service Area by referring to the Residential Development Allocation Map (Map 18) for identification of where residential development should occur within the Missoula Urban Service Area.

RESIDENTIAL

11. Encourage a residential land use pattern that provides a high quality living environment in a variety of residential settings, protects public health and safety, minimizes local government service costs, and preserves natural resources.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

15. Conserve resources and minimize transportation demand in rural areas by structuring commercial centers around existing facilities.

ECONOMY GOALS

2. Encourage economic development to occur in ways that conserve and enhance natural and human resources.
3. Manage growth to maintain and enhance the economy of Missoula County to support a diverse population, strong community, and healthy environment.

HOUSING GOALS

1. Achieve the overall mix and placement of housing needed to support a community rich in social, cultural, and economic diversity and an environment rich with natural resources.

HOUSING OBJECTIVES

4. Design and locate homes to minimize impacts on natural resources and the physical environment and to maximize social resources while meeting emerging needs. Locate housing in proximity to physical, technological, social, and economic infrastructure.

GENERAL LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES OBJECTIVES

1. Provide adequate infrastructure to ensure a healthy natural, economic, and social environment in Missoula County. Ensure the availability and affordability of infrastructure such as sewer, water, transportation, public safety, health and social services, public lands, parks and other open spaces, cultural resources, and education.

TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

1. Improve, rather than extend, the present transportation system network for the conservation of natural resources, energy and public funds.
3. Provide accommodations for and promote the use of more sustainable modes of transportation, including public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Expand the service of the transportation network by providing families, commuters, and senior citizens access to community and neighborhood centers. Promote the use of renewable energy and less reliance on fossil fuels.
4. Address noise, air quality, and safety impacts of major transportation facilities on adjacent land uses.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES OBJECTIVES

3. Develop opportunities for public recreational use of rivers and lakes while protecting environmental quality and private property.

1998 Urban Comprehensive Plan

I. GOALS

A. ENHANCED NATURAL RESOURCES

I. A. NATURAL RESOURCES -- THE ENVIRONMENT

We recognize the close connection between our development pattern and our environmental health. We also recognize the importance of a healthy environment to our sense of social, economic, and physical well-being. Preserving or enhancing the condition of our environment is one of the most important goals for well-managed growth.

Guiding Principles:

1. Our physical environment forms a continuum ranging from natural wilderness to densely populated urban landscape.
2. The topography of the County, with historic and current development, offers two patterns:
 - (a) rural, small town, and urban areas; and
 - (b) mountains and hills, valley floors, and streams and rivers.
3. We need to respect the different elements of these patterns and integrate them so as to form a functional, aesthetically pleasing, and livable whole.
4. Missoula County can and should move toward sustainable relationships between human activities and natural systems.
5. Social and economic factors are included in the broadest definition of "environment."

Considerations: In determining how best to approach the integration of patterns of development and preservation or enhancement of the environment, we should consider the following:

1. Identify critical lands (e.g., riparian resources, wildlife habitat, scenic land) so that growth or development can be guided for their protection.
 2. Locate open spaces that are recreational (parks, ball fields, golf courses, etc.) near areas where development already exists or where it is desired.
 3. Accommodate growth, retain historical resources, and provide appropriate open spaces in the design of development so that areas of greater density remain healthy, safe, and livable.
 4. Make decisions about infrastructure recognizing that they affect, deter or promote integration of development and environmental values.
 5. Recognize the fragile status of air and water quality and the carrying capacity of the County.
 6. Consider the actual, measured, and desired levels of public health and environmental health.
 7. Review the current status of regulations governing environmental and health standards.
 8. Develop funding mechanisms for environmental protection programs.
 9. Consider re-development opportunities for both developed and undeveloped areas.
- Undeveloped areas may offer the chance to re-aggregate lots and thereby allow beneficial master-planning of larger parcels to occur.

Action: Identify where in Missoula County certain types of growth should or should not occur and how the integration of developed lands and open spaces can best be accomplished. In areas designated as suitable for development, identify what types and levels of development are suitable and why they are. For areas designated as best left undeveloped, clarify concerns about environmental quality or open space values that make us want to protect these lands from development while recognizing and respecting the rights of private property owners. Consider environmental conditions and threats that exist throughout Missoula County. We should use the Cumulative Effects--Carrying Capacity Study information to help us determine how best to mitigate environmental problems, and how best to preserve the fragile elements of our physical environment. We may employ development guidelines and other tools to protect hillsides, riparian areas, wildlife habitat, and air and water quality.

II. B. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We recognize the role of a strong, diverse economy in maintaining the overall well-being of Missoula County residents. A primary objective of managing growth is to maintain and enhance the economy of Missoula County to support a diverse population, strong community, and healthy environment.

Guiding Principles:

3. Healthy economic development should occur in ways that conserve and enhance our natural and human resources.

Considerations: In determining how best to approach economic development opportunities and issues, we should consider the following:

2. There is substantial economic value in Missoula County's quality of life (natural open spaces, cultural activities, educational offerings, and relatively low crime rate).

III. GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS

We recognize that the City, County, other governmental bodies and citizen groups have the ability to manage growth and change through the effective implementation of a variety of incentives, regulations, and other means. Desired positive effects of well-managed growth can only be achieved if effective tools are in place to implement plans and strategies.

Guiding Principles:

3. Tools used by the City, County, and other governing bodies should reflect the values of the citizens they serve and effectively accomplish the goal to a) protect critical lands and natural resources, and b) enhance human resources and the valued characteristics of our communities.

Considerations: As we undertake growth management planning, we should consider the following:

4. Carefully examine tools used successfully elsewhere, such as development standards, impact fees, permit limitations, transfer of development rights, etc.

The following are related goal excerpts from existing issue-based plans

Long Range Transportation Plan (2012)

- Maintain our existing transportation system
- Improve the efficiency, performance and connectivity of the a balanced transportation system
- Maximize the cost-effectiveness of transportation

- Promote consistency between the land use and transportation plan to enhance mobility and accessibility
- Provide safe and secure transportation
- Support economic vitality
- Protect the Environment and Conserve Resources

The Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan (2006)

1. Preserve natural systems through open space acquisition and conservation easements.
 - Protect, maintain, and enhance areas that sustain our human, plant, and animal communities.
 - Protect and preserve natural areas and open spaces of local and regional significance for the benefit of future generations.
 - Preserve places of refuge and travel corridors for wildlife and people.
 - Protect river corridors, aquifer recharge areas, and other water sources.
2. Protect areas that reflect other community open space values, such as geologic, historic, archaeological, and other cultural resources.
 - Preserve scenic viewpoints and viewsheds.
 - Protect the visual reminders of our geologic history.
 - Spatially define the shape of our growing community in a way that honors its significant land forms and natural features.
 - Preserve significant agricultural lands in their historic use.
3. More fully connect urban area open spaces, and link them to the other major open lands adjacent to the urban area.
 - Provide appropriate public access to natural areas and open spaces, including improved opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle access and interaction throughout our community.
4. Use a broad range of financial and administrative tools to conserve open space areas.
 - Pursue public/private partnerships, the full array of conservation methods, regulatory approaches, leveraging funds, and volunteer and pro bono expertise.

2009 Master Parks and Recreation Plan for the Greater Missoula Area

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

2011 Missoula Active Transportation Plan

- Increase non-motorized trips and the percentage of residents and visitors who choose non-motorized modes of transportation for work and school commutes, social and recreational trips.
- Protect the Missoula area's natural resources and environment during the design and construction of new facilities.