



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**



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## 1.0 Introduction

The Montana Land Use Plan ([MLUPA](#)) requires communities develop a Land Use Plan, outlining existing and future conditions, subdivision regulations, and zoning. As part of the Land Use Plan, a community is required to prepare a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to display future land use designations for properties adjacent to a municipality with the potential to annex and receive City services in the next 10-20 years. A FLUM is a visual representation displaying not only the areas of future growth around a community, but the types of growth and development that a community envisions for the future.

The information provided below outlines the process and considerations community can take in developing and/or implementing a FLUM.



### Data Resources

- [American Community Survey](#)
- [Headwaters Economics](#)
- [Decennial Census](#)
- City/County Planning and Zoning
- City/County GIS
- Local Realtor Organizations

## 1.1 Zoning

Every community has existing zoning designations for the properties located within jurisdictional boundaries. The zoning outlines what type of land use, density, and intensity of development to expect. Zoning designations can look different in each community, but should include general designations such as:

- Residential (Low, Medium, High Density)
- Commercial (Neighborhood)
- Industrial (Light, Heavy)
- Public (Parks, Government, Schools)
- Preservation (Agriculture)

Zoning designations, along with existing infrastructure and development, will assist with the development of the FLUM. Existing land uses that are likely to continue within a municipality's jurisdiction and align with a community's vision, can be displayed as such on the FLUM. For example, a large industrial plant that provides employment to the community that is likely to stay Industrial, can be designated Industrial on a FLUM as is unlikely to change in the future. However, zoning designations should not be misinterpreted as future land use designations as zoning, per code, outlines how a property shall function whereas a future land use designation identifies what type of land use the community envisions for a property in the future.

### Tip #1

Existing zoning designations should not be misconstrued as future land use designations

## 1.2 Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

A FLUM is meant to be developed through an inclusive process as it should reflect not only the vision of a municipality [MCA 7-1-4111](#), but also of a community at large. The FLUM should be developed for all areas within a municipality, as well as any adjacent properties that have the potential to be annexed into that municipality in the next 10-20 years. The properties identified for potential annexation into a municipality should be vetted for feasibility to extend services and infrastructure.

Municipalities also may take on extraterritorial powers in some instances ([MCA 7-4-4306](#)).

### 1.2.1 Future Land Use Designations

Future land use designation should be established with associated descriptions and types of development that should be encouraged.

Future Land Use Designation	Description
Agriculture Preservation	Areas outside of city limits, allowing for single-family residences on large lots and a variety of agricultural uses.
Low Density Residential	Areas identified for single-family dwellings on various lot sizes, located both in established neighborhoods and on the town borders.
High Density Residential	Areas to encourage a mix of housing types, such as duplexes, townhomes and apartment buildings. Land uses could be located adjacent to commercial land uses, rail lines, and major transportation corridors.
Commercial	Areas adjacent to major transportation corridors or areas where grouping of businesses is encouraged. Development types could include retail, offices, and quasi-public uses.
Industrial	Areas to provide for manufacturing, research facilities, and industrial uses such as processing, assembling, and storage. Land use is encouraged along rail lines and adjacent to commercial corridors.
Public	Areas owned by government entities or intended for public use including schools, parks, government buildings, libraries and post offices. These areas often encourage public gathering, recreation and education.

**Table 1:** Example Future Land Use Designations



Residential and/or commercial density is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Target densities can vary depending on land use designations and appropriateness for considerations such as topography, sensitive areas, or natural hazard risk areas (eg, Floodplains). For example, in some communities, low-density residential areas may have a target density of six dwelling units per acre.

There are several ways to calculate density. One common method is to divide the number of proposed dwelling units by the total land area. For instance, if a development proposal includes 100 dwelling units on 20 acres, the resulting density would be five dwellings per acre.

While density often focuses on residential dwelling units, similar calculations can be applied to commercial or industrial projects by using commercial unit square footage instead of dwelling units.

A starting point for communities to establish appropriate densities is to consider the existing conditions in each zoning district or as established by zoning regulations. For example, if a low-density residential district requires a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet, allows up to two units per lot, then it can be calculated that the community allows a residential density of 17 units per acre.

*(1 acre (43,560 square feet) divided by 5,000 square feet and then multiplied by 2 units = 17.4)*

Each community must determine appropriate density levels based on its unique needs and values. This is often achieved through extensive community engagement and strategies similar to what is mentioned above.

A community is allowed to establish as many or as few future land use designations as desired. Depending on what land use designations a community chooses to utilize to develop a FLUM, land use designations should be placed in the areas in which those future land use designations are encouraged. Additionally, future land uses should be considered for any existing properties identified as redevelopment opportunities in the near or distant future.

While Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is ideal when developing a map, other programs such as CAD can be utilized as well to create a FLUM. If a community does not have access to any such program, it is recommended that a community access county or state resources for assistance.

### 1.2.2 Areas Unsuitable for Development

While it is important to identify areas for future growth and development, it is just as important to identify areas in and around a community that are not suitable for development. These areas unsuitable for development might include existing floodplains, wetland areas, and areas prone to landslides or reoccurring fire hazards. Additionally, areas where infrastructure, such as water and sewer, cannot be extended without significant financial investment or areas where capacity issues would require mitigation (i.e. installing a lift station) should be identified, as well as exempt properties such as churches, parks, and public spaces. Areas unsuitable for development can either be mapped as such or excluded altogether from the future land use map with an explanation in the Land Use Plan.

### 1.3 Adoption and Amendment

As a FLUM is intended to be adopted and function within a community's Land Use Plan, it is recommended that the process to amend the FLUM will follow the same process as the initial adoption of the Land Use Plan. The adoption and amendment processes are typically as follows:

1. The Land Use Plan and FLUM should be taken before the Planning Commission for recommendation of approval to the City Council
2. The City Council will provide final approval for both the Land Use Plan and FLUM

As development applications are submitted and properties are annexed, if the proposed land use deviates from the identified future land use on the jurisdiction's FLUM, the community should require a Land Use Plan amendment to update the FLUM. This will allow a community to keep a FLUM updated and provide an opportunity for public comment prior to any changes made. It will also make it easier for a developer to know the community's desire for land use on a parcel prior to annexation, allowing more predictability in the process.

