



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**



Prepared For: Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP),  
Montana Department of Commerce

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## 1.0 Introduction

The [Montana Land Use and Planning Act \(MLUPA\)](#) requires communities to include an analysis of the existing conditions for various elements within their jurisdiction. This guidance document provides the framework and the resources available to a community to develop a full Land Use Plan. While there are various elements researched and assessed for inclusion into a Land Use Plan, it is important to note that in many cases data can overlap in various sections of the plan depending on community priorities and how a community chooses to present information in their plan. For instance, parks and recreation could be included in the assessment of natural resources or in local services and facilities. It is at the community's discretion to choose where to include data and/or information throughout the Land Use Plan. For the purposes of this document, data may be excluded within a particular section as guidance may be provided on how to reference that data in another section.

A thriving community is often described as a great place to live, work, and play. Economic development plays a large role in the success of a community and its ability to thrive. It is important as it encompasses the conditions that would assess an economy's well-being and quality of life and identify processes and strategies for improvement.

To begin this process, the community should begin by compiling a list of data resources to utilize in the research of the existing conditions for each element.

## Existing conditions to be analyzed for the following elements

- Housing
- Local Services/Facilities
- Economic Development
- Natural Resources
- Environment
- Hazards
- Land Use
- Population and Demographics

## Quick Links

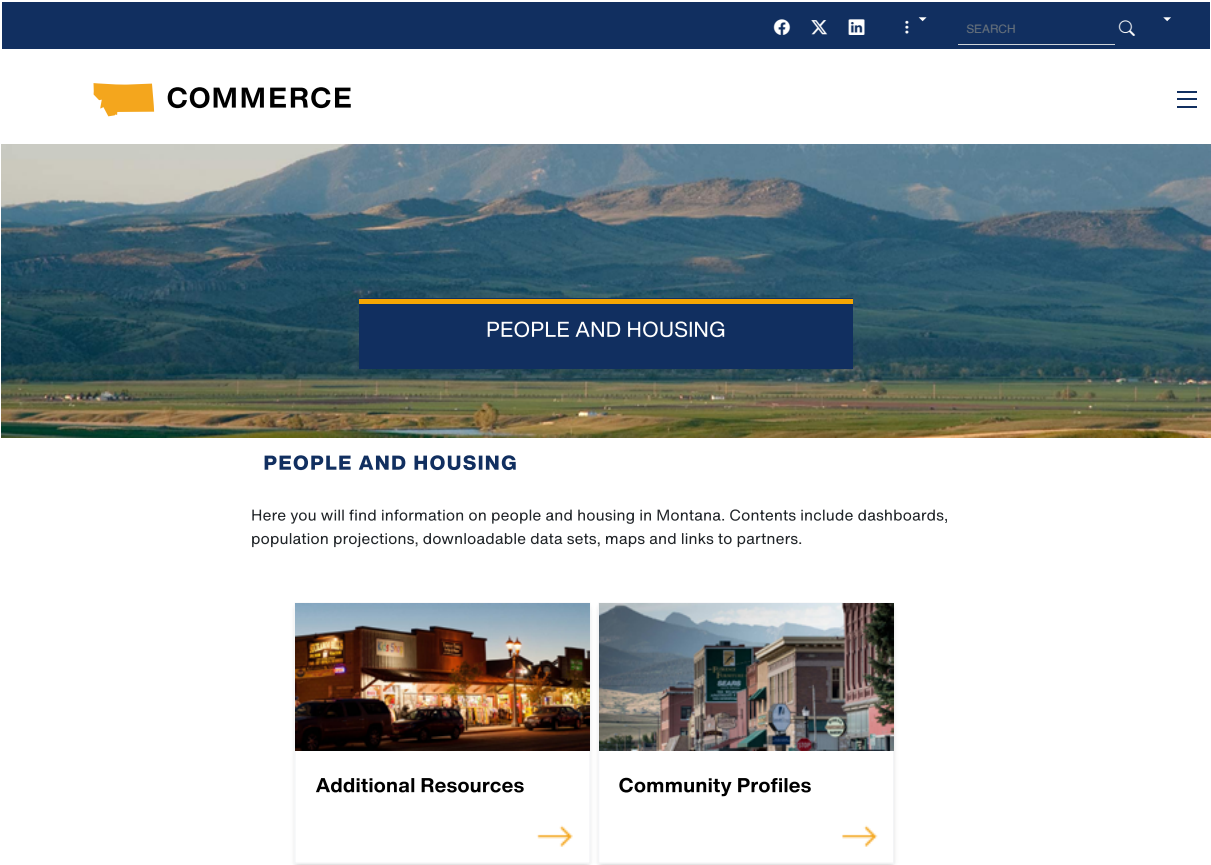
- › [United States Census Bureau](#)
- › [Headwaters Economics](#)
- › [Montana Department of Commerce](#)
- › [Montana State Library GIS Data](#)
- › [Department of Revenue](#)
- › [Montana Department of Labor](#)

## 1.1 Existing Conditions

The first step in this analysis is to understand the existing conditions as they relate to economic development within a community. Some of the most common methods of obtaining socioeconomic and economic development information are to view the Montana Department of Commerce website, the American Community Survey website, Montana Department of Labor and Industry, decennial census reports, or Headwater’s Economic Profile System (EPS) website.

### Tip #1

If you plan to utilize a data source that is not listed, verify that the source is reliable



**Figure 1:** Figure 1. Montana Department of Commerce Website  
[Click here to see online](#)



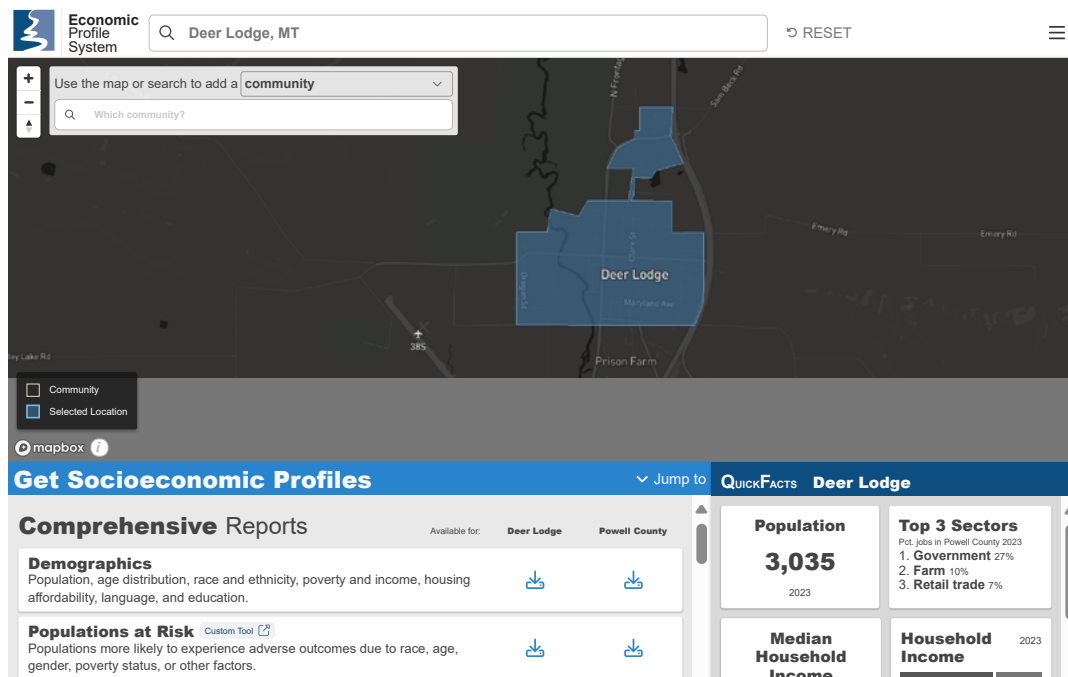


Figure 2: Headwaters Economic Profile System, Socioeconomic profile download screen [Click here to see online](#)

## 1.2 Existing Population

Recent population and demographics information can be found through the Montana Department of Commerce, Headwater's Economic Profile System, and the American Community Survey (ACS). It is important to note the Headwaters EPS system primarily utilizes data from either the ACS or the decennial census in their downloadable PDF and Excel spreadsheets.

Demographics		
Fort Benton, MT		
Population		
	Fort Benton, MT	United States
Population (2023*)	1,470	332,387,540
Population (2010*)	1,478	303,965,272
Population Change (2010*-2023*)	-8	28,422,268
Population Pct. Change (2010*-2023*)	-0.5%	9.4%

**High Reliability:** Data with coefficients of variation (CVs) < 12% are in black to indicate that the sampling error is relatively small.  
**Medium Reliability:** Data with CVs between 12 & 40% are in orange to indicate that the values should be interpreted with caution.  
**Low Reliability:** Data with CVs > 40% are displayed in red to indicate that the estimate is considered very unreliable.

### Data Analysis at a Glance:

- Total Population
- Age and Gender
- Race and Ethnicity
- Tribal Populations
- Population Growth Projections

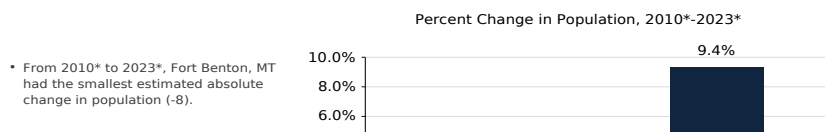


Figure 3: Headwater Economic Profile System, Demographic Download Example

[Click here to see online](#)



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Montana Land Use and Planning Act (MLUPA)

### 1.3 Age and Gender

Using the American Community Survey (ACS), filter your results by first searching for your community in the search bar.

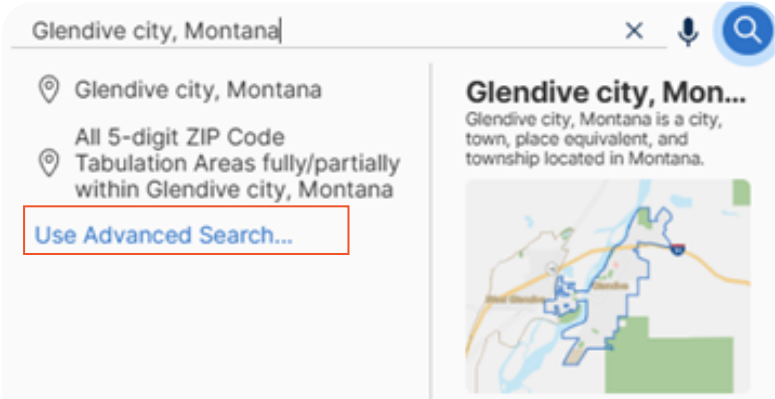


Figure 4: American Community Survey, City search

Tip #2

Age and Gender information can be found utilizing the Montana Department of Commerce and Headwaters Economics websites as well; however, the data is sourced from the U.S Census so ACS is likely to have the most updated data set available

Select the 'Profiles' tab and a Zip Code Tabulation Area will be present underneath. The Zip Code Tabulation Area data set will provide more details regarding Age and Gender.

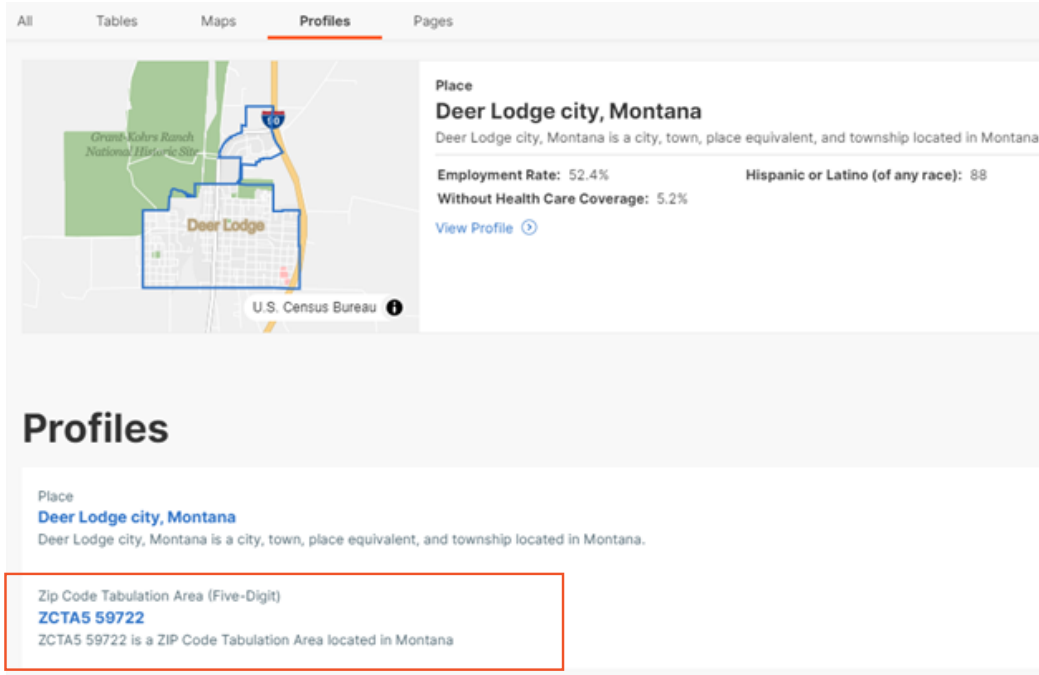


Figure 5: American Community Survey data table

Age and Gender information can inform a community about the current demographic and provide insight to prepare for future conditions. For example, a younger population may be present indicating the need for more daycare and primary school facilities, and vice versa, an aging population may indicate the need for increased senior programs and facilities within the community.

## 1.4 Race and Ethnicity

The same steps that were taken above to determine the Age and Gender can also be used to access Race and Ethnicity information. To avoid scrolling through all information provided in the Zip Code Tabulation Area data set, 'Race and Ethnicity' can be selected on the top of the page and will link directly to the desired information.

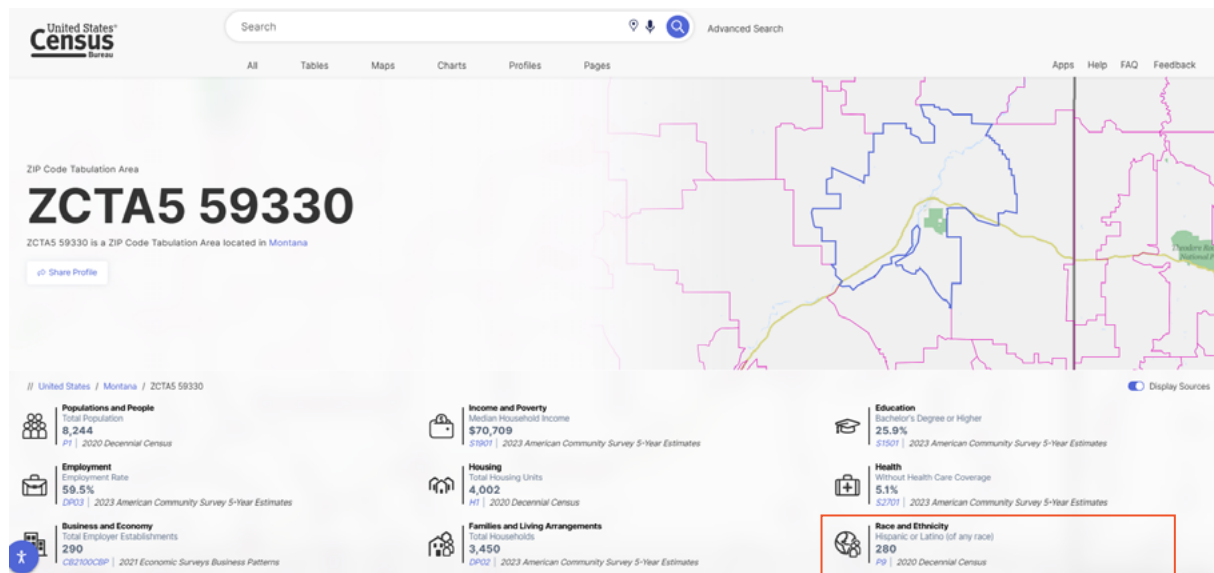


Figure 6: American Community Survey, Zip Code Tabulation Area

## 1.5 Tribal Populations

Similar to the information accessible for total population, the Headwaters Economics website will produce a comprehensive demographics report that outlines the presence of tribal populations within a community.

Demographics		
Fort Benton, MT		
Tribal		
	Fort Benton, MT	United States
Total Population, 2023*	1,470	332,387,540
Total Native American, 2023*	7	2,924,996
American Indian Tribes	1	1,565,022
Alaska Native Tribes	0	96,893
Non-Specified Tribes	0	447,687
Percent of Total		
Total Native American	0.5%	0.9%
American Indian Tribes	0.1%	0.5%
Alaska Native Tribes	0.0%	0.0%
Non-Specified Tribes	0.0%	0.1%

**High Reliability:** Data with coefficients of variation (CVs) < 12% are in black to indicate that the sampling error is relatively small.  
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### Tip #3

When using Census data, verify first whether it is decennial data, or ACS data. It is important to note the differences as some data sets are only published during the decennial census and other are provided in more recent ACS 5-year estimates

Figure 7: Headwaters Economics demographics report example

[Click here to see online](#)





## 1.6 Poverty

As outlined previously to obtain information, the Headwaters Economics website will produce a comprehensive demographics report that outlines the prevalence of poverty within a community.

### Demographics

#### Fort Benton, MT

#### Poverty Prevalence

	Fort Benton, MT	United States
People, 2023*	1,422	324,567,147
Families, 2023*	366	82,220,165
People Below Poverty	42	40,390,045
Families below poverty	4	7,176,933

#### Percent of Total

People Below Poverty	3.0%	12.4%
Families below poverty	1.1%	8.7%

**High Reliability:** Data with coefficients of variation (CVs) < 12% are in black to indicate that the sampling error is relatively small.  
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## 1.7 Population Projections

The Montana Department of Commerce provides population projections at a county level. Local communities, in most cases, will need to develop population projections by utilizing historical population data to establish an annual percent growth rate. Once the annual percent growth rate is established, a community can utilize that growth rate to calculate an approximate population projection for 15 or 20-year forecasts.

	2000	2010	2020	2040 Projection
Population	2,867	2,911	3,025	3,191 (STEP 4)
% Change (STEP 1)		+1.53	+3.91	
Annual percent growth rate (STEP 2)		0.153% per year	0.391% per year	
Average growth rate per year (STEP 3)		0.275% per year		

Table X. Example Population Estimates and Forecast

**STEP 1:** Percent change is calculated as follows:  
 $(\text{final value} - \text{initial value}) / \text{initial value}$

Example:  $(2010 \text{ population} / 2000 \text{ population}) / 2000$   
 population:

$$(2911 - 2867) / 2867 \rightarrow 44 / 2867 = 0.0153 * 100 = 1.53\%$$

**STEP 2:** It should be noted that this percent change is representative of the percent change over 10 years, from 2000 to 2010. To calculate the percent change per year, divide the percent change by 10.

Example:  $(\text{Percent change} / \text{ten years}) * 100 = \text{annual percent growth rate}$

$$0.0153 / 10 = 0.00153 * 100 = 0.153\% \text{ percent per year.}$$

**STEP 3:** As there are only two data points to establish an average growth rate per year, the annual percent growth rates that were determined can be averaged by adding the two data points together  $(0.153 + 0.391) / 2 = 0.275\%$  average growth rate per year.

**STEP 4:** To calculate an approximate population projection in the simplest terms, a community can utilize the linear growth model. The linear growth model assumes the average rate of growth through the desired projection year. It is important to note that there are other methods of calculating population forecasts; however, the linear growth model can allow a community to establish a conservative growth population projection without further complexity. The average growth rate of 0.00275 can be multiplied by the most recent population data point (3025) to establish the number of persons per year that the population might increase.

Example:  $(2020 \text{ population} * \text{average annual growth rate})$   $3025 * 0.00275 = 8.31$  persons per year;  $8.31 * 20$  (forecasting 20-years out) = 166.2 person increase over 20-years

2040 population forecast:  $3025 + 166 = \mathbf{3,191}$  people

Population forecasts can be utilized when assessing other elements within a community such as housing and infrastructure. It is important to have a good understanding of population increases/decreases as it will have a direct impact on housing availability and housing needs, as well as infrastructure capacity and serviceability.

### Population Horizons

In the event that historic population trends are difficult to obtain and a low, medium, or high population forecast needs to be established, a 0.5%, 1.0%, or 2% population increase per year can be utilized instead of an annual growth rate or average annual growth rate. The same steps can be followed utilizing the standard growth rates (0.5% low, 1.0% medium, and 2.0% high) to establish a population forecast.

### NOTE:

The numbers included in the example table do not reflect any one specific community. Population estimates and forecasts may be more or less depending on the historical growth of a community.

## 1.8 Additional Analysis

Once information is obtained from the data references, the data can be analyzed to provide insight to future conditions of a community. For example, age variations within a specific demographic helps to prepare a community for age gaps that might be necessary to employ a larger younger population or prepare for large group of working individuals that might be reaching retirement age soon. While data can provide useful information, it is up to the reader and community to interpret the data to better plan for the future.

## 1.9 Implementation

This section of the Montana Land Use Plan sets up the key basis for a lot of the land use decisions that are to be made when establishing the MLUPA. Understanding the current population and the future populations will be a key indicator in the land use practices that should be implemented for each individual community. Population projections are to be used in other portions of this analysis, such as the local services and infrastructure sections, to determine if the jurisdiction can handle population growth and what types of housing and economic development are needed to serve the population. Housing reforms in the zoning code can be used as an implementation method of this section to address changing housing needs as a result of population and demographic trends. Subdivision regulations and annexation policies are also methods to ensure that development is equipped for a rising population, however those regulations and policies should be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect the changing needs of the community.

