

Understand the Growth Policy

Know the key issues involved

Have your say in the outcome



Fergus County Growth Policy

Envisioning the County's future and working to achieve it rather than just reacting to change and dealing with it from one short-range, quick-fix solution to another as events occur.

Project Overview

Fergus County Commissioners in an effort to address the most critical issues facing the County now and in the near future, have authorized the County Planning Board to develop a Growth Policy (or Comprehensive Plan).

What is a Growth Policy?

A Growth Policy is a community's growth and development plan. It evaluates existing community conditions and sets goals for housing, land use, economic development, local services, public safety, natural resources, transportation, and other unique characteristics and features of the community.

A Growth Policy isn't a regulation or ordinance, but it serves as the legal basis for enacting them.



Why a Growth Policy in a County with little or no growth?

Change will happen. Whether that means growth or decline in population and resources, both require a plan to address a variety of issues within the County. The 1999 Montana Legislature change the terms "master plan" and "comprehensive plan" to "growth policy". The terms are now synonymous under Montana statute. 76-1-601 through 76-1-606, Montana Code Annotated (MCA) establishes minimum requirements for Growth Policies, although local governments still have the option of deciding whether to prepare and adopt Policies for their jurisdictions.

How do I get involved?

Contact Pam Vosen, the Fergus County Planning Director 406-535-9046 or email pvosen@co.fergus.mt.us.



What are the advantages to having a Growth Policy?

- **Maintains community values** – preserves cultural and historical values, helps maintain the character of the community
- **Makes safer communities** - sets standards and promotes projects that improve infrastructure and services (roads, bridges, water resources, sewer systems, solid waste, fire and emergency services, health facilities)
- **Promotes affordable housing**
- **Saves money** - Identifies growth patterns that minimize the cost to provide local services and infrastructure
- **Builds community** - greater understanding of issues
- **Attracts business** - a more attractive and well – planned community
- **Provides funding opportunities** - elevates community management in the eyes of funding agencies

What are key issues the Growth Policy will focus on?

Statute requires certain elements to be addressed in the Growth Policy and the Planning Board has identified some key issues but the **residents and stakeholders in Fergus County have an opportunity to identify additional issues.**

LAND USE

Analysis of how land is used (residential, commercial, industrial, agriculture, public, transportation) and direction on future use or constraints for future development.

POPULATION

Projections to help local government estimate type and quantity of public facilities and services required in the future. Analysis of population characteristics to help the community prepare for event such as decrease in school enrollments or an increase in the elderly population.

HOUSING

Determine type, size, location, quantity, and quality of housing in the community. How will housing options affect land use, transportation facilities, employment, health, recreation, and public facilities. Produce an implementation plan for meeting local housing needs.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Analyze income and employment information to reflect the County's current economic situation. Analysis will help influence decisions about land area for new businesses, transportation networks, infrastructure (water & sewer), and residential development.

LOCAL SERVICES

Fire protection, law enforcement, water and sewer service, public health, education, library, social services, parks and recreation, utilities, other governmental or non-governmental services consider of value to the community. How are we doing? What can be better?

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Roads, streets, bridges, buildings, public infrastructure, and other County facilities. What Capital needs are important?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Physical and environmental characteristics and constraints evaluation. How will these affect land use, economic development, and health and safety issues related to construction. Includes inventory of sand and gravel resources and their compatibility with existing and future development.

RECREATIONAL ACCESS

Examine recreational opportunities' role in the County. Determine how growth of the industry might affect land use, natural resources, and public facilities.