

Chapter 3: Community Goals / Objectives

3.0 Community Goals and Objectives

Introduction

The 2003 Growth Policy is a commitment to the residents of Yellowstone County that the local governments shall acknowledge and attempt to achieve public goals. The goals presented in this document result from extensive public comment and the values expressed through current issues and concerns. Goals are overarching statements that try to capture public values in simple, concise language. Goals describe desired conditions and are achieved in degrees and by specific actions. Every goal has one or more objectives which express a preferred outcome. Objectives are also simple statements, but objectives tend to describe specific results.

Goals help local governments establish benchmarks and are often used to support decisions. Many decisions made by City and County officials will be guided by the goals expressed in this Growth Policy. Certain actions and decisions, such as land use regulation, are required to be consistent with the goals and objectives listed in the Growth Policy.¹ For that reason, goals and objectives must be easy to interpret and applicable to the decisions or actions being made. When making decisions, elected officials, advisory boards and staff should consult these goals and objectives and ask “Will this project result in...”? The last part of this sentence should be completed with the applicable goal or objective. If the answer is yes, the project is consistent with the

Growth Policy. If the answer is no, it may be necessary to employ mitigating measures. In cases where a negative result cannot be mitigated, the decision to allow the action could be debated.

It is important to remember that goals are achieved by degrees, and even small decisions can move the community closer to a particular goal, or further away. These goals should be considered carefully but with common sense and an open mind; they are not regulations. They reflect community values that are subject to change, but they do provide the means to evaluate our actions and monitor our progress.

Community Goals and Objectives

Land Use Element

1. ISSUE: Existing neighborhood plans lack sufficient detail to address neighborhood character and preferred land use patterns.

GOAL: Predictable land use decisions that are consistent with neighborhood character and land use patterns.

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve neighborhood integrity.
- Empower neighborhood groups.

2. ISSUE: The current zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations do not meet the goal of preventing incompatible uses in and adjacent to existing City neighborhoods and County townsites.

GOAL: New developments that are sensitive to and compatible with the character of adjacent City neighborhoods and County townsites.²

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain a high quality of life for new and existing residents.
- Reduce conflicts between neighbors.
- Improve the appearance of land uses.

3. ISSUE: Rural townsites are not prepared to handle increased growth.

GOAL: Growth management tools available to rural townsites.

OBJECTIVES:

- Empower communities to direct growth.
- Use County resources and services more efficiently.
- Create a sense of community.

4. ISSUE: Urban sprawl threatens the rural character of land surrounding Billings, increases the cost of providing public services, and threatens the vitality of the city core and downtown area.

GOAL: Contiguous development focused in and around existing population centers separated by open space.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure the continued functionality of natural systems.
- Use City and County resources in a cost effective manner.
- Create attractive communities.

5. ISSUE: There is a serious lack of affordable housing for low to moderate income households.³

GOAL: Affordable housing for all income levels dispersed throughout the City and County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life of low income people.
- Preserve and rehabilitate the existing supply of affordable housing.
- Promote social equity and diversity.
- Create more affordable housing and work towards replacing housing lost through demolition.

6. ISSUE: There is a desire for more mixed-use neighborhoods.

GOAL: More housing and business choices within each neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve quality of life.
- Encourage more live-work environments.
- Reduce commuting and subsequent drain on natural resources.
- Develop more self-contained neighborhoods.

Economic Development

1. ISSUE: Lack of focus in economic development.

GOAL: Coordinated economic development efforts that target business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Strengthen area economy.
- Create living-wage jobs.

2. ISSUE: Lack of living-wage jobs.

GOAL: Increase the median income of households and individuals.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Attract and retain skilled labor.
- Reduce dependency on social programs.

3. ISSUE: Entryways to our communities should be attractive and not present physical barriers discouraging economic development.

GOAL: Attractive and accessible communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage new businesses to locate in Billings and gateway areas.
- Reduce travel time through town.
- Convey a business-friendly attitude.
- Increase the visual appeal of our highway and railroad corridors.

4. ISSUE: Government supported programs and improvements are not sufficiently funded.

GOAL: Improved public services.

OBJECTIVES:

- Construct safe and efficient infrastructure.
- Respond in a timely manner to public service needs.

5. ISSUE: Like many other Montana cities, the economic viability of Downtown Billings is uncertain.⁴

GOAL: An economically and culturally vibrant Downtown Billings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve and promote economic development of Downtown Billings.
- Create a strong central “core” for our community.
- Establish downtown as a recognizable landmark.

Aesthetics

1. ISSUE: There are areas in the City and County that are unattractive and present a poor image of the community.

GOAL: Visually appealing communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the image of the community.
- Instill pride in the community.
- Improve the quality of life for residents.

2. ISSUE: New development and signs, cell towers, power lines and other structures could reduce the visual quality of the rims.

GOAL: Unobstructed views of the rimrocks surrounding the City of Billings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the visual image of Billings.
- Protect a publicly recognized landmark.

3. ISSUE: Urban interstate corridors through the County are unattractive.

GOAL: An inviting and attractive urban interstate corridor through the County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve signage standards.
- Provide more aesthetic open space.
- Develop more greenspace.
- Develop attractive and well-maintained rest areas.

Natural Resources

1. ISSUE: The quality of the Yellowstone River and the associated riparian habitat is threatened.

GOAL: A healthy river ecosystem system that supports multiple uses.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure high water quality.
- Ensure continued recreational access.
- Protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

2. ISSUE: Water is an important resource and it is becoming scarcer.

GOAL: A sustainable supply of clean water.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public health.
- Reduce the cost of groundwater remediation.

3. ISSUE: Due in part to the arid nature of our environment and the remoteness of some developments, there is an increased risk to human life and property from wildfires.

GOAL: Minimize loss of life and property damage resulting from wildfires.

OBJECTIVES:

- Save lives and property.
- Utilize fire protection resources more efficiently.
- Protect the natural environment.

4. ISSUE: Weeds detract from the beauty of an area, pose a fire danger, and reduce the productivity of agricultural land.

GOAL: Controlled weed populations.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve range productivity.
- Preserve native vegetation.
- Reduce the risk of wildfire and potential for erosion.

5. ISSUE: Human encounters with wildlife often result in a painful consequence for wildlife, pets, and humans.

GOAL: Reduced opportunities for negative human and wildlife encounters.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce needless injury or death of wildlife and pets.
- Minimize property damage caused by wildlife.
- Protect human life and property.

6. ISSUE: Certain development is damaging our natural resources.

GOAL: Protection of groundwater, surface water, riparian areas, air quality, and productive agricultural land.

OBJECTIVES:

- Use City and County resources in a cost effective manner.
- Protect public health.
- Ensure the continued functionality of natural systems.

Open Space and Recreation

1. ISSUE: Some neighborhood parks appear to receive more funding for improvements than other neighborhood parks.

GOAL: Rational consideration of neighborhoods for park expenditures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide well-maintained and equipped neighborhood parks and improve undeveloped parks.
- Create neighborhood parks designed to meet the needs of the neighborhood.
- Empower neighborhoods to provide direction for budgetary decisions.

2. ISSUE: Billings and Yellowstone County need more major recreation facilities and need to improve those we already have.

GOAL: Recreation facilities that serve the diverse recreational needs of Billings and Yellowstone County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Meet the recreation needs of City and County residents.
- Improve the quality of life of residents.
- Encourage the development of all athletes.

3. ISSUE: Private land development sometimes restricts access to public land.

GOAL: Accessible public lands.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve relations between users and landowners.
- Ensure the public use of public land.

4. ISSUE: Billings and surrounding County town-sites needs more multiple use trails.

GOAL: A multi-purpose trail network integrated into the community infrastructure that emphasizes safety, environmental preservation, resource conservation and cost effectiveness.

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop non-motorized connections between residential neighborhoods and work places.
- Provide convenient access to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Improve quality of life for residents.

5. ISSUE: Public access to areas above and below the rimrocks is limited and decreasing each year.

GOAL: Protect and increase the availability of public access to natural areas and trails near the rims.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public use of a well-recognized and economically valuable natural resource.
- Increase recreation options for residents.
- Preserve a unique Billings' feature.

6. ISSUE: Public access to areas along the Yellowstone River is limited and decreasing each year.

GOAL: Protect and increase the availability of public access to natural areas and trails along the River.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public use of a well-recognized and economically valuable natural resource.
- Increase recreation options for residents.
- Preserve a unique Billings' feature.

Transportation

1. ISSUE: Speeding in City neighborhoods and outlying communities.

GOAL: Safe traffic speeds consistent with the surrounding uses.

OBJECTIVES:

- Decrease pedestrian-vehicle accidents.
- Promote non-motorized transportation modes.
- Promote cooperative speed enforcement.

2. ISSUE: Safe and efficient traffic circulation around and through the City.

GOAL: Efficient cross-town and in-town traffic.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce travel times.
- Create convenient traffic connections.
- Employ adaptable design options.
- Provide multiple intercity travel options.

3. ISSUE: Lack of adequate traffic control.

GOAL: Reduced rate of vehicle collisions.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce potential harm to people and property.
- Maintain safe and efficient traffic flow.

4. ISSUE: The design of roads, streets, and pedestrian facilities can be more attractive and functional.

GOAL: Visually appealing rights-of-way that serve the needs of all users.

OBJECTIVES:

- Employ smart, cost effective designs.
- Use designs that recognize the needs of all users.
- Incorporate attractive visual elements into rights-of-way design.

5. ISSUE: Obstacles to efficient and safe traffic flow.

GOAL: A safe and efficient transportation system characterized by convenient connections and steady traffic flow.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify obstacles to traffic flow.
- Remove or minimize impediments to traffic flow.
- Manage traffic demand.

6. ISSUE: Deteriorated conditions of City streets and County roads.

GOAL: City streets and County roads maintained at safe standards.

OBJECTIVES:

- Equitably share the cost of maintaining roadways.
- Timely response to public needs.

7. ISSUE: Resources for transportation improvements should be rationally allocated throughout City neighborhoods and County townsites.

GOAL: Rational consideration of all City neighborhoods and County townsites when allocating transportation improvement funds.

OBJECTIVES:

- Select projects based on a needs assessment.
- Reduce waste through coordination of projects.

8. ISSUE: More people should ride the MET.

GOAL: Reduced traffic congestion in Billings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Elevate the status of bus riding.
- Make bus-riding convenient.
- Establish a reward system for riders.

9. ISSUE: The sidewalk system in the City needs upgrading; many sidewalks are cracked and broken, several critical sections are missing, and important sidewalk routes are not adequately maintained.

GOAL: Well maintained network of safe and interconnected sidewalks.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improved public safety.
- Promote healthy lifestyle.
- Reduce traffic.

10. ISSUE: Lack of circulation connection in subdivisions and City neighborhoods.

GOALS: Increased circulation connections for improved traffic flow.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increased number of outlets in larger subdivisions.
- Multiple options for intra-neighborhood travel.

11. ISSUE: Some gravel County subdivision roads are dusty and rough due to the nature of aggregate surfaces.

GOAL: Improve quality of County subdivision roads.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve safety.
- Increase property values.
- Reduce maintenance.
- Improve quality of life.
- Improve air quality.

Public Services

1. ISSUE: Residents are not adequately informed of County and City projects.

GOAL: An effective public notification system.

OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance public involvement.
- Provide timely and accurate public notification.
- Increase contact with news media.

2. ISSUE: Dilapidated and unsafe properties in City neighborhoods and County townsites.

GOAL: Sanitary and safe properties.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide helpful and responsive public services.
- Improve the community image.
- Increase property values.

3. ISSUE: Safety is a concern in neighborhoods and outlying County townsites.

GOAL: Protect public lives and property.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure adequate public service to all residents.
- Utilize scarce resources wisely and employ cost effective techniques.
- Maintain acceptable levels of service in existing City neighborhoods when expanding service to new areas.

4. ISSUE: Public funds are not distributed rationally throughout City neighborhoods and County townsites.

GOAL: Rational consideration of all City neighborhoods and County townsites for public funds expenditures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and prioritize neighborhood needs.
- Empower public to provide direction on capital improvements expenditures.
- Leverage public funds with other resources.

5. ISSUE: There are vacant structures around Billings and in the County that could be reused.

GOAL: Adaptive reuse of vacant structures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Conserve resources.
- Preserve historic or cultural landmarks.
- Take advantage of economic development opportunities.
- Preserve neighborhood integrity.

6. ISSUE: Subdivision review, zoning applications, and other development permit review is not always conducted in a streamlined and timely manner.

GOAL: Predictable and timely development review procedures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Expedite review process.
- Actively enforce development regulations.
- Be responsive to applicants' needs.
- Provide adequate Planning Department staff for review purposes.

Cultural and Historic Resources

1. ISSUE: Historic landmarks and structures are being lost to neglect and development.

GOAL: Identification and protection of the historical, archeological, and cultural resources of Yellowstone County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve awareness of historic and cultural resources.
- Increase property values through structural rehabilitation.

2. ISSUE: The public desire for art is significant but unmet. The Horse of Course project was a huge success which demonstrated a strong desire for public art.

GOAL: Enhance public spaces with art and cultural opportunities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create memorable images.
- Improve the community's cultural interest.
- Create a sense of place.

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- 1 76-2-203, MCA, 76-2-304, MCA, 76-3-604(1), MCA
 - 2 Compatibility refers to the degree of similarity between uses with respect to appearance, use, scale, and traffic volumes generated.
 - 3 Affordable housing for low to moderate income households means housing costs are no more than 30 percent for households making less than 80 percent of the median income (\$49,100 for a household size of four) for Yellowstone County.
 - 4 The term "economic viability" means a state where business can be conducted at an acceptable profit margin.