



Envision Gallatin

WHAT IS THE GROWTH POLICY?

The Gallatin County Growth Policy acts as a compass that guides the County's land use decisions. Montana state law declares that the County must consider the Growth Policy in decisions regarding development patterns, public structures or utilities, water and sewer facilities, and during the adoption or amendment of any zoning regulations. The Growth Policy contains background information on the County and establishes policies, written as general land use goals, organized by three themes: **Heritage**, **Open Space**, and **Opportunity**. It also includes a Future Land Use Map or FLUM which depicts the goals and policies of the Growth Policy in the form of a map with corresponding density and land use recommendations. Importantly, state law prohibits the Growth Policy being used as a regulatory document meaning that development proposals cannot be denied based solely on compliance with the Growth Policy.

✓ THE GROWTH POLICY IS:

A **guide for land use decisions**

A **tool** illustrating the community's **vision for growth**

Meant to establish **goals, intent, and general guidance**

Developed with extensive **public input** and **collaboration**

✗ THE GROWTH POLICY IS NOT:

A **regulatory document**

Zoning (although it informs zoning)

Specific, detailed standards

Used or developed **"behind the scenes"**

Where Does it Apply?

While the document is called the "County" Growth Policy, it is not applicable to the entirety of Gallatin County. Incorporated cities and towns like Bozeman, Belgrade, Manhattan, Three Forks, and West Yellowstone each have their own land use planning documents and goals when it comes to growth and land use. In addition to general land use guidance, the County Growth Policy informs the development of neighborhood plans as well as zoning and subdivision regulations.

The Growth Policy has varying degrees of influence in different parts of the County:

Area of the County:

Growth Policy Influence:

Unzoned land without a neighborhood plan

Highest

Unzoned land with a neighborhood plan

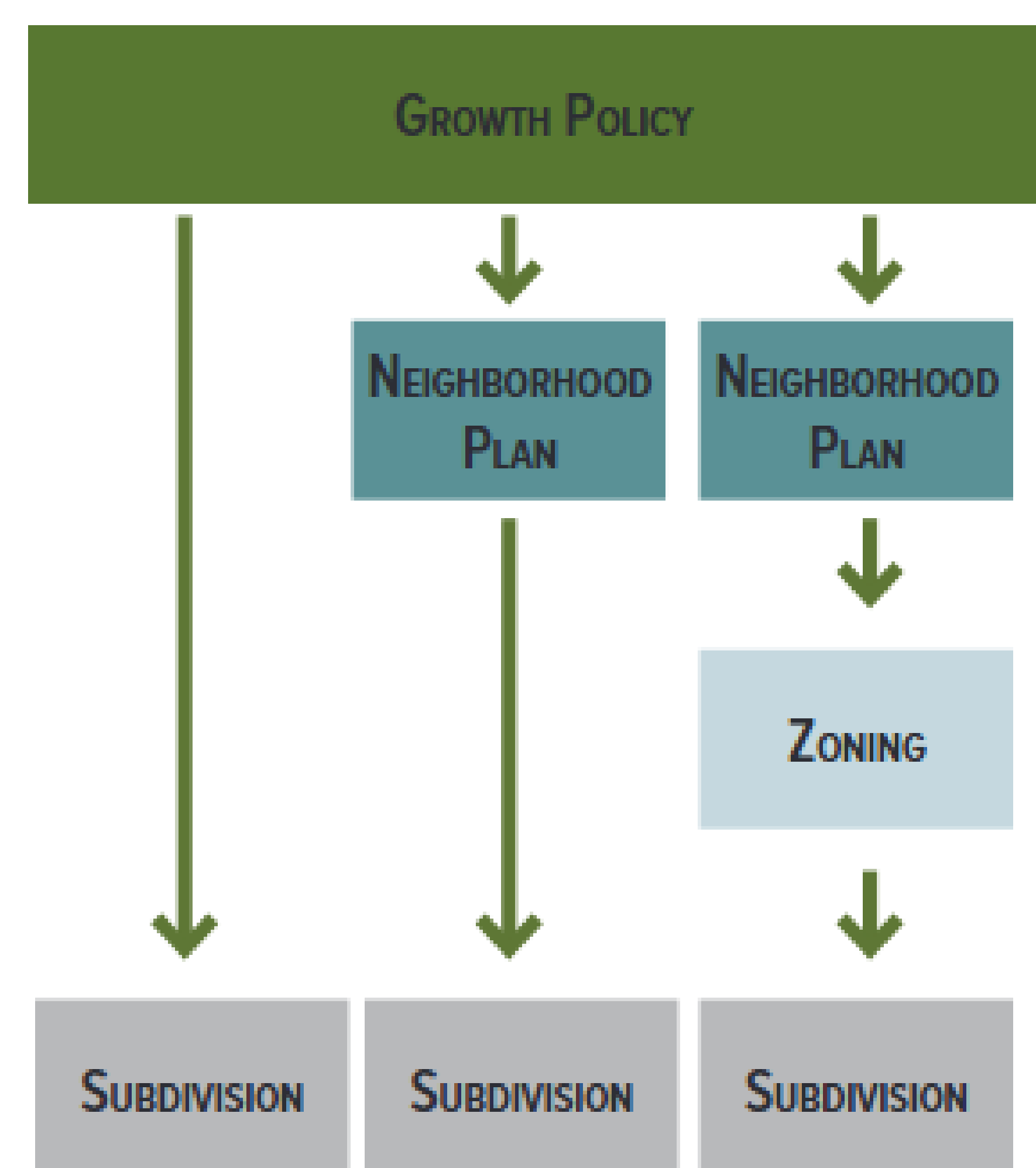
Higher

Zoned land under "part 2" zoning laws

Medium

Zoned land under "part 1" zoning laws

Medium



What are the Main Points?

While the Growth Policy is a large document with a lot of goals and information, there are several consistent themes that appear throughout. These are among the community's top priorities when it comes to growth, development, and the future of Gallatin County:

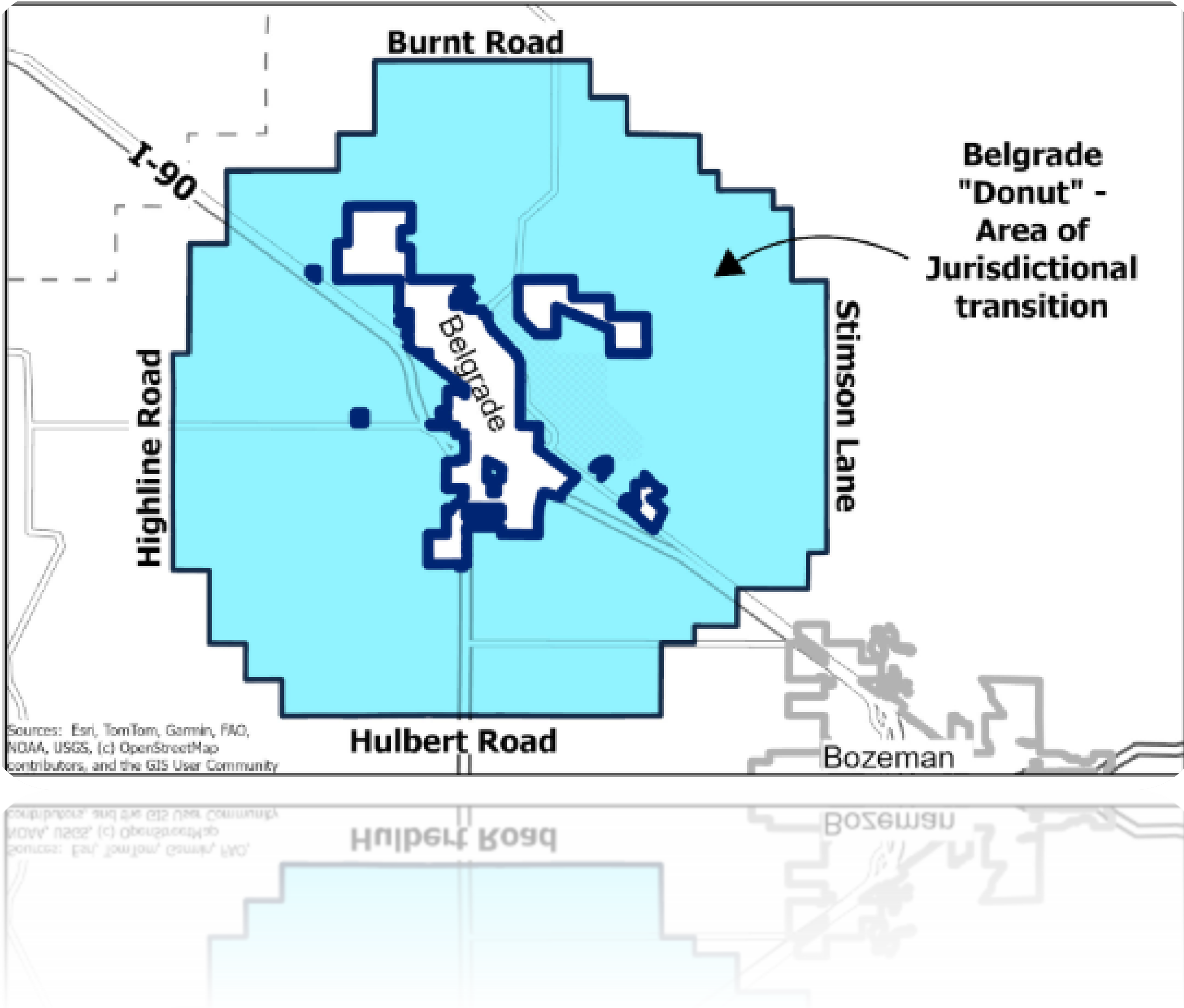
- Development should be **connected to existing infrastructure**, water and sewer districts
- Development should be proximal to existing communities and services to **reduce commute times and traffic**
- Impacts on **water use and water quality** should be minimized
- The right to **farm and ranch** should be protected and agricultural heritage preserved
- **Wildlife** habitat and corridors should be preserved for intrinsic value and public enjoyment
- **Open space, trails, and recreational** opportunities are highly desired
- The County should allow for a variety of **housing options** and **affordability** should be prioritized

WHY DOES THE GROWTH POLICY NEED TO BE UPDATED?

Belgrade ETJ Transition

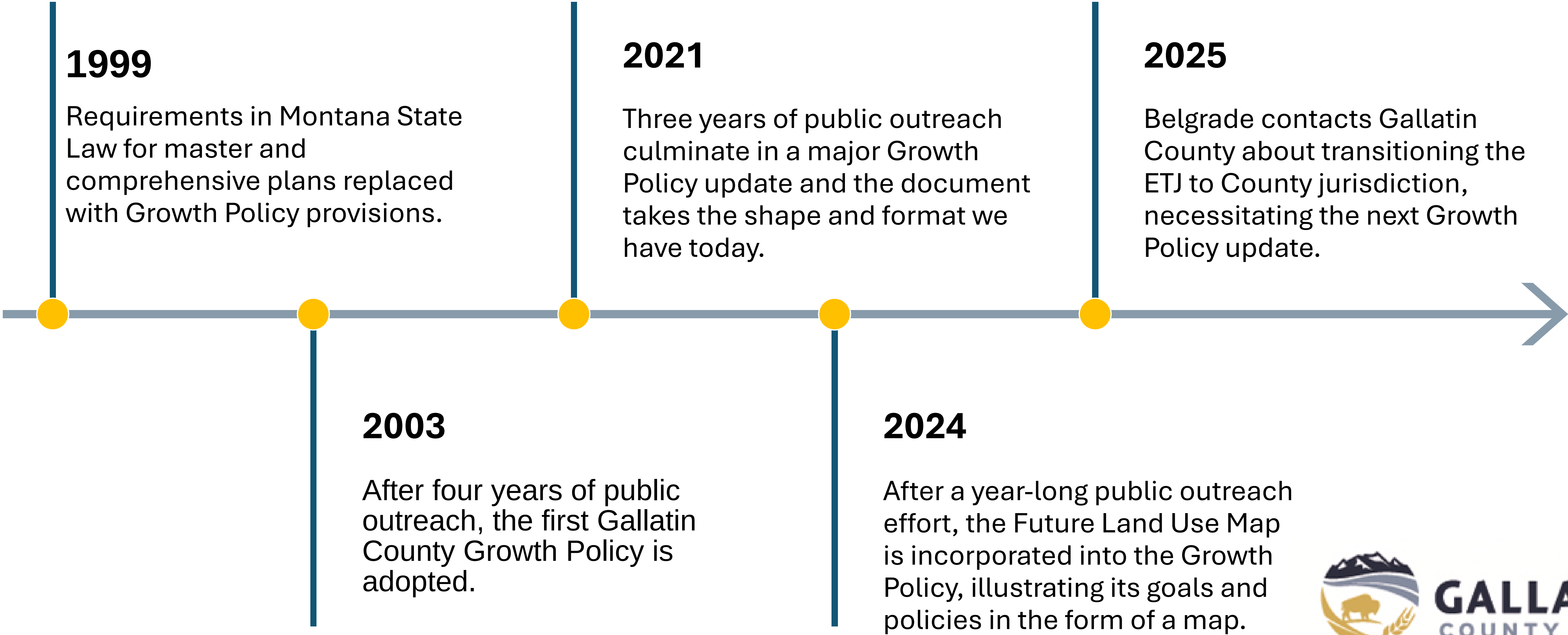
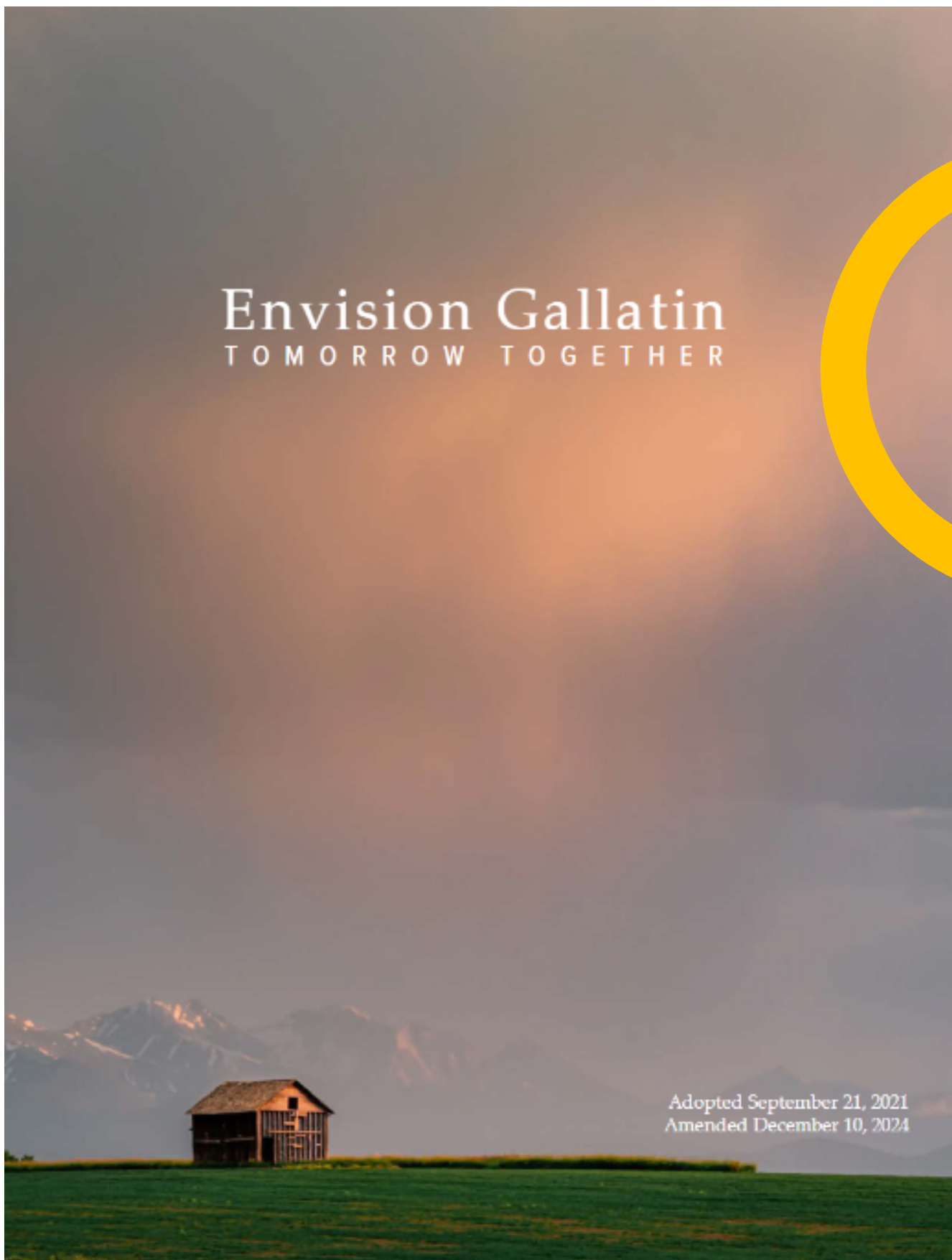
Effective July 1st, 2026, the City of Belgrade transitioned planning and development review responsibilities in the 4.5 mile “donut” surrounding their city limits to Gallatin County. This area, called the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction or ETJ, had been under shared City-County jurisdiction since 1975. Belgrade initiated the request primarily to focus capacity on meeting the requirements of the Montana Land Use Planning Act. Now, the Gallatin County Growth Policy must be updated to include the former ETJ and ensure a consistent approach to planning across unincorporated Gallatin County.

While the County is now responsible for development review and land use planning within the former ETJ, the City of Belgrade is still doing important planning work in this area. For example, as part of their recently adopted land use plan, Belgrade depicts how property will be zoned once annexed (brought into) the City. Once the Growth Policy update is complete, it will only apply until land in the former ETJ is annexed into the City of Belgrade. Due to limited infrastructure and services in the County, the Growth Policy recommends lower densities and less intense development than would be allowed in the City of Belgrade. Once annexed, development can be connected to important City services like water and sewer.



State Law Review Mandates

Montana state law requires County Growth policies to be reviewed to determine if updates are needed at minimum of every 5 years. The last comprehensive Growth Policy update was in 2021, so the Belgrade ETJ updates and the 5-year review updates are happening concurrently. As shown in the timeline below, the Growth Policy has been amended recently with robust community input, meaning that the scope of this update is limited to changes necessary to incorporate the former Belgrade ETJ, remove outdated information, update data, clarify some passages, and correct typos.

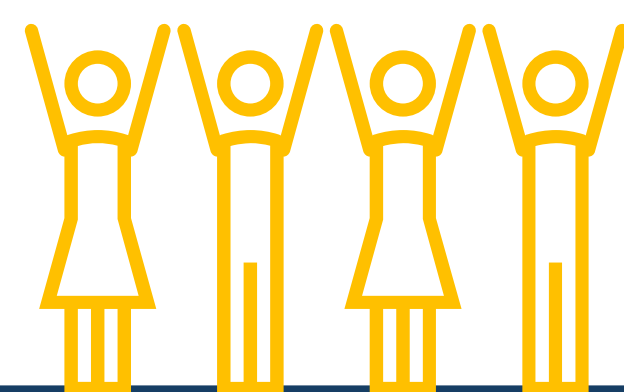


SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GROWTH POLICY

Future Land Use Map



- Former Belgrade ETJ area included in suitability analysis and assigned Future Land Use Map categories
- Airport Influence Area depicted
- Inclusion of new or updated data that impacts annexation holding areas and public infrastructure holding area boundaries:
 - Canyon Water and Sewer boundary (updated)
 - Bozeman's Wastewater Facilities planning area (updated)
 - Belgrade's water and sewer infrastructure planning area from the Utilities Master Plan (added)
- Canyon Water and Sewer District boundary re-classified as planning area to reflect status as not yet operational and providing sewer but not water services
- Updated parklands, open space, conservation easements
- Updated fire data
- Updated public lands data



Local Planning Efforts

- **Metropolitan Planning Organization** described as an incorporated transportation planning entity instead of a theoretical possibility
- **Urban Transportation District** operating Streamline and coordinating transit services after voter approval in 2023
- **Model Zoning Code for Affordable Housing** recognized as a County reference document providing guidance for housing affordability in zoning regulations
- Health and safety, housing goals tied to Gallatin City-County Community **Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Plan**
- **Safe Streets for All Action Plan** recognized as a County document with traffic safety analysis and recommendations

The Scope of the 2026 Growth Policy Update is Limited to:



Changes necessary to show that the Belgrade ETJ is now in the County's jurisdiction



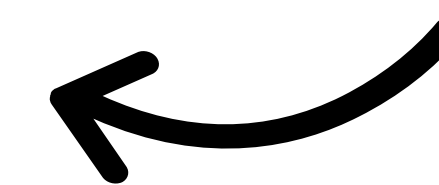
Clarification of ambiguous passages and correction of typos



Updating of outdated information



Scan the QR code to **visit the project webpage & learn more** about the update!



General



- County land area descriptions and maps updated to include the area formerly within the Belgrade ETJ
- Targeted updates made to reflect changes in state law, for example, the new requirement that certain first minor subdivisions be reviewed administratively
- Some policies edited to apply recommendations broadly rather than focus on specific kinds of zoning districts
- Certain passages edited to be more specific and give clearer recommendations
- Typos corrected and formatting issues resolved



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FUTURE LAND USE MAP 2024

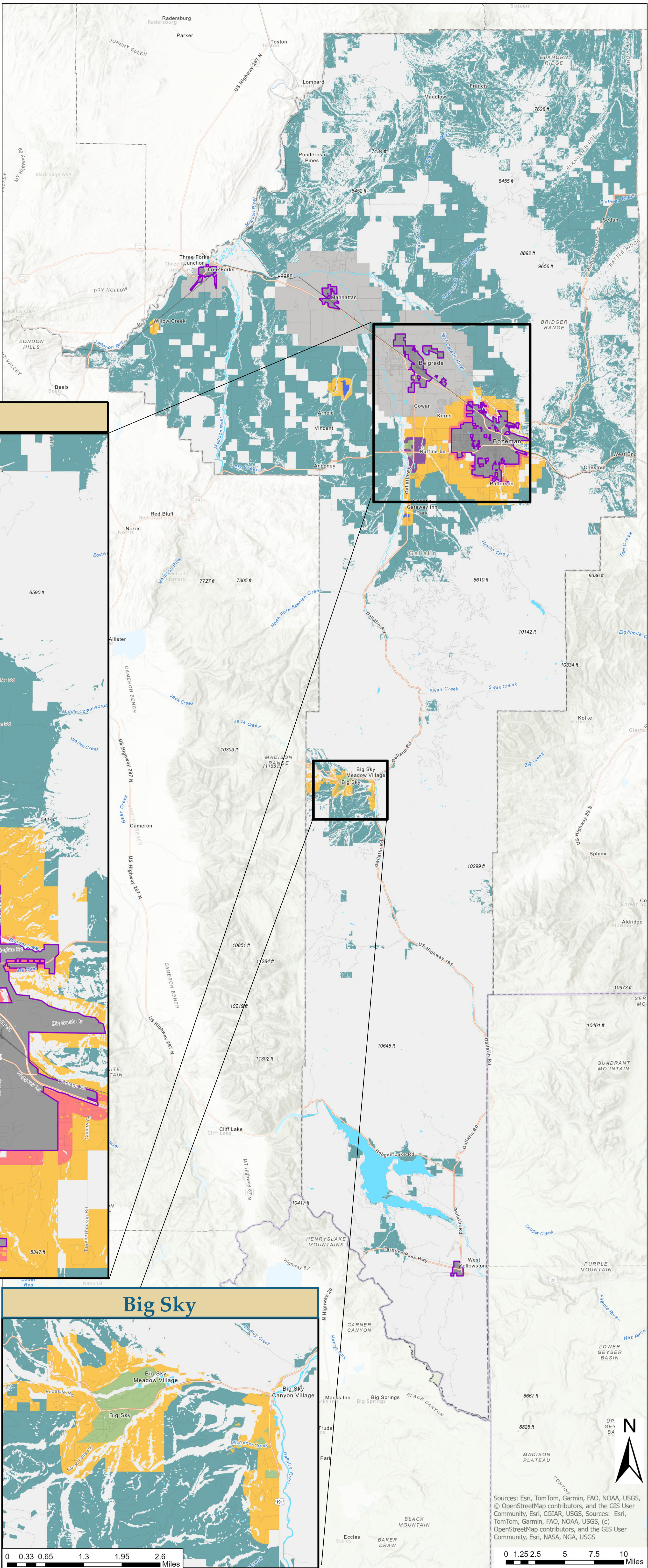
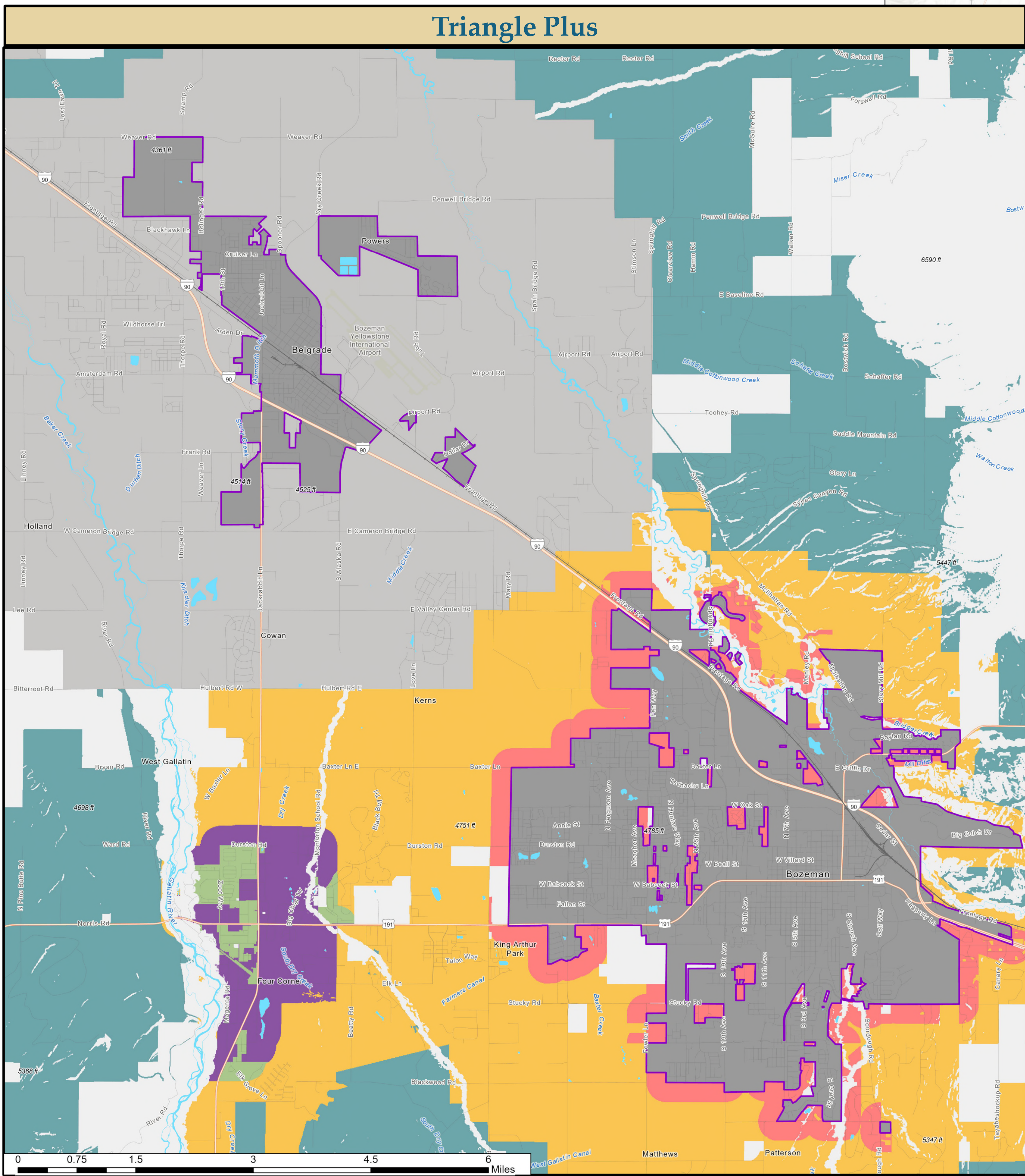
What is the Future Land Use Map (FLUM)?

The FLUM is a spatial illustration of the goals articulated in the Growth Policy. The map depicts future land use categories that show areas of the County that are less and more suitable for different intensities of development. The FLUM also includes special topics that correspond to each future land use category and overlays.

Take a closer look at this story map, which shows process used to create the 2024 FLUM, including an overview of the special topics and overlays.



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Legend

- Urban Growth Areas
- Rural Growth Areas
- Annexation Holding Areas
- Public Infrastructure Holding Areas
- Managed Growth Areas
- Open and Working lands
- Public Lands, Protected, and Constrained Areas
- Municipalities
- Municipal Planning Areas
- Railroad
- Highways
- Streets
- Water
- City Boundaries
- Gallatin County



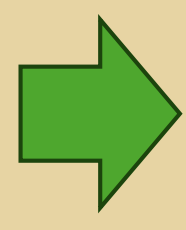
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FUTURE LAND USE MAP 2026

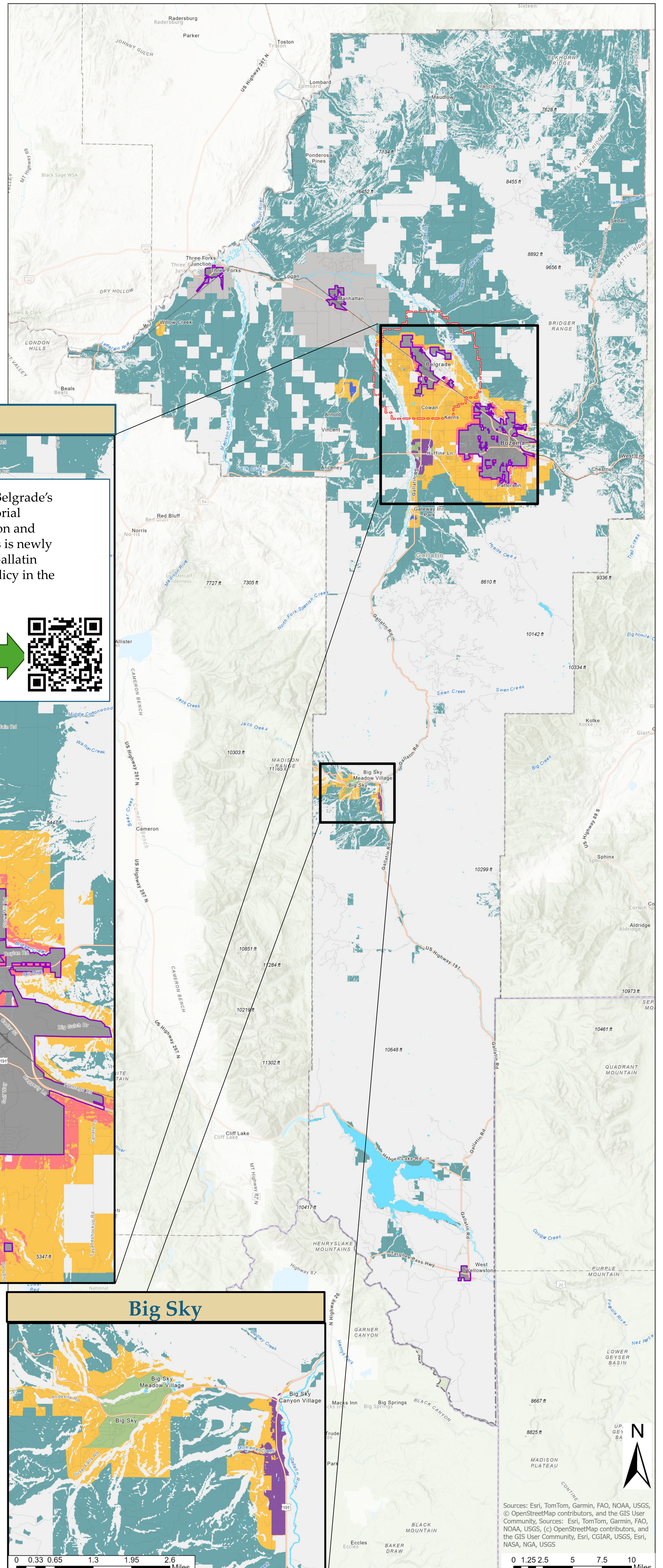
How was the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) updated for 2026?

The FLUM was updated using the same process followed in the 2024 Amendment to the Growth Policy. Updated data for water and sewer providers, municipal boundaries and planning jurisdictions, public lands, conservation easements, and fire data were used.

Take a closer look at the differences between the 2024 and draft 2026 FLUM.



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- Municipalities
- Municipal Planning Areas
- Railroad
- Highways
- Streets
- Water
- City Boundaries
- Gallatin County
- City of Belgrade's former extra-territorial planning jurisdiction



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FUTURE LAND USE MAP

URBAN GROWTH AREAS



RURAL GROWTH AREAS



ANNEXATION HOLDING AREAS



PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE HOLDING AREAS



PURPOSE

- | | | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the densest development occurs in areas most suitable for development.• Promote efficient delivery of infrastructure and services; provide diverse, accessible, and affordable housing in proximity to amenities and employers.• Support future expansion of transit and other transportation options to create connected communities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct growth to the most suitable areas of existing rural community centers where public water or sewer service is available.• Promote the efficient delivery of infrastructure and services.• Minimize further fragmentation of agricultural lands. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that the limited land resources in the County are utilized efficiently.• Discourage dense development in areas likely to be served by municipal water and sewer in the near-term to reduce sprawl on limited services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incentivize connection to public water and sewer services in areas with the highest potential to be served by a water and sewer district in the near-term.• Avoid the proliferation of development on individual well and septic systems. |
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TYPICAL USES

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| May include a range of housing options from high-density housing (e.g., four-plexes and greater, apartments, condominiums, townhomes) to accessory dwelling units, mixed-use developments, retail and commercial, dining, personal services, employment centers, parks, urban agriculture, schools, recreational facilities, and other complementary uses. | May include a range of housing options, from single unit residential on small lots and accessory dwelling units to duplexes or four-plexes, mixed use areas, community-oriented retail, commercial, and service uses, agriculture of various scales including urban agriculture and agriculture-related commercial services, parks, schools, recreational facilities, and other complementary uses. | Recommended typical uses are limited, but may include low-density housing (e.g., single-family detached dwellings), accessory dwelling units, home occupations, agriculture, and other complementary agricultural uses. | Should be limited to things like low-density housing (e.g., single-family detached), accessory dwelling units, home occupations, agriculture, and other complementary agricultural uses, unless connected to the water and sewer district or public/community water and sewer systems. |
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BASE DENSITY AND LOT SIZES

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| Minimum lot sizes and maximum densities will be determined by the capacity of public and private utilities and services. | Residential lot sizes and density may vary by location and are limited based on infrastructure capacity. Recommended lot sizes are typically small ranging from 2500 - 15000 sq ft or as limited by infrastructure or other constraints. | Base density capped at one dwelling unit per 20 acres but may be lower density in some areas to limit further development under County jurisdiction. Lot sizes may vary to preserve larger tracts as long as density cap is met. | Density and lot sizes should remain at existing parcel configurations unless connected to a water and sewer district or public/community water and sewer systems. |
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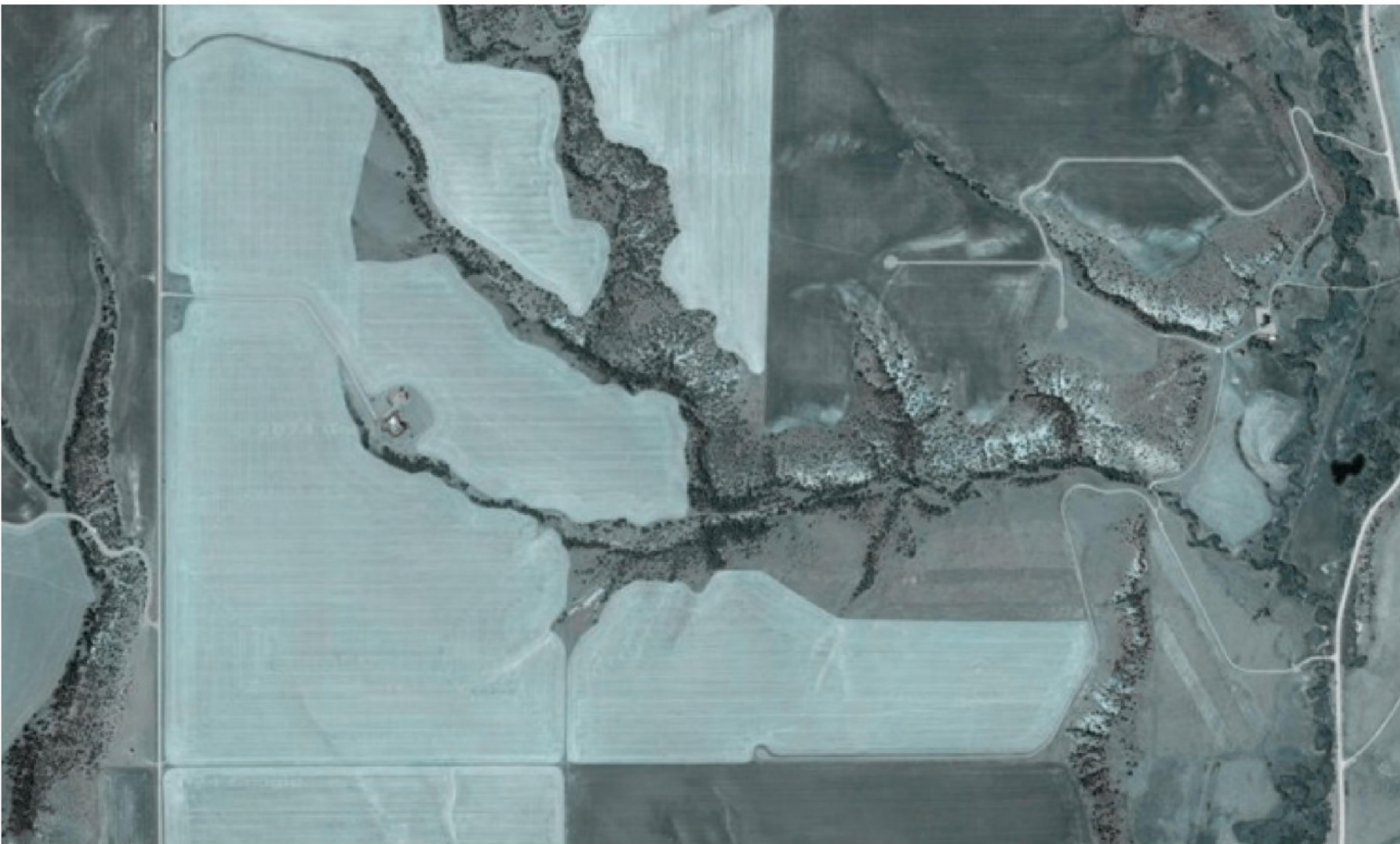
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FUTURE LAND USE MAP

MANAGED GROWTH AREAS



OPEN AND WORKING LANDS



PUBLIC, PROTECTED, & CONSTRAINED LANDS



PURPOSE

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow for carefully planned growth in areas with some constraints (e.g., some fire risk, wildlife value, or lack of services), but that are still suitable for moderate intensities of development.• Ensure that growth respects infrastructure capacity limitations and that opportunities to permanently reserve land for public benefit are provided. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit the intensity of future development in areas with physical constraints.• Support contiguous areas of working, agricultural, and environmentally sensitive lands.• Allow flexibility for a range of appropriate and supporting uses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge limitations on development in areas that are managed by state and federal agencies, including sensitive environmental areas (e.g., steep slopes, water courses, floodplain, or channel migration zones), and areas subject to conservation easements. |
|---|---|---|

TYPICAL USES

Typical uses will vary based on standard versus cluster and planned unit development and may include (but are not limited to) single family residential, accessory dwelling units, agriculture and agriculture-related uses, outdoor recreational uses, and other uses associated with the suite of public benefit options for cluster and planned unit development.	Typical uses will vary widely across the county and may include (but are not limited to), agriculture and it's complementary uses and structures (e.g. distribution and processing centers, feed and equipment suppliers, etc.), industrial uses, natural resource extraction (with appropriate buffers and mitigation from adjacent uses), energy production, limited single family detached units, accessory dwelling units, employee housing, and recreational uses.	Future uses within conservation easements are determined by existing land use agreements, and future uses on public lands are determined by the appropriate managing agency (e.g., National Park Service, US Forest Service, State of Montana, U.S. Bureau of Land Management). For the limited areas where the County has jurisdiction and the ability to influence future land uses (e.g., within watercourse buffers and areas of steep slopes) typical uses should be limited to agricultural uses (grazing, irrigation infrastructure), and potentially limited trails.
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BASE DENSITY AND LOT SIZES

Base density is limited to one dwelling unit per 40 acres or lower as determined by localized constraints (e.g. water/septic risk, wildfire risk, steep slopes, wildlife value) or as needed to further incentivize use of public/community well and septic systems and cluster or planned unit development. Lot sizes may vary as needed to preserve larger tracts while meeting the density cap.	Base density is limited due to lack of infrastructure, distance to services and amenities, and a variety of hazards. Density ranges from one unit per 160 acres to one unit per 40 acres.	Not applicable.
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SHARE YOUR IDEAS!



1. Are there any other clarifications or updates needed in the Growth Policy to reflect the ETJ transition?

2. What should the County keep in mind during the Belgrade ETJ transition?

3. Any other thoughts you'd like to share?



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