



**AGENDA
CITY OF LAUREL
CITY/COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020
5:35 PM
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Public Input: *Citizens may address the committee regarding any item of business that is not on the agenda. The duration for an individual speaking under Public Input is limited to three minutes. While all comments are welcome, the committee will not take action on any item not on the agenda.*

1. Roll Call

General Items

2. Approve Meeting Minutes: August 19, 2020
3. Public Hearing: Review and Comments on Laurel High School Sign Replacement

New Business

4. Growth Management Policy - Chapter Review

Old Business

Other Items

5. Upcoming Items

Announcements

6. Next Meeting: October 21, 2020

The City makes reasonable accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's ability to participate in this meeting. Persons needing accommodation must notify the City Clerk's Office to make needed arrangements. To make your request known, please call 406-628-7431, Ext. 2, or write to City Clerk, PO Box 10, Laurel, MT 59044, or present your request at City Hall, 115 West First Street, Laurel, Montana.

DATES TO REMEMBER

File Attachments for Item:

2. Approve Meeting Minutes: August 19, 2020



**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
CITY/COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2020
5:35 PM
LAUREL CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Public Input: *Citizens may address the committee regarding any item of business that is not on the agenda. The duration for an individual speaking under Public Input is limited to three minutes. While all comments are welcome, the committee will not take action on any item not on the agenda.*

1. Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 5:36PM

Ron Benner
Dan Koch
Roger Giese
Evan Bruce
Judy Goldsby
Nick Altonaga (City of Laurel)

General Items

2. Approve Meeting Minutes: July 22, 2020

Ron motioned to approve the meeting minutes from July 22, 2020 as presented.
Dan Seconded.
Motion Carried.

3. Public Hearing: Conditional Use Permit for Koo Beans Coffee

The Chair opened the public hearing. Nick provided a summary of the conditional use permit, presenting the details of the application and the supporting documents.

The applicant, Alania Eastman, 907 Bristol Way, Laurel, MT, was on hand to speak for the conditional use application.

Alania has been a resident of Laurel for the last five years. She has worked hard to bring a business to Laurel. Her and her husband both love the Laurel community.

The coffee kiosk would operate from 3:30AM to 3:30PM. They plan to donate a portion of revenue to the city and the school district to help give back.

Planning Board members asked questions of the Applicant.

Roger: Any plans for future employees?

- Currently just myself and my husband. Trying to keep it within the family.
- Possibly want to give jobs to teenagers/students in the future.

Evan: Will electricity and water services be hooked up to the kiosk?

- Electricity yes. Will use overhead lines going towards the train tracks.
- Water will be dumped off-site. Has had water plant officials allow her to dump at the city facility.

Ron: Bathrooms?

- No bathrooms right now.
- If the conditional use is approved, we will work with MRL to incorporate bathrooms.

Ron: Mountain Mudd had issues 10-12 years ago due to lack of bathrooms. Kiosks did not have any working relationship with nearby businesses to have facilities for kiosk employees. We need to discuss the rules and what was decided previously.

- How much garbage will be generated?
- How do we assess garbage rates on a kiosk?
- Commercial Vs. Residential: We need to ensure that garbage fees are equitable throughout the city.
- Need to see how the city dealt with Heidi's Kiosk.

Alania: For the bathroom, working with MRL for a port-a-potty for now. Garbage service is currently through McKinsey. It would not be hard to change over these services to Laurel Public Works.

Ron: any thoughts on traffic? Will it be a one-way exit?

Alania: There will be two driveways on the site, and it will have a one-way exit. We are aware of the safety issues of the road.

Members discussed the traffic directions on Main St. and 1st Ave and turning across traffic.

Roger: Electricity will be officially installed shortly, but how has it been operating up to now?

Alania: We are not operating until we go through all the required processes and approvals.

Dan: Will it be paved or gravel?

Alania: Gravel, because MRL would like it to remain that way. Have applied to MRL for a paved driveway that we are currently waiting to hear back on. Will be laying down neater gravel for the time being.

Members discussed other kiosk situations including Heidi's and Mo Cones.

Dan motioned to approve the Conditional Use Application with the conditions presented in the Staff Report.

Evan seconded.

Motion Carried.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Members held brief discussion on investigating what we have on hand for kiosk regulations for Heidi's and Mo Cones prior to sending it to the City Council.

There needs to be code to address kiosks. Also need to know the situation for temporary structures, and other types of small structures.

New Business

4. Conoco Sign Update Review

Nick presented the sign application for the Conoco on S. 1st Ave. Members reviewed the images and discussed the signage situation.

Ron Motioned to approve the Conoco Sign application.

Roger Seconded.

Motion Carried.

5. Growth Management Policy Chapter Review

Nick presented the current chapters of the Growth Policy update. Ron remarked that it would be important to get a full draft prior to the public hearing in September to review and develop comments.

Old Business

Other Items

6. Upcoming Projects Discussion

Discussion of GSE and a summary of that project. Upcoming Variance and Preliminary Plat review.

- Many moving pieces to this process
- Many details to review
- Nick will prepare a detailed staff report for the variances and the plat itself. Will have it far in advance of the planned October Meeting.

Upcoming Public Hearing on Laurel High School Sign

7. Growth Management Policy Schedule

Ron mentioned asking MDT about plans for West Laurel Interchange?

Brief discussion about West Laurel Interchange

- Possibilities for expansion.
- Discussions happened previously about West Railroad connections

Does the state have any plans for the interchange? Originally the plan was that the Interchange created a bypass up to Molt and Broadview.

Nick reported that he had met with MDT in the Spring regarding the growth policy and that they currently have no other plans for the West Laurel Interchange other than what has been prepared. MDT stressed the importance of developing funding sources for transportation projects to better implement them.

Roger Giese - Would like to see something similar what is on Shiloh and Central in Billings at the Interchange. A mix of cafes and residential units.

Nick remarked that a development of that kind could be a very positive development near the interchanges, if a site could be found and utilities provided.

Members discussed Utility lines and extending infrastructure.

- Nick has been looking into funding sources to support the extension of infrastructure.
- The Mayor has been aware of the funding needs and has investigated how to accomplish any expansion of utilities and services.

Announcements

8. Next Meeting: September 16, 2020

Ron motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Roger seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45PM.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

File Attachments for Item:

3. Public Hearing: Review and Comments on Laurel High School Sign Replacement

CONSTRUCTION PERMIT AND APPLICATION

CITY OF LAUREL, MONTANA

PERMIT No. _____

Job Address <u>208 E. 8th ST.</u>	
Owner <u>Laurel Public Schools</u>	Telephone <u>628-3360 628-3500</u>
Contractor <u>EPLOR SIGN GROUP</u>	Subdivision _____
Address <u>1131 MONARD RD</u>	Lot _____ Block _____ Tract _____ Zoning _____
Telephone <u>406-248-7401</u>	Type: Addition _____ Fence _____ MH Install _____
City License <u>#126</u>	New Structure _____ Remodel <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Special Conditions <u>Replace existing outdated sign</u>	Valuation of Project \$ <u>35,000</u>
	Description of Work: <u>Remodel existing sign</u>
Occupancy _____	Type of Construction _____
Number of Units _____	Total Square Feet _____
Rated Walls _____	

BUILDING Approved To Issue By _____ Date _____

Application is hereby made to the City of Laurel Building Code Official for a permit subject to the conditions and restrictions set forth. All provisions of laws and ordinances governing this work will be complied with whether specified herein or not. Each person upon whose behalf this application pertains, at whose request and for whose benefit work is performed under or pursuant to any permit issued as a result of this application agrees to, and shall indemnify and hold harmless the City of Laurel, it's officers, agents and employees.

The granting of this permit does not give authority to cancel or violate the provisions of any state or local law regulating construction or the performance of construction.

"Compliance with the requirements of the state building code for physical accessibility to persons with disabilities does not necessarily guarantee compliance with Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1978, the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, Title 49, chapter 2, commonly known as the Montana Human Rights Act, or other similar federal, state, or local laws that mandate accessibility to commercial construction or multifamily housing."

Any permit issued as a result of this application becomes null and void if work is not commenced within 180 days of issuance of such permit, unless a written request to extend this time is submitted to the City of Laurel Building Department and approved.

The applicant is responsible for calling to obtain underground line locations 1-800-424-5555 two days before digging.

All general contractors shall have a current City of Laurel business license.

The permit holder is responsible for giving 24 hour notice for required inspections.

I hereby certify I have read this application and the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

FEES AND CHARGES

1000-323011 building	\$ _____
1000-323013 plumbing	\$ _____
1000-323014 plan review	\$ _____
1000-323055 fence	\$ _____
1000-323011 roof	\$ _____
1000-323018 investigation	\$ _____
1000-323053 sign	\$ <u>492.00</u>
5210-343033 SDF water	\$ _____
5310-343033 SDF sewer	\$ _____
1000-323011 mh install	\$ _____
1000-323011 re-inspection	\$ _____
other	\$ _____
Total Amount due	\$ _____
Amount Paid	\$ _____

Signature of Applicant



Date

7/28/20



A FABRICATED GALVANEAL GABINET AND RETAINERS, FILMED TUFFAK FACES.ILLUMINATION WHITE LEDS.. NEW GS6 10MM 108X216 RGB MESSAGE CENTER,PAINTED GALVANEAL END FILLERS.6" PAINTED SQ.TUBE ON EXISTING BOLT BASES.PAINTED PAINTEDALUMINUM FILLER.

FINISH COLORS
1 WHITE
2 SILVER
3 PURPLE
4 YELLOW

SPECIFICATIONS
BASE
MATCH 121/DIBOND
3M 128
3M 015

DOUBLE FACE ELECTRONIC DISPLAY

DESIGNER: DK
SALESPERSON: TONY
REVISED:

CLIENT: LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL
LOCATION: LAUREL MT.

DESIGN NO: 166.20.BG
SCALE: 1/4"=1'0"
DATE: 6.9.20

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PO BOX 21239
BILLYS, MT 59104
406-248-7401
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Montana Code Annotated 2019

TITLE 76. LAND RESOURCES AND USE

CHAPTER 2. PLANNING AND ZONING

Part 4. Application to Governmental Agencies Group and Foster Homes

Definitions

76-2-401. Definitions. As used in **76-2-402**, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "Agency" means a board, bureau, commission, department, an authority, or other entity of state or local government.
- (2) "Local zoning regulations" means zoning regulations adopted pursuant to Title 76, chapter 2.

History: En. Sec. 1, Ch. 397, L. 1981.

Local Zoning Regulations -- Application To Agencies

76-2-402. Local zoning regulations -- application to agencies. Whenever an agency proposes to use public land contrary to local zoning regulations, a public hearing, as defined below, shall be held.

- (1) The local board of adjustments, as provided in this chapter, shall hold a hearing within 30 days of the date the agency gives notice to the board of its intent to develop land contrary to local zoning regulations.
- (2) The board shall have no power to deny the proposed use but shall act only to allow a public forum for comment on the proposed use.

History: En. Sec. 2, Ch. 397, L. 1981.

File Attachments for Item:

4. Growth Management Policy - Chapter Review

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Introduction

The Growth Management Policy is a guide for the development of the City of Laurel over the next five years. The purpose of this plan is to provide general guidelines to develop Laurel as a safe, livable, and economically viable community that residents, institutions, and businesses are proud to be in. This policy presents information about the city, its residents, and the goals and objectives the city will work towards in the long term.

This policy is focused on the City of Laurel and its surrounding zoning and planning jurisdiction. The city of Laurel is at a crossroads both in place and time. The city is located at an important agricultural, transportation and industrial junction which has helped develop the area over the past 130 years. The timing of this policy update is also important with a growing population, changing demographics, a fast-growing municipality nearby, and the need for updated regulations and policies to face 21st century technological, economic, and land use challenges.

Historical Context

The Crow was the principle tribe in the Yellowstone Basin at the time of the first arrival by European explorers. Captain William Clark and his expedition floated down the Yellowstone River from current-day Livingston in crude canoes on their return journey in July of 1806. Clark and his expedition camped at the mouth of the Clark's Fork near the present site of the Laurel and noted that it made a possible location for a trading post. Many decades later, Chief Joseph led the Nez Perce over the Yellowstone River near Laurel during their retreat to Canada in 1877. Colonel Sam Sturgis and his cavalry caught up and battled the tribe at Canyon Creek approximately six miles north of the Laurel. The Nez Perce escaped the cavalry and continued their flight to Canada after the battle. Laurel is located on both the Lewis & Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails to commemorate these events.

European settlement of the area began in 1879. The railroad reached Billings by 1882 and reached current-day Laurel by that Fall. The City of Laurel, originally called Carlton, was established in 1882 along the newly laid railroad tracks. The western legend of "Calamity Jane" Canary was associated with Laurel in its early years after she came to Laurel and 1882 and had her dugout near the Canyon Creek Battleground.

Laurel's population and its economy boomed during its early years. By 1920 the city's population had reached 2,338 residents. The rail yards were a permanent fixture of the local economy and became a dependable employer due to the consistent demand for agricultural products across the country. The three major industries which have played a significant role in the growth of the city has been agriculture, the railroad, and oil. Local farms near current-day Laurel were settled prior to any official town was established. Popular crops for area farmers and ranchers included alfalfa, grains, and sugar beets. This agricultural production was a major draw for the region outside of the rail yard's ability to ship goods elsewhere. These farms were an important driver of the local economy despite the outsized role the railyard held as a shipping center.

The Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroads all made their junction in Laurel by 1906. The Northern Pacific was building terminal yards in 1907 which would

eventually lead to Laurel being the largest terminal and classification station between St. Paul, Minnesota and Seattle, Washington. The yards would eventually have a fifty-five stall roundhouse, machine shop, ice-making plant, loading docks, water tank, and disinfecting plant. The yard is currently operated by Montana Rail Link which is leased from the Burling Northern/Santa Fe Railroad. Laurel remains the largest rail yard between Minneapolis and Seattle.

The area was repeatedly drilled in the early 1920s for oil exploration. The Northwest Refining Company bought a site for a proposed 2,000-barrell refinery in 1922. In 1927, productive oil fields were discovered in the nearby Oregon Basin of Wyoming. The existing regional rail infrastructure made Laurel an ideal location for the refining and export of crude oil from Wyoming and other regions. The refinery in Laurel has been operated by many companies including the Independent Refining Company, Farmers Union Central Exchange, and now CHS Inc.

Purpose

The Growth Management Policy is a statement of community goals and objectives that guide the physical development of the city. The policy is a comprehensive document covering many different study areas including demographics, land use, infrastructure, public services, transportation, and housing. The purpose of this Growth Management Policy is to:

- ❖ Establish Community Goals and Objectives,
- ❖ Present an updated profile of the community,
- ❖ Provide projections for housing, natural resources, population, land use and other subjects,
- ❖ Ensure an orderly set of policy priorities for the expansion of the city,
- ❖ Put forward an implementation guide for the established Goals and Objectives, and
- ❖ Act as a guide and resource for city staff and other local stakeholders.

Community Vision

The Growth Management Policy gives local stakeholders the opportunity to create a future vision for the Laurel community. A well-thought out vision is important because it informs the structure and form of the document and influences the work of the city long after it is published. This vision can involve where the city wants to grow, what types of businesses residents would like to see, priorities for project funding, the quality of life residents would like to have, and many more. The Growth Management Policy's goals, objectives, and recommendations for implementation are all developed from this community vision. City staff worked with Planning Board members to develop a community vision for Laurel.

In the future, Laurel will have:

- ❖ A diverse array of residents, businesses, and institutions,
- ❖ Greater employment opportunities,
- ❖ Connected and accessible neighborhoods,
- ❖ A variety of housing options and affordability,
- ❖ A thriving downtown and commercial districts,
- ❖ Well-functioning public services and amenities,
- ❖ Clear and consistent regulations for development, and
- ❖ An engaged community.

Regulatory Requirements

The Growth Management Policy is a statutory necessity for local governments. Montana Code Annotated Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6 provides the foundation for establishing a municipal growth policy. These statutes require certain general items to be included but the direction, focus, and contents of the policy are the responsibility of the local governing body. These statutes were established to enable local governments to proactively envision their future and implement change in a coordinated way.

CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Overview

The update process for the 2020 Growth Management Policy took place from November 2019 to October of 2020. Much of the plan was developed in the spring and early summer of 2020. The Planning Department convened multiple meetings of the Planning Board to discuss and review draft chapters and information, and reached out to local, county, and state officials for input.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent stay-at-home orders disrupted the in-person meetings of the Laurel City-County Planning Board. The Planning Department continued to draft sections of the plan, meet with stakeholders, and compile chapters despite this disruption.

Prior Efforts

The most recently approved Growth Management Policy was completed and approved by Laurel City Council in December of 2013. Prior to the adoption of the 2013 Growth Management Policy, The City of Laurel had prepared and adopted a Growth Management Policy in 2004.

Outreach

Outreach efforts were made during the late winter and early spring of 2020. The City reached out to many local, regional, and state groups. These groups and organizations were identified as important stakeholders in the development of the plan. Many groups were unable to give comment due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused scheduling and contact issues. The chart below shows the groups that the City met with and those who were contacted but who did not follow-up or were unable to provide direct information.

Laurel Growth Management Policy Update Outreach	
Groups Met with	Groups Contacted
Laurel Urban Renewal Agency	Laurel Chamber of Commerce
Laurel School District	Big Sky Economic Development Authority
City of Laurel Public Works	Montana Department of Commerce
City of Laurel Fire Department	Yellowstone County Disaster & Emergency Services
City of Laurel Police Department	Yellowstone County GIS
Laurel Rotary Club	Montana Department of Justice
Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners	
Yellowstone County Sheriff's Department	
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation	
Montana Department of Transportation (Billings District)	
Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development	
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	

Timeline of Meetings for the Growth Management Policy Update

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed meetings of the Planning Board between March and June of 2020. Compiling of the policy components and preparation of narrative portions continued during this time under the previously established schedule. The chart below shows the Planning Board and City Council meetings in which the Growth Management Policy Update was presented.

Laurel Growth Management Policy Update 2020 - Meeting Schedule			
Date	Purpose	Task	Outcome
December 11, 2019	Approve Schedule and Contacts	N/A - Initial Visioning Discussion	Send Invites to Agencies
January 8, 2020	Disc: Chapters 1&3	Intro/Purpose, Comm. Goals	Work Session
February 12, 2020	Disc: Chapters 4&5	Comm. Profile, Employment Forecast	Work Session
February 26, 2020	Disc: Chapter 6	Land Use	Work Session
March 11, 2020	Disc: Chapter 7	Future Land use	Work Session
March 25, 2020	Disc: Chapter 8	Housing	Work Session
April 8, 2020	Disc: Chapter 9	Infrastructure	Work Session
April 22, 2020	Disc: Chapter 10	Transportation	Work Session
May 13, 2020	Disc: Chapter 11	Economic Development	Work Session
May 27, 2020	Disc: Chapters 12&13	Public Services/Facilities & Recreation Plan	Work Session
June 10, 2020	Disc: Chapters 3, 14, 15	Comm. Goals & Natl Resources & Implementation	Work Session
June 24, 2020	Review Document	Review Completed Chapters	Work Session
July 22, 2020	Planning Board Review	Chapters 3, 7, 7.5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13	Work Session
August 19, 2020	Planning Board Review	Review Draft Document	Schedule Public Hearing
September 16, 2020	Planning Board Public Hearing	Full Document Review and Approval	Resolution of Adoption
October 6, 2020	City Council Discussion Session	Full Document (PB Approved)	Preliminary Presentation
October 20, 2020	City Council Workshop	Full Document (PB Approved)	City Council Review and Comments
October 27, 2020	City Council Public Hearing	Receive Public Comment, Approve Resolution of Adoption	Resolution of Adoption
November 27, 2020	Final Adoption	30 Day Comment Period	Adoption of 2020 Growth Management Policy

CHAPTER 3 – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Overview

The community goals and objectives presented in this chapter were established to transform the community vision into a concrete reality. These goals, objectives, and strategies were developed through research, data collection, interviews, and public meetings that the City and the planning board took on throughout the course of this planning process.

These goals cover a wide range of topics including Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, Infrastructure, and more. This collection of community goals and objectives is meant to be exhaustive to provide the City, developers, residents, and business owners with a comprehensive set of guidance to inform local efforts across different sectors, topics, and areas of influence.

Land Use Goals and Objectives

Land use policy is one of the most powerful tools a city has. Zoning and subdivision codes influence growth patterns, infrastructure placement, road connectivity, and much more. The city of Laurel is focused on the effective use of land in and around the city. The city also plans to conserve open space and traditional land uses by focusing on smarter, denser development clustered along major routes and commercial areas.

The overall goals of this plan are to conserve open space while maximizing the areas currently in and directly adjacent to the city. A rehabilitation of Laurel's downtown and Southeast 4th street is possible through a mix of infill development, mixed use buildings, improved infrastructure, and updated façade and signage standards.

Goal 1: Conserve open space and traditional land uses

- ❖ Encourage cluster developments to incorporate open space into new developments
- ❖ Provide options for landowners for conserving portions of their land
- ❖ Study and Implement strategies to create an interconnected system of parks and greenways and open space that are accessible to area residents

Goal 2: Develop downtown Laurel into a viable place to live, work, and play

- ❖ Encourage mixed uses for living, working, and shopping local
- ❖ Identify priority parcels for infill development
- ❖ Implement Placemaking projects to create a more livable and enjoyable downtown
- ❖ Partner with local groups to support community businesses, events, gatherings, and other efforts
- ❖ Connect with regional agencies to access project funding, receive technical support, and boost the visibility of Laurel development opportunities

Goal 3: Update Subdivision Code to suit the needs of Laurel and its surrounding area

- ❖ Provide clear and consistent standards
- ❖ Ensure Proper scale and scope of regulations
- ❖ Include trails, open space, and greenway considerations in parkland subdivision review
- ❖ Regularly review and update the Subdivision Code as needed to remain up to date

Goal 4: Update the Zoning Code to provide for a greater flexibility of allowable uses, clearer requirements, and more efficient land use

- ❖ Study the inclusion of different types of housing within residential districts
- ❖ Update Overlay Districts, Parking Requirements, and the Sign Code to better fit the City's needs and character
- ❖ Allow live/work opportunities in commercial areas
- ❖ Enable property owners to use their land more effectively and efficiently

Goal 5: Use long term planning documents to identify funding and address priority needs for infrastructure and development

- ❖ Establish an Annexation Plan to develop priority growth areas and strategies
- ❖ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for vital infrastructure to support the city as it grows
- ❖ Prepare a Commercial and Industrial Development Study for land adjacent to major transportation routes in the Laurel area

Annexation Goals and Objectives

It is important for municipalities to seize opportunities for growth. Having strategies in place to address challenges for developing a community and preparing priorities for expansion are vital activities to have in place. Two overarching goals were prepared to help the City of Laurel grow through annexation.

Goal 1: Adopt a long-range view for growth of the City

- ❖ Establish a growth-conscious set of policies to expand the city and its services
- ❖ Create priority growth areas for extension of services
- ❖ Develop and approve an Annexation Plan for the Laurel Planning Jurisdiction
- ❖ Support the creation of a long-term Capital Improvement Plan for the extension of capital infrastructure

Goal 3: Manage fiscal responsibility with established and proposed annexation standards

- ❖ Ensure that the established standards are right and proper for the City of Laurel
- ❖ Ease burden for developers to annex into the city while meeting established standards
- ❖ Allow greater flexibility in development patterns
- ❖ Determine the cost and benefits of annexation

Housing Goals and Objectives

Housing is a necessity in any community. The goals presented below are a means to ensure that people can find an affordable, accessible, comfortable, and attractive place to live. Laurel has remained lucky as a municipality not struggling with a serious housing affordability crisis. Some housing trends that Laurel could tap into include the growing demand for closer-knit, denser, and connected neighborhoods near commercial areas. Many younger Americans have also abandoned the traditional single-family home for other housing including rowhouses, tiny homes, condominiums, and apartments. Many older Americans are also focusing on downsizing to housing that is more accessible to local services including restaurants, doctors' offices, and grocery stores.

Housing is closely connected with transportation and economic development. Updating our zoning code to allow a wider array of housing options such as tiny homes, accessory dwelling units, and multi-family housing is a major goal. This type of update will ensure that currently developed parcels and vacant parcels within the city can be developed with more options for prospective buyers or renters. It is also important for Laurel to have standards and code that allow for the efficient use of space already within the city while enabling the effective use of land in the surrounding area.

Goal 1: Encourage a mixture of housing types to meet the demand of all market sectors

- ❖ Maintain a diverse array of housing and affordability
- ❖ Promote higher density housing types in the downtown area and adjacent to major transportation corridors
- ❖ Study mixed-use housing and other alternative housing types and styles
- ❖ Provide options for a full spectrum of housing from rentals to retirement housing

Goal 2: Provide information on housing related grants, loans, and ownership programs

- ❖ Develop a list of resources for renters and homeowners
- ❖ Collect information on Federal, State, local, and philanthropic rental and homeownership programs
- ❖ Advise Laurel area residents about available support for housing, rent, and homeownership

Infrastructure Goals and Objectives

Infrastructure is the actual foundation of the community. It will be vital for the City to utilize long range planning to establish infrastructure standards, mapping of current infrastructure facilities, and infrastructure development costs for necessary and prospective projects.

The drafting of planning documents including master plans and preliminary engineering reports (PERs) relating to the Laurel Water system, Wastewater system, and Stormwater system are all important to ensure orderly and effective growth of the city. A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is another vital infrastructure planning document which should be prepared. Plans and engineering reports should clearly provide useable data, allow for inclusion in grant applications, and present direct insight on necessary future projects.

Goal 1: Maintain an Effective and Efficient Public Infrastructure System that Adequately Serves the Needs of the City

- ❖ Develop a data-driven infrastructure maintenance schedule
- ❖ Determine any existing gaps in services and other infrastructure deficiencies within the city
- ❖ Adopt up-to-date infrastructure standards that are appropriate for the needs of the city
- ❖ Study using public spaces within floodplains, water courses, and wetlands to be used as passive recreation uses such as parks and greenways
- ❖ Study the feasibility of recycling programs and other means to reduce the solid waste stream
- ❖ Incorporate stormwater system planning into roadway and other infrastructure planning processes

Goal 2: Establish the Long-Term Capital and Infrastructure Needs for the City

- ❖ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Improvement and Expansion of infrastructure
- ❖ Prepare a Water System Master Plan
- ❖ Create a Wastewater System Master Plan
- ❖ Complete a Stormwater Management Plan
- ❖ Ensure that infrastructure planning documents are routinely updated.
- ❖ Confirm that the established infrastructure priorities are adequate

Goal 3: Seek out Possible Funding Sources for the Expansion of Infrastructure and Services

- ❖ Study the physical and financial needs for the extension of infrastructure to priority growth areas.
- ❖ Collaborate with Montana State Agencies on major projects and studies
- ❖ Explore Federal, State, and Philanthropic infrastructure grant opportunities
- ❖ Determine the positive impacts from the expansion and improvement of infrastructure
- ❖ Apply for funding opportunities that are appropriate for city priorities and projects

Transportation Goals and Objectives

The transportation network brings people together. This network is a patchwork of streets, roads, sidewalks, bike paths, trails, railway, and anything in-between. It is important to couple transportation development with land use. To this end, a goal of the city is developing a more multi-modal approach to our streets and pathways. Developing bicycle and pedestrian improvements such as bike lanes, greenways, improved signage, and sidewalk improvements is a major goal. Furthermore, traffic and speed data should be studied on major routes to determine street safety and determine possible solutions. Laurel seeks to make our neighborhoods and commercial areas more accessible and connected by improving pedestrian facilities including sidewalks, accessible curb cuts, signage, and road markings. The establishment of a road network master plan is also important to create a concrete plan for street expansion and continuity to support orderly and consistent growth patterns.

These transportation goals are a way to increase quality of life, connect people to their community, increase safety, and plan around current trends and future growth. The three overarching transportation goals have been provided with their objectives and strategies.

Goal 1: Preserve, Maintain, and Improve the existing Transportation system

- ❖ Update the Long-Range Transportation Plan
- ❖ Establish a systematic approach for the maintenance and repair of the road network.
- ❖ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan to identify major Transportation projects
- ❖ Establish a road network master plan to ensure street continuity, traffic flow, and neighborhood connectivity,
- ❖ Promote fiscal responsibility and high return on investment
- ❖ Coordinate roadway improvement projects after underground infrastructure improvements

Goal 2: Improve Mobility, Safety, and Accessibility for all Users and Modes of Travel

- ❖ Implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements and traffic calming measures to transform the downtown area into a pedestrian friendly place,

- ❖ Create a looping bicycle/pedestrian trail and street system that connects the different areas of Laurel to one another
- ❖ Adopt pedestrian and multi-modal friendly transportation standards and safety measures
- ❖ Study options to expand and improve on the existing Laurel Transit program

Goal 3: Connect Transportation Decisions with Land Use Decisions

- ❖ Integrate land use planning and transportation planning to better manage and develop the transportation network.
- ❖ Utilize transportation projects to encourage intensive development patterns along major routes and existing areas of the city.
- ❖ Adopt and implement consistent system policies and maintenance standards
- ❖ Ensure the development of a sustainable transportation system that minimizes environmental impacts

Economic Development Goals and Objectives

The Laurel economy has changed greatly in the past few decades. The emergence of online retail has shifted the focus away from traditional brick and mortar downtowns and easy to use and seemingly more convenient online or delivery establishments. Recently, small towns and cities across the country are finding that thoughtful economic development and land use planning can rehabilitate their downtowns and neighborhoods and are reversing some of the losses of the emergence of online retail.

The City has established focus areas for economic development. These areas include Laurel's traditional downtown core, the Southeast 4th St. Commercial district, the 1st Avenue Corridor, and Old Route 10 running westward from the City. A major focus of this chapter is to establish smarter, more sustainable development that adds character and connectivity to its commercial areas. Commercial areas of Laurel should be attractive places to visit. Placemaking and beautification projects are useful in encouraging residents and visitors to explore different areas of the city. Increasing walkability and mixed-use development is a focus to create greater housing and commercial opportunities.

The goals presented below are an effort to increase the attractiveness, usefulness, and quality of our commercial and economic areas. Expansion brings new opportunity. The area near the West Laurel Interchange has major growth potential. This area can become a major boon for the Laurel community through the effective use of placemaking strategies, smart growth concepts, and cohesive zoning and development standards.

Four main goals have been established that focus on Economic Development with specific objectives to help meet each goal.

Goal 1: Develop Downtown Laurel into a destination to live, work, and play

- ❖ Institute placemaking projects to further enhance district character
- ❖ Increase live-work opportunities for current and future residents and businesses
- ❖ Apply Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding to beautification, blight removal, and area public improvement projects
- ❖ Identify and find solutions for unused and underused parcels as candidates for development

Goal 2: Create a resilient local economy

- ❖ Strengthen core businesses and industries through communication and connections with technical support
- ❖ Ensure that local economic activities are inclusive and accessible to all stakeholders
- ❖ Implement policies that create stable and sustainable economic growth
- ❖ Work to highlight the shared benefits of working together as a community with local businesses stakeholders, and developers
- ❖ Provide an economic ecosystem that allows for a wide array of businesses, industries, and developments to thrive
- ❖ Study and implement policies to enhance local business demand and alternative strategies for value creation for the community

Goal 3: Collaborate with area organizations to support economic growth and local employment and training opportunities

- ❖ Communicate with local groups to determine any needs and assistance
- ❖ Create partnerships with local and regional groups to fill local service gaps and create needed programming
- ❖ Take part in events and workshops to support local business initiatives and activities
- ❖ Establish common ground with local and regional groups to provide resources and assistance
- ❖ Connect residents and businesses with economic, financial, and entrepreneurship resources and opportunities

Goal 4: Study options for new commercial and industrial properties in anticipated high growth areas

- ❖ Create a Corridor Master Plan for growth in and around the intersection with Old Route 10 and the West Laurel Interchange
- ❖ Study options and determine priorities for the possible establishment of Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) and Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDDs)
- ❖ Review and pursue opportunities for clustered commercial and/or industrial parks
- ❖ Develop funding strategies to provide services for priority growth areas.

Public Facilities and Services Objectives, Policies and Strategies

Effective and efficient public services are a major draw for prospective residents, developers, and businesses. Above all public facilities and services must be accessible, helpful, and dependable for everyone residing, working, and visiting the city. The City should establish the current gaps and projected needs of public facilities as the city grows. It is important to work with public stakeholders and departments to cover the whole population. Providing consistent and stable service delivery is a must.

Goal 1: Provide consistent and high-quality public services to the community

- ❖ Develop standard operating procedures to ensure consistency for city departments
- ❖ Develop maintenance procedures for parks, facilities, and public areas.
- ❖ Study current facilities and services to identify gaps in services

Goal 2: Respond to the changing nature of the community

- ❖ Plan for the expansion of public facilities in priority growth areas

- ❖ Invest in public facilities that are accessible to everyone in the community
- ❖ Study how to improve city services to boost quality of life for residents, businesses, and institutions

Goal 3: Work with city departments and local stakeholders to determine the expansion of public facilities and services

- ❖ Open lines of communication between city departments and institutions to gain input on major projects
- ❖ Consider the public service requirements of large-scale projects prior to their approval and implementation
- ❖ Develop plans for the expansion of Fire, Police, and EMS facilities

Recreation Objectives, Policies and Strategies

The wide array of Laurel city parks are a great asset to city residents. It is a goal to ensure that current and future city parkland is an essential and amenity for residents. Parks should be developed and improved to act as neighborhood focal points. Many of Laurel's parks are very small, with some located at inopportune locations. It is a major goal to ensure that parkland is an essential and useable amenity for residents. The City should study underutilized and/or burdensome parkland parcels and consider re-use scenarios.

Historic Riverside Park has been a staple of the community for almost one hundred years. The Riverside Park Master Plan was developed in 2018 to provide a blueprint for improvements and the reuse of the park. It will be important to continue the ongoing improvement efforts and to develop policies to attract visitors from Yellowstone County and beyond. Riverside Park should be maintained as a historical, recreational, and economic asset into the future.

Goal 1: Develop parkland as an essential and useful amenity for residents

- ❖ Ensure new developments have appropriate park space for recreation and general use
- ❖ Study how existing parks can be improved through new facilities, changed layouts, or additions
- ❖ Review current park infrastructure and determine if improvements are necessary to better serve the needs of the surrounding area

Goal 2: Promote Riverside Park as a vital historic, civic, and recreation resource for residents and visitors

- ❖ Adhere to the projects and strategies presented in the 2018 Riverside Park Master Plan
- ❖ Seek grant funding for structural and site improvements
- ❖ Develop historic markers for Riverside Park and its historic structures
- ❖ Study options for connecting Riverside Park to the city proper through infrastructure improvements, civic engagement, or other means.
- ❖ Establish signage and marketing for the assets and resources of Riverside Park to area residents and highway travelers.

Goal 3: Create an interconnected system of parks, greenspace, and trails that are accessible to all residents

- ❖ Create a city-wide Park System Master Plan to develop project priorities

- ❖ Consider the creation of a City Parks Department to oversee park operations and maintenance.
- ❖ Identify unused land that could be transformed into greenspace or trails for use by current and future residents.
- ❖ Update the zoning and development codes to encourage the creation of bicycle and pedestrian trail corridors

Natural Resource Goals and Objectives

The Laurel planning jurisdiction contains a variety of terrain types and environments. The natural environment should be preserved and enhanced to balance environmental sustainability with economic growth, recreational opportunities, and development. Natural resources and the natural environment can be managed with growth activities to provide social, economic, and community benefits to people over time while continuing with their natural functions. The natural resource goals and objectives were developed with this balance of activities considered.

Goal 1: Protect Laurel's natural resources and traditional environment

- ❖ Provide options for landowners for conserving portions of their land while developing on others
- ❖ Achieve a balanced pattern of growth to ensure environmental concerns are considered during development
- ❖ Manage the local water resources as a healthy, integrated system that provides long-term benefits from enhanced environmental quality

Goal 2: Incorporate sustainable development patterns in the Laurel subdivision and land use codes

- ❖ Review and update existing zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure environmental preservation and conservation are addressed
- ❖ Review and update landscaping ordinances as needed to best suit Laurel's natural environment
- ❖ Manage rivers, floodplains, wetlands, and other water resources for multiple uses including flood and erosion protection, wildlife habitat, recreational use, open space, and water supply

Goal 3: Connect with local, regional, and state agencies and stakeholders to improve the natural environment in and around Laurel

- ❖ Sponsor environmental cleanup and rehabilitation programs that include the city, school district, community organizations, and residents
- ❖ Participate in regional watershed studies to achieve effective long-term flood protection
- ❖ Explore the possibility of creating a conservation corridor along the Yellowstone River

Intergovernmental Coordination Goals and Objectives

Intergovernmental coordination and collaboration are important to ensure that the city of Laurel can sustainably develop, seize opportunities for growth, and improve the quality of life for residents, visitors, and businesses. Consistent intergovernmental coordination will allow Laurel to be a partner and participant in the growth of the region, rather than a bystander.

It will be important for the City to regularly communicate with local, county, and state groups and departments to seize grant and development opportunities, provide the Laurel perspective, and connect local groups to those in the wider region. It is envisioned that the City will help direct local residents,

businesses, developers, and groups to helpful county, state, federal and institutional resources and supports.

Goal 1: Establish lines of communication with local, county, and state institutions

- ❖ Create an accurate directory of government representatives and staff
- ❖ Update governmental stakeholders of ongoing projects and work in the Laurel area
- ❖ Develop working relationship with legislators, staff, and stakeholders of the different levels of government

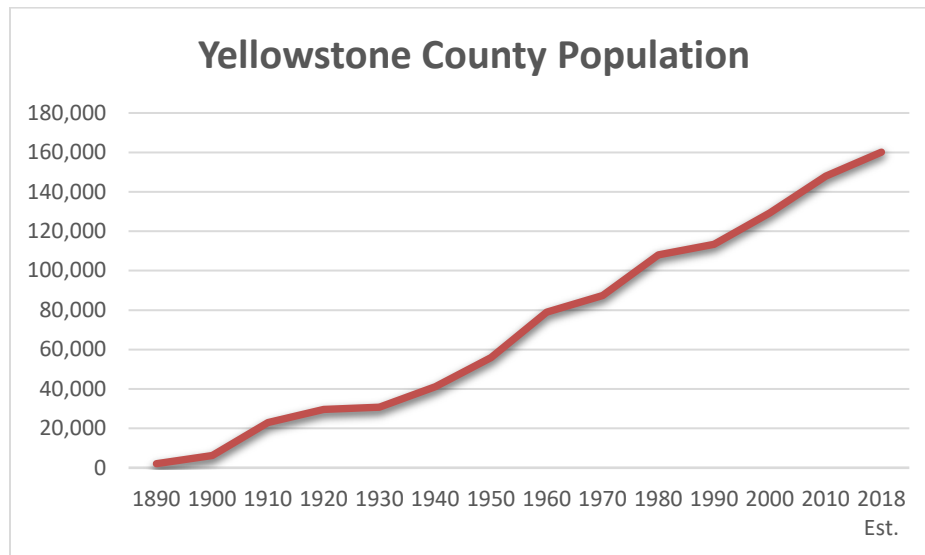
Goal 2: Coordinate with local and regional institutions to support and grow the Laurel community

- ❖ Work with economic development groups to seize opportunities for business growth
- ❖ Connect area businesses with institutions and governmental groups that can support their mission
- ❖ Communicate with area legislators to provide information on growth patterns and development in the Laurel area.
- ❖ Check-in with state agencies and the Board of County Commissioners to confirm compliance to state-wide codes and operational needs.

CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY PROFILE

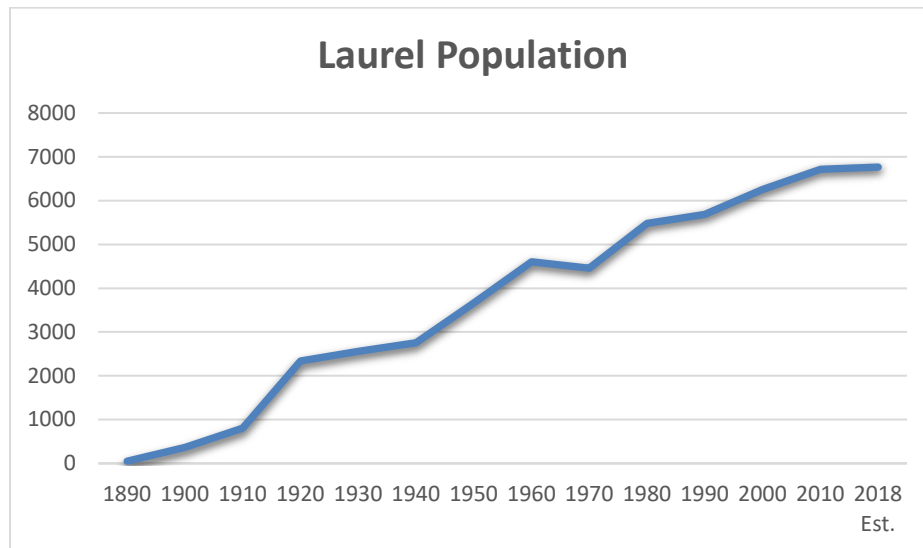
Population Trends

The City of Laurel incorporated in 1908. The population of Laurel grew steadily after the early boom years of railroad and oil development. The nearby City of Billings has been the major driver of growth and development in Yellowstone County in the past few decades with Laurel playing a lesser role. City staff anticipates a continuation of steady growth despite certain developments which may impact this such as the construction of the West Laurel Interchange for interstate I-90.



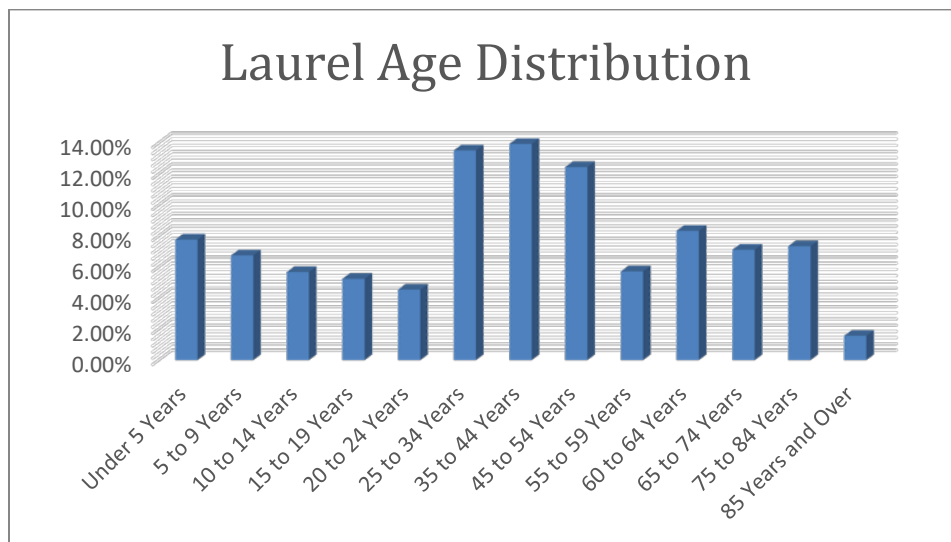
U.S. Decennial Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Laurel has grown slowly over the past forty years. It is anticipated that Laurel will reach a population of 7,000 after the 2020 U.S. Census is completed.



U.S. Decennial Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Residents of Laurel tend to be older. The chart below shows that most residents are above the age of 25, with almost 40% of the population between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-nine.



2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Ethnic Characteristics

The charts below provide a summary of the ethnic makeup of the City of Laurel. The current census estimates indicate that Laurel is not a very diverse community. The lowest estimate for white residents is 95.11% which is displayed in the “Hispanic or Latino and Race” Chart below.

Race	Estimate	Percent
Total Population	6,885	100.00%
White	6,775	98.40%
Black or African American	11	0.16%
American Indian and Alaska Naïve	192	2.79%
Asian	0	0.00%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
Some Other Race	16	0.23%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Hispanic or Latino and Race	Estimate	Percent
Total Population	6,885	100.00%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	178	2.59%
Mexican	101	1.47%
Other Hispanic or Latino	77	1.12%
Not Hispanic or Latino	6,707	97.41%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Households and Families

There are an estimated 2,882 Households and 1,907 families in the City of Laurel. Households in the city of Laurel have a median household income of \$50,778 while families in Laurel had an estimated \$68,575. An estimated 9% of Laurel residents are below the poverty level compared with 5.5% of families. It is forecasted that Laurel's overall population will increase by 1.30% between 2019 and 2024, with an increase in total households of 1.10% and families of 8.60%.

Education

Laurel is a well-educated community. 94.07% of the population over the age of 25 have completed a high school attained a high school diploma, with 51.21% having at least completed some college or an associate degree program. Laurel spends less per student than the United States average, but it maintains a more positive student per librarian, and student per counselor ratio.

Education	Laurel, MT	United States
Expenditures Per Student	8,629.00	12,383.00
Educational Expenditures Per Student	7,897.00	10,574.00
Instructional Expenditures per Student	5,080.00	6,428.00
Pupil/Student Ratio	16.80	16.80
Students per Librarian	464.70	538.10
Students per Counselor	348.50	403.20

Education in Laurel, Montana. Bestplaces.net. Accessed 2/3/2020.

Work Commute

79% of Laurel residents commute to work alone in a car, truck, or van. This is slightly higher than the National average of 76.4%. Laurel does have a higher than average rate of carpooling, with 13.66%, versus the National average of 9.2%¹. Laurel residents travel an average of 21.5 minutes to work. This can be partially attributed to the nearby city of Billings being a major employment center.

Commuting to Work	Estimate	Percent
Workers 16 Years and Over	3,528	100.00%
Car, Truck, or Van - Drove Alone	2,787	79.00%
Car, Truck, or Van - Carpooled	482	13.66%
Public Transportation (excluding Taxicab)	22	0.62%
Walked	82	2.32%
Other Means	15	0.43%
Worked at home	140	3.97%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	21.50	
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

¹ Selected Economic Characteristics. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

CHAPTER 5: EMPLOYMENT AND POPULATION FORECASTS

A mix of businesses helps a city to thrive and allows residents to live, work, and play in their communities. A diverse array of businesses also keeps a community more resilient in the case of economic downturns. Laurel has been blessed with two long-term stable employers in the Montana Rail Link railyard and CHS Refinery. These two institutions are well established and are not anticipated to disappear. The City of Laurel hopes to further diversify the local economy and attract a variety of types of businesses and jobs. The growth policy focuses on revitalizing Laurel's downtown businesses, assessing how zoning can be updated to better suite businesses and employees, and connecting Laurel neighborhoods with the existing business communities to help increase traffic to existing establishments.

Employment Forecasts

66.92% of the estimated 5,362 residents of Laurel aged 16 years and over are in the labor force. Only 2.69% were unemployed, and 30.40% were not in the labor force as of the 2017 U.S. Census estimates. This unemployment rate has remained steady with the current rate at approximately 2.5%. Laurel also has a balanced split of occupations with no general sector having more than 16% of the total labor pool. This type of mix of industries and employment is a good for a community to help insulate it from major economic shifts.

Industry	Estimate	Percent
Total Civilian Employed Population 16 years and over	3,588	100.00%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	153	4.26%
Construction	262	7.30%
Manufacturing	315	8.78%
Wholesale Trade	157	4.38%
Retail Trade	603	16.81%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	206	5.74%
Information	66	1.84%
Finance and Insurance, and Real estate and rental and leasing	208	5.80%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and waste management services	299	8.33%
Education Services, and Healthcare and Social Assistance	533	14.86%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	493	13.74%
Other Services, except public administration	233	6.49%
Public Administration	60	1.67%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Housing

Housing is an important asset to a community. Maintaining a mix of affordable housing is important to attracting a diverse array of people to a community. Housing provides shelter but it also provides character to a community by way of how it is designed, situated, and utilized. The charts below provide an overview of housing in Laurel. Laurel has a low housing vacancy rate, and many owner-occupied units.

Housing Occupancy	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	2,992	100%
Occupied housing units	2,882	96.30%
Vacant housing units	110	3.70%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

67% of all houses are owner-occupied. This means that people have invested their time, money, and effort into the Laurel community.

Housing Tenure	Estimate	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	2,882	100.00%
Owner-Occupied	1,931	67.00%
Renter-Occupied	951	33.00%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Affordable rents enable a wide array of people to live in your community. 70% of renters in Laurel pay 35% or less of their paycheck towards their monthly rent. This percentage is positive because it allows more money to be utilized for purposes such as restaurants, shopping, and other services.

Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income	Estimate	Percent
Occupied units paying rent	898	100.00%
Less than 15.0 percent	115	12.81%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	183	20.38%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	52	5.79%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	161	17.93%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	121	13.47%
35.0 percent or more	266	29.62%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

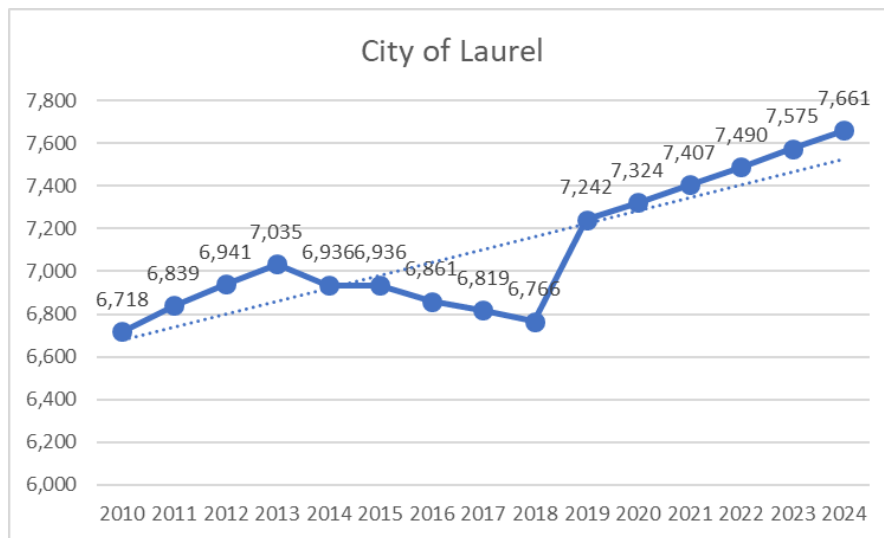
78% of houses in Laurel are worth between \$100,000 and \$300,000. The median household value is \$169,900. This is a very positive development as affordable houses and rents allow for a more diverse array of people to become homeowners and to put down roots in the community.

Housing Value	Estimate	Percent
Owner-Occupied Units	1,931	100.00%

Less than \$50,000	203	10.51%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	155	8.03%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	377	19.52%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	592	30.66%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	554	28.69%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	50	2.59%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0	0.00%
\$1,000,000 or More	0	0.00%
Median (In Dollars)	\$ 165,900	
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

Population Forecasts

Laurel saw a dip in population between 2013 from 7,035 to 6,766 in 2018. It was estimated that this trend was reversed in 2019 with approximately 7,242 residents in the city. It is anticipated that Laurel will grow at a steady rate over at least the next 5 years. This considers the proximity to the City of Billings and attracting businesses, residents, and commuters who have a stake in the Billings economy.



Growth Rate	2010-2019	2019-2024
Population	0.880%	1.30%
Households	0.840%	1.10%
Families	0.580%	8.60%
Median Household Income	X	1.68%
Per Capita Income	X	2.44%

CHAPTER 6: Land Use

Overview

Laurel is located in South Central Montana, 16 miles West of Billings, the largest city in Montana. Laurel is located along major transportation routes including Interstate I-90, Route 212, and Old Route 10. Laurel is located 223 miles east of the state capital of Helena, 70 miles from the northeast entrance of Yellowstone National Park, 80 miles from the Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, and 137 miles to the city of Bozeman.

Laurel is located on the western boundary of Yellowstone County. The area has seen major development with the continued growth of the City of Billings, but the surrounding region remains sparsely populated and remains largely prairie, rangeland, and farmland.

Trends

The City of Laurel has developed slowly over the past few decades. Development has focused itself north and west of the city. There are also many vacant and underused parcels within the city itself. The area adjacent to Interstate I-90 is mostly commercial and industrial in nature. This similar land use is seen along Old Route 10 to the west of the city.

Existing Land Uses

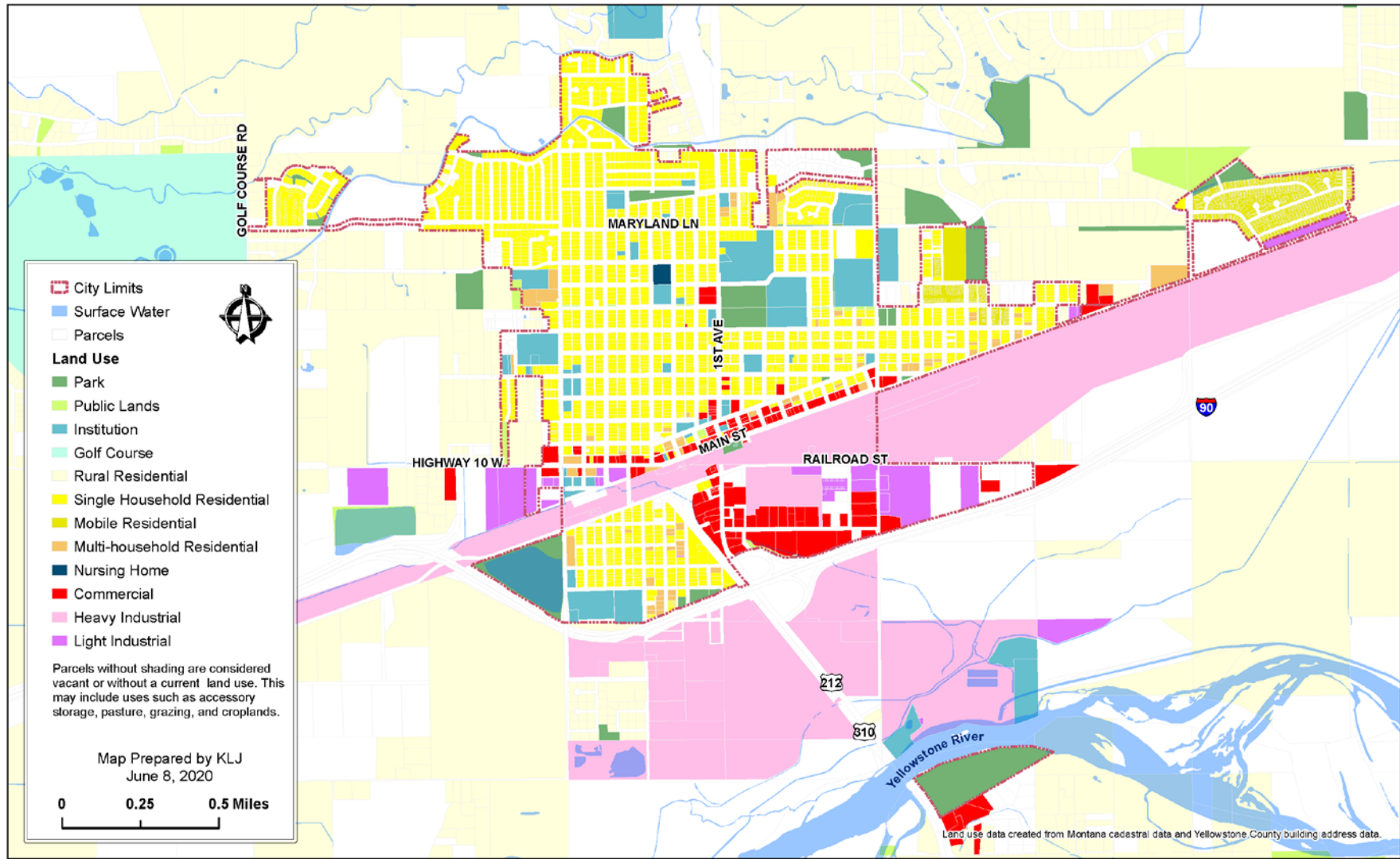
The City of Laurel has a variety of established zoning districts. These districts cover a wide range of uses and purposes. The districts and their official definitions can be found below.

- Agricultural-open space (AO) zone - The agricultural-open space zone is intended to preserve land for agricultural and related use. Land within this zone is usually unsubdivided and with a minimum of roads, streets, and other utilities. It may be cultivated acreage or land less suitable for cultivation, yet suitable for various agricultural enterprises using the broadest scope of the agricultural definition. Land within this zone may be located adjacent to highways and arterial streets. The AO zone is further intended to discourage the scattered intrusion of uses not compatible with an agricultural rural environment.
- Suburban residential (SR) zone - This zone is limited to single-family residential tracts on a minimum of five acres of land and on which agricultural uses may be conducted with the exception that animal units shall not exceed ten per five acres.
- Residential tracts (RT) zone - This residential zone is designed for single-family residential homes on a minimum of one acre of land. Livestock is limited to two livestock units per acre with additional units allowed per additional half-acre increments in conformance with Section 17.08.651 of this code. No livestock is allowed in the city limits, and all livestock must be removed when annexation occurs.

- Residential estates-22,000 (RE-22,000) zone - This zone is intended to provide of low-density, single-family, residential development in areas near or adjacent to the city that are served by either central water or sewer systems.
- Residential-7500 (R-7500) zone - The residential-7500 zone is intended to provide an area for medium, urban-density, single-family, residential environment on lots that are served by a public sewer and sewer system.
- Residential-6000 (R-6000) zone - The residential-6000 zone is intended to promote an area for a high, urban-density, duplex residential environment on lots that are usually served by a public water and sewer system.
- Residential light multifamily (RLMF) zone - The residential light multifamily zone is intended to provide a suitable residential environment for medium density (up to a fourplex) residential dwellings. The area is usually served by a public water and sewer system.
- Residential multifamily (RMF) zone - The residential multifamily zone is intended to provide a suitable residential environment for medium to high density residential dwellings; and to establish, where possible, a buffer between residential and commercial zones.
- Residential manufactured home (RMH) zone - The residential manufactured home zone is intended to provide a suitable residential environment for individual manufactured homes, manufactured home parks, and competitive accessory uses.
- Planned unit development (PUD) zone - The planned unit development zone is intended to provide a district in which the use of the land is for the development of residential and commercial purposes, as an integrated unit.
- Residential professional (RP) zone - The residential professional zone is intended to permit professional and semiprofessional uses compatible with surrounding residential development.
- Neighborhood commercial (NC) zone - The neighborhood commercial zone is intended to accommodate shopping facilities consisting of convenience retail and personal service establishments which secure their principal trade by supplying the daily needs of the population residing within a one-half mile radius of such neighborhood facilities. The location and quantity of land within the NC zone should be a business island not more than four acres in size and that no business frontage should extend more than six hundred feet along any street.
- Central business district (CBD) classification - The central business district classification is intended to primarily accommodate stores, hotels, governmental and cultural centers and service establishments at the central focal point of the city's transportation system.
- Community commercial (CC) classification - The community commercial classification is primarily to accommodate community retail, service and office facilities offering a greater variety than would normally be found in a neighborhood or convenience retail development. Facilities within the classification will generally serve an area within a one and one-half mile radius, and is commensurate with the purchasing power and needs of the present and potential population

within the trade area. It is intended that these business facilities be provided in business corridors or islands rather than a strip development along arterials.

- Highway commercial (HC) district - The purpose of the highway commercial district is to provide areas for commercial and service enterprises which are intended primarily to serve the needs of the tourist, traveler, recreationist, or the general traveling public. Areas designated as highway commercial should be located in the vicinity of, and accessible from freeway interchanges, intersections in limited access highways, or adjacent to primary or secondary highways. The manner in which the services and commercial activities are offered should be carefully planned in order to minimize the hazard to the safety of the surrounding community and those who use such services; and to prevent long strips of commercially zoned property.
- Light industrial (LI) classification - A light industrial classification is intended primarily to accommodate a variety of business warehouse and light industrial uses related to wholesale plus other business and light industries not compatible with other commercial zones, but which need not be restricted in industrial or general commercial zones, and to provide locations directly accessible to arterial and other transportation systems where they can conveniently serve the business and industrial center of the city and surrounding area.
- Heavy industrial (HI) district - A district intended to accommodate manufacturing, processing, fabrication, and assembly of materials and products. Areas designated as heavy industry should have access to two or more major transportation routes, and such sites should have adjacent space for parking and loading facilities.
- Airport (AP) zone - The airport zone is designated to preserve existing and establish new compatible land uses around the Laurel airport.
- Floodplain (FP) zone - The floodplain zone is designed to restrict the types of uses allowed within the areas designated as the floodplain and floodways as officially adopted by the Montana Board of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena, Montana.
- Public (P) zone - The public zone is intended to reserve land exclusively for public and semipublic uses in order to preserve and provide adequate land for a variety of community facilities which serve the public health, safety and general welfare.



EXISTING LAND USE

Laurel Area Existing Land Use Zoning, 2020

Residential and Rural Residential

Laurel's many residential districts provide a variety of densities, volumes, and types of housing. Laurel has a joint city and county planning board and as such has regulations which accommodate these two different modes of living. The older areas of the city such as the south side and neighborhoods adjacent to downtown have higher density zoning as is appropriate for those originally platted parcels and smaller scale residential buildings. Newer developments and additions to the city generally have lower density zoning than the original Laurel townsite and are more suburban in nature. It is important to provide a mix of residential styles and types to provide residents and prospective residents a choice of housing.

Commercial

Laurel is a full-service community with a supermarket, Walmart, gas stations, bars, and restaurants accessible to local residents and visitors. There is a variety of different commercial areas in the city. The traditional central business district remains heavily commercial, with some buildings containing apartments on the upper floors. The area adjacent to Interstate-90 that is accessibly from 1st Avenue South by East Railroad Street and SE 4th Street contains many commercial and industrial properties that service both Laurel residents and highway travelers. The parcels along Old Rt. 10 contain a mix of zoning including highway-focused commercial properties. Many properties located along East Main Street are zoned Community Commercial and contain a variety of establishments.

Public

The City of Laurel maintains a full array of public facilities to serve the residents, businesses, and institutions that operate within the city limits. The City maintains a fully staffed city hall, public library, public works shops, a water treatment plant, and a sewer treatment plant. The Laurel School district maintains the Laurel High School and Middle school along with the Graff Elementary School, South Elementary School, and West Elementary School.

Parks

Laurel is home to many parks of all shapes and sizes. The most important of these parks are Thompson Park and Riverside Park. Thompson Park is in the center of the city and has many athletic fields, the public pool, and public facilities. Riverside Park is a historic park that has been used by residents and travelers to the area since before the City of Laurel officially existed. Throughout Laurel's history this park has been used by many private, civic, and government groups. There are also many other smaller parks established as land has been annexed into the city and further developed.

Industrial

There is a large amount of industrial property in and around the city of Laurel. The city of Laurel was originally built around the commercial rail yard that is currently operated by Montana Rail Link. This is the largest switching yard between Minneapolis and Seattle. The other major industrial property is the large refinery complex owned and operated by CHS Inc. The other major industrial property in and around the city is the Fox Lumber operation that is located along East Railroad Street.

Urban Renewal

The City of Laurel established a Tax Increment Finance District in 2007 that encompasses the traditional downtown area along with the SE 4th Street commercial area. This TIF District has provided financing for infrastructure projects and grant funding to local property owners and residents for façade, structural, technical assistance, and signage improvements within the district. The grant program is managed by the volunteer board that makes up the laurel Urban Renewal Agency.

CHAPTER 7: FUTURE LAND USE

Overview:

Laurel has struggled to grow over the past two decades. This stems from multiple factors including a lack of long-term planning capacity, lack of funding, and a lack of focus on the bigger picture. This lack of development happened during a time of consistent growth for the neighboring city of Billings. Laurel must have an eye on the future if it wants to thrive as a separate entity outside of Billings. This includes planning for commercial and industrial expansion, seizing growth opportunities, and adopting zoning and development standards that suit the city and attract developers and new residents.

Residents of Laurel pride themselves on the small-town character of the community. City staff need to properly plan for growth and have the appropriate regulations in place to both grow and maintain the classic community character that residents enjoy. This balance includes putting in place appropriate building design standards, zoning requirements, and signage standards to maintain community character.

Residential Districts

Residential areas come in many shapes and sizes. Some are more densely built and more urban looking while others are the traditional modern American suburb with single family homes. Many communities continue to maintain a more restrictive style codes that limits certain residential uses, types, and sizes. Other communities have begun moving away from the strict guidelines towards a more inclusive model of allowing different styles, sizes, and types of housing in residential areas.

Some new and different types of housing compared to the traditional single-family home include accessory dwelling units (ADU's), townhomes, and rowhouses. Expanding housing options can be as simple as tweaking the number of allowable units and setbacks. Development in our residential neighborhoods can come through small changes. Studying our districts and updating setbacks and other restrictions can have a big impact on helping our neighborhoods evolve and grow over time.

Vacant Land

The city currently has numerous unused or vacant parcels that could be brought into productive use. There are many strategies out there that focus on adaptive reuse of structures which could be used for buildings downtown and throughout the rest of the city.

Prioritizing infill development for the downtown area and the SE 4th Street district can help bring new businesses, jobs, and residents. The City could also utilize Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) funding to support the acquisition and rehabilitation of unused and vacant properties within the downtown and SE 4th Street commercial area.

Partnering with local institutions and organizations to better utilize unused land as gathering spaces or the home of community projects, and other efforts can help people see new uses for land which may have been unused for many years.

Development Standards

The City of Laurel currently has multiple sets of development standards that include the Public Works Standards, Rules governing utilities, and subdivision development requirements. Adoption of a consistent and understandable set of development standards for areas within the city and its zoning jurisdiction will ease the development process for residents, landowners, and developers.

Extraterritorial Zoning

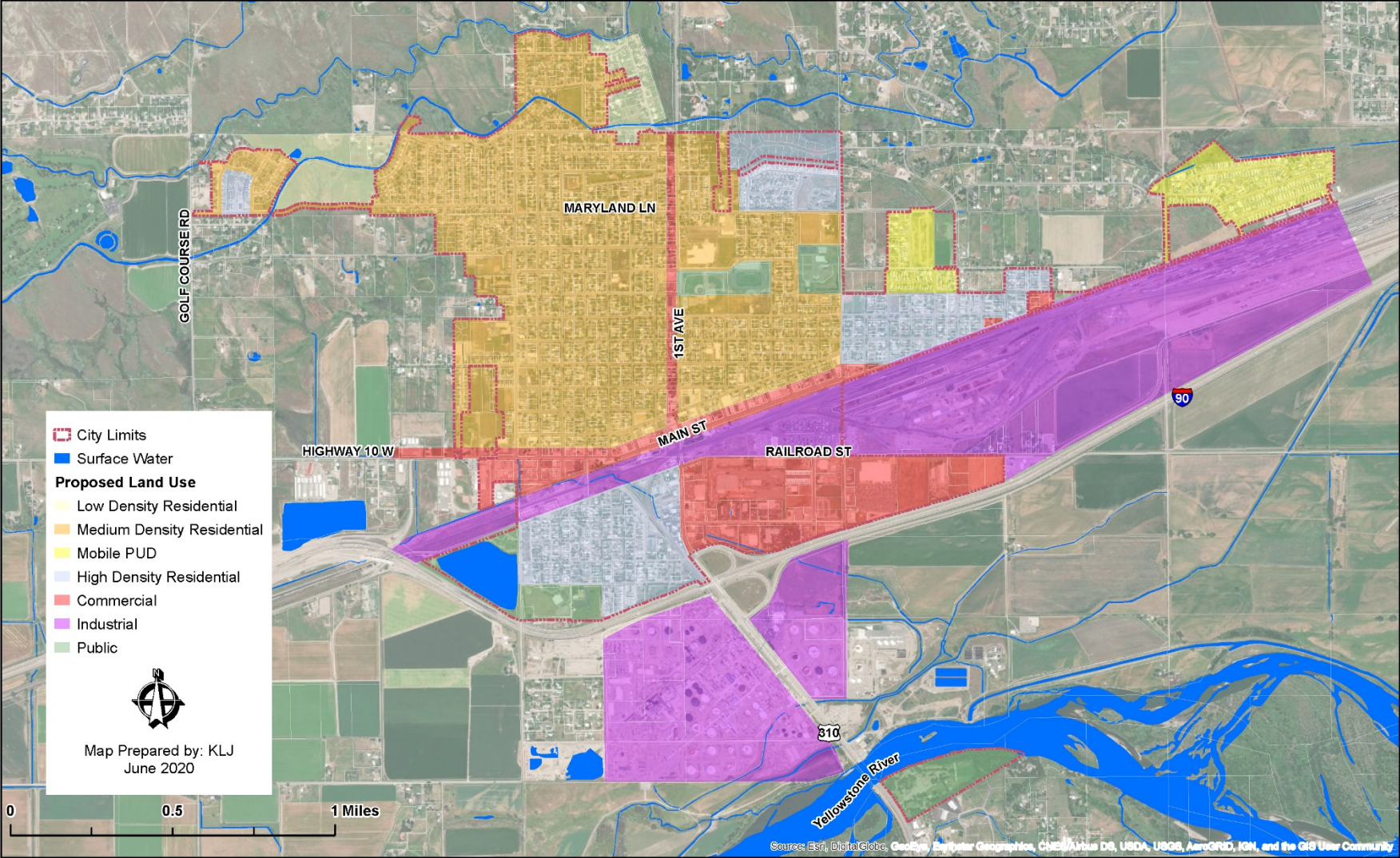
The extraterritorial zoning of the city of Laurel extends approximately one mile outside the municipal city limits. Properties within jurisdiction have zoning applied to them. This current zoning district is classified as “Residential Tracts” and is focused on low density residential. The City needs to ensure that this zoning designation and its requirements still adequately cover the needs of county residents within the zoning jurisdiction. It is recommended that City staff also ensure that this extraterritorial zoning can easily allow county residents to join the city if they so choose.

Infrastructure Extension

Planning for the expansion of city services and infrastructure is a vital component of bringing new growth to a community. This focus on long term infrastructure and growth was not addressed by the city for many years. Installing new infrastructure is expensive but it is more costly to miss out on development opportunities and not allow a community to grow and develop.

Identifying and installing priority infrastructure along major routes needs to be a priority for city staff. There are many opportunities to support these infrastructure efforts through public and private grant and loan programs. Many grant programs exist to extend infrastructure to job creation and economic growth. Grants such as these could be used to expand infrastructure to the West Laurel Interchange that is under construction.

New development and growth require adequate infrastructure to support it. Development of an Annexation Plan and a Capital Improvement Plan can establish the priority areas for growth and establish project costs for identified infrastructure needs for a city. Laurel has never prepared either of these types of plans in the past. It would be wise for city staff and its partners to study the possibilities for major commercial and industrial in the area and plan infrastructure to accommodate these new productive land uses.



PROPOSED LAND USE MAP

Laurel Future Land Use, 2020

Future Land Use Goals and Objectives

The overall goals of this plan are to conserve open space while maximizing the areas currently in and directly adjacent to the city. Parks and greenways will be important amenities for residential developments and commercial corridors instead of afterthoughts. Zoning will be updated to provide a more diverse array of housing types and density. Priority areas for annexation will be determined and infrastructure extension costs will be studied.

Codes will be updated to maintain community character while simultaneously enabling development of new neighborhoods. Current and future commercial and industrial parcels will be identified to promote effective and intense use of land. The central business district will be a focus of infill and mixed-use development to create the most effective use of our traditional downtown.

Goal 1: Conserve open space and traditional land uses

- ❖ Encourage cluster developments to incorporate open space into new developments
- ❖ Provide options for landowners for conserving portions of their land
- ❖ Study and Implement strategies to create an interconnected system of parks and greenways and open space that are accessible to area residents

Goal 2: Develop downtown Laurel into a viable place to live, work, and play

- ❖ Encourage mixed uses for living, working, and shopping local
- ❖ Identify priority parcels for infill development
- ❖ Implement Placemaking projects to create a more livable and enjoyable downtown
- ❖ Partner with local groups to support community businesses, events, gatherings, and other efforts
- ❖ Connect with regional agencies to access project funding, receive technical support, and boost the visibility of Laurel development opportunities

Goal 3: Update Subdivision Code to suit the needs of Laurel and its surrounding area

- ❖ Provide clear and consistent standards
- ❖ Ensure Proper scale and scope of regulations
- ❖ Include trails, open space, and greenway considerations in parkland subdivision review
- ❖ Regularly review and update the Subdivision Code as needed to remain up to date

Goal 4: Update the Zoning Code to provide for a greater flexibility of allowable uses, clearer requirements, and more efficient land use

- ❖ Study the inclusion of different types of housing within residential districts
- ❖ Update Overlay Districts, Parking Requirements, and the Sign Code to better fit the City's needs and character
- ❖ Allow live/work opportunities in commercial areas
- ❖ Enable property owners to use their land more effectively and efficiently

Goal 5: Use long term planning documents to identify funding and address priority needs for infrastructure and development

- ❖ Establish an Annexation Plan to develop priority growth areas and strategies
- ❖ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for vital infrastructure to support the city as it grows
- ❖ Prepare a Commercial and Industrial Development Study for land adjacent to major transportation routes in the Laurel area

CHAPTER 7.5: ANNEXATION

Overview

Annexation is necessary to have Laurel remain a viable, independent community. Annexing territory into a municipality helps a city grow geographically, economically, and socially. The actual city of Laurel has grown slowly over the past few decades, with few new subdivisions and parcels annexing into the city despite many developments taking place in the surrounding area. The City of Laurel and its residents seek to maintain their longstanding identity and character while growing steadily. Annexation is now a necessity to ensure Laurel's long-term viability due to its proximity to the fast-growing City of Billings to ensure that this character and independence is maintained.

Annexation planning is a long-term process in both scope and scale. Targets and goals are usually set for a timeline of five years and ten years, with performance measures in place to track progress. Implementing successful annexation and growth activities involves thoughtful updates to local development and annexation codes, addressing infrastructure gaps, and outreach to nearby county property owners and developers to showcase the benefits of annexation into the city.

Purpose

Annexation is presented in Title 7, Chapter 2. in the Montana Code Annotated that establishes the Creation, Alteration, and Abandonment of Local Governments. Parts of this chapter sets the conditions and rules for annexations and additions of territory into a municipality, establishes the ways areas can be annexed, and specific limitations to these processes for both municipalities and property owners.

Annexation is a process that brings new territory into a municipality and extends public services to that territory. Annexation is a key process to continue the growth and development of communities in Montana. Adding new territory to a community adds new opportunities for business, industry, recreation, and residential developments. Annexation also provides an opportunity for new resources and amenities to be added to a community.

Importance

Laurel is currently at a crossroads in its development. The city has not grown or expanded much in the past few decades while the nearby municipality of Billings has been steadily expanding westward. Billings has established and implemented a long-term annexation and expansion plan while Laurel has had piecemeal annexations and additions to the city. Laurel could find itself hobbled financially if it does not address annexing new territory that can create growth opportunities as Billings steadily expands to Western Yellowstone County.

Proper annexation planning and implementation can lead to increased economic activity, new residential development, and increased revenues for the local government to provide services. Growth and expansion need to be an official part of the conversation for Laurel to remain a viable, livable, and autonomous community into the future. It will be necessary to update the current annexation policy to ensure it provides reasonable restrictions, clear guidelines, and options and incentives to developers and property owners who want to annex into the city.

Priority Areas

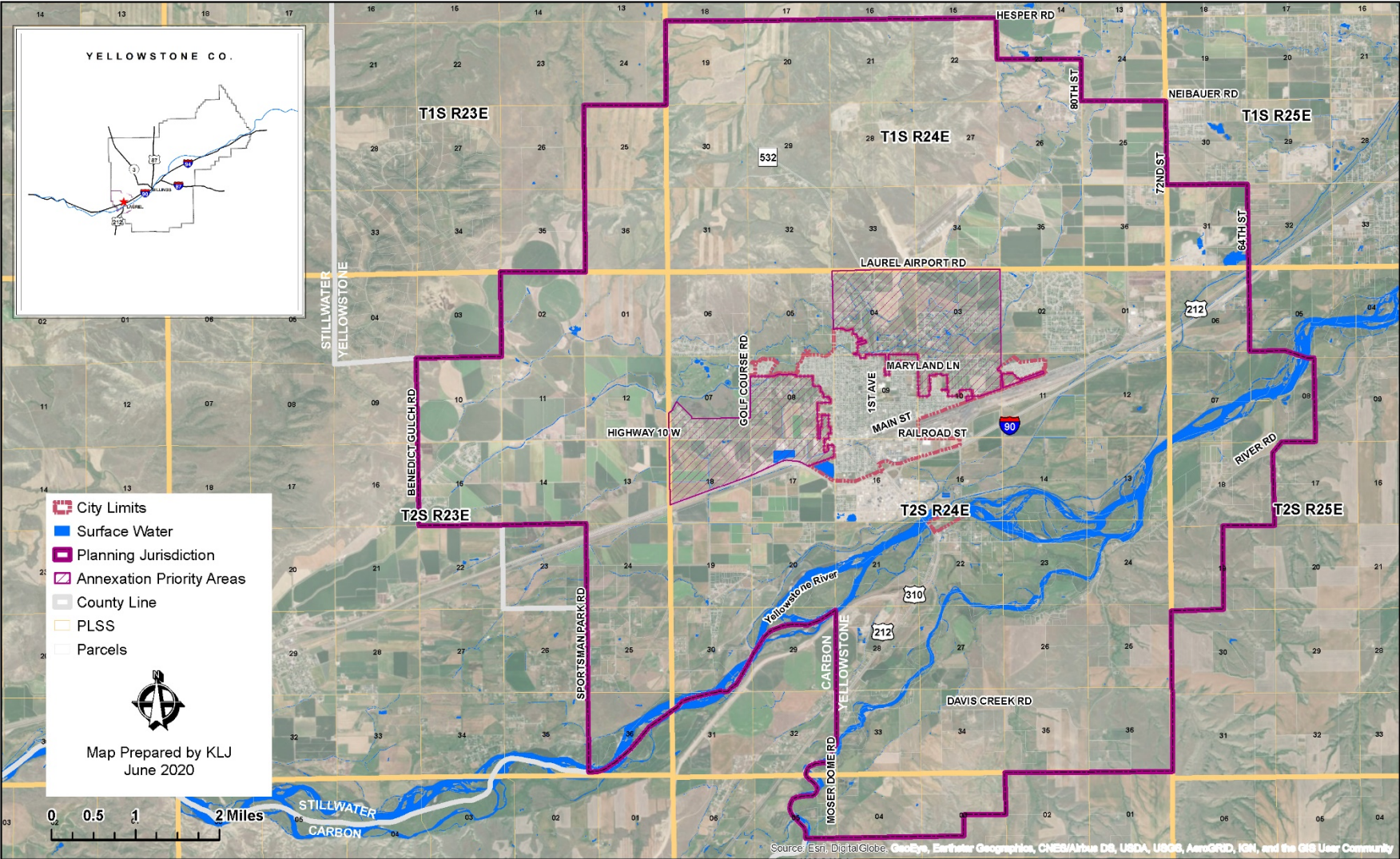
Establishing priority areas are important for setting an agenda for growth, starting discussions with property owners and developers, and preparing projects. A map of the Laurel Planning Jurisdiction and priority growth areas is presented on the next page.

Areas to the West of Laurel are a high priority for development due to their proximity to the city and established transportation corridors. Annexation of territory to the West of the City presents the most viable options for growth. This area is already served by roadways and there are adjacent services nearby. A high priority should be placed on parcels between 8th Avenue and Golf Course Road, parcels neighboring the intersection of Old Rt. 10 and the West Laurel Interchange

There are many areas directly adjacent to the East of the City that would be prime candidates for annexation despite many growth conversations first focusing on westward expansion. The parcels between Alder Ave and Yard Office Rd, especially those along East 8th Street should be considered as well as the lands adjacent to the Village Subdivision. These areas are already closely linked to the city with roads and services and their inclusion would fill the gaps in the Laurel City map.

A few specific areas should be looked at for annexation north of the City. These include lands off West 12th Street that straddle the Big Ditch, Areas between Montana Ave and Great Northern Road, and the land neighboring 1st Ave North to Lois Place.

Growing the City of Laurel to the south is not a viable option. A major reason for this is because the CHS refinery makes up the bulk of the land between Interstate-90 and the Yellowstone River. The costs associated with the extension and construction of city services to those parcels adjacent to and south of the Yellowstone River would be prohibitively expensive for the City, property owners and developers to create and attach to. This is due to the distances needed to extend infrastructure and the fact that floodplain makes up much of the land adjacent to the Yellowstone River.



CITY OF LAUREL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

PLANNING JURISDICTION

Laurel Planning Jurisdiction and Priority Growth Areas, 2020

Annexation Policies

The city of Laurel has not annexed much territory in recent years. This lack of annexation can be attributed to the 2008 annexation policy which many prospective developers consider having draconian requirements. Many property owners and developers have remarked that the strict requirements of the policy and its lack of alternatives and options for infrastructure financing and build out place too high a price on annexation to make annexation feasible.

Discussions should take place as to if this approved policy still serves the needs of the city and what policies and requirements would enable growth activities and annexation for the city. A future annexation policy should also establish priority areas and specific goals over the next five to ten years.

Infrastructure Extension

Connection to improved utilities and services is the main driver behind annexing into a municipality. Laurel has not developed a long-term plan around extending services that can enable property owners to annex into the city more easily. Developing a CIP will help Laurel prioritize growth areas and build out public services that will position Laurel for growth and attract new properties to the city.

Annexation Goals

These two goals were prepared to help the City of Laurel grow through annexation.

Goal 1: Adopt a long-range view for growth of the City

- ❖ Establish a growth-conscious set of policies to expand the city and its services
- ❖ Create priority growth areas for extension of services
- ❖ Develop and approve an Annexation Plan for the Laurel Planning Jurisdiction
- ❖ Support the creation of a long-term Capital Improvement Plan for the extension of capital infrastructure

Goal 3: Manage fiscal responsibility with established and proposed annexation standards

- ❖ Ensure that the established standards are right and proper for the City of Laurel
- ❖ Ease burden for developers to annex into the city while meeting established standards
- ❖ Allow greater flexibility in development patterns
- ❖ Determine the cost and benefits of annexation

CHAPTER 8: HOUSING

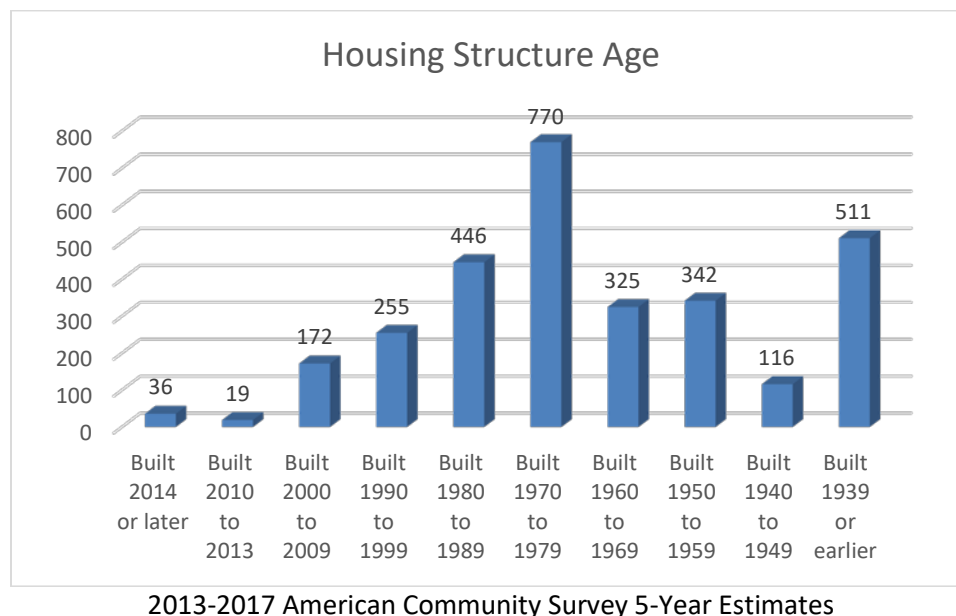
Overview

Housing is an essential element of any community. This chapter provides a summary of housing in Laurel and discusses some housing support programs that exist to help renters, and current and prospective homeowners. Having adequate, accessible, and affordable housing is an important piece of what attracts people to a community. The City of Laurel is lucky to have a variety of housing options and housing types that provide options for residents. It is important to maintain a wide array of housing that meets the different demands of the market including rental properties, multi-family units, single family homes, and retirement homes.

Laurel's location has made it an attractive bedroom community for Billings. This opens opportunities for both traditional neighborhood residential housing and embracing the growing trends of building closer-knit, dense, connected neighborhoods for more urban and in-town development. It will be important for the City to think about housing and real estate trends as the city grows. This will ensure that the housing needs of the current population are met while creating housing that will interest prospective residents and homeowners.

Households and Housing Units

Approximately 68% of Laurel's housing stock dates to before 1979. Aging housing stock can pose issues for maintenance, safety, and accessibility. These issues can lead to the need for code enforcement to step in to ensure the local ordinances are followed and that the situation has not become hazardous or dangerous. Ensuring that new housing is built will provide new opportunities for homeownership and help raise the standard of housing available for residents.



65% of Laurel's housing stock is made up of detached single-family homes. Mobile homes make up the next greatest share of housing at 15% of units. This proportion of detached single-family homes has

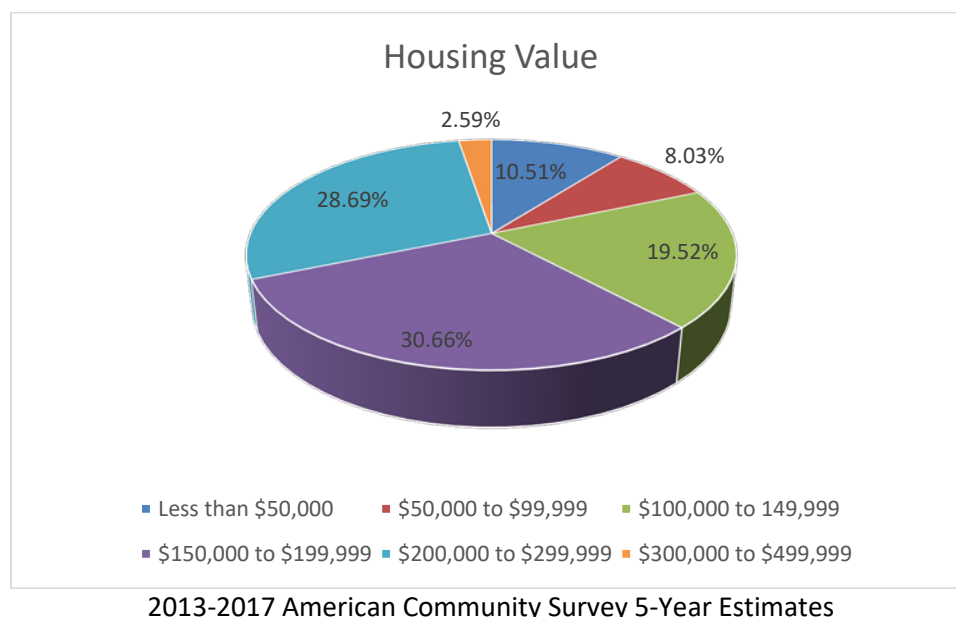
been the norm for Laurel and many other cities and towns throughout the United States. A growing trend to consider is that many younger and older Americans are seeking to downsize to smaller units and multifamily or connected units that are closer to shopping, amenities, and services. It is important to think about these trends in order to embrace growth opportunities, whether it is in a traditional residential neighborhood, or more urban or downtown environments.

Units in Structure	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	2,992	2,992
1-unit, detached	1,952	65.20%
1-unit, attached	87	2.90%
2 units	92	3.10%
3 or 4 units	103	3.40%
5 to 9 units	119	4.00%
10 to 19 units	48	1.60%
20 or more units	130	4.30%
Mobile home	461	15.40%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.00%
2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

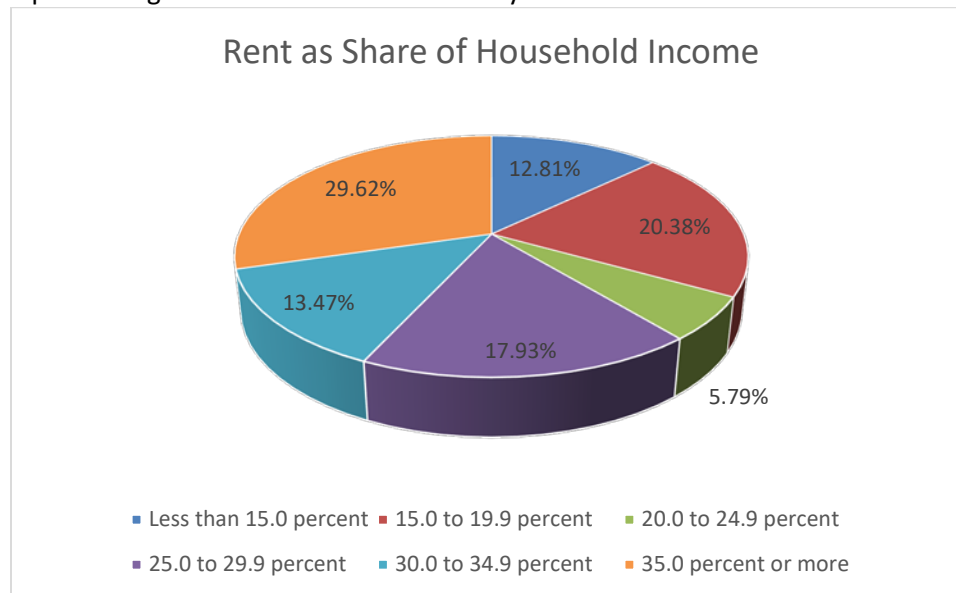
A move back towards traditional downtowns has been seen across the United States. This trend presents a variety of opportunities for diversifying the type and size of housing options to include rowhouses, townhomes, live-work buildings, and more.

Housing Affordability

Many parts of the United States are facing issues with housing affordability. This has even included some communities in Montana such as Bozeman and Whitefish. Housing in Laurel has generally remained affordable despite being located twenty miles from the largest city in the state. The charts below provide an overview of both housing value, and rental expenditures.



Rental affordability is an important factor in retaining residents, especially those who may work in service and retail industries. Overall, 57% of Laurel residents spend less than 30% of their income on rent. This is a positive figure that allows a diverse array of residents to afford to live in the city.



2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing Programs and Incentives

Many housing support and incentive programs exist that are sponsored by non-profits, institutions, and state and federal agencies.

Montana Housing Support Programs

- ❖ Bond Advantage Down Payment Assistance program
- ❖ MBOH Plus 0% Deferred Down Payment Assistance Program
- ❖ Multi-Family Coal Trust Homes Program
- ❖ Housing Choice Voucher Program
- ❖ Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)
- ❖ Project Based Section 8
- ❖ Section 811 Supporting Housing for Persons with Disabilities

The Federal Government has a number of First Time Homebuyer Loans and Programs including:

- ❖ FHA Loan Program
- ❖ HUD - Good Neighbor Next Door Buyer Aid Program
- ❖ Homepath ReadyBuyer Program
- ❖ Energy Efficient Mortgage Program
- ❖ HOME Investment Partnerships Program

Community Land Trust

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are non-profits that hold land permanently in trust for communities in order to make it available for housing, farming, ranching, commercial space, historic preservation, or open space. These organizations separate the price of land from the improvements made to it, investing subsidy, and enforcing resale restrictions on properties to ensure permanent affordability. Trust Montana is a statewide organization that assists rural cities and towns with managing community land

trusts to ensure they can maintain affordable and traditional land uses. CLTs serve an important role in setting aside land as a community asset for generations to use and enjoy.

Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning is a land use policy that works to incentivize dense housing development through tax relief, abatements, and bonuses. These zoning policies enable developers to capture normal profits while capturing a share of excess profits for public benefit. Inclusionary zoning utilizes feasibility studies to analyze the impact of density and infill development on specific areas. Communities must carefully weigh the costs and benefits of each incentive and evaluate them relative to the affordable housing requirements or goals. Incentives include:

- ❖ Density Bonuses
- ❖ Expedited Processing
- ❖ Fee waivers
- ❖ Parking reductions
- ❖ Tax abatements

Housing Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Encourage a mixture of housing types to meet the demand of all market sectors

- ❖ Maintain a diverse array of housing and affordability
- ❖ Promote higher density housing types in the downtown area and adjacent to major transportation corridors
- ❖ Study mixed-use housing and other alternative housing types and styles
- ❖ Provide options for a full spectrum of housing from rentals to retirement housing

Goal 2: Provide information on housing related grants, loans, and ownership programs

- ❖ Develop a list of resources for renters and homeowners
- ❖ Collect information on Federal, State, local, and philanthropic rental and homeownership programs
- ❖ Advise Laurel area residents about available support for housing, rent, and homeownership

CHAPTER 9: INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview

The City of Laurel Department of Public Works operates the municipal water treatment and distribution system, the wastewater collection and treatment system, and conducts maintenance and improvement work on roads, streets, parks, and sidewalks. The City of Laurel has recently completed several major infrastructure upgrades. These include an upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, an overhaul of the Water Treatment Plant, installation of a new Water Intake, and improvement of the Sedimentation Basins at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

There are still major infrastructure needs despite these major projects. The city's water and sewer lines are aging, and in many places are still the original lines installed around the time of incorporation. A major priority is to study how to provide services to the area near the West Laurel Interchange which has a lot of growth potential.

Opportunities also include expanding services to nearby county residents to both the North, West, and East of the current city limits. There is a total of 2,858 water connections into the city system. Exploring funding for the extension and improvement of water and wastewater services to enable more annexation and development is worthwhile. Additionally, funding the expansion of the capacity of the city to handle stormwater runoff is a vital effort to increase the longevity of our streets, roads, and pedestrian areas.

The goals and objectives presented in this chapter are focused on a few major items. It is hoped that the city can maintain an efficient and effective system for infrastructure and services that covers the needs of the city while establishing long-term capital infrastructure needs to expand and improve services. To help achieve those two stated goals it will be important for city staff and leadership to seek out federal, state, philanthropic, and other grant and loan programs to support the priorities that staff and stakeholders identify.

Wastewater System

The City of Laurel's Wastewater Treatment Plant is located at 5310 Sewer Plant Road. It is manned by three operators and one relief. The facility was first constructed in 1908 and underwent substantial upgrades in the 1930s and in 1986. The plant most recently underwent a significant upgrade that was completed in 2016. The reclamation system is a Biological Nutrient Removal system (BNR). The facility now conducts sludge dewatering as well. The new system has reduced the levels of nitrogen and phosphorus being discharged into the Yellowstone River. Improvement of the Sedimentation Basins were completed in 2019. The wastewater system has a capacity of 1,120,000gpd. City staff should monitor the current wastewater and sewer system to ensure that it can meet the growing demands of the city.

Water System

The Laurel Water Treatment Plant is located at 802 Highway 212 South. The upgrade of the Water Treatment Plant was completed in 2019. The plant operates 24 hours per day and is staffed by six employees plus management. The Water Treatment Plant has a treatment capacity of 5,000,000 gallons

per day (gpd). The Plant provides water service to more than 6,700 people and has a total of 2,858 metered connections.

The Yellowstone River is the raw water source for the City of Laurel. A water right was filed in 1908 giving the City access to 12,600,000gpd. A water reserve was granted in 1978 that allowed for the anticipation of future growth and added an additional 6,380,000gpd.

The original water distribution system was installed in 1908. Currently, there is one ground storage tank, built in 1967 with a capacity of 4,000,000 gallons with 2,000,000 of them being usable and the other 2,000,000 creating pressure for distribution. Additionally, the City has two booster pump stations. Pipe sizes in the system range from 2 to 18 inches in diameter. The 301 fire hydrants scattered throughout the system are tested routinely to assure they are working properly.

The City provides water to all areas within the City Limits; however, there are 82 residential connections and one industrial connection outside the City boundary. Property owners in the county who are interested in connecting to the City system must make all the necessary excavations and pay for all materials necessary for connections. The current standards and regulations for public works and utilities require developers to extend to extend utilities.

The Yellowstone River has provided adequate water for the city but concerns have been raised regarding sufficient flow due to erosion from flooding and droughts in recent years. The City has taken steps to counteract these concerns through major upgrades to the Water Treatment System. Upgrades and improvements were completed on the Sedimentation basins and the Water Treatment Plant in 2019. Additionally, a new water intake in the Yellowstone River was completed in 2017 to ensure a stable water supply despite the changing nature of the course and level of the river. One additional project that has been identified is the need for a second water reservoir to create extra storage capacity as the city grows. City staff should include this on any future public works planning documents.

Stormwater System

Stormwater is collected and managed to prevent flooding, erosion, and contamination of water sources. Water can pick up pollution such as oil, fertilizer, pesticides, soils, and trash as it runs off rooftops, paved streets, highways, and parking lots after a rain event or due to snow melt. Stormwater can flow directly into the Yellowstone River from a property or into a storm drain and through the city infrastructure until it is released into the Yellowstone River. The three major concerns of stormwater management are the volume of runoff water, the timing of runoff water, and the potential contaminants the water is carrying.

The City of Laurel has historically experienced problems with flooding in the downtown area. Flooding activities are generally from heavy rain runoff and not the nearby Yellowstone River. The City of Laurel has limited stormwater infrastructure to handle stormwater runoff. The majority of stormwater infrastructure is in the Central Business district and the South East 4th Street area. Stormwater management has also been established for the Elena, Iron Horse, and Foundation Subdivisions.

The City needs to address stormwater infrastructure within its current limits and as it expands. Creating an adequate stormwater management system helps to keep roadways in better condition and lessens the hazards for drivers in inclement weather. Stormwater system extensions should be considered during any roadway planning procedure to ensure roadway improvements do not have to be recreated.

Solid Waste Services

The City of Laurel Public Works Department provides exclusive solid waste collection services within the city limits. The City does not provide any solid waste collection services outside of the city limits. Garbage services will not be exclusive to parcels that choose to annex into the city as per Montana state regulations. The City of Laurel operates the City's Transfer station which is located at 175 Buffalo Trail Road. The Transfer station provides added services like taking in large or bulky items, tree branches, and other unusual materials and pieces. Laurel utilizes the Billings Regional Landfill located nearby.

Infrastructure Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Maintain an Effective and Efficient Public Infrastructure System that Adequately Serves the Needs of the City

- ❖ Develop a data-driven infrastructure maintenance schedule
- ❖ Determine any existing gaps in services and other infrastructure deficiencies within the city
- ❖ Adopt up-to-date infrastructure standards that are appropriate for the needs of the city
- ❖ Study using public spaces within floodplains, water courses, and wetlands to be used as passive recreation uses such as parks and greenways
- ❖ Study the feasibility of recycling programs and other means to reduce the solid waste stream
- ❖ Incorporate stormwater system planning into roadway and other infrastructure planning processes

Goal 2: Establish the Long-Term Capital and Infrastructure Needs for the City

- ❖ Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Improvement and Expansion of infrastructure
- ❖ Prepare a Water System Master Plan
- ❖ Create a Wastewater System Master Plan
- ❖ Complete a Stormwater Management Plan
- ❖ Ensure that infrastructure planning documents are routinely updated.
- ❖ Confirm that the established infrastructure priorities are adequate

Goal 3: Seek out Possible Funding Sources for the Expansion of Infrastructure and Services

- ❖ Study the physical and financial needs for the extension of infrastructure to priority growth areas.
- ❖ Collaborate with Montana State Agencies on major projects and studies
- ❖ Explore Federal, State, and Philanthropic infrastructure grant opportunities
- ❖ Determine the positive impacts from the expansion and improvement of infrastructure
- ❖ Apply for funding opportunities that are appropriate for city priorities and projects

CHAPTER 10: TRANSPORTATION

Overview

The city of Laurel is at the center of a major transportation network that includes local streets and sidewalks, state arterials, railroad lines, the interstate highway, and everything in between. The city itself was surveyed and built on a gridded road network that provided orderly development for residential and commercial properties close to the railroad and Old Route 10 and 1st Avenue which run through Laurel's downtown. The establishment of the Interstate-90 near Laurel led to commercial development on the south side of the city which continues to this day. Successive developments of both residential subdivisions and commercial areas have not continued this original ordered network which has caused problems for road continuity, provision of services, and orderly and consistent growth of the city at its boundaries. The railyard and numerous railroad lines bisect the city, separating neighborhoods from each other and creating only two north-south access points: the 1st Ave underpass and the 5th Avenue railroad crossing.

Connecting transportation decisions with land use policy is an important goal for the city. A priority for the city is to develop a multi-modal approach to our streets and pathways. City staff will work to encourage intensive use of land already within and adjacent to the city and along major transportation routes, while ensuring residential developments provide adequate and accessible pedestrian improvements to allow everyone to access their community. Establishing a consistent maintenance plan to preserve, improve, and expand the transportation network will provide current and future residents with an easy and effective way to move around the city regardless of travel mode. Orderly growth of the transportation network will also be important to ensure neighborhoods and commercial areas are easily accessible to all. These transportation goals are a way to increase quality of life, connect people to their community, increase safety, and plan around current trends and future growth.

Local Routes & Maintenance

Laurel's downtown core and original neighborhoods were developed upon a gridded network of streets and alleyways. Subsequent developments have strayed from this system and did not follow any set guidelines for road connections or continuity. This lack of an orderly road and pedestrian system outside of Laurel's traditional core has created issues for future growth for the city.

Only a handful of streets allow for unbroken travel from the East to West side. New development took place without considering roadway connections and traffic planning. Subsequent subdivisions and construction did not provide easements or right of way to continue city thoroughfares and structures were constructed within the path of right of ways. This is especially apparent West of 8th Avenue, which has many roads to nowhere. It will be important for Laurel to establish specific guidance to ensure adequate road connectivity for traffic flow, safety, wayfinding, and the extension of future services.

Laurel has only two North-South road connections between its northern and southern neighborhoods. The two connections are the 1st Avenue underpass and 5th Avenue railroad crossing. The nearest other connections are Exit 437 for East Laurel and Exit 426 in Park City. Investigating other means of north-south access and finding other connection points will improve emergency services response, ease traffic along major routes, and improve accessibility to and from the different areas of the city.

Many of Laurel's roads are also in dire need of repair. Much of the city's older local roads were built with deficient construction and design methods which now compounds annual maintenance problems. The city recently completed a study of its municipal road network that inventoried and provided solutions to the infrastructure deficit of the road system. Utilizing this study along with updated development and service standards will lead to improved road conditions and connectivity for Laurel residents, businesses, and visitors.

State Highways

Two major state routes pass through Laurel. These are 1st Avenue, which forms the major North-South route, and Old Route 10, that runs East-West and acts as Laurel's Main street. These routes see major commercial and industrial traffic and intersections along these routes can be congested during peak hours. Seeking out mobility and safety improvements along these two routes is encouraged to create more livable, accessible, and safer streets as the City updates its zoning code, subdivision code, and roadway standards.

A map of road classifications has also been provided to show further details of the Laurel road network and other major streets roadways in the city.

Federal Highways

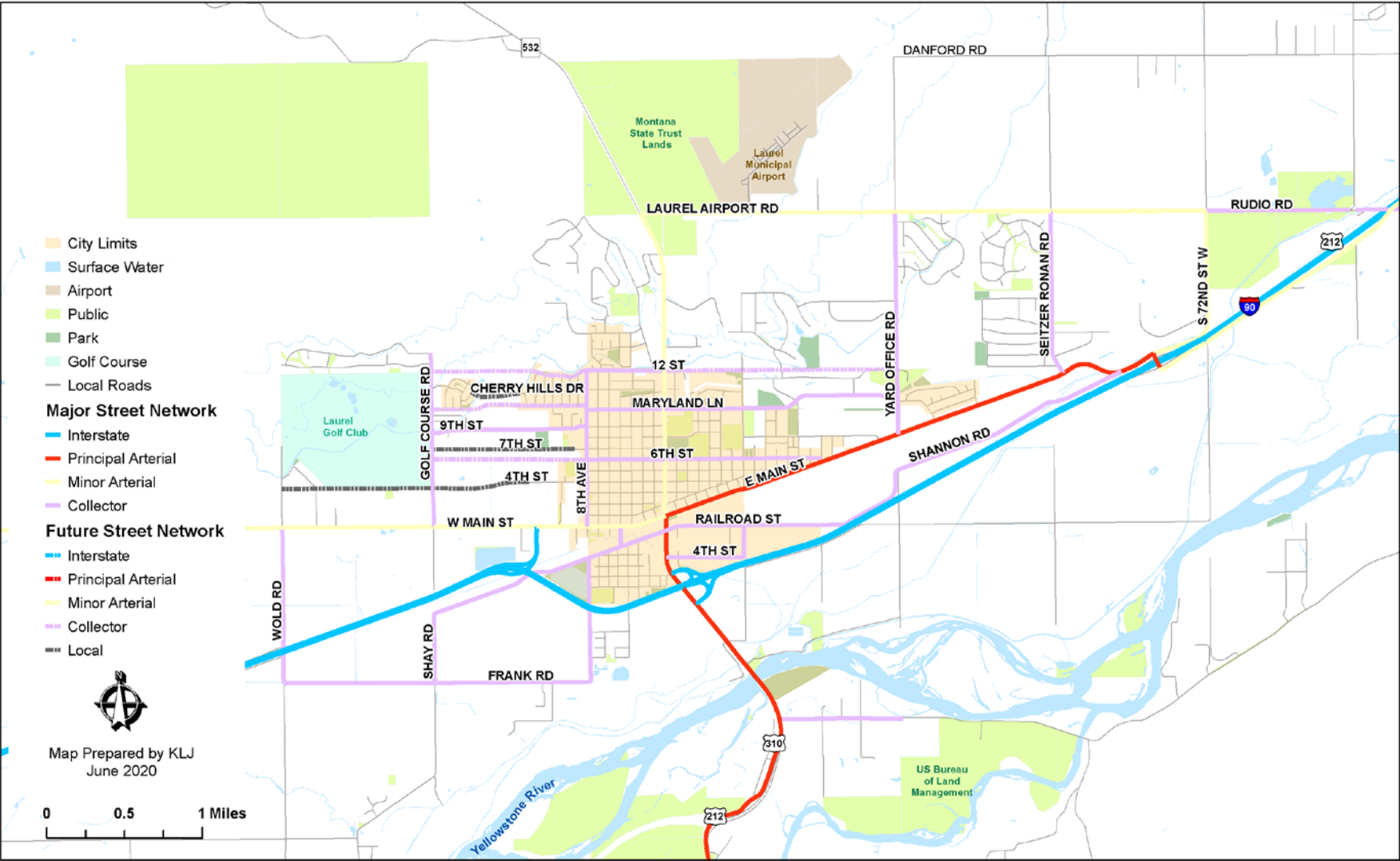
Interstate-90 passes directly through Laurel. There are currently two on/off ramps to access the highway with a third under construction directly to the West of the City. The interstate has been a source of growth for the city with many businesses locating in the SE 4th Street district adjacent to the highway.

The Montana Department of Transportation is currently constructing a North facing on/off ramp West of Laurel to connect approximately to 19th Ave West. This project is ongoing and is expected to alleviate some access issues and provide new development opportunities for the city. This project is also anticipated to bring new growth opportunities for the area. Planning for this growth and seeking out possible funding sources to extend city services to this area is vital.

Railroad

Montana Rail Link operates the rail yard in Laurel. This yard has been active since the late 1800s and is a historic asset to the transportation and economic sectors. The rail yard is a hub for freight and raw materials heading through the area. The railroad, CHS refinery, and other industrial properties provide many benefits to the area despite not being within the Laurel city limits through a healthy jobs base, revenue to the school district, and lower tax rates for residential and commercial properties.

The railroad is a major asset to the area but also acts as a hinderance for transportation within and around the Laurel area. The railroad is not within the Laurel city limits and as such the city has little oversight of the activities taking place. The rail yard and its lines split the city into a North and South side with only two north-south connections: the 1st Ave underpass and the 5th Ave crossing. The only other North-South connections are the East Laurel exit on Interstate-90 and Exit 426 in Park City.



MAJOR STREET NETWORK

CITY OF LAUREL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Laurel Road Classifications, 2020

Roadway Classifications

- ❖ Interstate Highway (Principal Arterial)
 - Primary through travel route
 - Longest trip length
 - Highest trip speed
- ❖ Principal Arterial
 - Serve major activity centers and includes corridors with the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip length within a city.
 - Provide the highest level of mobility, at the highest speed, for long uninterrupted travel.
- ❖ Minor Arterial
 - Interconnects urban principal arterials
 - Provides continuity for rural arterials that intercept urban boundaries
- ❖ Collector
 - Designed for travel at lower speeds and for shorter distances.
 - Collectors are typically two-lane roads that collect and distribute traffic from the arterial system.
 - Collector roads penetrate residential communities, distributing traffic from the arterials
 - Urban collectors also channel traffic from local roads onto the arterial system.
 - Serve both land access and traffic circulation in higher density residential and commercial/industrial areas
- ❖ Local
 - Largest element in the American public road network in terms of mileage.
 - Local roads provide basic access between residential and commercial properties, connecting with higher order roadways.
 - Provide access to adjacent land
 - Short distance trips

Public Transportation

Laurel Transit was established in 2010 through grant funding from the State of Montana. It was established to provide transportation services to the elderly and disabled population in the Laurel area. Laurel Transit currently provides on-demand transportation services within the city of Laurel, its surrounding area, and scheduled service to Billings. Laurel Transit operates Monday-Friday, 10:00AM – 4:00PM. The Billings scheduled service route begins at 7:30. Laurel Transit has connected with local and regional agencies whenever possible to expand its services to better assist its clients.

Discussions have previously taken place around the viability of a fixed route system for the city of Laurel. These services are currently not feasible but future coordination with partners and Billings MET Transit could change this situation. Further growth and development of Laurel could also necessitate greater in-town transit connections as well as a commuter route into Billings. The system could be improved through greater outreach with local groups and marketing of services to Laurel residents.

Funding Sources

Many state and federal funding sources exist for transportation projects that impact:

- ❖ Road Safety
- ❖ Alternative Transportation

- ❖ Improved Mobility
- ❖ Economic Development
- ❖ Job Creation and Retention

Federal Agencies with available grants include:

- ❖ Federal Highways Administration
- ❖ U.S. Department of Transportation
- ❖ Federal Transit Administration
- ❖ U.S. Department of Agriculture
- ❖ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Transportation Goals and Objectives

The three overarching transportation goals have been provided with their objectives and strategies.

Goal 1: Preserve, Maintain, and Improve the existing Transportation system

- Update the Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Establish a systematic approach for the maintenance and repair of the road network
- Develop a Capital Improvement Plan to identify major Transportation projects
- Establish a road network master plan to ensure street continuity, traffic flow, and neighborhood connectivity
- Promote fiscal responsibility and high return on investment
- Coordinate transportation projects after underground infrastructure improvements

Goal 2: Improve Mobility, Safety, and Accessibility for all Users and Modes of Travel

- Implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements and traffic calming measures to transform the downtown area into a pedestrian friendly place
- Create a looping bicycle/pedestrian trail and street system that connects the different areas of Laurel to one another
- Adopt pedestrian and multi-modal friendly transportation standards and safety measures
- Study options to expand and improve the existing Laurel Transit program

Goal 3: Connect Transportation Decisions with Land Use Decisions

- Integrate land use planning and transportation planning to better manage and develop the transportation network
- Utilize transportation projects to encourage intensive development patterns along major routes and existing areas of the city
- Adopt and implement consistent system policies and maintenance standards
- Ensure the development of a sustainable transportation system that minimizes environmental impacts

CHAPTER 11: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Laurel had two traditional industries that were its economic pillars; the Railroad and the Oil industry. These two sectors still play a major role in the economy but have been joined by many other services and businesses such as retail, education, healthcare, and finance. Laurel has seen a decline in downtown and local businesses as Billings becomes more accessible and online shopping and delivery becomes easier. Communities large and small have been forced to compete more and more for businesses, workers, and growth opportunities in an increasingly connected global economy. It will be a major effort to develop Laurel as a community with a self-contained business ecosystem where local businesses and entrepreneurs, and larger statewide and national establishments can thrive.

The proximity of Laurel to Billings is a smaller scale instance of how different factors impact local community economies. Laurel has been referred to as just a bedroom community to Billings due to its proximity and the sheer number of Laurel residents who commute into Billings for work. It has also become easier for Laurel residents to travel to Billings for food, shopping, and other services.

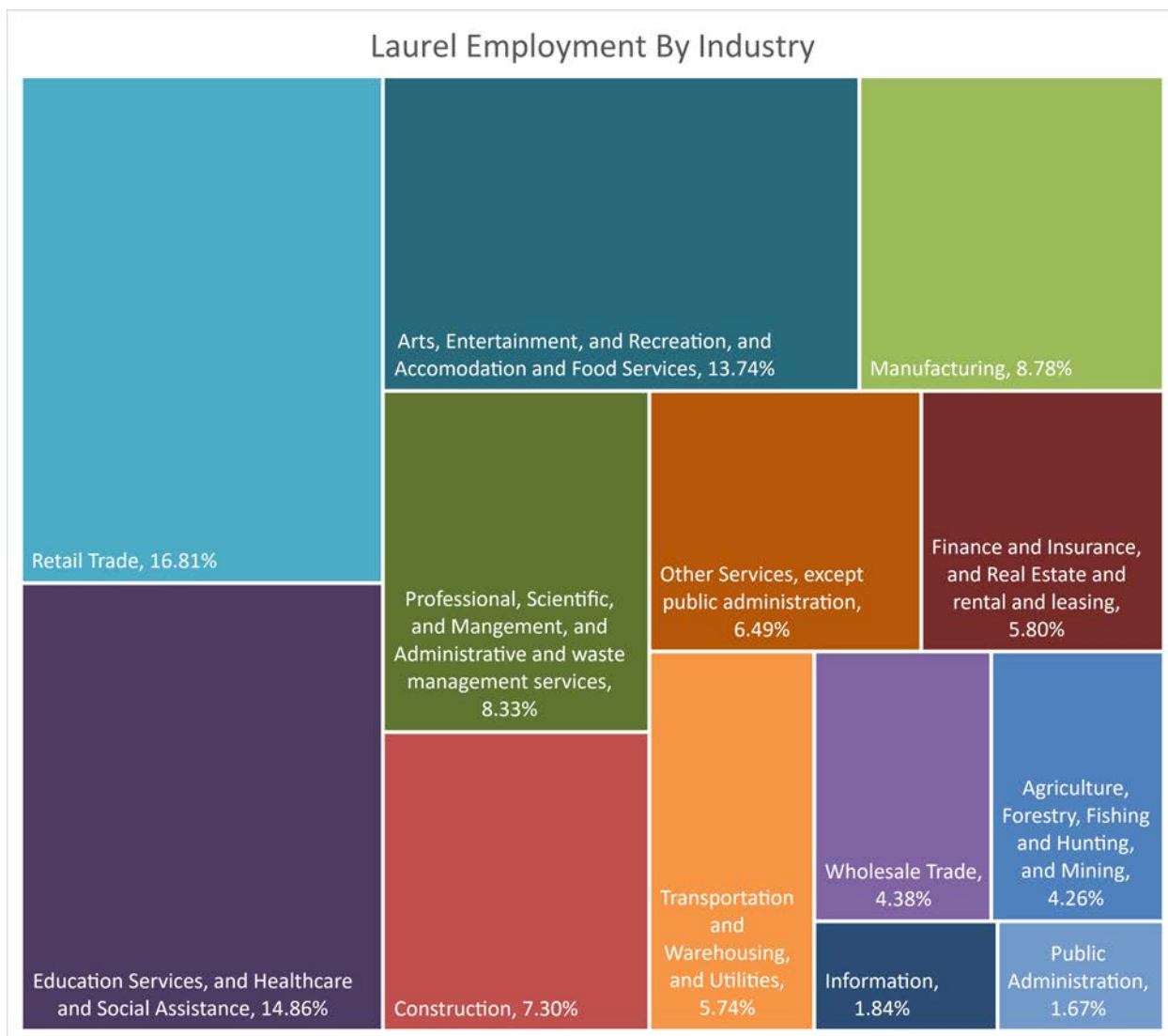
An important point to note is that Laurel would be the center of economic development and business activities if it were in any other county in the state. Laurel can once again become a community where small businesses thrive, the downtown is healthy, and entrepreneurs take the risk to open a business even with its proximity to the City of Billings. Creating a more attractive and active business community is not an impossible task. Goals have been established that can help develop laurel as its own community while keeping it connected with Yellowstone County and the Billings area.

Studying and adopting policies to develop downtown Laurel into a destination to live, work, and play can help breath new life into the community. Focusing policies and efforts on resilient economic growth activities will create both new local activity and sustainable, long term economic stability for the community. Increasing Laurel's collaboration and communication with area groups can help connect stakeholders to business funding supports, employment, and training opportunities that would otherwise not be available. Growth is anticipated on the west side of Laurel. It is important to plan for this growth by studying options for new commercial and industrial properties in priority areas.

The Local Economy

Workers in Laurel are in a wide array of industries. The chart below presents a visual representation of the different mix of industries and the amount of people in their workforce. A diverse employment base helps to ensure a stable and resilient economy. Improving the core sectors of the city while opening-up opportunities for new growth is an important objective to help keep the local economy healthy.

There are also several major industries located directly outside the Laurel city limits that have a large impact on the community. These include the MRL railyard and the CHS refinery. These two industries provide many jobs to Laurel residents and those residing within the Laurel planning jurisdiction. These anchor industries not only provide livelihoods to many Laurel area residents but also enable other supporting industries and businesses in the Laurel planning area as well. It will be important to maintain good relations with MRL and CHS to coordinate growth efforts and properly develop the Laurel area.



2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Economic Development Organizations

There are a variety of groups that are active in the economic development field in the Laurel and Yellowstone County area. Big Sky Economic Development and Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development have many services available for businesses and residents of Laurel. These groups can help leverage funding and different state and federal programs to support local economic development efforts.

Big Sky Economic Development Agency

The official mission statement of Big Sky Economic Development is “... to sustain and grow our region’s vibrant economy and outstanding quality of life, by providing leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development.”

Big Sky Economic Development Agency, or Big Sky EDA, is the certified economic development authority of the South-Central Montana region. Big Sky EDA directly services a nine-county region including Petroleum, Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Sweetgrass, Stillwater, Yellowstone, Carbon, and Big Horn counties. Big Sky provides services and support for small business development, community development initiatives, federal procurement assistance, tax increment financing, workforce development, veterans businesses, and business financing.

The City of Laurel Planning Director is currently the Ex-Officio representative of the City of Laurel on Big Sky EDA's board of directors. The Ex-Officio member represents the interests of the City on the Board of Directors and communicates the position of the city to Big Sky EDA staff and partners.

Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development

Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development, or Beartooth RC&D, began in 1969 as a partnership between the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Carbon and Stillwater Counties to serve the area. Beartooth is now an officially designated Economic Development District and has expanded its support to Sweet Grass, Yellowstone, and Big Horn Counties. Beartooth RC&D provides technical assistance, community development services to groups in the South-Central Montana region.

The overall work of Beartooth RC&D is to improve local economic and social conditions by focusing on the conservation, utilization, and development of the natural and human resources of the region. The City has begun regular contact with Beartooth RC&D to coordinate local economic development efforts and be notified of ongoing work in the region. Keeping communication channels open and collaborating on projects will help support economic development for Laurel and the surrounding area.

Economic Development Objectives and Policies and Strategies

Four main goals have been established that focus on Economic Development with specific objectives to help meet each goal.

Goal 1: Develop Downtown Laurel into a destination to live, work, and play

- ❖ Institute placemaking projects to further enhance district character
- ❖ Increase live-work opportunities for current and future residents and businesses
- ❖ Apply Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding to beautification, blight removal, and area public improvement projects
- ❖ Identify and find solutions for unused and underused parcels as candidates for development

Goal 2: Create a resilient local economy

- ❖ Strengthen core businesses and industries through communication and connections with technical support
- ❖ Ensure that local economic activities are inclusive and accessible to all stakeholders
- ❖ Implement policies that create stable and sustainable economic growth
- ❖ Work to highlight the shared benefits of working together as a community with local businesses stakeholders, and developers
- ❖ Provide an economic ecosystem that allows for a wide array of businesses, industries, and developments to thrive

- ❖ Study and implement policies to enhance local business demand and alternative strategies for value creation for the community

Goal 3: Collaborate with area organizations to support economic growth and local employment and training opportunities

- ❖ Communicate with local groups to determine any needs and assistance
- ❖ Create partnerships with local and regional groups to fill local service gaps and create needed programming
- ❖ Take part in events and workshops to support local business initiatives and activities
- ❖ Establish common ground with local and regional groups to provide resources and assistance
- ❖ Connect residents and businesses with economic, financial, and entrepreneurship resources and opportunities

Goal 4: Study options for new commercial and industrial properties in anticipated high growth areas

- ❖ Create a Corridor Master Plan for growth in and around the intersection with Old Route 10 and the future West Laurel Interchange
- ❖ Study options and determine priorities for the possible establishment of Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) and Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDDs)
- ❖ Review and pursue opportunities for clustered commercial and/or industrial parks
- ❖ Develop funding strategies to provide services for priority growth areas.

CHAPTER 12: PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Overview

Municipalities provide numerous public services to their residents, businesses, and institutions. Effective public services are vital for a community to thrive. Public services include fire departments, police departments, parks and recreation programs, Libraries, emergency medical services, and water and sewer utility systems. It is important for public officials to take a lead role by planning and implementing expansions and improvements of public services that improve the quality of life for their community.

This chapter presents the array of public services operated by the City of Laurel and provides goals and objectives to improve and expand those services to better help the local community. A proactive approach to public services can also lead to many benefits as newly established or upgraded services can incentivize new development and growth in a community. Effective public services show prospective residents, business owners, and developers that the municipality is working to provide stable services while addressing service needs.

City Administration

The Laurel City Hall is located at 110 West 1st Street. The City Hall contains offices for the City Clerk-Treasurer, Water Department, Planning Department, and the Public Works Department. The City Hall also contains the City Council Chambers, the Office of the Mayor, City Court, and related administrative archives.

Laurel Police Department

The Laurel Police Department is a full-service department serving the community twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The City of Laurel currently has 13 sworn officers employed by the city. Services include patrolling for criminal activities and traffic violations, accidental investigation, and misdemeanor and felony crime investigation. The Department's service area is within the municipal boundaries of Laurel, unless responding as backup to another law enforcement agency in the area.

The City of Laurel ensures that their officers are properly certified and trained above and beyond the state requirements. Officers must pass a twelve-week basic police officer course at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy in the state capital of Helena. Furthermore, communication officers must also attend and pass a one-week course for their additional responsibilities. The Laurel Police Department also hosts its own basic reserve course annually for reserve officers.

The Laurel Police Department is currently located in the Fire-Ambulance-Police Building (FAP building). The facility is shared with the Fire Department and Ambulance service. The facility was built in 1976 and has seen additions and renovations over time. This building is not sufficient for the needs of the departments located there. It will be important to seek out funding options to improve, expand, or construct additional facilities for these departments.

Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

Laurel Volunteer Fire Department

The Laurel Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) has served the City of Laurel and the surrounding area since its inception in 1909. The Mission statement of the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department is:

“The Laurel Fire Department is committed to serving the city of Laurel, it’s residents, the surrounding fire districts and the visitors to our city for any of their emergency fire rescue needs. We will do this through a strong dedication and commitment to our community with a long tradition guiding us to what is important.”

The LVFD provides full-service fire response service to the City of Laurel, Laurel Airport Authority, Yellowstone Treatment Center, Laurel Urban Fire Service Area, and Fire Districts 5, 7, and 8. These services include structure fires, wildland fires, vehicle fires, industrial hazards, water and ice rescue, vehicle extractions, Hazmat situations, rope rescue, and public service calls.

It has been recognized that the LVFD needs to change and adapt to the changing nature of fire services. It will be important to improve the delivery of high-quality services to the community through planning and implementing new policies. The LVFD has begun development of a “Fire Services Business and Work Plan” that presents information about the department as well as goals and objectives to improve and expand fire services

Goals presented in the Draft Work Plan include:

- Finance – Develop avenues of revenue to offset costs for manpower, operations, and equipment replacement
- Equipment replacement – Develop a schedule for equipment replacement
- Education – Communicate with city officials on the beneficial aspects of the current LVFD structure
- Training – Continue training to expand training to evolve with ever-changing fire services
- Communications – Develop lines of communication between various groups at department, local, county, and state levels.
- Performance Management – Evaluate department on skills and abilities for career advancement and adjustments to training needs
- Construction of a New Fire Station – A new station will be necessary to meet the needs of a growing community.

Firefighters in Montana are required to complete a minimum of thirty training hours per year. Many of the members of the LVFD regularly complete over 100 hours of training hours per year. Members of the LVFD are afforded the opportunity to travel to specialized schools and training sessions to learn new information and share it with their fellow firefighters in the Department.

The LVFD is actively involved in the community through events and has held annual events such as Fire Prevention Weeks and Safety Days. The LVFD also manages the fireworks display for the 4th of July celebration. The 4th of July celebration is well known throughout the state and brings awareness to the members of the LVFD and their work for the Laurel community. The LVFD is currently set at forty-five members to meet current community needs. The Department undertook a reorganization in 2010 to better coordinate the department. This reorganization allowed the department to meet any

requirements of partial paid staff for a department if the City of Laurel met the requirements for a Second-Class city of 7,500 residents or more.

The Department is located within the Fire-Ambulance-Police Building, (FAP building). This facility has three full bays and an extra half bay for equipment. The LVFD also has access to equipment bays at the Laurel City shops if necessary. It is anticipated that an expansion of the FAP building or the construction of a new facility will be necessary to adequately cover the Fire Service needs of the Laurel community over the long-term.

Ambulance Service

The primary mission of the City of Laurel Ambulance Service (LAS) is to provide quality pre-hospital emergency medical services and transportation to medical facilities in a prompt and safe manner to those residing, visiting, or traveling through the Laurel service area. The department is a hybrid model, with certain full-time positions and additional volunteers. The department is made up of a full-time director and five full-time staff of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). LAS staff are trained to provide at least a minimum of Basic Life Support (BLS) assistance plus endorsements from the state to provide other advanced services.

The LAS is located at the Fire-Ambulance-Police building. The FAP building has space for three ambulances, restrooms, a crew lounge, offices, small kitchen, and storage rooms. The building also has a community meeting room attached. The City should consider options for upgrades, expansions, or new facility locations to improve emergency services.

School District

The Laurel School District serves the City of Laurel and the surrounding area. The District instructs 2,100 students throughout its different facilities. The District maintains instructional levels from Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). The grades are grouped as follows:

- Kindergarten through 4th grade – Elementary School
- Grades 5 through 8 – Middle School
- Grades 9 through 12 – High School

The Laurel School District currently operates five schools that include:

- Laurel High School
- Laurel Middle School
- Fred W. Graff Elementary
- South Elementary
- West Elementary

The Laurel School District's Mission is: "Dedicated to the individual development of each student, every day, without exception." Students are assigned to a classroom or group depending on what will best serve that student. Considerations are made for class size, peer relations, student/teacher relations, and teaching instructional style. The School District also has administrative offices located at the old Laurel Middle School at 410 Colorado Avenue.

The Goals of the Laurel School District's education program is:

- To deliver a quality educational program that promotes both academic success and the overall development of every student.

- To meet the needs and skill level of each student.
- To promote high student expectations, the importance of lifelong learning and creative/critical thinking.
- To provide the students with a strong desire to learn.
- To foster self-discovery, self-awareness, and self-discipline.
- To develop an awareness of and appreciation for cultural diversity.
- To stimulate intellectual curiosity and growth.
- To provide fundamental career concepts and skills.
- To help the student develop sensitivity to the needs and values of others and respect for individual and group differences.
- To be free of any sexual, cultural, ethnic, or religious bias.

The District previously established goals for District growth in its 10-15 Year Master Facility Plan. These included the development of a new facility for grades three through 5 and a transportation facility, the remodeling of existing schools, relocating administrative offices, selling aging district-owned structures, and the addressing of inadequate learning environments in certain facilities. The district developed these goals to grow with the community and adapt when necessary.

Public Library

The Laurel Public Library was created in 1916 via ordinance and opened to the public on July 18, 1918. The Library was first established at 115 West 1st Street, the site of the current City Hall. The Library relocated to its current facility at 720 West 3rd Street in 1989 after fundraising by volunteers and the Library Board. The Laurel Public Library serves the citizens that reside within the city limits. Yellowstone County residents are served without cost. Stillwater and Carbon County residents can also apply for and receive a library card. The mission of the library is to provide a “place where community members can grow, teach and interact in mutual benefit with others.”

The current library facility is approximately 6,000 square feet and contains four wings. The general needs of the library’s clients are met by the current building, but improvements have been discussed. The library could be improved by expanding the building to include a storage room, meeting rooms, and small study rooms. The needs of the library clients have been growing and the Library will need to grow with them.

The Library does not have any specific sharing agreements with the Parmly Library in Billings or any other regional libraries. The Library is currently part of the Montana Shared Library Catalog Consortia through an agreement with the Montana State Library. This Consortia is made up of more than 140 libraries across the state consisting of public, academic, and special library types.

Public Services and Facilities Goals and Objectives

Effective and efficient public services are a major draw for prospective residents, developers, and businesses. Above all public facilities and services must be accessible, helpful, and dependable for everyone residing, working, and visiting the city. City staff should establish the current gaps and projected needs of public facilities as the city grows. It is important to work with public stakeholders and departments to cover the whole population. Providing consistent and stable service delivery is a must.

Goal 1: Provide consistent and high-quality public services to the community

- ❖ Develop standard operating procedures to ensure consistency for city departments
- ❖ Establish regular maintenance procedures for parks, facilities, and public areas
- ❖ Study current facilities and services to identify gaps in services and identify future needs

Goal 2: Respond to the changing nature of the community

- ❖ Plan for the expansion of public facilities in priority growth areas
- ❖ Invest in public facilities that are accessible to everyone in the community
- ❖ Study how to improve city services to boost quality of life for residents, businesses, and institutions

Goal 3: Collaborate with city departments and stakeholders to determine the expansion and improvement of public facilities

- ❖ Open lines of communication between city departments and institutions to gain input on major projects
- ❖ Study the state of current public facilities for deficiencies and issues
- ❖ Identify necessary upgrades, changes, or expansions of public facilities to best serve the Laurel area
- ❖ Consider the public service requirements of large-scale projects prior to their approval and implementation

CHAPTER 13: RECREATION PLAN

Overview

Access to recreational opportunities and parkland is a key component of quality of life for communities. The parks and public areas owned and maintained by the City of Laurel are a great asset to local and area residents. Access to walking, biking, and local amenities help boost the quality of life for both residents and visitors. Many cities and towns have begun establishing greenways and trails to connect parks and open space with local neighborhoods. Incorporating efforts like these into Laurel planning and development strategies can help to boost livability and help residents to be healthier and more active.

City staff should consider developing a vision for the Laurel parks system that could establish priorities for park funding and placement that would be most useful for residents. Creation of a connected park and trail system would enable residents to enjoy more parts of Laurel and the surrounding area.

Many of Laurel's parks are very small, with some located at inopportune locations. It is important that parkland is an essential and useable amenity for residents. Parks should be developed and improved to act as neighborhood focal points. City staff should also study underutilized and/or burdensome parkland parcels and consider re-use scenarios.

Repurposing vacant or underused land as parks and trails can create many added benefits for a community. Downtown Laurel currently has large areas of vacant land owned by BNSF Railroad and leased by MRL. Studying options for low impact reuse of this land as parkland or greenways could enliven downtown by activating the South side of Main Street, creating more opportunities for residents to spend time downtown, and creating more public space for events or gatherings.

Riverside Park has been a staple of the community for almost one hundred years. The Riverside Park Master Plan was developed in 2018 to provide a blueprint for improvements and the reuse of the park. It will be important to continue the ongoing improvement efforts detailed in the plan and to develop policies to attract visitors from Yellowstone County and beyond. Riverside Park should be maintained as a historical, recreational, and economic asset into the future.

City Parks

There are many public parks throughout the City of Laurel. Some of the major parks are listed below. There are also many smaller unnamed parks throughout the city.

- ❖ Thomson Park
- ❖ Russell Park
- ❖ Nutting Park
- ❖ Kiwanis Park
- ❖ Murray Park
- ❖ South Pond
- ❖ Riverside Park
- ❖ Lions Park
- ❖ MT State Firefighters Memorial Park

Parks Funding, Governance, and Operations

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining and improving park facilities. Public Works provides staff time and funding towards upkeep for park facilities. The City of Laurel Park Board is made up of volunteers who provide oversight and input on park operations, maintenance, and activities.

Riverside Park is an important historic asset for the city, the region, and the state of Montana. There are many private and public groups that are active in historic preservation like the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board who can help support preservation and improvement efforts in Riverside Park.

Community Sponsored Events

Community sponsored events are a great way to get residents outside, engaged with nature, and connected to their community. Laurel has a history of hosting well known events to get people outside and active. City staff and local stakeholders should work together to promote outdoor events to get people more active in the community.

Laurel is home to several major events throughout the year. The July 4th festivities include the Chief Joseph Run, pancake breakfast, parade, and fireworks celebration. Laurel also hosts an annual Christmas tree lighting event downtown, farmer's markets, and other events throughout the year.

The city's parks are a focal point for residents and visitors. They represent an important asset that makes Laurel a better place to live. City staff should partner with local groups to support community events and create more opportunities for recreational activities and outdoor enjoyment in the city's neighborhood parks.

Recreation Objectives and Policies and Strategies

Goal 1: Develop parkland as an essential and useful amenity for residents

- ❖ Ensure new developments have appropriate park space for recreation and general use
- ❖ Study how existing parks can be improved through new facilities, changed layouts, or additions
- ❖ Review current park infrastructure and determine if improvements are necessary to better serve the needs of the surrounding area

Goal 2: Promote Riverside Park as a vital historic, civic, and recreation resource for residents and visitors

- ❖ Adhere to the projects and strategies presented in the 2018 Riverside Park Master Plan
- ❖ Seek grant funding for structural and site improvements
- ❖ Develop historic markers for Riverside Park and its historic structures
- ❖ Study options for connecting Riverside Park to the city proper through infrastructure improvements, civic engagement, or other means.
- ❖ Establish signage and marketing for the assets and resources of Riverside Park to area residents and highway travelers.

Goal 3: Create an interconnected system of parks, greenspace, and trails that are accessible to all residents

- ❖ Create a city-wide Park System Master Plan to develop park priorities
- ❖ Consider the creation of a City Parks Department to oversee park operations and maintenance.
- ❖ Identify unused land that could be transformed into greenspace or trails for use by current and future residents.
- ❖ Update the zoning and development codes to encourage the creation of bicycle and pedestrian trail corridors

CHAPTER 14: NATURAL RESOURCES

Overview

The Laurel planning jurisdiction contains a variety of terrain types and environments. The city itself is urbanized and is surrounded with many residential subdivisions surrounding it. A variety of farmland, grazing land, riverine areas, and wetlands surround the city of Laurel and make up much of the planning area. Laurel's natural features pose special opportunities and challenges that should be considered when planning for growth.

The natural environment should be preserved and enhanced to balance environmental sustainability with economic growth, recreational opportunities, and development. Natural resources and the natural environment can be managed with growth activities to provide social, economic, and community benefits to people over time while continuing with their natural functions. The proximity to natural areas such as parks, trails, and other open spaces are an important variable for many people on where they choose to live and work.

The Laurel area is an interconnected network of land and water resources that contribute to the health, economic wellbeing, and quality of life for the community. This network of natural resources requires investment and maintenance just like roads and utility systems. Creating a balance of conservation, management, and growth can reward a community with great benefits such as increased quality of life, longer-lasting infrastructure, and improved property values.

Groundwater Resources

Groundwater quality and quantity will become a growing concern as Laurel and the surrounding area develops. Tradition modes of living will shift because of needing to address groundwater issues. The primary impact of development in the area will be a reduction of groundwater recharge capacity. Groundwater recharge has averaged 8.2 inches per year but depends on the specific land use and soil. The planning area contains relatively thin alluvial gravel deposits of groundwater. The average saturated thickness of local aquifers is fifteen feet, with the thinnest saturated zones occurring along cliffs and escarpments and the Yellowstone River's channel.

Wildlife Habitat

Rivers, Streams and Lakes

It is important to recognize the Yellowstone River as a partner and major asset to Laurel. The Yellowstone River provides a stable water source for the city, as well as recreational opportunities, and riverine wildlife habitat. Maintaining the Yellowstone River as a resource is a complex job including managing the river ecosystem, monitoring historic water rights, and the needs of the local community for commercial, industrial, and residential needs.

There are also many year-round and seasonal drainage and irrigation ditches that carry water through the city. These ditches include the Nutting Drain Ditch, Big Ditch, High Ditch, and Cove Ditch. Flooding is known to occur intermittently near the ditches. High water levels on properties near the ditches are a concern for property owners seeking to develop their property.

Floodplains

A floodplain is an area of land adjacent to a stream, river, or other water source that stretches from the banks or boundaries of its channel to the base of higher elevation terrain that experiences flooding during periods of high discharge and or rainfall. Floodplains are natural drainage basins for the discharge of heavy precipitation. The Yellowstone River exhibits wide floodplains and variations in flow due to its terrain. Flow rates are dependent upon the season and the amount of rain and snow melt. Flows are usually at their highest during the spring months into the early summer.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) utilizes the 100-year floodplain boundaries as the standard measurement for floodplain regulation. The 100-year floodplain is the area that have a one percent chance of flooding each year from a specific water source. The federal government expects localities to take a proactive approach to flood damage prevention. Local governments are expected by the Federal Government to take a proactive approach to flood damage protection. Laurel has had an established Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) since 1982. This map was most recently updated in November of 2013.

Most of the Laurel planning area is outside of the 100-year floodplain. The areas within the 100-year floodplain include many properties directly abutting the Yellowstone River and its tributaries, some irrigation and stormwater ditches running through the city, and portions of downtown Laurel along Main Street and its directly adjacent side streets. Laure's Riverside Park is also fully within the floodplain.

Wetlands

Wetlands are ecosystems that are flooded by water permanently or seasonally. Wetlands have unique vegetation, wildlife, and hydric soils. Wetlands near Laurel include riparian areas along the Yellowstone and Clark's Fork Rivers, marshes, spring seeps, and prairie potholes. Wetlands have historically been obstacles and detriments have been removed whenever possible. Much of Laurel and the surrounding area suffer from high groundwater. Close attention must be paid towards high groundwater and its impacts to public utilities such as water lines, sewer lines, and stormwater drainage systems. It is important to understand wetlands and their traditional role in the environment to better plan for growth and development.

Agricultural Land

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defines prime farmland as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. These crops also have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when managed appropriately.

Laurel and Yellowstone County have bene home to agricultural farms and ranches since the beginning of European settlement in the area. There a vast amount of agricultural farmland within the Laurel planning jurisdiction itself. The map below presents the varieties of crops in the Laurel planning area.

Laurel - Crop Data

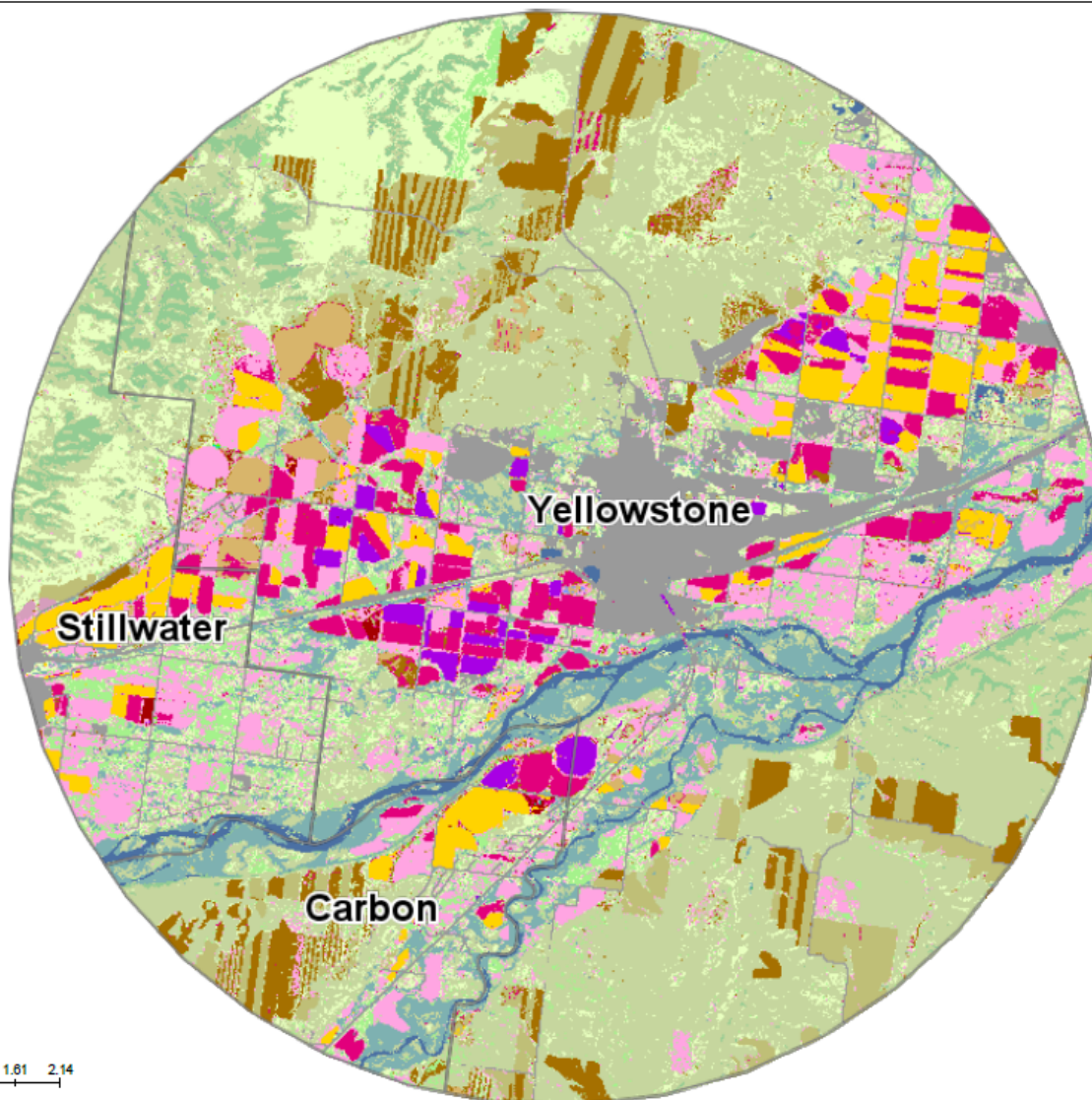
Land Cover Categories
(by decreasing acreage)

AGRICULTURE*

-  Grass/Pasture
-  Alfalfa
-  Fallow/Idle Cropland
-  Other Hay/Non Alfalfa
-  Winter Wheat
-  Barley
-  Corn
-  Spring Wheat
-  Sugarbeets
-  Dry Beans
-  Triticale
-  Peas
-  Safflower
-  Oats
-  Flaxseed
-  Canola

NON-AGRICULTURE**

-  Shrubland
-  Woody Wetlands
-  Evergreen Forest
-  Developed/Low Intensity
-  Developed/Open Space
-  Herbaceous Wetlands

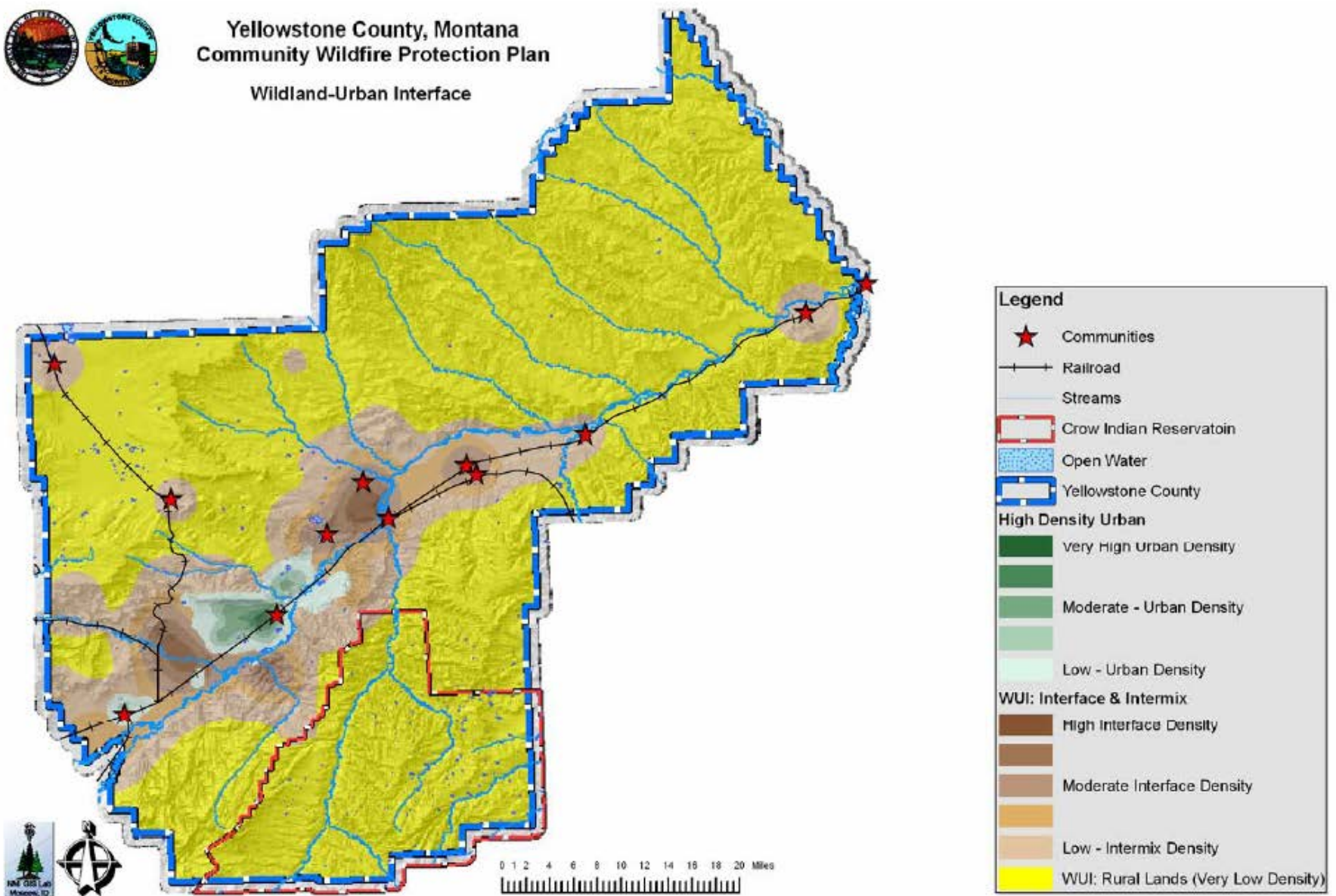


Wildland-Urban Interface and Significant Infrastructure



Yellowstone County, Montana Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Wildland-Urban Interface



Wildland-Urban Interface

Laurel was part of the planning process for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan on 2006. A Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) map was prepared as a part of this process. The goal of the planning process was to improve fire prevention, reduce hazardous fuels, restore, fire-adapted ecosystems, and to promote community assistance.

Yellowstone County has a diverse ecosystem with an array of vegetation that have developed with and adapted to fire as a natural disturbance process. Decades of wildland fire suppression and long-standing land use practices have altered the plant community and has resulted in dramatic shifts in the types of fires and local species composition. Rangelands and farmland in Yellowstone County have become more susceptible to large-scale, high intensity fires that threaten life, property, and natural resources because of these long-term practices.

Natural Resource Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Protect Laurel's natural resources and traditional environment

- ❖ Provide options for landowners for conserving portions of their land while developing on others
- ❖ Achieve a balanced pattern of growth to ensure environmental concerns are considered during development
- ❖ Manage the local water resources as a healthy, integrated system that provides long-term benefits from enhanced environmental quality.

Goal 2: Incorporate sustainable development patterns in the Laurel subdivision and land use codes

- ❖ Review and update existing zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure environmental preservation and conservation are addressed.
- ❖ Review and update landscaping ordinances as needed to best suit Laurel's natural environment
- ❖ Manage rivers, floodplains, wetlands, and other water resources for multiple uses including flood and erosion protection, wildlife habitat, recreational use, open space, and water supply

Goal 3: Connect with local, regional, and state agencies and stakeholders to improve the natural environment in and around Laurel

- ❖ Sponsor environmental cleanup and rehabilitation programs that include the city, school district, community organizations, and residents
- ❖ Participate in regional watershed studies to achieve effective long-term flood protection
- ❖ Explore the possibility of creating a conservation corridor along the Yellowstone River

CHAPTER 15: GROWTH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

The 2020 Laurel Growth Policy is a significant upgrade of the existing Growth Management Plan. The previous Growth Management Plan provided very useful information regarding existing community characteristics as well as trends that had future implications for the community, but it did not provide specific recommendations regarding how the community may best address existing and emerging issues.

The content of this chapter is critical to compliance with state law and provides necessary details for communities to be eligible for various funding programs and resources. The chapter is organized into two primary sections:

1. Section 1: Identification of tools available to Montana cities to help implement the growth policy; and
2. Section 2: Fulfills a specific requirement in Montana State Law requiring growth policies to evaluate jurisdictional subdivision regulations in the following three ways:
 - a. Identification of how local government defines various impact assessments as specified in the law
 - b. Addressing how public hearings for proposed subdivisions will be conducted, and
 - c. Addressing how local governments will make decisions with respect to various impact assessments

In addition, the second section identifies specific objectives, policies and strategies for six planning topic areas which are also outlined throughout the Growth Policy text:

- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Public Facilities and Services
- ◆ Intergovernmental Coordination

In some cases, the topic areas identify specific resources and programs that are available to help implement strategies identified for each topic area. Objectives are also listed and for each identified objective, there are recommended implementation measures. The implementation measures are either recommended policies or strategies. Recommended policies reflect the intent of how a governing body might address a planning topic or issue through policy. Strategies reflect a specific course of action that a governing body might utilize to address a specific planning topic or issue.

Implementation Tools

This section identifies several types of Growth Policy implementation tools. Generally, there are five types of tools at a local government's disposal to help implement a growth policy. They include:

- ◆ **Regulations:** Regulations are generally outlined and authorized by Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and adopted into law by local government.
- ◆ **Policies:** The Growth Policy and other adopted plans contain policies that express the community's interest in pursuing a course of action on topics and issues. Unlike regulations, local government has discretion in the implementation of policies.
- ◆ **Government Finance:** Government finance tools represent the community's financial commitment to fund the implementation of policies and strategies outlined in the Growth Policy.
- ◆ **Education:** Educational tools, such as the growth policy itself, include several activities that inform the public, appointed officials and elected officials that facilitate effective decision making.
- ◆ **Coordination:** Coordination tools are voluntary measures with the local government or between a local government and other local, state and federal government or agency that results in more efficient and effective delivery of services or a shared response to a common concern.

Provided below is a discussion of each of the types of growth policy implementation tools. The tools described are not all inclusive but rather are intended to provide examples of tools that are commonly used by communities in Montana. Several of the tools are already being utilized by the City of Laurel. The tools not in use may be considered as additional means to advance the implementation of the Growth Policy.

REGULATORY TOOLS

Subdivision Regulations

MCA requires counties to adopt subdivision regulations that comply with the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act. Subdivision regulations control the creation or modification of the division of land into new parcels or tracts. They also control the design of subdivisions and provide standards for adequate provision of infrastructure without adversely impacting public services and natural resources.

The City of Laurel has adopted subdivision regulations that are enforced in the City or on lands proposed for annexation into the City of Laurel. Subdivision regulations will need to be updated to be consistent with this Growth Policy and must include any amendments made during the 2020 Montana Legislative session.

Zoning Regulations

Zoning regulations are a common regulatory tool to control land use. One of the primary purposes of zoning regulations is to minimize land use incompatibility. Zoning regulations also establish standards that limit the density or intensity of development as well as other characteristics of development such as off-street parking, signs, lighting, site layout, etc. Zoning regulations are supplements to a zoning map that establishes zoning districts in the jurisdiction. The zoning map provides the means to separate incompatible land uses and zoning regulations mitigate potential land use incompatibilities at the boundaries separating different zoning districts.

The City of Laurel adopted zoning regulations in 2001. Over the years, several amendments have been made to those regulations. The city is in the process of reviewing a comprehensive update to the zoning regulations

as prepared by their planning consultant. Pursuant to MCA, the City of Laurel can establish extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction up to one mile beyond the city limits if Yellowstone County and the city create the extra territorial area and provide for joint administration.

Design Standards

Design standards are most often contained within zoning regulations but can also be established in subdivision regulations. The purpose of design standards is to enhance the appearance and functionality of a development. Overly restrictive design standards can impede development. If properly crafted, design standards can significantly enhance the built environment without placing undue burdens on a developer.

Floodplain Regulations

Floodplain regulations are intended to regulate the use of land located within an officially designated 100-year floodplain in order to protect buildings and occupants from the risks associated with flooding. Floodplain provisions are contained in the subdivision regulations. Some communities choose to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS). CRS is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. Any community in compliance with the minimum requirements of NFIP may participate. Participation in the CRS results in discounted premiums for flood insurance policy holders; between 5 to 45 percent depending on the rating of proposed floodplain management activities, reducing the likelihood or magnitude of damage resulting from a flood.

Zoning Compliance Permits

Zoning compliance permits ensure that development activities comply with zoning regulations. The City of Laurel requires the issuance of zoning compliance permits for most types of improvements to private property.

Building Permits

Building permits are utilized to ensure that construction of buildings follows the State of Montana Building Code. Building permits are required for all buildings over two hundred (200) square feet. Most residential building permits are issued by the City Building Inspector but permits for commercial or residential buildings with five or more dwelling units are issued by the State.

POLICY TOOLS

Neighborhood or Area Plans

The Growth Policy can be further implemented by more detailed neighborhood or area plans. With the adoption of the Growth Policy, plans may be prepared that provide a greater level of detail for specific areas or issues as the City finds need.

Annexation Policy

A city expands its boundaries and its jurisdictional authority through the process of annexation. There are six different methods for annexation authorized by state statute (Parts 42 through 46 of Title 7, Chapter 2, MCA). Part 46 authorizes an annexation resulting from a petition from private property owners.

Cities use two tools to facilitate and guide future annexations. The first is a "Limits of Annexation" map that delineates the areas surrounding the city that can be reasonably supported by urban services and infrastructure.

The map is prepared in coordination with the preparation of a capital improvements plan. The second is the use of annexation agreements. Entering into an annexation agreement with a property owner prior to the submission of development plans gives a local jurisdiction the opportunity to assign infrastructure and other costs associated with development of the annexed property.

Urban Planning Area

Urban planning areas are different than Extra Territorial/City-County Planning areas. An Urban Planning Area focuses on extension of infrastructure over a portion of the City-County Planning Jurisdiction and typically for a shorter time horizon than the jurisdictional area associated with the City-County Planning Jurisdiction.

Designation of an urban planning area is utilized for the extension of urban services as a jurisdiction grows. It delineates the geographic extent of how far outside the city limits the jurisdiction is prepared to extend urban services within a 10-year planning horizon. This is often accomplished by establishing an urban service area boundary beyond the city limits. The urban service area boundary is established in coordination with planned growth areas identified in the Growth Policy as well as the city's capital improvement plan. This tool helps a city plan for future growth outside the city limits and puts property owners outside the city limits on notice of what areas will and will not be supported by the extension of urban services.

Urban Renewal Districts

The establishment of urban renewal districts facilitates redevelopment of specifically selected areas in the city. Title 7, Chapter 15, Part 42 of the MCA gives municipalities authority to establish urban renewal districts in areas that meet the statutory definition of "blighted" areas and authorizes the municipality to expend funds in the area to stimulate private investment.

Tax increment finance (TIF) districts are often used to recapture the city's expenditure of funds for public improvements in the redevelopment area. TIF districts use the incremental increase in tax collections as blighted areas are redeveloped or other improvements are made to properties within the district. It is this increment that is used to retire debt to install the additional or new capital infrastructure. Prior to establishing an urban renewal district, municipalities are required to prepare and adopt an urban renewal plan. For more information see the TIF Section under Government Finance Tools.

GOVERNMENT FINANCE TOOLS

Capital Improvement Programs

City and county governments often program capital improvements on an annual basis. This is a reasonable practice for communities experiencing no or low levels of growth. However, for communities anticipating or experiencing high levels of growth, the use of multi-year capital improvement programs is an important tool to plan for public expenditures associated with growth. In such cases, a local government may establish a five-year capital improvement program. As noted above, a multi-year capital improvement program can support the establishment of urban service areas and facilitate negotiation of an annexation agreement.

Fee Incentives

The reduction or full waiver of municipal fees can be utilized to support implementation of specific growth policy goals and objectives. Often the financial incentive is used to support affordable housing or redevelopment projects. The tool can also be used to support specific economic development policy.

Impact Fees

An impact fee is a charge on development assessed at the building permit or zoning compliance permit stage of a project to assist the funding of new or expanded facilities that are needed to accommodate the development. Impact fees are used by communities anticipating or experiencing high levels of growth and are intended to maintain existing or minimum levels of service with minimal costs to existing property owners.

Impact fees can be assessed for a wide range of community services including but not limited to public safety (EMS, police and fire), public works (sewer, water, transportation and drainage facilities), recreation, libraries, etc. Citizens who are assessed impact fees need to receive benefit from impact fee expenditures within a reasonable period, which most often is five years.

Local Government Owned Land

Land that is owned by local government, including school districts, is a valuable resource that can be used to implement growth policy goals and objectives. Undeveloped public land may be used to financially leverage private development that meets a community's high demand need. By reducing or eliminating land acquisition costs the jurisdiction provides a significant financial incentive to facilitate development that supports the implementation of land use, housing or economic development policy. When this implementation tool is used the local government should consider entering into a development agreement to ensure the developer provides the desired outcome.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) was first authorized by the Montana legislature in 1974. It is a locally-driven funding mechanism that allows cities and counties to direct property tax dollars that accrue from new development, within a specifically designed district, to community and economic development activities within that district. It is intended as a tool that can encourage and support investment in areas where growth has been hindered by a lack of infrastructure and/or the presence of blight.

TIF does not increase property taxes for individuals and businesses located within a designated district. It only affects the way that taxes are distributed after they have been collected. A base taxable value is determined upon the establishment of a TIF district, and any additional tax revenue that accrues due to new development over a specified time frame is used to finance a variety of district improvements. Eligible improvement activities include:

- ◆ Land acquisition
- ◆ Rehabilitation and renovation
- ◆ Demolition and removal of structures
- ◆ Planning, marketing and analysis
- ◆ General redevelopment activities
- ◆ Constructing, improving and connecting to infrastructure

EDUCATION TOOLS

Planning Studies and Data Collection

The Growth Policy provides significant information and data on the community's various characteristics. It also provides an extensive list of policies and strategies to implement growth policy objectives. In most cases the information and data contained in the growth policy will be enough to justify and implement the policies and strategies. However, there may be cases where the community will need to conduct more detailed follow-up planning studies and collect additional information to support an implementation activity.

Establishing impact fees or urban renewal districts are examples of implementation measures requiring additional study. As discussed below, ongoing collection of data will support Growth Policy monitoring.

Growth Policy Monitoring

The recommended policies and strategies contained in this Growth Policy are based on an assessment of current information and data. The policies and strategies remain relevant so long as conditions in the community are aligned with current trends. However, unanticipated circumstances or opportunities are likely to arise that will warrant a re-evaluation of policies or strategies whether they have been implemented or not. To support a re-evaluation of policies or strategies, data that is applicable to various planning topics should be collected and reported on an annual basis. This data will, in effect, provide community indicator information allowing the community to identify the emergence of new trends.

It is recommended that the City consider preparation of an annual community indicator report that can be used to support an evaluation of the level of success in achieving community goals and objectives, and an assessment of the need to implement or revise selected policies and strategies contained in the Growth Policy. Annual community Indicator reports also provide valuation information that can be used in the next update of the Growth Policy. The reports can also be used to justify need when requests for outside funding are made.

Community indicator reports should provide information that can be compared to information contained in the Growth Policy, so change can be measured.

Annual community indicator reports should include, but are not limited to an assessment and review of the following information:

- ◆ Building permits for new housing
- ◆ Volume of sales of residential property (Laurel Real Estate MLS Service)
- ◆ Crime statistics (Laurel Police Department)
- ◆ Client caseloads for senior citizen programs (Yellowstone County Council on Aging)
- ◆ Number and type of new or expanded businesses
- ◆ Number and type of new jobs created (Montana Department of Labor and Industry)
- ◆ Tax revenue
- ◆ School enrollment
- ◆ Levels of participation in recreational programs

- ◆ Remaining capacity of sewer treatment facilities
- ◆ Remaining capacity of the landfill
- ◆ Updated population projections prepared by the Montana Department of Commerce
- ◆ Annual departmental budget reports/requests
- ◆ Medical Facility programming/services

COORDINATION TOOLS

Intra-Governmental Coordination

The functions of local government are logically divided into departments. The departmentalization of local government services tends to discourage the sharing of information and coordination between departments. Too often synthesizing information from the various departments to get a holistic view of the community is solely the responsibility of the elected officials and most often occurs during preparation of annual budgets. It is recommended that Laurel consider the timely sharing of department reports with staff members responsible for overseeing implementation of the Growth Policy.

In addition, the City might consider assigning individual departments the task of implementing or evaluating the need to implement recommended policies and strategies that most clearly impact those individual departments. This is an excellent way to spread ownership of the Growth Policy. Annual department reports can provide information on the status of recommended implementation activities. The City might consider including a Growth Policy Implementation section into each department budget, to institutionalize the community's commitment to Growth Policy implementation.

Intra-governmental coordination is also an effective tool to more efficiently deliver services. When leaders of each department meet periodically to share information and service delivery challenges, there is more opportunity to enhance coordination between departments and identify ways that staff, equipment and other departmental resources might be shared to mitigate service delivery challenges.

Inter-Governmental Coordination

The same principles discussed in the previous section apply to coordination between local governments and between local governments and regional, tribal, state and federal agencies. Inter-governmental coordination provides an opportunity to regularly share information about plans and programs and enhance working relationships.

The City might consider establishing a semi-annual meeting schedule with regional, state and federal agencies and a quarterly meeting schedule for local governments within the county. Individual County Commissioners and City Council members can be designated as the liaison for each agency and/or local government. The intangible benefits of this coordination are often the maintaining of open lines of communication and a greater mutual understanding of the perspectives and needs of the larger region and state.

Evaluation of Yellowstone County/Laurel Subdivision Regulations

An evaluation of the administration and standards contained in the Laurel Subdivision Regulations is required as part of the Growth Policy. There are three items that need to be evaluated per Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6, 76-1-601(3)(h), MCA. 1).

1. How local government defines the various impacts assessments as specified in 76-3-608(3)(a),
2. How local government makes decisions with respect to the impact assessments as made, and
3. How public hearings for proposed subdivisions are conducted.

Impact Assessments: Definitions and Evaluation Factors

Local government subdivision regulations are required to review proposed subdivisions in accordance with the following criteria provided in 76-3-608(3)(a):

- ◆ The effect on agriculture
- ◆ The effect on agricultural water user's facilities
- ◆ The effect on local services
- ◆ The effect on the natural environment
- ◆ The effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat
- ◆ The effect on public health and safety

For each of the above criteria, applicable definitions and evaluative provisions contained in the subdivision regulations must be identified.

Effect on Agriculture

Agriculture is defined as all aspects of farming or ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals or poultry; and any practices including forestry or lumbering operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.

The effect on agriculture is evaluated utilizing the following provisions:

1. Is the proposed subdivision or associated improvements located on or near prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service? If so, identify each area on a copy of the preliminary plat.
2. Is the proposed subdivision going to result in removal of any agricultural or timber land from production? If so, describe.
3. Are there any possible conflicts with nearby agricultural operations (e.g., residential development creating problems for moving livestock, operating farm machinery, maintaining water supplies, controlling weeds or applying pesticides; agricultural operations suffering from vandalism, uncontrolled pets or damaged fences)? If so, describe.
4. Are there any possible nuisance problems which may arise from locating a subdivision near agricultural or timber lands? If so, describe.
5. What effects would the subdivision have on the value of nearby agricultural lands?

Effect on Agricultural Water User Facilities

Agricultural water user facilities are defined as those facilities which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands to produce agricultural products.

These facilities include, but are not limited to, ditches, head gates, pipes and other water conveying facilities.

The effect on agricultural water user facilities is evaluated by the following provisions:

1. Are there any conflicts the subdivision would create with agricultural water user facilities (e.g. residential development creating problems for operating and maintaining irrigation systems) or would agricultural water user facilities be more subject to vandalism or damage because of the subdivision? Describe.
2. Are there any possible nuisance problems which the subdivision would generate regarding agricultural water user facilities (e.g. safety hazards to residents or water problems from irrigation ditches, head gates, siphons, sprinkler systems or other agricultural water user facilities)? Describe.

Effect on Local Services

Local services are defined as any and all services that local governments, public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens. The effect on local services is evaluated by the following provisions:

1. Are there any additional or expanded public services and facilities that would be demanded of local government or special districts to serve the subdivision? Describe.
2. Are there any additional costs which would result for services such as roads, bridges, law enforcement, parks and recreation, fire protection, water, sewer and solid waste systems, ambulance service, schools or busing, (including additional personnel, construction and maintenance costs)? Describe.
3. Who would bear these costs (e.g. all taxpayers within the jurisdiction, people within special taxing districts, or users of a service)?
4. Can service providers meet the additional costs given legal or other constraints (e.g. statutory ceilings on mill levies or bonded indebtedness)?
5. Are there off-site costs or costs to other jurisdictions that may be incurred (e.g. development of water sources or construction of a sewage treatment plant; costs borne by a nearby municipality)? Describe.
6. How does the subdivision allow existing services, through expanded use, to operate more efficiently, or makes the installation or improvement of services feasible (e.g. allow installation of a central water system or upgrading a country road)?
7. What are the present tax revenues received from the un-subdivided land?

By the County \$ _

By the municipality, if applicable, \$ _____

By the school(s) \$ _____

8. What are the approximate revenues received by each above taxing authority if the lots are reclassified, and when the lots are all improved and built upon? Describe any other taxes that would be paid by the subdivision and into what funds (e.g. personal property taxes on mobile/manufactured homes are paid into the County general fund).
9. Would new taxes generated from the subdivision cover additional public costs?
10. How many special improvement districts would be created which would obligate local government fiscally or administratively? Are any bonding plans proposed which would affect the local government's bonded indebtedness?

Effect on Natural Environment

Natural environment is defined as the physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, sound, light and objects of historic and aesthetic significance. The effect on the natural environment is evaluated by the following provisions:

1. What are the known or possible historic, paleontological, archaeological or cultural sites, structures or objects which may be affected by the proposed subdivision? Describe and locate on a plat overlay or sketch map.
2. How would the subdivision affect surface and groundwater, soils, slopes, vegetation, historical or archaeological features within the subdivision or on adjacent land? Describe plans to protect these sites.
3. Would any stream banks or lake shorelines be altered, streams re-channeled or any surface water contaminated from sewage treatment systems, run-off carrying sedimentation, or concentration of pesticides or fertilizers?
4. Would groundwater supply likely be contaminated or depleted as a result of the subdivision?
5. Would construction of roads or building sites require cuts and fills on steep slopes or cause erosion on unstable, erodible soils? Would soils be contaminated by sewage treatment systems? Explain
6. What are the impacts that removal of vegetation would have on soil erosion, bank or shoreline instability?
7. Would the value of significant historical, visual or open space features be reduced or eliminated?
8. Are there any natural hazards the subdivision could be subject to (such as flooding, rock, snow or landslides, high winds, severe wildfires, or difficulties such as shallow bedrock, high water table, unstable or expansive soils, or excessive slopes)?
9. How would the subdivision affect visual features within the subdivision or on adjacent land? Describe efforts to visually blend the proposed development with the existing environment (e.g. use of appropriate building materials, colors, road design, underground utilities and re-vegetation of earthworks).

Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife is defined as those animals that are not domesticated or tamed, or as may be defined in a Growth Policy. Wildlife habitat is defined as the place or area where wildlife naturally lives or travels through. The effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat are evaluated by the following provisions:

1. What impacts would the subdivision or associated improvements have on wildlife areas such as big game wintering range, migration routes, nesting areas, wetlands or important habitat for rare or endangered species?
2. What effect would pet, or human activity have on wildlife?

Effect on Public Health and Safety

Public health and safety are defined as the prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of wellbeing for the community at large. Conditions relating to public health and safety include but are not limited to: disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding, fire or wildfire hazards, rock falls or landslides, unstable soils, steep slopes and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high pressure gas lines; and air or vehicular traffic safety hazards. The effect on public health and safety is evaluated by the following provisions:

1. Are there any health or safety hazards on or near the subdivision, such as: natural hazards, lack of water, drainage problems, heavy traffic, dilapidated structures, high pressure gas lines, high voltage power lines or irrigation ditches? These conditions, proposed or existing, should be accurately described with their origin and location identified on a copy of the preliminary plat.
2. Would the subdivision be subject to hazardous conditions due to high voltage lines, airports, highways, railroads, dilapidated structures, high pressure gas lines, irrigation ditches and adjacent industrial or mining uses?
3. How will the subdivision affect the adjacent land use? Identify existing uses such as feed lots, processing plants, airports or industrial firms which could be subject to lawsuits or complaints from residents of the subdivision.
4. What public health or safety hazards, such as dangerous traffic, fire conditions or contamination of water supplies would be created by the subdivision?

In addition to the above factors, the subdivision regulations also require preparation of a community impact report on the following public services and facilities.

1. Education and busing
2. Roads and maintenance
3. Water, sewage and solid waste facilities
4. Fire and police protection
5. Payment for extension of capital facilities

Public Hearing Requirements and Procedures

The subdivision regulations contain several sections that specify the procedural requirements for the following types of subdivision applications.

1. Divisions of land exempt from subdivision review
2. Review and approval procedures for minor subdivisions
3. Review and approval procedures for major subdivisions, including review and approval of preliminary and final plats
4. Expedited review of a first minor subdivision

The subdivision regulations apply to all jurisdictions within the county. The County is in the process of updating the subdivision regulations for consistency with all applicable enacted amendments to the MCA during the last three Montana legislative sessions. All procedural provisions, including those applicable to public hearings, are consistent with the current statutory provisions contained in the MCA.

Objectives, Policies and Strategies

A growth policy is a foundational document. It is intended to provide an overview of the community in terms of guidance for future planning. As a guiding document, the growth policy should encourage as many “finer point” studies and documents as possible to encourage refining of larger scope ideas.

Items outlined in the following tables are only options, and do not in any way obligate the governing body to pursue, fund or prioritize any given option or opportunity. Instead, the following are the recommended objectives and policies and strategies for each topic of the Growth Policy. For each policy and strategy, the entity responsible for implementation is identified and a recommended time frame for implementation is provided. The entity listed first for each policy and strategy (in italicized type) is assigned the primary responsibility to initiate and follow-through with implementation measures. In a few cases, multiple entities are assigned the primary responsibility for implementation. Other listed entities for recommended policies and strategies are responsible for supporting the implementation measures. Four implementation time frames are provided:

1. Immediate (defined as within a year after adoption of the Growth Policy)
2. Short-term (defined as not later than two years after adoption of the Growth Policy)
3. Mid-term (defined as between two and four years after adoption of the Growth Policy)
4. Long-term (defined as prior to the future update of the Growth Policy in 5 years (2025))

LAND USE

TABLE 1, LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Objective: Ensure developable land is available to accommodate anticipated population increases.		
Utilize the Land Use and Business Development map to assist in guiding development and extending the service area within the City.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Immediate
Retain existing residents, including the young adult population, and accommodate new people, including energy sector workers and their families, moving into the community.	<i>BSEDA</i> City Council	Immediate
Objective: Accommodate future growth in areas that can be efficiently served by public services.		
Encourage county land use policies and development standards adjacent to Laurel that are compatible with city land use and development standards and land uses and infrastructure.	<i>Planning Board</i> County Commission	Short-term
Investigate the use of an urban service boundary or adequate public facilities ordinance to promote efficient extensions of infrastructure.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Short-term
Objective: Implement land use policies and strategies to promote investment in Laurel and development of commercial uses		
Identify areas in the City of Laurel that would meet the MCA criteria for establishing a redevelopment plan.	<i>BSEDA</i> City Council	Short-term
Review the City code of ordinances to determine if existing regulations are imposing a constraint on new development.	<i>City Council</i>	Mid-term

Objective: Establish land use compatibility policy in planned future growth areas, including policy to limit incompatible development in existing agricultural areas.

Establish future land use policy to guide decisions on rezoning and land use map amendment applications.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council County Commission	Short-term
Enforce zoning standards to mitigate adjacent land use incompatibilities.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Immediate
Establish zoning standards that address land use transitions and compatibility with existing rural residential developed properties.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Mid-term
Require recordation and notification of buyers of residential properties in proximity of agricultural land uses and operations such as harvesting, grazing of animals, etc.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council County Commission	Short-term

Objective: Improve the physical appearance of existing neighborhoods and high visibility properties to retain a clean and safe sense of place.

Enforce zoning landscaping standards and consider establishing open space requirements for development projects.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Immediate and short-term
Establish a street tree/landscaping program for community gateways and selected commercial sites.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council County Commission	Long-term
Enhance code enforcement of properties not maintained or in need of repair.	City Council	Immediate
Report the identification of abandoned or derelict properties to the County Sanitarian who has the authority to investigate and decide if a public nuisance exists. If such a determination is made the matter will be brought to municipal court.	<i>City Council</i> <i>County Commission</i> County Sanitarian	Immediate
Continue to amend the City of Laurel zoning ordinance to promote high quality development.	<i>Planning Board</i> <i>Zoning Commission</i> City Council	Short-term
Update and enforce ordinances in City of Laurel.	<i>Planning Board</i> City Council	Short-term

HOUSING

TABLE 2, HOUSING OBJECTIVES

Objective: Increase the availability of housing choices for all people including low and fixed-income residents, senior citizens, homeless and disabled persons.		
Encourage development of apartment buildings in the City of Laurel to provide more housing options for residents with fixed incomes.	BSEDA Planning Board City Council County Commission	Short-term
Work with the owners of undeveloped vacant properties. Financial incentives such as tax abatement or directly monthly payments to the property owner should be considered.	County Commission City Council	Immediate
Objective: Increase availability of housing in the community, with special emphasis on increasing the supply of affordable and workforce housing.		
Use surplus city, county, town and school district owned land to establish public-private partnerships for developing affordable and workforce housing.	County Commission City Council School Districts	Short-term
Implement revisions to the zoning ordinance to encourage residential development and redevelopment in existing neighborhoods.	Planning Board City Council	Immediate
Promote Neighbor Works-Montana housing programs which include but are not limited to home buyer assistance (including income-based loans), foreclosure intervention, home maintenance guides, purchase of mobile homes, etc.	BSEDA City Council	Mid-term
Objective: Reduce the number of substandard housing units by securing outside funding for repair and rehabilitation.		
Establish a local housing rehabilitation program and seek state and federal funds to support its activities.	BSEDA	Short-term
Apply for Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant funds that can be used to develop a housing assistance program.	BSEDA	Short-term
Seek funding from the Montana Entity of Commerce Home Program non-competitive homeowner rehabilitation funds.	BSEDA	Short-term

Objective: Make targeted public investments in neighborhoods to stimulate private investment.

Seek Montana Department of Commerce Community Block Grant Program funds for public facility projects in neighborhoods.	City Council	Short-term
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Objective: Establish minimum standards for temporary workforce housing.

Establish zoning and subdivision standards for the appropriate location, size, design standards, reclamation procedures and infrastructure for temporary worker housing.	Planning Board County Commission City Council	Immediate
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TRANSPORTATION

TABLE 3, TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

Objective: Improve traffic safety and maintain existing streets and roads.

Formalize an adequately funded street and road maintenance program that is responsive to citizen complaints and uses criteria to prioritize street maintenance projects.	City Council County Commission	Long-term
Establish, implement and enforce load limits on streets to reduce damage to streets, truck traffic congestion and noise and visual impacts of heavy truck traffic.	Planning Board City Council	Short-term
Establish access management regulations in the City of Laurel zoning ordinance and the subdivision regulations.	Planning Board Zoning Commission City Council	Mid-term

Objective: Plan for new streets and roads in future growth areas by preserving right-of-way for street and road extensions.

Implement a Future Roadway Functional Classification map to coordinate alignment of extended or new streets and in growth areas to maximize connectivity of the street network.	Planning Board City Council	Immediate
Prepare specifications for new roads based on the projected overall traffic volume and truck traffic volume, including the expected weight of loads.	City Council County Commission	Mid-term
Establish street connectivity standards in the City of Laurel zoning ordinance.	Planning Board Zoning Commission City Council	Short-term

INFRASTRUCTURE

TABLE 4, INFRASTRUCTURE OBJECTIVES

Objective: Maximize the functional life of existing water, sewer, storm water and solid waste facilities.		
Establish and/or maintain an inspection and maintenance program for sewer, water and drainage facilities	City Council	Short-term
Objective: Coordinate infrastructure planning with future land use policy and future growth areas.		
Coordinate future infrastructure investment with future land use designations.	City Council Planning Board	Short-term
Develop a financially feasible five-year capital improvement plan (CIP) for infrastructure improvements in designated growth areas.	City Council	Mid-term
Create compatible development standards for streets, roads, water, and sewer in the county that can be annexed into the City.	Planning Board City Council County Commission	Mid - term
Objective: Establish policies that clearly define financial responsibilities for infrastructure improvements associated with existing and new development.		
Refine policy and regulation on infrastructure cost sharing associated with development by providing preferential terms for development that clearly promote multiple Growth Policy goals and objectives.	Planning Board City Council	Short-term
Monitor funding programs and apply for infrastructure project grant funds. (Details on several grant programs that support community infrastructure projects are provided below).	City Council	Immediate

Infrastructure Funding Opportunities:

Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program

The Montana Legislature established the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Loan Program for Drinking Water projects. The program provides at or below market interest rate loans to eligible Montana entities. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is the administering agency and assures the technical, financial and programmatic requirements of the program are met.

Eligible water projects include acquisition of land that is integral to the project, consolidating water supplies, engineering, new sources, treatment, source water protection, storage and distribution.

Eligible applicants are municipalities, public or private community water systems and non-profit, non-community water systems. The current interest rate for loans is 3.75 percent with payment schedules not to exceed 20 years. Drinking Water Projects qualifying as disadvantaged may extend the term up to 30 years.

Applications are accepted year-round. Preliminary engineering analysis must be reviewed prior to submittal of application.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund Loan Program

The Montana Legislature established the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF) Loan Program for water pollution control projects. The program provides at or below market interest rate loans to eligible Montana entities. Cooperatively, DEQ and DNRC administer the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund Loan Program.

Eligible water quality projects include wastewater treatment plant improvements, interceptors, collectors and lift stations, lagoon construction and rehabilitation, engineering and project inspection, and land used for disposal purposes. All projects must be included in a project priority list and intended use plan for the fiscal year in which funding is anticipated, and the ability to repay loan funding must be demonstrated.

Eligible applicants are municipalities for wastewater projects as well as municipalities and private entities for nonpoint source projects. The current interest rate for loans is 3.75 percent with payment schedules not to exceed 20 years. Water Pollution Control projects qualifying as disadvantaged may extend the payment term up to 30 years.

Applications are accepted year-round. Preliminary engineering analysis must be reviewed prior to submittal of application.

Montana Department of Commerce, Treasure State Endowment Program Construction Grants (TSEP)

The Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) awards matching grants to local governments for construction of local infrastructure projects. TSEP construction grants provide help in financing infrastructure projects throughout Montana.

Eligible applicants include incorporated cities and towns, counties, consolidated governments, Tribal governments and county or multi-county water, sewer or solid waste districts.

A dollar-for-dollar match is required, but in cases of extreme financial hardship where the public's health and safety are seriously affected, grants up to 75 percent of the project costs may be awarded. Matching funds can be public or private funds. Construction grant applications are limited to a maximum of \$750,000. Applications are typically due the first week of May on even numbered years.

US Department of Agriculture, Water and Environmental Loan and Grant Program (WEP)

Water and Environmental Programs (WEP) loans and grants provide funding for drinking water, sanitary sewer, solid waste and storm drainage facility projects in rural areas and cities and towns of 10,000 or less. WEP also makes grants to nonprofit organizations to provide technical assistance and training to assist rural communities with their water, wastewater and solid waste problems. Eligible projects include construction, repair and expansion of water, wastewater, storm water and solid waste systems.

Public bodies, non-profit organizations and recognized Indian Tribes are all eligible applicants for the program. This funding opportunity is capped at 75 percent of total project costs. Applications are accepted on a continual basis.

Economic Development Administration, Public Works Grant Program

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides public works investments to support construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities to help communities and regions leverage their resources and strengths to create new and better jobs, drive innovation, become centers of competition in the global economy and ensure resilient economies. Eligible projects are those pertaining to water and wastewater systems that address national strategic priorities, assist economically distressed and underserved communities, demonstrate a good return on EDA's investment through job creation or retention, demonstrate or support regional collaboration and employ public-private partnerships to use both public and private resources and/or leverage complementary investments.

Eligible applicants include municipalities, counties and Indian Tribes. The maximum award attainable is 75 percent of project cost. Application deadlines are variable and would need to be determined at the time of application.

US Department of Interior, Water Grant Program System Optimization Review Grant

The Water Program focuses on improving water conservation, sustainability and helping water resource managers make sound decisions about water use. It identifies strategies to ensure present and future generations will have enough clean water for drinking, economic activities, recreation and ecosystem health. The program also identifies adaptive measures to address climate change and its impact on future water demands.

Eligible projects include any plan of action that focuses on improving efficiency and operations on a regional or basin perspective. Eligible applicants include the state, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, water districts or other organizations with water or power delivery authority.

A 50 percent match is required for this funding opportunity and the maximum award attainable is \$300,000.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

TABLE 5, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Objective: Develop economic strategies that create a diverse local economy with employment opportunities for all ages.

Develop a marketing brand for the City of Laurel and Yellowstone County to market to potential businesses and future residents.	<i>BSEDA</i> <i>City Council</i> County Commission	Short-term
Survey existing businesses to identify needed skill sets and to identify ways the County or City can aid in improving business operations and productivity.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Mid-term
Maintain SEMDC as the one-stop service center that distributes information about available regional, state and federal technical assistance, loans and grant programs for expanding and start-up businesses.	<i>BSEDA</i> <i>City Council</i> County Commission	Short-term
Acquire an existing commercial building or construct a new facility to serve as a business incubator.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Long-term
Refine existing economic development strategies to target under-represented industries with forecasted high demand for jobs.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Mid-term
Capitalize on energy-sector growth and expand businesses to support primary energy industries.	<i>County Commission</i> <i>City Council</i>	Mid-term
Seek state and federal funds to increase telecommunications infrastructure in the community (specifically bandwidth) to increase efficiency of businesses, enhance the technology courses offered at the city high school and attract new businesses that require high-capacity telecommunications infrastructure.	<i>BSEDA</i> <i>City Council</i>	Short-term
Continue to support start-up businesses by providing technical assistance and temporary financial assistance such as low interest guaranteed loans.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Short-term

Objective: Enhance the community's quality of life to stimulate private investment.

Develop a main street grant program to fund façade and other property improvements to enhance visual aspects of the core of Laurel	<i>BSEDA</i>	Short-term
Establish a business improvement district or special district to fund streetscape improvements in the core of Laurel.	<i>BSEDA</i> City Council	Mid-term
Continue to promote the use of the revolving loan fund that is intended to provide gap lending for business development.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Immediate
Promote more special events by civic organizations to increase business activity and enhance the community's quality of life.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Mid-term

Objective: Maximize the use of outside economic development funding opportunities.

Take maximum advantage of existing economic development technical assistance and loan and grant programs offered by USDA Rural Development, the Montana Community Development Corporation, and Southeastern Montana Development Corporation.	<i>BSEDA</i> City Council County Commission	Short-term
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Objective: Ensure existing job training services provide skills needed by existing and targeted businesses.

Modify existing job training programs to be responsive to employment trends, specifically forecasted high-demand occupations.	<i>BSEDA</i>	Long-term
Promote establishment of a college satellite facility or a trade school or nursing program in the City of Laurel. Develop/promote remote learning programs to reduce transportation costs for college students and increase the number of college- aged students who can remain in the community.	<i>City Council</i> <i>County Commission</i> <i>BSEDA</i>	Short-term
Consider expanding the number of high school courses that offer college credits and enter into Articulation Agreements with nearby colleges to receive formal acknowledgement of course credentials.	<i>School Districts</i>	Short-term

Economic Development Funding Opportunities

Community Development Block Grant Program

Each year the US Entity of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocates grant funding to the Montana Department of Commerce for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Funds are intended to benefit low or moderate-income persons, aid in prevention or elimination of slums or meet urgent community development needs. CDBG is broken into five different funding categories: Planning, Public Facilities, Housing and Neighborhood Renewal, Neighborhood Stabilization Program and Economic Development.

Eligible applicants include counties, incorporated cities and towns, and consolidated city-county governments. Deadlines are staggered throughout the year with planning grants being offered one year and construction grants the following year generally.

Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Main Street Program

The mission of the Montana Department of Commerce Main Street program is to be a coordinating resource for communities seeking to revitalize their historic downtown or core commercial districts and to provide technical assistance to communities of all sizes. The underlying premise of the Montana Main Street Program is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation.

In 2011, the project began gearing toward community development. The Montana Main Street Program was awarded a Preserve America sub grant from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 2011. The purpose of the grant was to focus on core and downtown planning and to build capacity under the Main Street program. It was this sub grant that focused the program toward community development.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

TABLE 6, PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES

Objective: Improve effectiveness and efficiency of government programs and services.

Encourage continued and expanded joint use of public facilities to provide cost effective local services.	<i>County Commission</i> <i>City Council</i> <i>CPRD Board</i> <i>School Board</i> <i>Medical Board</i>	Short-term
Coordinate County and City services and share facilities/equipment to increase efficiency of providing local services.	<i>County Commission</i> <i>City Council</i>	Short-term
Evaluate effectiveness of the existing differentiated water rates measured by per capita water consumption.	<i>City Clerk</i> <i>City Council</i>	Short-term

Objective: Provide responsive public services that improve the health, welfare and safety of City residents.

Create a brochure or marketing materials to increase the number of volunteer firefighters and ambulance service first responders and emergency medical technicians.	<i>Emergency Services Coordinator</i> Fire Department Chief Ambulance Director	Short-term
Facilitate expansion of the existing assisted living facility to address the unmet high demand for this housing option for senior citizens.	<i>City Council</i>	Mid-term
Establish a back-up Emergency Operations Center (EOC) facility that would be used during a declared emergency in the event the EOC in the courthouse is damaged or destroyed.	<i>Emergency Services Coordinator</i> County Commission	Short-term
Prepare new marketing strategies and outreach efforts to identify special need populations in the community.	<i>Emergency Services Coordinator</i>	Short-term

Objective: Enhance public involvement and timely/accurate notification of City and County projects.

Continue to encourage public participation in decisions on public projects and services.	<i>County Commission</i> <i>City Council</i>	Immediate
Utilize citizen task forces to research and evaluate the feasibility of new or expanded programs and community enhancement projects.	<i>County Commission</i> <i>City Council</i>	Short-term

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES

The city interacts with a number of agencies and organizations including but not limited to, Laurel Schools, Eastern Montana Drug Task Force (EMDTF), Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FW&P), DEQ, DNRC and Yellowstone County which shares the library, weed management, senior citizen services, public health services, probation, and county landfill in the Laurel area.

The city of Laurel has inter-local agreements with the school regarding cooperative efforts, shared use of facilities and other areas of mutual interest. The Laurel volunteer fire department has a mutual aid agreement with Yellowstone County Fire Services.

The Laurel Police Department works with the EMDTF, assists Yellowstone County on calls near Laurel and works closely with the Montana Highway Patrol.

Ongoing efforts will be maintained. These efforts include the city mayor or administrative staff meeting with the Yellowstone County Commissioners, and school administrator at least once a year to discuss ongoing cooperative efforts and coordination. The Yellowstone County Commissioners appoint four members to serve on the City-County Planning Board which has jurisdiction of matters related to growth adjacent to the city of

Laurel, yet outside the limits of the incorporated boundaries of the city. A copy of the Laurel Comprehensive Growth Plan will be submitted to the County Commissioners for review and comment prior to the adoption by the City Council.

TABLE 7, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION OBJECTIVES

Objective: Establish an annexation policy encouraging coordination with the County.		
Develop a coordinated city-county policy about annexation of developed properties addressing the transition from rural to urban services and fiscal impacts associated with the annexation.	Planning Board City Council County Commission	Short-term
Establish extraterritorial zoning one mile beyond Laurel city limits. To implement this policy the City of Laurel would need to adopt its own city subdivision regulations.	Planning Board City Council	Short-term
Objective: Develop a TIF district to create economic incentives and spur growth in Laurel's core		
Create TIF district with reasonable boundaries.	City Council BSEDA	Short-term
Complete Determination of Blight study for selected district.	City Council Planning Board BSEDA	Short-term
Work with other cities to establish who will be responsible for managing various aspects of the TIF district.	BSEDA City Council Planning Board	Short-term
Create an Urban Renewal Plan in accordance with MCA conditions addressing blight.	Planning Board	Mid-term
Hold public hearings, adopt the plan and receive certification by the Montana Department of Revenue.	City Council Montana Dept of Revenue	Mid-term
Determine taxable value of the district and calculate tax increment. Develop financing strategy for tax increment funds.	City Council BSEDA	Mid-term
Utilize tax increment funds to implement improvements in district.	City Council Planning Board BSEDA	Long-term
Objective: Maintain acceptable levels of service in developed areas as the City of Laurel and grow.		
Establish policies that set minimum levels of service for essential services such as schools, fire, police, water and sewer.	City Council School Districts	Mid-term

Objective: Support development of agriculture in the community.

Support specialized agricultural businesses that produce high-value, high-demand products.	<i>MSU Extension</i>	Mid-term
Encourage continued and expanded use of state and federal land for agricultural purposes.	<i>County Commission</i>	Immediate
Promote community gardening programs in the city and the county to encourage residents to plant more local produce and create/expand farmer markets in Laurel	<i>MSU Extension</i>	Short-term