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COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

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AGENDA
JOINT CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 6 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Land Use Plan Project Kickoff Presentation by Cushing Terrell

ADJOURNMENT

Next Regular Planning Commission Meeting – December 11, 2025

Columbia Falls Land Use Plan

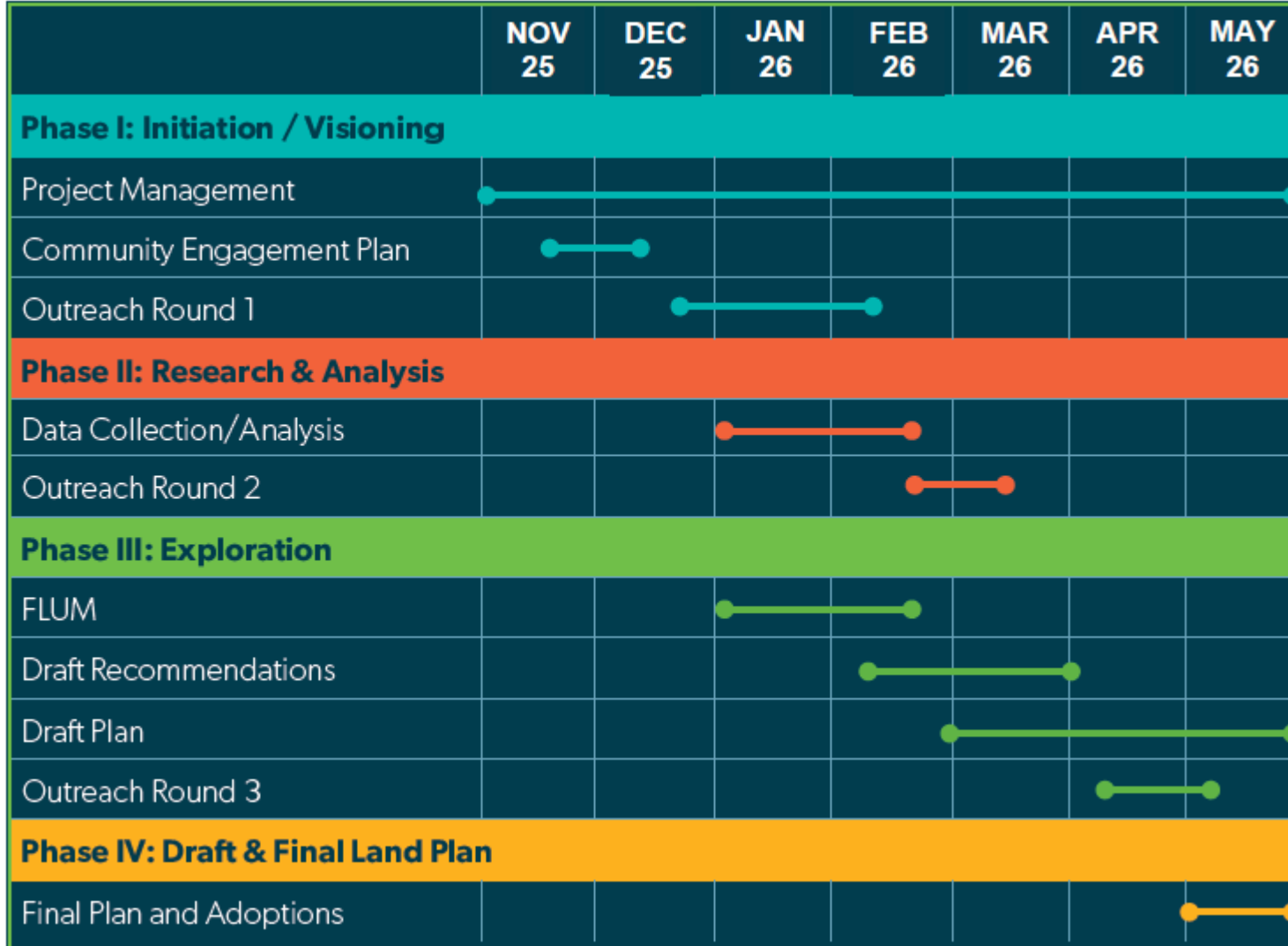
Project Kick-off November 13, 2025

Agenda

- Project Schedule
- Community Engagement Plan
- Discussion

Project Schedule

Item No.1.



Outreach Round 1

- Project website – launched Nov 11:
<https://columbia-falls-land-use-plan-ctagroup.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Online survey: November 11 – December 11
- Nov 20: Utility Infrastructure Public Meeting

A vertical poster with a scenic background of mountains and evergreen trees. The top half has a dark green background with the text 'TAKE OUR SURVEY!!!' in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The bottom half has a light beige background with black text. The text reads: 'Columbia Falls is Updating its Land Use Plan!', 'Please take this short survey to help us shape a community vision for the City.', and 'Scan the QR Code for more info!'. There is a small circular logo for the City of Columbia Falls on the left and a smaller QR code on the right.

TAKE OUR SURVEY!!!

Columbia Falls is Updating its Land Use Plan!

Please take this short survey to help us shape a community vision for the City.

 Scan the QR Code for more info! 

Outreach Round 2

- Stakeholder Interviews: December - January
- January 26: Council Workshop
- Planning Commission:
 - February 12
 - March 12



Columbia Falls Land Use Plan

News and Updates

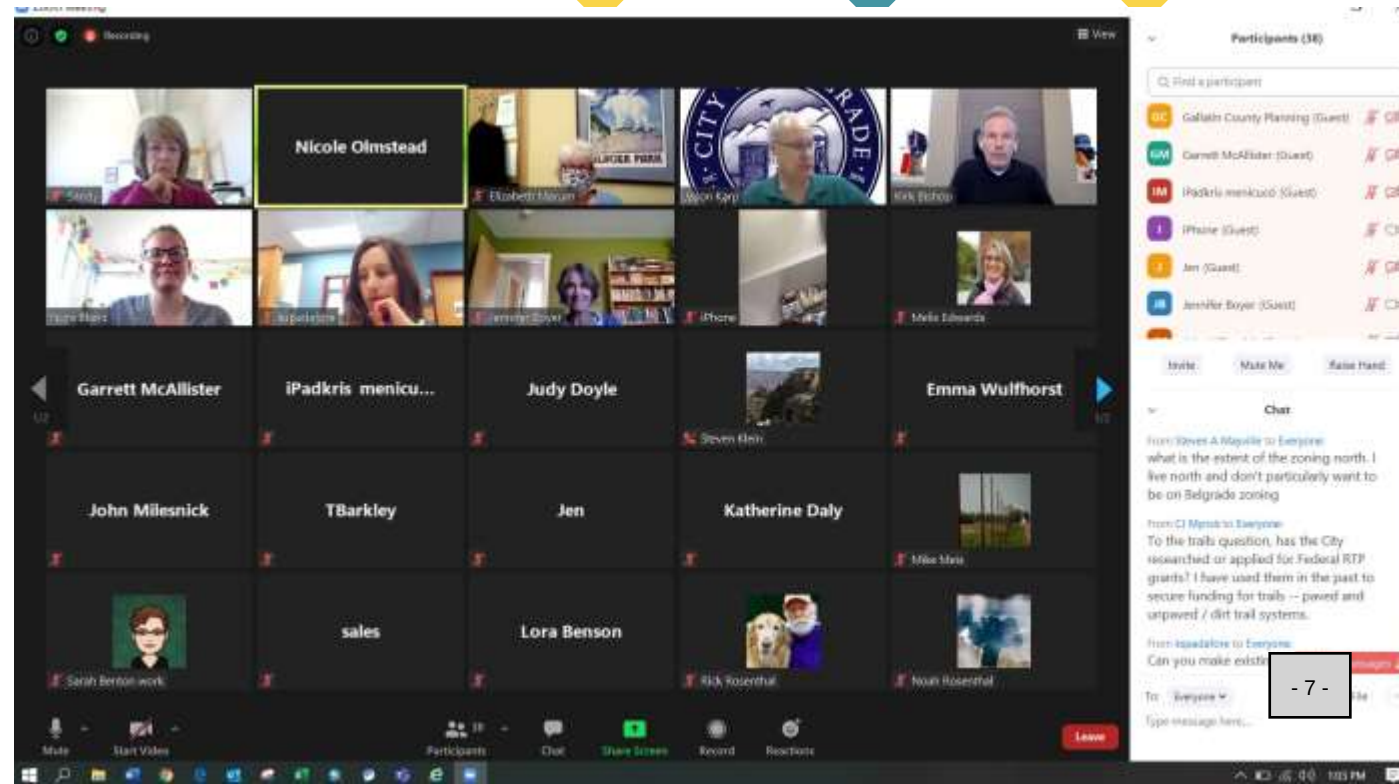
Engage

Columbia Falls Land Use Plan

The City of Columbia Falls is creating its new Land Use Plan, a roadmap to direct future growth and development. Your input is critical in the creation of the Plan - join us and tell us your vision!

Outreach Round 3

- Early April – Virtual Public Meeting
- April 13 – Council Workshop



Plan Adoption

- April 23 – Planning Commission Recommendation
- May 4 – City Council First Reading
- May 18 – City Council Adoption

Discussion

1. What challenges and opportunities have you identified for the Land Use Plan?
2. What would you like to get out of this Update?

TAKE OUR SURVEY!!!

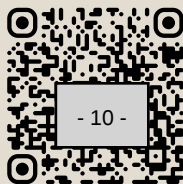
Item No.1.

Columbia Falls is Updating its Land Use Plan!

**Please take this short survey to
help us shape a community
vision for the City.**



**Scan the QR Code
for more info!**



- 10 -

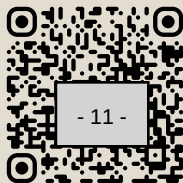
WHAT'S A LAND USE PLAN???

Item No.1.

Columbia Falls' Land Use Plan is a guiding document that provides a vision for future growth & development. It uses a framework of goals, strategies and actions to achieve the community's vision.



**Scan the QR Code
for more info!**



Public Comment

TO: Mayor, City Council, and Planning Commission

FROM: Daniel Sidder, 529 11th St W

RE: Land Use Plan, MLUPA

Dear Mayor, Council, and Planning Commission,

I am writing today to share a few thoughts regarding the upcoming Land Use section of the Growth Policy. Columbia Falls is an exceptional city to live in, and this portion of the Growth Policy is one of the most important for local residents. No pressure!

As many of you know, Flathead County is the fastest growing county in the state. Kalispell is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, and Montana has recently been crowned the least affordable state by the National Association of Realtors. We know things have changed rapidly, and we know that things will likely continue in that direction.

In conversations with neighbors, friends, and colleagues about growth in Columbia Falls, I've heard a few different sentiments:

1. We don't want growth
2. We only want growth if it is "affordable" or insert other sentiment
3. The market will work itself out

Unfortunately, I don't think any of these sentiments will help maintain the community we love and foster the type of development we desire. As the city moves forward in this Land Use section, I hope that you will reflect on what makes Columbia Falls special.

Over the last several years there has been tremendous pressure on the city to grow outwards. I commend the city for not caving and holding firm - expanding the city limits and adding new infrastructure will only cause more liabilities for the tax base in the future.

While I commend the city for holding firm on outward expansion, I've been disappointed in the attitudes around in-fill development. I've read in reports from the city that there is little developable land in city limits. On daily my neighborhood dog walk, I see large corner lots with no homes, large side lots with a huge garage that could easily be a small home, and countless examples of places where new homes would blend right into the existing neighborhood. So, what is stopping someone from developing those?

For starters, the lot size and set-back requirements. My neighborhood, zoned for CR-5 requires a 5,400 sqft lot. If one of those side-yards were to be split off and a small starter home added, it would not be approved due to the lot size and set-back requirements. I am going to share a few recommendations, based on the work from Strong Towns, on how we can create a Housing Ready City:

1. Allow the next level of development in each zone by right. In CR5, for example, you can build two dwellings per lot. Increase that to 3 or 4. No neighborhood should experience rapid change, and no neighborhood should be exempt from change.
2. Eliminate minimum lot size requirements in existing neighborhoods. This allows for more efficient land use by removing artificial barriers that limit the number of homes that can be built.
3. Legalize starter homes in all residential zones, such as making "cluster development" by right.
4. Repeal parking mandates and allow property owners to decide how much parking is needed for their project.

If these were to be accepted, it would allow many neighborhood scale developers off of the sideline. According to the Housing Needs Assessment, the City alone needs 245 homes to keep up with the future housing needs. In my opinion, the answer shouldn't be to encourage annexation on the edge of town with the hopes a developer will build hundreds of homes. I believe we can easily accommodate more than 245 homes throughout our city without overloading the infrastructure, changing the character of neighborhoods, and putting the city on the hook for maintaining miles of new infrastructure.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Daniel Sidder

Name: Gary Hall

Email: reachgaryhall@gmail.com

Message:

Barb, Please forward to Council and Planning Commission, Thank you, Gary

November10th, 2025

Dear Columbia Falls City Council and City Planning Commission,

I am honestly looking forward to the Land Use Planning Project Kick off at City Hall Thursday evening. I have been concerned about the rhetoric that the City expressed that sometimes there are more residents on the outskirts of the City at planning meetings than City residents. The reason for that is the Cities decisions to annex County property is concerning county residents and how it affects their environments and culture. I would simply ask that we begin this process with mutual respect and even a goal to be an example of how city and county residents (affected by annexations) can have a fruitful and intelligent outcome.

I have been doing research around the USA of cities and how their strategic planning documents are written with modern and current relevance. Jay Marquesan said he just returned from Iowa City Iowa and his relative is a developer/builder there. He said that big subdivisions that are proposed must contribute to infrastructure, roads, schools etc. (They built a brand-new High School)

I know that is something we City/County governments in the Flathead have never done. It is obvious that Flathead County has not prepared for the mega growth that is happening, someone has convinced planners and local government that we are desperate for housing, the question that begs to be asked is for whom, obviously ingress people, not locals. Berg Land Companies public presentation was a perfect example of no concern for local culture or environment. He said they were putting houses on 3500 sq ft lots for \$800K-\$1 million, and when we said access to the highway in unattainable, he laughed and said he had driven the roads and there were plenty of exits to the highway, he had no idea of the situation of access off River Road or of our culture and community.

I have also discovered that the Supreme Court ruled that they (developers) can only be charged in proportion to the impact on the area. California was over charging developers for infrastructure costs, thus it made its way to the supreme court. I would ask that you consider implementing a policy that requires a level of financial involvement from developers either in the city or annexed property from the county. (How about rebuilding the Red Bridge for foot traffic)?

Lastly, I sincerely ask that the City Manager and City Planning Commission require or strongly suggest to anyone building on the highway corridor (Gateway to Glacier) to implement native rock or log accents in to their design. We have missed the opportunity with the recent new banks and credit unions. I think of Leavenworth Washington's city fathers required that in their new buildings. We can and should be doing the same thing here in Columbia Falls. This is an amazing opportunity I hope we can all create something that can retain our culture and community feel.

Respectfully Submitted, Gary Hall B