



**Work Session Meeting Agenda**  
**2 Park Drive South, Great Falls, MT**  
**Gibson Room, Civic Center**  
**April 07, 2026**  
**5:30 PM**

The agenda packet material is available on the City’s website: <https://greatfallsmt.gov/AgendaCenter>. The Public may view and listen to the meeting on government access channel City-190, cable channel 190; or online at <https://greatfallsmt.gov/344/Live-Meetings>.

Public participation is welcome in the following ways:

- Attend in person.
- Provide public comments in writing by 12:00 PM the day of the meeting: Mail to City Clerk, PO Box 5021, Great Falls, MT 59403, or via email to: [commission@greatfallsmt.net](mailto:commission@greatfallsmt.net). Include the agenda item or agenda item number in the subject line, and include the name of the commenter and either an address or whether the commenter is a city resident. Written communication received by that time will be shared with the City Commission and appropriate City staff for consideration during the agenda item, and, will be so noted in the official record of the meeting.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*(Public comment on agenda items or any matter that is within the jurisdiction of the City Commission. Please keep your remarks to a maximum of five (5) minutes. Speak into the microphone, and state your name and either your address or whether you are a city resident for the record.)*

**WORK SESSION ITEMS**

1. Growth Policy Update - Presented by Brock Cherry.

**DISCUSSION POTENTIAL UPCOMING WORK SESSION TOPICS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE**

Special Commission Work Session, Monday April 20, 2026 2:00-6:30 p.m.

Commission Work Session, Tuesday April 21, 2026 5:30 p.m.

Commission Meeting, Tuesday April 21, 2026 7:00 p.m.



**City of Great Falls – Growth Policy Update**  
**“Future Great Falls 2045”**  
April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
City Commission Work Session

## Our Goal for Today

- **To determine whether this draft is substantively complete enough to begin the formal adoption process**, with the understanding that refinements and revisions can continue as the process moves forward.
- We may still find a few typos, formatting issues, and other edits. Staff will continue reviewing and refining the document for grammar, spelling, formatting, and similar clean-up items all the way through adoption.



# Introduction – Why a Growth Policy?

- Required by state statute, the newly adopted, Montana Land Use Planning Action (MLUPA).
- The City’s current Growth Policy was adopted in 2013.
- The Growth Policy provides a level of predictability for residents and developers alike – **“Frustration is born out of unmet expectation.”**
- Coordinated planning allows the City both internally and externally to maximize our resources for desired outcomes.



# Growth Policy Project Timeline: 33 Months in the Making



# The Growth Policy: A Quick Overview

<b>Chapter 2</b> Past & Present Conditions	<b>Chapter 3</b> Public Engagement Summary	<b>Chapter 4</b> Vision Statement & Planning Principles	<b>Chapter 5</b> Future Land Use Types & Future Land Use Map	<b>Chapter 6</b> Fiscal Chapter	<b>Chapter 7</b> Planning Focus Areas & Concepts	<b>Chapter 8</b> Goals & Action
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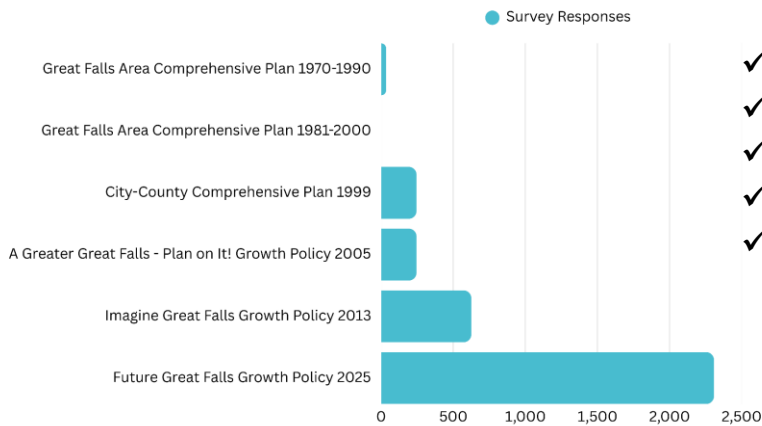
## Chapter 2 – Past & Present Conditions (Pg. 11)

- Population growth has been slow (less than 2% increase from 2010)
- Aging infrastructure and housing shortages are key challenges
- Strong assets:
  - Regional hub for healthcare, education, agriculture, and military
  - Extensive parks, trails, and natural features
  - Revitalization of Downtown
- Development patterns show:
  - Suburban expansion + underutilized areas in the core
  - Opportunity for infill and reinvestment
  - Need for consideration of public services and new/existing infrastructure



# Chapter 3 – Public Engagement (Pg. 58)

“Greatest public engagement effort in the City’s history...”



- ✓ 150+ hours of engagement
- ✓ 97 Meetings/Presentations
- ✓ 27 Media features
- ✓ 63 Social Media posts
- ✓ 2308 Survey responses

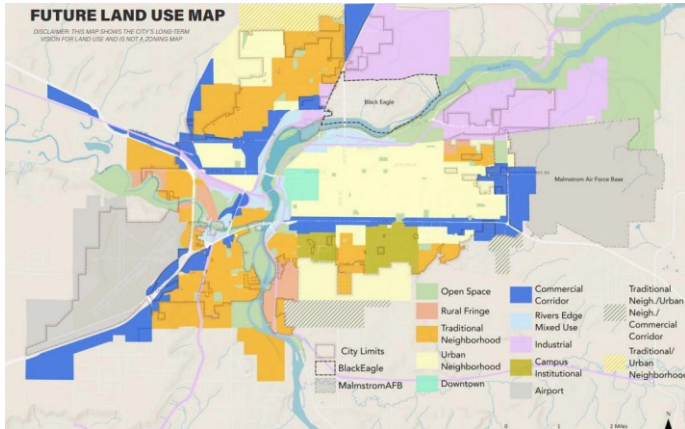


# Chapter 4 – Planning Principles & Framework (Pg. 73)

- Establishes the **community vision** (pg.74) for Great Falls
- Defines core **planning principles** (pgs.75-76) to guide decisions:
  - *Montana Values*
  - *Community Building*
  - *Economic Vitality*
  - *Intentional Growth and Innovation*
  - *Community Connection and Place-Making*
  - *Participatory Planning*



# Chapter 5 – Future Land Use Types & Future Land Use Map (Pg. 77; Land Use Map Pg. 101)



What the Future Land Use Map is and isn't:

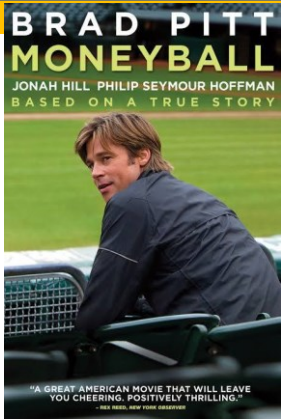
- NOT a Zoning Map – Does NOT provide development rights.
- IS a key component of the basis of decisions for Land Use – It will inform development code changes, land use decisions and the like.



# Chapter 6 – A Fiscally Conscious Future (Pg. 103)

*"Service, Efficiency, and the Cost of Growth"*

- Great Falls' fiscal health depends not just on growth, but on the cost of serving that growth. The form, location, and intensity of development determine whether it strengthens or strains long-term stability.
- Projecting taxable value helps show how different development patterns support the tax base that funds core City services. As Great Falls grows, financial analysis and infrastructure planning should help align development with long-term service and utility capacity.





# Chapter 7 – Focus Areas & Concepts (Pg. 111)

- Applies the plan to **focus areas and corridors**
- **Demonstrates** how vision becomes real, physical change
- Identifies:
  - Potential growth areas
  - Redevelopment opportunities
  - Policies, regulations, and design tools needed
- Encourages:
  - Mixed Use development
  - Housing diversity
  - Walkability and connectivity



# Chapter 8 – Goals & Implementation (Pg. 131)

**TABLE 8.2 - IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS	ACTION STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<b>MONTANA VALUES</b>	<p><b>8.2.1</b> Minimize Safety Hazards and Overhead Interference: Public safety and emergency service capacity to grow, amend, and enhance facilities. Provide clear public information about how development requests impact trees, zoning, utilities, and long-term service costs.</p> <p><b>8.2.2</b> Preserve Open Space as Part of City Day Living: Update land development regulations to allow clearing and open space dedication in growth areas to preserve agricultural and wildlife corridors and wetlands.</p> <p><b>8.2.3</b> Development Process Accountability and Infrastructure Stewardship: Support transparent, measurable, and predictable development review and infrastructure management by aligning practices with state goals, federal standards, utility standards, and a multi-jurisdictional "Call to Action" Plan based on the Growth Policy and Urban Land Use Map.</p>	<p>PO Dept., Great Falls Fire Rescue, Great Falls Public Department, Public Works, Cascade County City Manager's Office, Finance Dept., Communications Specialist, and other emergency service providers.</p> <p>PO Dept., Public Works, Parks &amp; Recreation</p> <p>Public Works, PO Dept., Finance Dept., Cascade County Manager, NARC, NEI, and NPI</p>	<p>Public safety service capacity and response times are clearly defined and integrated into annexation, subdivision, and major development review processes. Public information is available regarding public, fire, and emergency service capacity, service requests, facility needs, and long-term operating costs. Growth decisions are better aligned with available public safety capacity to ensure consistent service levels, improve transparency, reduce late-stage program changes, and prevent unexpected service gaps in growth areas.</p> <p>Update land development regulations to allow dedicated development and open space dedication in suitable growth areas to better preserve agricultural land, wildlife corridors, wetlands, and other natural features while effectively supporting growth. The updated code should enable dedicated development to proceed to right-of-way clear standards, without requiring a separate approval process, as long as open space and other relevant requirements are met. Licenses &amp; Permits is updated to align land development regulations, increased use of dedicated development options, such as right-of-way, and preservation of open space in new growth areas.</p> <p>Publicly available development review timelines, checklists, pre-application requirements, and permit tracking tools enhance transparency, predictability, and accountability. Performance is measured through review times, materials, decision milestones, annual spending, and per-acre program investments to increasing completion applications. Review time program changes happen due to clear standards, infrastructure expectations, and cost responsibilities, resulting in more consistent application of adopted standards and more efficient review and regulatory decisions. Existing public facilities are inventoried and evaluated for capacity, with future infrastructure needs are identified based on growth projections. Prioritized Capital Improvements Plan is developed, funded, and adopted through the budget process with estimated costs, funding strategies, and effective management of the Strategic Capital Improvement Program.</p>

- Provides an **action plan** to implement the Growth Policy
- Specific strategies and recommendations
- Partners involved
- Timelines
- Designed to be a living document - planned reviews and updates.

**TABLE 8.3 - INTERMEDIATE PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS	ACTION STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<b>MONTANA VALUES</b>	<p><b>8.3.1</b> Address Flood Resilience and Emergency Preparedness: Prepare for natural hazards and climate change through emergency preparedness planning, wildfire risk reduction, and floodplain management that protect lives and property.</p> <p><b>8.3.2</b> Create, Build, Coordinate, Cross-Collaborate, Engage, and Communicate: Identify shared opportunities, responsibilities, and resources for regional development coordination with the City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and other local, regional, and state agencies. Support shared economic development, infrastructure, land use, transportation, and environmental planning.</p> <p><b>8.3.3</b> Neighborhood Action Plans and Technical Assistance: Support resident-led neighborhood development through Neighborhood Action Partnership Program for projects that meet goals and technical assistance needs.</p>	<p>City of Finance, Great Falls PD, Great Falls Community Risk Management Committee, Cascade County Emergency Management Services, Public Works</p> <p>PO Dept., City Manager's Office, Parks &amp; Recreation, Utility, City Staff, and other agencies</p> <p>PO Dept., Public Works, Parks &amp; Recreation, Neighborhood Councils, Land Use</p>	<p>A Community Wildfire Protection Plan is updated or a city-specific hazard mitigation study and plan is completed. Available maps are updated, and hazard data are more consistently used in public information, development, and infrastructure decisions that protect lives and property.</p> <p>Regional and local historical consultation efforts to city not project to improve cultural sites, traditional knowledge, and the heritage of the area. Infrastructure changes that improve safety and accessibility are coordinated between the City and other agencies. Shared economic development, infrastructure, land use, and service alignment, and inclusion of other housing, healthcare, and economic development community planning and implementation. Support may be demonstrated through MOUs, committee representation, and joint project outcomes.</p> <p>Create a Neighborhood Action Partnership Program that offers small annual grants and technical assistance for resident-led projects, such as community gardens, local business, neighborhood art, and design. The program should identify and secure funding sources to be established citywide, fund at least three projects annually, and encourage active participation from City Council districts.</p>
<b>COMMUNITY BUILDING</b>	<p><b>8.3.4</b> Build Civic Leadership, Sustainability, and Resilience: Partner with Great Falls High School, the University of Providence, Great Falls College MSU, and other higher education, trade, and workforce training partners to create youth and young adult programs in arts, leadership, sustainability, and civic engagement to enhance participation in the Chamber's Leadership High School Program.</p>	<p>Great Falls High School, CSE, Cascade High School, PO Dept., Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., Neighborhood Councils, Cascade County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Department, and Cascade County Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>Partner with Great Falls Public Schools, the University of Providence, Great Falls College MSU, and other higher education, trade, and workforce training partners to develop youth and young adult programs to build leadership, sustainability, and resilience in all community projects such as that construction, park improvement, public art, neighborhood improvements, and the high school reuse project, implementing the Chamber's Leadership High School Program. Success is measured in increased participation in community projects.</p>
<b>ECONOMIC VITALITY</b>	<p><b>8.3.5</b> Promote Housing and Workforce Mobility: Collaborate with employers, developers, housing organizations, and educational institutions to align workforce housing, housing options, and workforce mobility with current and future workforce needs.</p> <p><b>8.3.6</b> Revitalize Commercial, Mixed-Use, and Industrial Districts: Refine commercial, mixed-use, and industrial zoning to allow flexible development and development options, including the right to lease, low-work, workforce, and appropriately scaled commercial uses, in areas where they are applicable and support broader neighborhood economic development goals.</p>	<p>PO Dept., Neighborhood Councils, Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, Workforce, PO Dept., the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Great Falls Home Builders Association</p> <p>PO Dept., UPFA</p>	<p>Establish workforce housing partnerships that unite employers, developers, housing organizations, educational institutions, and housing providers to better align housing needs with current and future workforce needs. The effort should ensure that employer, workforce, and workforce training partners to develop youth and young adult programs to build leadership, sustainability, and resilience in all community projects such as that construction, park improvement, public art, neighborhood improvements, and the high school reuse project, implementing the Chamber's Leadership High School Program. Success is measured in increased participation in community projects.</p> <p>Update the Land Development Code to enable more meaningful mixed-use zones that allow for light industrial, neighborhood scaled commercial, and workforce work opportunities in appropriate districts, and where appropriate create zoning flexibility to more effectively address commercial uses to support workforce housing needs. The updated code should distinguish between different types of commercial uses and development standards for residential and commercial development, and support an increase in new for industrial projects.</p> <p>Complete a review of zoning codes and use the results to implement zoning amendments that support neighborhood service businesses, workforce, and daily amenities in suitable locations, including health services, childcare, in-to-office uses, and neighborhood-scale retail. This effort should increase mixed-use and neighborhood commercial uses across downtown, enhance access to daily needs throughout the city, decrease the frequency of residents making trips to the City's major commercial centers for basic goods and services, and help reduce the commuting energy gap.</p>



# City Commission Policy Decisions

The City Commission will need to provide specific direction regarding the following:

- **The Future Land Use Type of the Little Shell Recreation & Gaming Facility.**
  - Currently, the subject property is designated as Traditional Neighborhood.
  - The Tribe has asked the FLUT to indicate its proposed commercial pursuits (Commercial Corridor).
  - Surrounding property owners are concerned about the character of their neighborhood.
- **Whether to officially sunset the Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan.**
  - The plan was adopted in 2004.
  - Some community members believe the plan is too dated; others believe the plan is still relevant.
  - Can be officially sunset with new Growth Policy.



# Commission Questions, Concerns, Recommendations, etc?





## City Commission Action Requested

**If the City Commission sees fit, City Staff requests direction to formally initiate the adoption process for the Growth Policy Update, which will include the following:**

- Planning Board Public Hearing & Recommendation on 4/28
- City Commission Resolution of Intent on 5/19
- City Commission Public Hearing & Adoption 6/16

