

City of Billings
and Yellowstone County, Montana

West Billings Plan

Summer 2001

*Create an achievable plan to
meet the community's shared
vision for the future of West*

*Billings, enabling it to thrive
on growth and change
through innovative,
aesthetic land use
and responsible
development.*

A supplement to the Yellowstone County Comprehensive Plan

JGA ARCHITECTS • ENGINEERS • PLANNERS



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The West Billings Plan is a product of teamwork reflecting the insights and contributions from a wide spectrum of the Billings community and the neighboring areas to provide clear direction and guidance in making informed and correct decisions for the future development of West Billings.

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West Billings Plan

Introduction

The Purpose Of The West Billings Plan

Life in West Billings is good. This is a good place to raise a family and to conduct business. We have an excellent quality of life with cultural and educational opportunities and extensive health care resources. We enjoy the many benefits of our role as a regional trade center. Billings's residents have abundant and world-renowned recreational and scenic resources with the Yellowstone River and nearby Yellowstone National Park. Billings provides the community with qualities people seek.

Communities offering a desirable quality of life attract more people. Unplanned development has eroded the character and livability of some towns throughout the west. Billings would be no exception. The Yellowstone County Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1990. However, as growth and development have occurred throughout the Billings area, it has become very clear that more specific direction and guidance is needed to allow more informed decisions to address the growth pressures facing West Billings.

An objective from the very beginning of the planning process was that this plan must provide "real solutions to real issues." Many of the issues included in this plan have been problems growing in magnitude and complexity for many years. Difficult and complex problems often require bold actions to fully resolve them. This plan, in some areas, breaks new ground for the Billings community, taking the bold steps necessary to achieve the desired vision for West Billings.

This plan reflects the community's desired direction for the future of West Billings. The effectiveness of the plan will depend largely on the commitment of local elected officials, county planning staff, and members of the planning board.



Mission, West Billings Plan

"CREATE AN ACHIEVABLE PLAN TO MEET THE COMMUNITY'S SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WEST BILLINGS, ENABLING IT TO THRIVE ON GROWTH AND CHANGE THROUGH INNOVATIVE, AESTHETIC LAND USE, AND RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT."



The Yellowstone River, though bordering the plan area, can play a pivotal role in how the area develops, thanks to its natural beauty and the strong feelings of residents about how it should be treated in development.

The general public also has a responsibility to ensure that those officials make decisions that correspond to the goals and policies of this plan.

Planning Area

The study area for the West Billings Plan includes the area from the Yellowstone River north to the Rimrocks and from the Billings City Limits, as they existed on January 1, 1999, west to 72nd Street West, excluding the 1999 Laurel Planning Jurisdiction. The planning area is illustrated on Map 9 in the Appendix.

West Billings Facts

Comprised of 22,860 acres or over 35 square miles.

2,650 separate parcels.

Growing at a rate double that of the City of Billings.

Population has more than doubled since the 1970's.

There are nearly 11,000 people living in West Billings in over (3,000 dwelling units), most on well and/or septic systems.

Background

History tells us that our current run of community and national prosperi-

Authority

This document is a supplement to the 1990 Yellowstone County Comprehensive Plan. It is authorized by Title 76 (Land Resources and Use), Chapter 1 (Planning Boards), Part 6 (Growth Policy), and also by Chapter 2 (Planning and Zoning), Section 76-2-104 (Development Pattern) and other sections of Montana's Annexation and Planning Statutes, 13th Edition. The West Billings Plan is adopted under the provisions of 76-1-601 (3) (a) of Montana's Annexation and Planning Statutes.

In October of 1998, the Billings City Council and the Yellowstone County Commission authorized JGA Architects-Engineers-Planners to prepare the West Billings Master Plan, a Neighborhood Plan, hereafter referred to as the West Billings Plan. The purpose of this neighborhood plan is to help area citizens define what their vision of West Billings really is and to devise workable solutions to identified issues. This plan provides policy guidance for public investment and land use decisions that will define the pattern and quality of future development.

ty and accompanying healthy market for new homes contributes to much of the sprawling growth nationally, in our region, and particularly in the West Billings area. Throughout the 20th century, both locally and nationally, healthy economies and the resulting upsurge in land development have hastened calls to control growth. Other factors contributing to the recognition of a need for planning and growth management in the West Billings area are:

Recognition that Billings must grow as an urban community rather than as a low-density rural area;

Realization that ground water is declining in both quantity and quality with emerging concerns of health hazards;

Realization that there is a real need to resolve the growing conflict between the local gravel extraction industry and residential development;

Realization that the issue of agricultural land preservation in West Billings must be resolved;

Apprehension of the nature of unplanned development along and west of Shiloh Road that will be an outgrowth of construction of the Shiloh Road - Interstate 90 interchange and upcoming road improvements;

An awareness that Billings must address growing concerns of community character and quality of development, and

The realization that there are significant public safety issues that should be addressed regarding potential flooding in the West Billings area.

Growth is recognized to be desirable and necessary for a healthy community economy, but it must occur with careful planning and direction. The National Association of Home Builders conducted a survey in early 1999. Two thousand randomly selected households nationwide and 3,000 households in 10 metropolitan areas were surveyed. The results showed that "Americans associate growth with economic opportunities and strongly believe that government should plan and manage growth rather than restrict or stop it." The survey further indicated that "growth is viewed as favorable and, judging by the overwhelming desire (70% of respondents) for a single-family detached home in the suburbs, is consumer driven in many respects." The survey concluded that the citizens' main concern is planning for growth. The message for government at all

Plan Objectives:

UPON A STRONG FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND EXTENSIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, THE WEST BILLINGS PLAN IS INTENDED TO GIVE CLEAR DIRECTION TO ELECTED OFFICIALS, PLANNING BOARDS, COUNTY PLANNING STAFF, DEVELOPERS, AND AREA RESIDENTS AS TO:

- *PUBLIC SAFETY;*
- *FUTURE LAND USE;*
- *WHERE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE LOCATED;*
- *HOW GROWTH SHOULD OCCUR;*
- *GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS; AND*
- *CLEARLY DELINEATE EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF DEVELOPMENT.*

Survey: Growth Viewed as Favorable

In a survey of local residents and landowners conducted by the Yellowstone County Board of Planning in the fall of 1996, 300 participants voiced the following about West Billings.

81% think that ground water quality is a major issue.

76% feel an effort should be made to preserve or perhaps conserve agricultural land.

59% want storm water runoff to be directed through a linear open space network.

60% want public water and sewer extended into the West Billings area.

54% are willing to fund a park improvement district.

88% think standards should be established for building design, landscaping, and signage in West Billings.

levels is simple but powerful: allow growth to occur by managing and planning for it in our communities.

Administrative Procedures

The West Billings Plan reflects the Billings community's vision for land use and growth in 2000. This, however, is not a static, one-time effort. Over time, and with experiences gained in implementing these goals and policies, certain revisions may be appropriate and necessary. Revisions of the plan should always include public input and opportunities for further review.

The Yellowstone County Board of Planning should review the progress made on implementation of this plan every year. It is suggested that the last regularly scheduled meeting of the planning board each year should include a discussion of the effectiveness and implementation of the plan. The planning department should prepare an annual report to the planning board, City Council, and County Commission reviewing the consistency of their planning activities and success and failures in plan implementation. This annual review is intended to be a method of measuring and documenting the utilization and effectiveness of the plan.

At least every five years the planning board should perform a comprehensive review and evaluation of the West Billings Plan and its implementation. Revisions and updating of the plan should be completed as necessary. A thorough analysis and public discussion must precede any proposed goal or policy changes.



West Billings Plan Overview

Planning Criteria

The philosophy guiding the development of the West Billings Plan followed these criteria.

- Visionary*** To inspire decisions to implement the community's shared vision for the future of West Billings enabling it to thrive on growth and change through innovative, aesthetic land use, and responsible development.
- Flexible*** To respond to changing opportunities.
- Dynamic*** To provide current and reliable information for ongoing decision-making.
- Achievable*** The plan must present straightforward and clear direction as to the desired type and character of land use in the form of illustrated goals and policies.

The plan includes general and specific recommendations that reflect the values of the community, encourages sound decision-making, and empowers people to take action. The plan also includes realistic implementation strategies that involve both private and public actions, as well as regulatory decisions.

How This Plan Was Developed

In October 1998, the Billings City Council, the Yellowstone County Commission, and the Yellowstone County Board of Planning authorized JGA Architects-Engineers-Planners of Billings to proceed with preparation of the West Billings Plan. Work began after finalization of the scope of the project at a meeting held with JGA staff and the West Billings Plan steering committee.

Subdivision development in West Billings is rapidly eliminating farming as a economically viable business enterprise.



High-Priority Issues

Participants in the Jan. 21, 1999 meeting put top priority on the following issues:

Agricultural lands preservation / conservation
Annexation impacts
Fire flows
Expansion of the planning study area
Infill development
Character of commercial development
Encouragement of non-motorized transportation
Impact fees
Importance of planning
Landowners rights
Land use impacts
Land use trends
Requirements of new development vs. the needs of new development
Open space preservation and uses through orderly development
Park needs and development
Schools
Shiloh Road development standards and character
Sprawl
Storm drainage
Development moratorium until city water and sewer are available
Establish traffic corridors and truck routes
Visual and scenic issues
Public policy and planning tools
Public service issues
Ground water issues vs. city water provision
Irrigation ditches
Expansion of zoning jurisdiction
Zoning compatibility (neighborhoods as units of development)

A structured community participation process was a significant component in the development of this neighborhood plan. This effort directly involved over 1,900 Billings area residents and consisted of nine public meetings held at Will James Middle School with attendance of between 70 and 80 participants at each meeting. Additional community input was obtained through eleven presentations of a visual preference survey, eventually involving nearly 500 residents throughout the Billings area, and numerous other public presentations and discussions involving over 550 additional residents.

These activities are described in greater detail in the following chronology.

1. JGA conducted monthly community meetings at Will James Middle School.
 - a) Meeting 1 held on December 16, 1998 with 230 in attendance, was an orientation presentation of the purpose of the project, an overview of the planning process, and discussion of the opportunities for community participation and involvement in the project.
 - b) Meeting 2 held on January 21, 1999 with 70 in attendance was a group discussion of issues and priorities. Those present broke into small discussion groups that brainstormed the issues facing West Billings. Each group reported back to the total assemblage and further discussion followed.
 - c) Meeting 3 held on February 18, 1999 with 65 in attendance was the first presentation of the Visual Preference Survey slide show. In an effort to define the expectations for community character, the slide show allowed the audience to rate their individual preference of 107 images of towns throughout the region.
 - d) Meeting 4 held on March 18, 1999 with 80 in attendance. The Billings City Engineer discussed design concepts for the first phase reconstruction of Shiloh Road and the City Parks Department discussed park needs and practical realities of developing new parks in West Billings. The City Public Utilities Department presented the situation and current policies regarding serving West Billings with water and sewer.

- e) Meeting 5 held on April 4, 1999 with 85 in attendance was a presentation by the Montana Bureau of Mines on the ground water investigation currently underway in West Billings. There also was a presentation by the State Department of Environmental Quality on the realities and issues pertaining to the impacts of gravel mining on residential and commercial development in West Billings.
 - f) Meeting 6 held on May 19, 1999 with 55 in attendance was a presentation by Montana Power Company and the Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative on the issues and costs relating to placing electric power lines underground versus above ground. The County Parks Board discussed the County's approach to acquiring new parkland and the Board's views regarding park planning and development in the county.
 - g) Meeting 7 held on September 1, 1999 with 90 in attendance was a presentation of the results and conclusions of the Visual Preference Survey, a group discussion on preliminary goal statements, and an initial consensus on the specific issues to be addressed in the plan.
 - h) Meeting 8 held on October 7, 1999 with 75 in attendance consisted of large and small group discussion on the proposed themes that are to be included in the plan (Planned Growth; Appropriate Land Utilization; Distinctive Community Character; and Open Space). There was considerable discussion of issues and aspects related to these major themes. Agreement was reached within the group to proceed with development of goals, policies, and implementation strategies.
2. To enhance the awareness of the West Billings Plan, JGA presented a series of open discussions on the West Billings planning process to the following groups:

Yellowstone Valley Environmental Roundtable

Billings West Rotary Club

Yellowstone County Democratic Breakfast Group

Billings Board of Realtors

Billings Chamber of Commerce, Managed Growth Committee

West High School Parent Advisory Committee

Medium-Priority Issues

Participants in the Jan. 21, 1999 meeting put medium priority on the following issues:

Balance development issues with economic impact

Cost/benefit analysis of new subdivisions

Encourage infill development

Adequacy of public services to serve new development

Limit access to arterial streets

Pave all new streets in planning area

Regional planning coordination (Billings, Laurel, County)

Low-Priority Issues

Participants in the Jan. 21, 1999 meeting put lowest priority on the following issues:

Irrigation ditch safety and future utilization

Traffic

*Pachyderm Club**Montana Education Association-Retired Teachers*

3. To gain clear insights and understanding of specific and complex issues, JGA also facilitated special topic meetings with the following groups:
 - a) *West Billings agricultural land owners.* 40 long-time farmers, who own a large percentage of the land within the study area, met together on March 25, 1999 to openly discuss their personal opinions and viewpoints regarding the economic and physical aspects of agriculture operations in West Billings.
 - b) *Schools and parks representatives.* Billings Public Schools, City Parks Department, County Parks Department, and JGA staff met on April 8, 1999 to brainstorm ideas as to how to achieve a coordinated approach to the acquisition of new school sites and new park sites. All agreed that it was very desirable to develop new schools adjacent to a park or open space.
4. To obtain a community-wide response to the Visual Preference Survey, JGA presented the survey to the following groups composed of more than 500 Billings residents:

*West Billings Community Planning Meeting**West Billings Rotary Club**Montana State University Billings**Mission Ridge Retirement Center**Golden K Kiwanis Club**Breakfast Exchange Club**Yellowstone County Commission, Billings City Council, and City and County Department Heads**Billings Association of Realtors**Yellowstone Community Health Plan**Yellowstone County Board of Planning**JGA Architects-Engineers-Planners*

This community participation process provided a clear picture of the principal issues, concerns, and expectations of Billings's residents for the future of the West Billings area.

Through November 1999 to December of 2000, the Yellowstone County Board of Planning reviewed and revised draft plan reports. Additionally,

a subcommittee meeting was held with representatives of the City of Billings Public Utilities Department at which time it was stated that the existing city sewer plant would likely be able to handle additional volumes generated by the extension of sewer services west to 56th Street West. Those representatives also stated that extension of municipal water services to these areas extending to 56th Street West would be possible but would eventually require additional incremental capital improvements at the city water plant as development proceeds. Extension of water and sewer mains to these areas would be accomplished by following City of Billings requirements and procedures.

On April 13, 2000 a community meeting was held at Will James Middle School to present and discuss finalized planning goals and concepts. Concluding the public input process of the West Billings Plan was a final community meeting attended by over 80 people. The theme of the meeting was “did we hear you right”. This was a presentation and discussion of the plan’s first draft. To obtain initial reactions to the draft plan, participants completed an opinion survey.

Following additional opportunities for community review and comment, the planning board approved the plan on January 9, 2001 and held a formal public hearing at Billings West High School on February 8, 2001. The Yellowstone County Commission conducted a series of joint meetings with the Billings City Council, planning board members, JGA staff, department heads, and interested community representatives. During these meetings the themes, goals, policies, and implementation strategies contained in the plan were carefully reviewed, discussed at length, and final revisions were agreed to. The Yellowstone County Commission and the Billings City Council formally adopted the West Billings Plan on May 29, 2001.

Planning Themes and Goals, A Vision for West Billings

West Billings has many attributes that make it a wonderful place to live. Its dramatic setting, a broad range of employment opportunities, and adequate housing, afford an exceptional quality of life. However, these attributes can easily be degraded if development in the future is not based on good planning for land use, infrastructure, parks, transportation, and other aspects of daily life.

In West Billings, a vision that acknowledges the realities of growth is needed to guide development by effective growth management. This process has evolved through a structured public participation process that started in December 1998 and proceeded through the fall of 1999. Following a public hearing, additional public meetings were held in the Spring of 2001 in the Yellowstone County Courthouse to discuss the plan,

page-by-page, and agree on specific wording. This vision has been defined and inspired by citizens' values as much as by data. These values are the essential and enduring beliefs the West Billings community holds for itself. It is hoped that these values inspire action. This vision presents overall themes for West Billings' development as envisioned by the community.



Residential development is rapidly increasing throughout West Billings.

Analysis of numerous public discussions, written questionnaires, and direction from the Yellowstone County Board of Planning resulted in the development of four general themes and related, but more specific goals. The Themes addressed in this plan are:

THEME 1 - PLANNED GROWTH

The goals of this theme are:

*Establish development patterns
Develop municipal water and wastewater facilities
Enhance the efficiency and quality of service from utility providers
Provide realistic and workable mechanisms to manage growth*



Theme 1: Required public water and sewer systems, limiting sprawl, coordinated city/county growth management, and limiting commercial development will achieve planned growth.

THEME 2 - APPROPRIATE LAND UTILIZATION

The goals of this theme are:

*Plan for the orderly and efficient urbanization of agricultural lands
Conserve gravel resource lands for commercial gravel extraction*



Theme 2: Large gravel mining operations are expanding in West Billings that present hazards to residential development.

THEME 3 - ACHIEVING A DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The goals of this theme are:

*Create developments in West Billings that are compatible with their surroundings
Achieve, over time, an overall sense of community continuity and compatibility
Ensure that the reconstruction of Shiloh Road and all new development neighboring Shiloh Road is designed to a special standard*



Theme 3: Shiloh Road is now connected to I-90.

THEME 4 - ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, OPEN SPACE, WATERWAYS, AND SCENIC RESOURCES

The goals of this theme are:

*Identify and protect open spaces, flood channels, waterways, and scenic resources
Develop parks in conjunction with schools
Promote long-range interdisciplinary and interagency planning to identify community parkland
New parklands should benefit both the neighborhood and the overall community park and linear open space system*



Theme 4: The Yellowstone River is a nationally recognized scenic resource in West Billings.



West Billings Plan

Goals, Policies, and Implementation Strategies to Guide West Billings' Growth

• Theme 1. Planned Growth

BACKGROUND

It is the primary objective of this plan to guide the long-term growth of West Billings by achieving planned growth. For the purposes of this plan, planned growth will mean:

Conserving land and natural resources by limiting sprawl (unplanned and unmanaged growth) through achieving more compact development.

Cooperative and coordinated City and County growth management.

Making full use of public services with more cost effective neighborhoods and infrastructure.

Reserving key land parcels for parks and open space.

Having mixed land use to allow shorter automobile trips, more walking, and less automobile reliance.

A reduction in automobile use by the location of commercial nodes, meaning less traffic and less need for more roads and wider roadways.

Streets must be safe and efficient, but also convenient and developed in a way that defines a desirable community character.

The Plan Framework

Themes, goals, and implementation strategies are intended to guide growth in West Billings. The general planning themes become real through more specific goals and implementation strategies. Goals are a clarification and expansion of the planning themes. The goals are statements used for establishing a framework and specific guidance from which policies and implementation strategies are developed. Policies will give specific guidance to the planning board, planning staff, elected officials, developers, and the Billings community as they make land utilization and public or private investment decisions. Implementation strategies are recommended methods for achieving the intent of the goals and policies. The discussion of each planning theme has five components:

1. *Theme Topic* - issues raised by the community. These themes, derived from citizen feedback and community participation in the planning process, are to be addressed by the plan.
2. *Background* - brief description of the public involvement and comments that lead to the development of the theme.
3. *Goal* - statement expressing a means of achieving the theme.
4. *Policy* - statement expressing specifically what is to be accomplished to achieve a stated goal.
5. *Implementation Strategies* - linkage from a plan to actions designed to achieve stated goals. Implementation strategies present the specific intent of this plan, and, taken together, constitute an agenda for action by the planning board, elected officials, and the citizens of Billings and Yellowstone County for the development of West Billings.



Zoo Montana is an excellent regional recreational and educational facility located near the new Shiloh/ 1-90 Interchange.

Defining a desirable community and considering open space, commercial development landscaping, signage, exterior lighting, and compatible architectural design.

Planned growth policies require homes and related commercial facilities to be built on less land in well-designed neighborhoods, with municipal water and sewer services, usable open space, efficient access, and adjacent to existing development.

In West Billings, a complex low-density pattern of residential development is occurring. With water and sanitary sewer services

available from the City of Billings upon annexation a more compact, urban-like density is achievable. Subdivisions have developed within the West Billings area with acre or multi-acre lots served by community systems or individual water wells and individual septic systems. Information from a comprehensive West Billings ground water investigation currently underway by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, indicates a “fragile subsurface water condition characterized by a diminishing supply and declining quality of ground water.”*

The phenomenon of “sprawl” has embraced the West Billings area. Areas just outside the Billings city limits are being subdivided at low, non-urban densities. Those developments within the Billings Urban Planning Jurisdiction have a potential for future annexation into the city. It is not realistic to expect, without strong guidance from this plan, that that growth will be an orderly development of urban density radiating, piece-by-piece, out from Billings. More likely to occur over time is a continuation of the current trend - the expansion of Billings into areas subdivided into acreage lots. These low densities make the provision and maintenance of public services very costly and inefficient and will result in a community form quite inconsistent with the historic density and character of the City of Billings.

It is not desirable for West Billings to develop into a low-density, rural character community. In future years, as Billings expands, land that is to be annexed must be subdivided and developed in a manner and at densities appropriate and compatible to the existing Billings urban area. In accomplishing this, the Billings community will be better prepared to economically provide public services to newly developing West Billings neighborhoods, assuring the availability of more affordable and desirable housing and more aesthetically pleasing commercial development. Far-

* Billings Area Ground Water Investigation, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, completion estimated Summer 2000.

sighted and creative new subdivision mechanisms must be devised, with close cooperation between Yellowstone County and the City of Billings, utilizing higher densities and smaller lot sizes. When these lands are eventually annexed, they will be compatible with the urban fabric of Billings and will allow an efficient provision of public services.

It is acknowledged that growth will occur and that growth is generally considered good for the community's economic health. The challenge facing the Yellowstone County Board of Planning, the Yellowstone County Commission, the Billings City Council, and residents of the West Billings area is that of achieving planned growth.

Achieving planned growth requires acknowledgement of these fundamental principles:

Growth is acknowledged as inevitable; planned growth is desired.

The provision of public water and sanitary sewer services into West Billings is considered the key factor to achieving a reasonable urban development pattern for expanding the Billings community.

Land use planning in West Billings should be coordinated with planning for area water and sewer services.

Limiting sprawl through more compact development and infill development can conserve land and natural resources.

Strip commercial development with individual street accesses should be discouraged.



Land throughout West Billings is being sold for commercial or residential development prices rather than at the traditional agricultural values.

Within the area of this plan future subdivisions that rely on individual wells and septic systems will be designed for eventual connection to public systems.

Future leapfrog development should be minimized and in-fill development should be encouraged.

More compact development patterns are desirable because they make full use of urban services, offer cost-effective infrastructure, and hold down costs to the taxpayer.

Plan for a mix of land uses that reduces automobile usage by locating stores, housing, schools, and

recreation within a very short drive (or walking distance) from each other in compact neighborhoods with pedestrian-oriented streets.

Consistent, effective, and predictable growth management mechanisms and regulations are needed that can effectively manage growth.

Planned growth can be initiated by providing strategies to achieve the goals of this plan.

PLANNED GROWTH GOAL 1 - Establish Development Patterns that Use Land More Efficiently

Policy A Promote efficient utilization of land within the West Billings planning area by promoting well designed, more pedestrian friendly, urban development patterns with a mix of uses and an efficient, creative use of land.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG 1.A.1 Provide for an adequate distribution of land use based on the needs of the marketplace to accommodate anticipated population growth in West Billings to 72nd Street by expanding the Yellowstone County zoning jurisdiction to include all of the West Billings Planning Area (refer to Map 9).

PG 1.A.2 Preserve and protect public safety, open space, scenic, and cultural resources by implementation of the following plans:

*Parks 2020 City and County
Parks Master Plan*

*The Yellowstone River
Greenway Master Plan*

*The 1995 Bicycle Plan for the
Billings Urban Transportation
Planning Area (Bike Net Plan)*

*The Report on Re-study of the
Yellowstone River and
Tributaries, Billings Montana
Flood Control Project, Western
Unit, March 1970,
Department of the Army*

*Any subsequently adopted water, sewer, and storm water master plans
encompassing lands within the West Billings planning area*



Many traditional farming operations continue to operate in West Billings attempting to co-exist with new residential neighborhoods.

PG1.A.3 Shorten automobile trips by locating non-industrial commercial development in close proximity to residential areas.

PG1.A.4 Devise and implement an expanded county zoning ordinance that includes appropriate zone classifications to implement the vision of this plan.

Policy B With the intent of preventing strip commercial development, the West Billings planning area should contain commercial nodes of varying sizes located at the intersections of arterial streets. These commercial nodes may vary in size based on special circumstances such as topography and adjacent uses. Commercial development along Shiloh Road should be developed as commercial nodes for neighborhood, community commercial, and regional commercial center uses. Commercial nodes should be comprised of, as much as possible, a diverse range of commercial, business office, and entertainment facilities. It is intended that neighborhood centers should be roughly the size of the center currently located at the northwest corner of Grand Avenue and Rehberg Lane and community centers roughly the size of West Park Plaza on Grand Avenue. Regional centers are intended to serve the entire Billings community and the region beyond. Non-retail, office and multi-family uses will be supported along arterial streets. The city and county must both be involved zoning jurisdiction in the West Billings Plan area is expanded or modified, according to the Interlocal Agreement.



The plan calls for opportunity for community discussion on power poles and for the installation of underground utilities wherever possible.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.B.1 Limit neighborhood commercial centers to compact “commercial villages” of approximately 15 to 20 acres in size. These centers are to be spaced no less than approximately one mile apart at intersections of arterial streets, unless otherwise approved by the governing bodies.

PG1.B.2 Limit community commercial centers to appropriate intersections of arterial streets and spaced no less than approximately two miles apart. Community commercial centers should be compatible with the

surrounding area and designed to serve the overall West Billings community unless otherwise approved by the governing bodies.

PG1.B.3 Limit regional commercial centers to areas having efficient and direct access to Interstate 90 or other regional corridor as designated by the adopted Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan.

PG1.B.4 Commercial nodes may be expanded from the designated sizes in response to the needs of the community and the market as those needs change from time to time.

PG1.B.5 In order to eliminate strip commercial development, separation should be maintained between commercial nodes. To encourage compact commercial centers, no access to commercial use shall be allowed more than 1000 feet from the intersection of arterial streets or as designated by a traffic access study consistent with the adopted Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan.

Policy C Large commercial stand alone development lacking amenities such as landscaping and varied roof lines, generally known as "big box," as exists along King Avenue near 24th Street West, is not appropriate to the desired character of West Billings west of or along Shiloh Road.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.C.1 Revise the zoning code to provide that non-residential development create a distinguishable, unified design, manifested by an appropriate combination of the following: an architectural style; significant landscaping on the perimeters and within the parking circulation routes; greenway zones; enhanced pedestrian amenities which encourage internal pedestrian circulation; and buffered parking facilities that minimize impacts on adjacent residential use. This will be implemented by changes to the Unified Zoning Code.



The plan calls for assuring uninterrupted views of the Rimrocks.

PG1.C.2 Revise the zoning code to include commercial architectural and landscaping standards that insure aesthetically pleasing characteristics consistent with community preferences as illustrated in the Visual Preference Survey discussed below. This will be implemented by changes to the Unified Zoning Code.

Policy D Regional commercial development to serve travelers, tourists, and business is appropriate adjacent to the Shiloh Road - Interstate 90 Interchange and perhaps at the 72nd Street West - Interstate 90 Interchange if approved by the Laurel Planning Board.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.D.1 Develop appropriate zoning districts in partnership with landowners and the planning board based upon the goals of this plan and aesthetic guidelines that comply specifically with CC2.A.1 and CC3.A.1.

Policy E Commercial nodes should contain business development sites of various sizes to accommodate a variety of businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.E.1 Subdivision review shall encourage the development of business diversity.

Policy F Develop transportation systems that complement the goals and policies of the West Billings Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.F.1 Coordinate and insure compatibility between the Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan and the West Billings Plan.

PG1.F.2 To maintain the safety and integrity of the arterial roadway system, access off arterial streets should be limited by utilizing no access strips and on-site circulation.

Policy G For subdivision review purposes, treat 72nd Street West as an arterial street that connects to State Highway 3 and the proposed north bypass and provide for the continuation and realignment of 56th Street West to connect directly north to Rimrock Road (See Map 8, Future Land Utilization).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.G.1 Revise the Transportation Plan to include 72nd and 56th Streets and address the northern connection from West Billings to Highway 3.

Policy H The goals and objectives of the 1995 Bicycle Plan for the Billings Urban Transportation Planning Area and the Parks 2020 Plan should be implemented in West Billings.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.H.1 Obtain linear parks and rights-of-way easements, especially where they will lend themselves to dual usages and continuous linkages, in areas such as along irrigation ditches and canals, natural and artificial drainages, floodways, streams, creeks and rivers, railroad and arterial rights of way, and other continuous linear features lending themselves naturally to the creation of a non-vehicular transportation network to connect parks, schools, public places, and business centers. Regarding railroad or arterial rights-of-way linkages, the linear parks or right-of-way should generally be obtained on the side facing the greatest populated area. Right-of-way along ditches and canals can be used for storm water management and retention as well as for parkway.

PG1.H.2 The subdivision regulations for both the City of Billings and Yellowstone County should be reviewed and appropriately amended to be fully compatible and include specifics so that developers, planning department staff, the Yellowstone County Board of Planning, the city and county parks boards, and the governing bodies will take non-vehicular transportation right-of-way needs into account when reviewing all subdivision requests.



The mature landscaping at Rimrock Mall illustrates the positive affect street trees can have on softening the look of large parking areas.

Policy I Designate on the West Billings Plan Area to direct development that is suitable for public services (water, sewer, fire, police) and to define a potential supply of land for near-term urban expansion of the City of Billings based on the city's capital improvements plan, or other capital improvement efforts either public or private.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.I.1 The Yellowstone County Board of Planning shall schedule for review at least every five years the boundaries of the West Billings Plan area and recommend to elected officials criteria for modification of the West Billings Plan.

PG1.I.2 Address the boundaries of the zoning jurisdiction in the Interlocal Agreement.

Policy K Increase residential densities within the West Billings planning area by approving requests for residential zoning that are consistent with this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.K.1 The planning staff and city and county zoning commissions shall consider zone changes in light of the goals and intent of the West Billings Plan.

Policy L Reduce sprawl and development pressure on agricultural lands, conserve (not permanently preserve) irrigated farmland, and increase the density of new residential development by requiring new subdivisions in the West Billings Plan area to be served with municipal or approved community water and sewer systems and/or by requiring new subdivisions to allow for such service in their preliminary design.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.L.1 Development regulations should be adopted which require that all new subdivisions be served by municipal or approved community water and sewer systems if they are within 500 feet of system lines.

PG1.L.2 Individual water well and septic systems may be used in the West Billings Plan area if they meet the requirements of the Department of Environmental Quality.

PG1.L.4 Revise county subdivision regulations to require that proposed subdivisions within the West Billings Plan area should include:



The West Billings Plan is trying to avoid the cluttered character of some existing commercial development.

- A. *A minimum acreage tract lot size of one acre or the size required by the State of Montana to permit individual water well and septic systems on a single lot, whichever is greater.*
- B. *A conceptual plan for re-subdivision of the acreage tracts into streets and lots of typical urban densities consistent with the goals of the West Billings Plan, adequate to support the construction of public or approved central water and sewer systems, street improvements, and other public services, as well as dedication of the easements for those services. The conceptual plan for re-subdivision can be filed as a part of the subdivision improvements agreement, or other contractual agreement with the governing body.*
- C. *Waivers of the right to protest the creation of municipal or rural special improvement districts formed for the purpose of constructing and maintaining water and sewer trunk lines and other required site improvements.*
- D. *Dedication of park lands, or cash in lieu necessary to meet the park dedication requirements that would be imposed for the density to be achieved under the conceptual plan for re-subdivision. Early dedication of these park lands, based on floodway designation, is necessary to facilitate meeting the goals of Theme 4 (Enhanced Public Safety, Open Space, Waterways, and Scenic Resources) which call for fewer but larger parks connected with a linear open space network that will also serve as a flood control mechanism. This public safety measure is permitted under MCA 76-3-511 (2).*
- E. *Subdivision improvement agreements sufficient to insure that construction of a home and other improvements on the acreage tract will conform to the master plan for re-subdivision.*

PG1.L.5 Revise subdivision regulations to provide for adoption and enforcement of conceptual plans for future re-subdivision.

Policy M Development in the West Billings planning area shall provide for a variety of residential types and densities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.M.1 Revise zoning codes to allow for mixed land uses.

PG.1.M.2 Provide a density bonus for cluster development.

PG1.M.3 Lot size averaging, planned unit developments, mixed-use developments, cluster development, incentives, and other techniques should be used to encourage a variety of residential types and densities.

PG1.M.4 Provide opportunities for a mix of housing types (small lot single family detached, townhouse, duplex, triplex, and 6 to 8 unit apartments), within medium density residential areas by encouraging the use of planned unit developments and other appropriate mechanisms.

PG1.M.5 Enable the approval of development projects that incorporate innovative mixed-use land planning concepts that provide for community aesthetics, compatible land uses, a mix of housing opportunities, open space, and other community amenities by revising zoning and subdivision regulations.

Policy N Medium and high-density residential development (including elderly and disabled housing) should be located nearby and within walking distance to commercial centers, medical facilities parks, and recreational amenities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.N.1 Subdivision review should encourage mixed-use development and PUD concepts and shall consider the proximity of housing to commercial, medical, and recreational facilities.

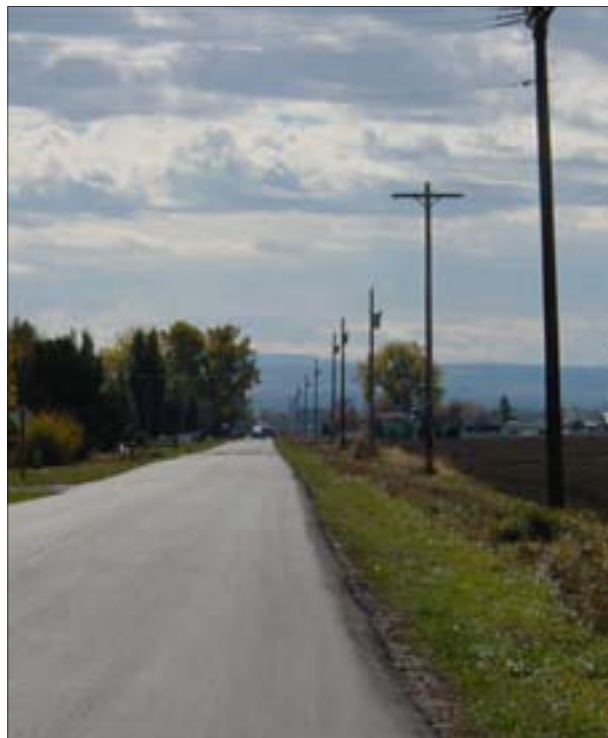
Policy O Through incentives offered by governmental entities, leapfrog development across undeveloped areas should be avoided.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.O.1 Growth management, and avoiding leapfrog development, shall primarily be accomplished through the orderly provision of public water and sewer services and the zoning of land, along with incentives for infill development within the City of Billings.

PG1.O.2

Subdivision approval shall be contingent upon the availability of either municipal or approved central water and sewer systems or by including provision for those services and easements for them in the preliminary design.



Shiloh Road, with the construction of the new interchange with I-90, will soon be transformed from a narrow county road to a busy five-lane arterial highway with commercial and non-commercial development. The West Billings plan calls for special design requirements to be established and Shiloh to be designated as an Entryway Corridor.

Policy P *Subdivisions should be approved only if all of the following conditions are met:*

- A. *Municipal or approved central water and sewer systems are in place or planned to be provided prior to development and are within 500 feet of the proposed development.*
- B. *The subdivision includes approved central water and sewer systems or approved individual well and septic systems (along with providing stubs and easements for future connection to municipal water and sewer) and otherwise complies with Goal 1, Policy L. An adequate water supply for fire suppression shall also be provided.*
- C. *The proposed development does not result in an unacceptable reduction of existing levels of service on impacted roads, allows for the continuation of adequate traffic flow, and protects public safety as determined by the County Public Works Department.*



Signs of development spring up with increasing frequency in West Billings.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.P.1 Subdivision regulations shall be revised to incorporate the subdivision approval conditions presented in Goal 1, Policy P.

Policy Q *Ensure that new development is provided with adequate infrastructure and services, including sanitary sewer and storm water control.*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.Q.1 Assure the subdivision review process is consistent with all applicable city, county, and state subdivision requirements.

Policy R *Encourage innovative land-use planning techniques to be used in building higher density and mixed-use developments as well as infill developments.*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG 1.R.1 Assure that the process for reviewing site-specific land development applications is reasonable, predictable, and fair for applicants and contiguous neighbors by holding neighborhood area meetings with impacted neighbors.

Policy S *Employ innovative planning concepts to achieve desirable and well-designed neighborhoods, protect the environment, preserve meaningful open space, improve traffic flow, and enhance the quality of life of West Billings residents.*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.S.1 Consider allowing an administrative approval of Planned Unit Developments, reduce the fees charged for PUD's, and revise the city and county zoning codes to allow for a mixed-use zone.

Policy T The planning board and local governing bodies should review land planning and development concepts that may be new to the Billings area, but are proven to be successful in other parts of the country.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG1.T.1 Develop and conduct workshops for the purpose of educating the community on land use and development techniques.

PG 1.T.2 The county planning staff should review and evaluate the effectiveness of city and county zoning and subdivision ordinances employed in other localities and revise local ordinances, as necessary, to provide for the implementation of the policies contained in this plan.

PG 1.T.3 The county planning staff should summarize growth management measures and regulations used in other communities and report to the planning board. After a review and evaluation of this material, the planning board should implement modifications to this plan to assure the most effective growth management program possible.

PLANNED GROWTH GOAL 2 - Develop Municipal Water and Waste Water Facilities and Other Public Services to Support Urban Growth in West Billings

Policy A Public water and wastewater services and distribution systems shall be made available within West Billings as soon as possible. A priority is to serve development requests for lands located within the West Billings Plan area. The City Public Utilities Department or other public or private provider should work closely with developers and homeowners to ensure a timely, cost effective, and efficient method of providing municipal water and sewer to new construction and to connect existing development to public services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.A.1 Provide public water and sewer services as part of the expenditures listed in the City of Billings Capital Improvements Plan.

Policy B Condition approval of new development in the West Billings Plan area on the ability to provide infrastructure and public services, including streets, sidewalks, curb, gutter or alternative standards, police, fire, public water, and sewer services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.B.1 The appropriate service-providing jurisdiction (city or county) shall ensure the most cost effective and efficient delivery of municipal water and sewer and other services.

PG2.B.2 The City of Billings and Yellowstone County should jointly develop a new set of West Billings Plan Development Standards appropriate to the nature of the area. All improvements including public water, sewer, curb, gutter, streets, and sidewalks within the West Billings Plan must be constructed to these new standards.

PG2.B.3 Should there be an unexpected delay in the provision of municipal water and sewer services, development in the West Billings Plan area may occur if it is serviced by approved central water and sewer systems.

Policy C The Billings Public Utilities Department, in conjunction with the County Public Works Department, with approval by elected officials should devise a creative, innovative, efficient, and equitable approach to funding water and sewer extensions to West Billings.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.C.1 Create a water and sewer trunk line extension revolving fund. These revolving funds would provide the initial capital for extension of water and sewer trunk lines to areas that are considered appropriate for development. As developers subdivide and develop new areas, they would pay fees to the service provider sufficient to allow the recovery of the cost of extending the trunk lines.

PG2.C.2 The Billings City Council shall consider approving expenditure of revolving funds for the extension of water and sewer trunk lines based on an annual review process, the first of which will occur in the 2002 budget process, that would solicit and rank proposals from developers based on the following criteria:

- A. *The commitment and ability of benefited landowners to proceed to near-term development of the property and replenish revolving fund expenditures.*
- B. *The provision of a variety of housing types, including affordable housing in West Billings.*

- C. *The commitment of landowners to develop improvements in compliance with city standards or West Billings Plan Area Development Standards.*
- D. *The degree to which the proposed development or project area would be developed in accordance with the goals of the West Billings Plan.*
- E. *The degrees to which other public services, including education, law enforcement, and fire protection are readily available to the project area.*
- F. *Other criteria as may be deemed appropriate by the reviewing agencies and/or elected officials.*

Policy D As provided under Planned Growth Goal 1, Policy L for new subdivisions, the city or county should only permit new individual private water and sewer systems (one well and septic system per dwelling unit) to serve single-family homes on legal lots in existence as of the date this plan is adopted by the governing bodies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.D.1 The Yellowstone County Board of Planning shall determine legal lots that are of record as of the date this plan is adopted by the governing bodies based on the official records maintained by the Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder.

PG2.D.2 Use reimbursement agreements for the provision of municipal water and sewer systems where lines are extended by private developers.

Policy E Provide incentives to encourage the provision of municipal water and sewer services in new and existing development.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.E.1 Consider incentives that incorporate:

Advancement of revolving funds to develop municipal services as described in PG2.C.

A program of cost reduction including options for public subsidy to provide services to existing development.

Density bonuses for design and amenity achievement.

Significantly higher development fees for larger lots.

Condition public subsidies of the extension of municipal water and sewer services on the development being adjacent to existing development.



Many neighborhoods in the West Billings area already incorporate many of the recommendations made in the plan.

Policy F Proximity to the City of Billings is a justification for annexation as a condition to obtain public services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.F.1 Subdivided land within 500 feet of the Billings city limits must annex to obtain public water or sewer services. If this is not economically feasible, current practices will prevail.

Traffic backed up on Shiloh. Shiloh is a narrow county road not designed to carry the volume of traffic currently seen. Traffic is expected to increase dramatically with the opening of the new 1-90 interchange and with proposed development.



Policy G To better fund the extension of municipal services in the planning area, dwellings and developments approved after the adoption of this plan shall be required to connect to water and sewer lines as they become available.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG2.G.1 It shall be required that when municipal water and sewer services are available to within 500 feet of an individual occupied lot, property subdivision, or if private systems should fail (excepting individual systems currently serving homeown-

ers of viable agricultural enterprises), all lots or properties using private systems must abandon such systems, or pay higher fees to connect at a later time (except wells used solely for irrigation purposes) and connect to municipal services. If this is not economically feasible, current practices will prevail.

Policy H To address city service issues in relation to existing subdivisions that do not comply with standards described in Planned Growth Goal 2, Policy B, the city will review upgrades, consider alternative standards and create a service plan upon annexation of those areas.

PLANNED GROWTH GOAL 3 - Enhance the Efficiency and Quality of Service from Utility Providers through the Coordination of Utility Land Use, and Transportation Planning

Policy A The City of Billings, Yellowstone County, the City of Laurel, and any special districts should work closely together in a spirit of cooperation to maintain consistency and to produce coordinated water and sewer plans for areas located between Billings and Laurel in a manner consistent with the goals of the West Billings Plan. The intent of this cooperative effort is to establish efficient and cost effective long-term water and sewer services and surface improvements throughout the area between Billings and Laurel.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PG3.A.1 Implementation tools for consideration include creation of intergovernmental agreements, the formation of a public works committee at the city and county staff level, and coordination of capital planning through coordination of city and county capital improvement program planning.

PLANNED GROWTH GOAL 4 - Provide Realistic and Workable Mechanisms to Manage Growth and Insure that Sprawl Is Not Pushed Westward by the Potential Impacts of Growth Management within the Area of the West Billings Plan

Policy A Ensure a good, consistent, and ongoing working relationship between the City of Billings, the City of Laurel, and Yellowstone County that is directed specifically to the implementation of the goals of this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PG4.A.1 Establish a committee comprised of representatives of the Yellowstone County Planning Board and the Laurel Planning Board to conduct ongoing meetings directed towards addressing community growth and rural development issues occurring in the area between Billings and Laurel. The objective of this committee is to ensure that the goals of the West Billings Plan are achieved and that all growth and development that occurs is well planned.

PG4.A.2 As a part of the development of a new Yellowstone County Growth Policy, continue and expand the planning process started with the West Billings Plan to include all of the area within Yellowstone County.

- **Theme 2.**

Appropriate Land Utilization: Urbanization of Agricultural Land and Minimizing Conflicts Between Gravel Extraction and Residential Development.

BACKGROUND

West Billings residents have identified a number of issues related to land utilization. These issues, if not adequately addressed in this plan, have a high potential for conflict, tension and confusion as more and more development occurs in the West Billings area. It is the intent of Theme Two to address the following community issues:

We should minimize the conflicts between agricultural and residential land use and recognize the fact that agriculture, as it has been traditionally known in West Billings, has become a marginal commercial enterprise that will be phased out over time with the realities of the farm economy and changes of ownership. By promoting the development of lands in close proximity to the Billings urban area we will preserve the economic vitality of agricultural enterprises farther from the city.

The local gravel industry is acknowledged to be important to the Billings economy. Thus the inherent conflicts between gravel extraction and residential development must be resolved.

Agriculture: It is the intent of this plan to conserve irrigated farmland and plan for the most efficient, economically feasible, and environmentally responsible utilization of land within the planning area. The urbanization of the West Billings area should occur in accordance with the goals of this plan. Long-time agricultural land owners stated at a special meeting held on March 25, 1999 that commercially significant agriculture, as it has been traditionally known in West Billings, is generally no longer economically feasible within the West Billings planning area and cannot be considered a long-term land use. Local farmers have stated:

Most existing farmers have few, if any, descendants interested in agriculture to which they can pass their land.

Nearly all of the remaining farmland in the West Billings area has been broken into parcels of 80 acres or less. Local farmers consider that an economically viable farm in this area must be 400 to 500 acres.

The conflicts between the operational realities of agriculture (dust, odors, animals, irrigation ditches, slow moving large machinery on busy local roads) are increasingly incompatible with the lifestyles of new residential development.

Farmland sold for residential or commercial development is far more valuable to the landowner than selling it for agriculture.

Inevitably agriculture within the West Billings planning area will be phased out over time with changes in land ownership.

Gravel Mining: It is acknowledged that the gravel industry in West Billings is important to the local economy and is necessary to serve local construction activities. However, conflicts between the existing and growing gravel extraction industry and residential areas must be resolved. State law gives the landowner a vested right to extract gravel with the satisfaction of environmental and reclamation requirements. The county is allowed by state law to review those operations for mitigation of impacts including hours of operation, dust, noise, alternative routes and speed limits as a Special Review. The area between the Yellowstone River and one mile north of the BBWA Canal generally is considered to be an area of economically feasible gravel mining. There is inherent conflict and basic incompatibility between gravel mining and residential land use. Refer to Map 8, Future Land Utilization for the general locations of existing gravel mining areas. It is recognized that:

Large gravel trucks traveling local roads are in direct conflict with residential neighborhoods and local motorized and non-motorized traffic.

Gravel mining operations can produce dust, inharmonious vistas, and other issues that are incompatible with residential development.

Post extraction land uses may be restricted by final reclamation, the depth of the mining and the ground water.

The intentions of the land utilization policies included in this section as they relate to gravel are to:

- A. *Identify and designate potential gravel extraction areas;*
- B. *Minimize potential conflicts and the impacts of gravel extraction on the environment, residential neighborhoods, and other land uses by utilizing a comprehensive subdivision review process to identify and require appropriate mitigating measures;*
- C. *Ensure that an awareness of existing and potential gravel extraction areas is included in all development review and subdivision review processes; and*
- D. *Ensure that gravel extraction sites are left in a condition compatible with subsequent uses through required compliance with state site restoration*



Some housing in West Billings consists of mobile homes on acreage parcels.

requirements. At certain locations identified through the subdivision review process, it may be determined that additional, more extensive, site restoration measures are required to address the goals of this plan.

LAND UTILIZATION GOAL 1 - Plan for the Orderly and Efficient Urbanization of Agricultural Lands

Policy A Utilize zoning to provide an efficient and orderly transition from agricultural to urban land utilization. Minimize leapfrog and indiscriminate development and conserve agricultural lands that are beyond the West Billings Plan area.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LU1.A.1 For lands within the West Billings planning area, residential and commercial zoning designations are appropriate and recommended to be approved.

Policy B Development of non-irrigated farmland (generally lands located north of the Big Ditch) within the appropriate zoning designation is considered a priority. Develop incentives for the development of non-irrigated farmland.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LU1.B.1 Revise subdivision regulations and zoning codes to provide incentives that will allow a more streamlined review process for conserving agricultural land where appropriate. Agricultural land is an important feature of the rural landscape.

Farmland in the area is generally irrigated, very high quality agricultural land that is being consumed by residential development. Because the land is adjacent or very close to Billings, it is inevitable that farming will be phased out over time. The plan is not trying to preserve agriculture but conserve agricultural land.



LAND UTILIZATION GOAL 2 - Identify Gravel Resource Land for Commercial Gravel Extraction, Minimize the Detrimental Effects of Gravel Extraction on the Environment and Other Land Uses, and Plan for the Eventual Post-Extractive Use of Gravel Sites

Policy A Designate gravel resource lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term commercial significance for the extraction of gravel.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LU2.A.1 Yellowstone County shall, with advice from the Montana Bureau

of Mines, or other appropriate agency develop criteria for the identification and designation of gravel extraction lands.

LU2.A.2 Gravel resource deposits considered to have long-term commercial significance and consistent with the above gravel extraction land designation criteria, once adopted, shall be identified and designated so that the potential supply of sand and gravel will reasonably meet 100 year projected demand in the immediate trade area.

Policy B Ensure that the use of lands adjacent to designated gravel resources does not interfere with the continued use, in accordance with the best management practices, of these lands for the extraction of gravel.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LU2.B.1 Yellowstone County shall adopt regulations which provide that subdivision improvement agreements for all major and minor subdivisions approved for development on or within 2,000 feet of lands designated as gravel resource lands shall contain a notice that the subject property is within or near designated gravel resource lands on which a variety of commercial and industrial activities may occur. This notice shall provide a clear warning that the subject development has the potential of being incompatible with residential development.

LU2.B.2 Develop and adopt zoning and other regulations that:

Provides notice on title reports that a property is in the vicinity of a gravel extraction area.

Evaluate impacts of potential gravel mining in the staff review of new subdivisions.

LU2.B.3 The Yellowstone County Board of Planning shall establish a Gravel Resource Overlay Zoning District. It is recommended that residential and commercial uses be allowed only after a special review process that requires the developer to demonstrate compatibility between the intended land use and existing or reasonably foreseeable gravel extraction operations.

LU2.B.4 Where proposed development abuts existing or potential gravel resource lands, develop regulations that require creative land planning and subdivision design. These subdivisions should utilize cluster development, creative applications of open space, effective and substantial buffering or other techniques that result in locating housing as far as possible from existing or future gravel extraction operations. Residential uses should not be allowed without extensive buffering and other methods of mitigating any known or potential adverse impacts.

Policy C Ensure that gravel extraction and reclamation leave exhausted sites in a condition that does not preclude or inhibit the planned post-extractive use of the gravel sites within the limitations of the county's ability to control gravel operation impacts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LU2.C.1 Before mining is permitted, post-extractive uses shall be identified for gravel resource lands that are consistent with this plan's land use goals and policies.

LU2.C.2 Yellowstone County shall cooperate with the Montana Bureau of Mines to ensure that gravel site excavation and reclamation is consistent with all state reclamation laws, the West Billings Plan, the Yellowstone County Comprehensive Plan (and any updated Growth Policy).

LU2.C.3 The City of Billings and Yellowstone County shall pursue innovative reclamation plans in concert with private landowners for the final conversion of exhausted gravel resource lands into desirable uses (commercial, residential development, parkland, open space, community lakes, flood retention areas, etc.). Implementation of such reclamation plans will be considered as favorable mitigation of the mining activity.

- **Theme 3.**

Achieving A Distinctive Community Character

BACKGROUND

Should the West Billings area follow the national tendency of new development to look just like similar development in other towns, or should a distinctive character be established? Comments obtained from public participation throughout this planning process clearly indicate that community aesthetics and character is important for community pride, economic

health, and overall quality of life.

Business and new residents, to some extent, are all attracted to or repelled by a community's appearance. An attractive community can help generate business enthusiasm and attract new residents. An attractive community is



The Rimrocks are a defining character of Billings and their visual character needs to be preserved.

also a healthy community. It has a sense of pride, a sense of caring, and a sense of place.

The more West Billings and the entire Billings community does to enhance its quality of life and natural assets, the more new families and business growth it will attract. On the other hand, the more Billings comes to look like the next town and the less community character we have, the less motivation there is for business and families to locate here.

Theme 3 focuses on the integration and interrelationships of the following community issues:

The Billings area should expand as an urban area, not as a rural community.

Shiloh Road is a major community entryway corridor and should have special design standards and development requirements.

Streets must be safe and efficient, but they must also be convenient, visually pleasing, and developed in a way that defines a desirable community character for West Billings.

More compact, mixed-use development requires compatibility between buildings (design theme, materials, and scale) and effective buffering between land uses to ensure privacy, safety, and visual compatibility. We should devise development regulations and standards that enhance and protect community character and the environment. We should consider and implement the findings of the Visual Preference Survey as part of the development permitting process. The impacts of growth, such as sprawl, the loss of community character, and the "same as every other town" chain store design, should be mitigated and controlled.

Sensitivity to the size, character, and location of signs, the elimination of billboards in West Billings, placing utilities underground when possible, and sensitivity to where and how communication towers are located are important to the definition of community character and a successful streetscape.

Effective use of landscaping to separate and buffer streets, sidewalks, bike-ways, buildings, and parking lots significantly enhances the community environment and quality of life.



New development on Shiloh Road is well-landscaped.

Community entryways are important. The character of entrances into Billings, such as Shiloh Road, sends immediate messages to travelers and residents. Too often that message is monotony. The entrance to the next town looks like the exit from the last: parking lots, big signs, and the same stores.

To define the desired character of West Billings and generally enhance the quality of development, this neighborhood plan is presenting and recommending comprehensive development guidelines. The intent of these guidelines is to assure that residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-

use development relate to and are compatible with their surroundings and provide a safe and desirable environment for West Billings residents, shoppers, and workers.

The primary direction for establishing development guidelines comes from comments received from the approximately 500 participants in the Visual Preference Survey conducted throughout Billings during late 1998 and through mid 1999, and comments received during numerous public meetings.

The design guidelines to be developed for the design review process are not intended to be quantitative, fixed zoning standards. They are to be applied with an attitude of flexibility. Each development site and project will have particular characteristics that may suggest that some guidelines be emphasized and others be de-emphasized. The purpose in having guidelines that express an overall vision for West Billings is to encourage

creativity. Repetitive, “cookie-cutter” solutions are not desired. However, the guidelines should present a clear picture of design expectations and must not be diminished or cast aside on the grounds that “each project is unique”.

The design review process should seek to achieve the following objectives:

- A. Street design criteria that include landscaped medians, boulevard walks, and street trees on Shiloh Road; and boulevard walks and street trees on all other arterial streets.*
- B. Walkways and sidewalks that separate and protect pedestrians from motorized vehicles and encourage walking rather than driving.*
- C. Design of parking areas that includes dispersed landscaping and walkways to eliminate overly large paved areas and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment.*
- D. Location and design of commercial buildings that are compatible in style, materials, and scale with adjacent development.*
- E. Commercial development that is more “residential” in character, with distinctive rooflines and sensitivity to the impacts of signage and exterior lighting.*
- F. An abundance of trees, which is more desirable than fewer trees within any commercial or residential development.*
- G. Protection of significant vistas and natural features of the Yellowstone Valley, such as the Rimrocks, through careful, sensitive, and creative site planning.*

The placement of electric power lines underground is considered a significant component of achieving a distinctive community character and a desirable community aesthetic. It is acknowledged that there is a greater expense associated with the placement of utility lines underground.

Throughout this planning process, it was affirmed many times during public discussion, that underground utility lines are very important to community character and aesthetics. It is not considered to be in the best public interest for the utility provider or local government to assume that the costs are too high and underground utilities are unfeasible. It is the intent of this plan to allow the public an opportunity to discuss the costs and permit a neighborhood or community-based decision.

The following goals and policies address the desired character of arterial and commercial streets, sidewalks, signs, commercial development, parking lots, trees and landscaping in commercial development, residential development, vistas, public areas, and overhead versus underground utility lines.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL 1 - Create Developments in West Billings that Are Compatible with Their Surroundings and Provide a Safe and Desirable Environment for Residents, Shoppers, Workers, and Visitors

Policy A Create identifiable, pedestrian oriented commercial developments with focal points, opportunities for mixed-use areas that aesthetically combine residential and commercial buildings, residential subdivisions, and park areas that link neighborhoods through a linear open space network, subdivision entryways and special arterial treatments.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC1.A.1 Revise the subdivision and zoning regulations and implement other appropriate mechanisms to allow and achieve:

- A. Varied densities;*
- B. Opportunities for a mix of commercial and residential uses and types;*
- C. Focal points, such as parks, schools, and other uses located within walking distance of neighborhoods, and;*
- D. Pathways and bikeways that are connections to an overall pathway and bikeway system.*

Policy B The Yellowstone County Board of Planning Board must assure that the city's and county's Planned Unit Development process is compatible, workable, and effective in achieving the intent of the aesthetic and quality development goals of this plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC1.B.1 Revise the city and county planned unit development regulations to assure that in commercial developments the architectural style, height, building mass, and design of site improvements are consistent with the goals of this plan.

CC1.B.2 Revise the city and county Planned Unit Development regulations to assure, that in higher density multi-family development, the height, scale, design, and architectural character of the proposed units are compatible with the character of buildings in the surrounding area.

Policy C Provide a consistent and abundant network of landscaping along streets and in parking areas by the creation of street tree planting, landscaped streetscapes, and aesthetic site improvement qualities throughout West Billings, and assure there is adequate room for utility placement in the right of way.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC1.C.1 Devise a workable and affordable plan and effective strategy to achieve an “urban forestry” program for West Billings that would state specific requirements for the planting of street trees in all commercial and residential developments.

CC1.C.2 Devise a workable and affordable method for both initial financing and long-term maintenance of street trees in any public right-of-way

CC1.C.3 The planning board, in partnership with local stakeholders, should review and make revisions to existing city and county commercial and residential site improvement regulations and subdivision ordinances (including the Planned Unit Development provisions) to include requirements applicable in the West Billings planning area that achieve the following site improvement objectives:

- A. Consistent and abundant landscaping along streets and in parking areas;*
- B. Well defined entrances that consider location and compatibility with adjacent development;*
- C. Sensitivity to the impacts of exterior lighting on the surrounding area;*
- D. Signage designed in a manner appropriate and compatible with the street frontage and the character of a specific development in the same manner as the county sign code;*
- E. Adequate setbacks, buffers, and visual screens to make commercial development compatible with abutting residential uses; and,*
- F. Site design that is sensitive to the preservation of significant vistas of community-wide value and community cultural and environmental resources.*

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL 2 - Achieve, over Time, an Overall Sense of Community Continuity and Compatibility. Clearly Define and Establish a Distinctive Character for West Billings

Policy A Achieve the objectives described and illustrated in the Visual Preference Survey to effectively address the character, aesthetics, and quality of new development.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC2.A.1 Devise and implement a design review process for all commercial and mixed-use development that will include design guidelines for West Billings commercial and mixed-use development and assure the compatibility of new development with existing neighboring development.

Policy B Ensure that all signage, including traffic control and directional signage, is located with consideration of the overall site development and is compatible in size and scale to the neighboring areas.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC2.B.1 Revise existing or devise new city and county signage regulations, procedures, standards, and guidelines to accomplish the objectives of Community Character Goal 2, Policy B.

Policy C Strive for the elimination of sign clutter. Particular sensitivity to the character and attributes of the streetscape should be used with the placement of advertising, traffic control, and directional signage.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC2.C.1 Revise existing or devise new city and county signage regulations, procedures, standards and guidelines to accomplish the objectives of Community Character Goal 2, Policy C.

Policy D Work toward ensuring compatibility and consistency in the development of signage regulations for the City of Billings and the West Billings planning area.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC2.D.1 Enforce county sign regulations that currently prohibit new billboards in the West Billings Plan area.



Policy E Eliminate the visual clutter of utility poles and overhead power lines in West Billings.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC2.E.1 Encourage placement of utility lines underground when deemed affordable. If it is determined that underground placement is not possible, utility lines should, as much as possible, be co-located out of public view.

CC2.E.2 Devise and implement a workable and reliable system that allows the community to be clearly notified of upcoming above ground, three phase utility installations and to be allowed an opportunity for public discussion regarding the funding of underground utilities.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL 3 - Ensure that the Reconstruction of Shiloh Road and All New Development Neighboring Shiloh Road Is Designed to a Special Standard Reflecting Its Function as an Entryway into West Billings and the Entire Billings Community.

Policy A Designate the full length of Shiloh Road between Interstate 90 and Rimrock Road, and neighboring lands within approximately 1,000 feet from the centerline of Shiloh Road, as a Community Entryway Corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CC3.A.1 Review current Entryway Corridor Districts for application to Shiloh Road and if necessary, devise and implement an entryway corridor zoning.

CC3.A.2 To welcome visitors and residents to Billings, develop a fully landscaped community entrance icon or monument near the Shiloh Road interchange.

- **Theme 4.**

Enhancement of Public Safety, Open Space, Waterways, and Scenic Resources

BACKGROUND

Open space is defined as any parcel or area of lands that are devoted to or used for public enjoyment or the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. Examples include publicly owned lands and parks used for either

active or passive recreation, schools, rivers, and other waterway corridors, utility corridors, floodways and drainages, linear open spaces used for trails, and bikeways, environmentally critical areas, and other special resource lands. Note that rural subdivisions can contribute to the experience of a rural area.

It is the intent of the West Billings Plan to incorporate and reaffirm the goals of

existing parks, recreation, and open space plans from the City of Billings and Yellowstone County, as well as other related plans such as the Yellowstone River Greenway Master Plan and flood management plans.

Excerpts from the *Parks 2020 Plan* that are of particular significance to the West Billings planning areas are included here.

Vestiges of the fading agricultural economy in the West Billings area ironically contain some of the most cherished rural elements.



JGA Architects-Engineers-Planners

"The increasing reliance on subdivision land dedications and small special improvement and maintenance districts is not yielding the types of park lands and recreation experiences most valued by the citizens. Preference surveys indicate the public wants large community parks, community greenways with multiple use trails, state of the art recreation facilities, and public stewardship of unique natural and cultural resources."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 5)

"...We welcome visitors and greet them with attractive entrance ways and landscape that enhance our natural surroundings."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 3)

"Relying predominately on park land acquisition to preserve and protect critical resources, like the Rims and the river, is unrealistic. A comprehensive policy on growth management and an open space neighborhood plan were identified as needs."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 6)

"...We make wise use of our physical resources by planning our parks to provide multiple benefits like conservation, recreation, environmental, and visual resource preservation, as well as function in many ways...as ball fields, as storm water drainage areas, as concert halls, as peaceful sanctuaries."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 3)

"...We seek a balance with our natural environment by surrounding, connecting, and interweaving the urban setting with open spaces."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 3)

"...We are concerned with preserving our natural heritage and have protected the Yellowstone River, its tributaries, and the bold sandstone outcrops of the Rims from inappropriate development."

(Parks 2020 Plan, page 3)

Other excerpts from the *Parks 2020 Master Plan* pertaining to West Billings state:

"Shiloh Northwest is a high residential growth area. New subdivisions contain moderately sized parks, most of which are undeveloped. Zimmerman Public Park is the largest park in the area. Zimmerman and the numerous natural resource parks

Flood Issues

The City of Billings and Yellowstone County suffered a devastating flood in June of 1937 after an intense rain and hailstorm over the already saturated drainage areas west and northwest of Billings. Substantial overland flows developed along Canyon Creek, Hogan's Slough, Little Cove Creek, and Cove Creek. Railway bridges became partially clogged with flood debris west of town and floodwaters flowed eastward, along the tracks, into the city. In addition, floodwaters entered the Billings Bench Water Association (BBWA) canal, west of town. Subsequently, the south bank of the BBWA canal broke above Pioneer Park and water flowed into the city's main business district. Six hundred businesses and 2,664 dwellings sustained losses of approximately \$3 million in 1937.*

*Source: *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha, Nebraska, March 1970, Report on Restudy of Yellowstone River and Tributaries, Billings, Montana, Flood Control Project.*

The following information is identified in the West End Flood Control Study prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1970 and a West End Storm Drainage Master Plan continuation and restudy prepared by Engineering, Incorporated in 1991.

Excerpts from the Corps of Engineers *West End Storm Drainage Master Plan* (pp. 10-1) state:

...In the case where substantial contributing drainage from above (existing development) exists, exceeding the capacity of the storm water conveyance system through a fully developed (West Billings) area would result in severe flooding and property damage. Thus, adequate capacity provision for the major 100 year event is essential."

...Early identification of the need for green belt corridors will facilitate planning for the area. Future zoning and land use restrictions will prevent a serious flood hazard condition from developing."

that parallel the Rimrocks do not satisfy the need for developed recreation parkland. There are several undeveloped parcels that are well suited for recreational use. The Parks 2020 Master Plan identifies priorities for development under various funding scenarios. Future parkland, acquired through the subdivision process, must ensure that diverse recreational opportunities are provided and that parks are dispersed equitably throughout the area. Access to and views of the Rims should continue to be protected through parkland acquisition or conservation and recreational use easements. Access to the Rimrocks parks should be improved and connections between subdivisions and across major roads should be improved."

"Shiloh West consists of scattered major subdivisions and large lot residential development. Shiloh Road borders the area on the east, limiting safe access to adjoining neighborhood recreation parks. Future development will be limited to large lots if public water and sewer services are not extended west of Shiloh Road. Large lot subdivisions require less parkland dedication, resulting in fewer and smaller parks. The need for community park and recreation facilities will increase. A planned 53-acre county park, located on Shiloh Road at King Avenue West should be developed as a recreational complex that also would serve as a neighborhood cultural and educational center. (The 1991 Storm Water Master Plan recommends an approximately 190-acre floodwater detention pond in this area.)

Parkland dedications should conform to the Parks 2020 Master Plan recommendations, relative to location and service area. Opportunities exist to coordinate with state and federal agencies on potential parkland development. These opportunities should be pursued. Open space that defines the limits of westward

Proposed Future Studies

The following projects are subject to the availability of future funding. The following are excerpted from the 1991 Engineering Inc. report *West End Storm Drainage Master Plan continuation and restudy* and the Army Corps of Engineers' *West End Flood Control Study*, 1970.

As development progresses on the west end of Billings, additional planning and studies will be essential to insure that storm drainage provisions are appropriately provided for. Several areas of consideration requiring further study are identified as follows:

- Explore future acquisition of the [Shiloh] Drain. Initiate discussions with the Shiloh Drain Board to negotiate a long-term agreement for eventual transfer, [acquisition or other mechanism to convey] ownership and responsibility to the City [of Billings].

- Define green belt corridors and widths for the west half of the study area. The locations shown in this master plan are schematic and approximate. Uncontrolled growth may encroach into critical needed green belt areas. Future planning and regulation would need to involve the Yellowstone County Planning Department. Recommended scope of future study should include:

- Aerial contour mapping of the west half of the study area (similar to completed east half) to facilitate identifying optimum green belt corridor.

- Analysis to determine proposed green belt cross-section and configuration required to meet hydraulic conditions.

- Development of zoning (or other growth management tool) to regulate future development and designation of the green belt corridors.

- Conduct an inventory of flow restrictions and upgrade requirements on the Birely Drain channel to facilitate future discharge of the Yellowstone Country Club area.

- In-depth evaluation of the Hogan's Slough flood retention facility, diversion channel and downstream (Canyon Creek) considerations. [See Section 7.6 of Engineering, Inc. report.] It is also recommended that landowners contact be initiated in the flood retention and diversion channel areas to facilitate future acquisition of right-of-way. This is particularly important in the case of the JTL gravel pit west of Shiloh Road. Contact should be made prior to the owner reclaiming and filling the existing mined gravel pit.

- Explore potential wetland impacts and requirements in planning future storm drainage corridors and improvements. Specifically, a location that may be a factor is the area southwest of Rimrock Road and 62nd Street West.

- Provide further evaluation of the existing detention dam on the Cove Creek tributary located in the Yellowstone Club Estates Subdivision.

- Construct detention pond and diversion channel along the west side of Shiloh Road.

expansion will be increasingly valuable. A comprehensive growth management plan is needed to address community open space and protection of agricultural lands.”

The intent of Theme 4 is to provide a blueprint for achieving the following community goals:

Loss of life and damage to private and public property should be prevented by the identification, delineation, and construction of drainage corridors and floodwater detention areas, which will allow flash flood type runoff events to pass safely through West Billings to the Yellowstone River.

Adequate fire flow should be a prerequisite for approval of new subdivisions to prevent loss of life and property and to reduce fire loss.

Strategically located or environmentally important land parcels should be reserved for open space, such as floodway corridors, parks, and pathways for walking and bicycles, as illustrated on Map 8, Future Land Utilization.

Whenever possible, parks should be acquired and developed as joint-use facilities in conjunction with schools when affordable.

A linear open space network for multiple uses (floodway corridors, pathways, bikeways, trails, parks, open space) that incorporates identified drainage ways and appropriate irrigation ditches or waterways should be obtained and developed as land is subdivided.

The Yellowstone River and its riparian environment should be preserved as a community, regional, and national resource by incorporating and implementing the Yellowstone River Greenway Master Plan.

Scenic and unique community natural resources, such as the Rimrocks and significant vistas of community-wide importance should be protected from encroachment and disruption by buildings, utility and communication towers, insensitive site development, and inappropriate building locations.

OPEN SPACE GOAL 1 - Identify and Protect Open Spaces, Flood Channels, Waterways, and Scenic Resources in West Billings

Policy A Identify and preserve an integrated linear open space network within West Billings that is compatible with and is an enhancement of the Parks 2020 Master Plan, the 1991 Billings West End Storm Drainage Master Plan, the Yellowstone River Greenway Master Plan, and the Yellowstone County Parks Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS1.A.1 Revise city and county subdivision regulations to achieve over time, a comprehensive linear open space network.

OS1.A.2 During the subdivision review process, utilize the open space recommendations of this plan, as illustrated by Map 8, Future Land Utilization,

Policy B Utilize the development of a linear open space network as a component of achieving an acceptable level of flood control.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS1.B.1 Incorporate the drainages, floodways, and flood water detention areas identified in the March 1970 Army Corps of Engineers Report* and the 1991 Billings West End Storm Drainage Master Plan prepared by Engineering, Inc., and any other subsequently adopted storm water management plans or master plans into a West Billings linear open space network contingent upon funding.

OS1.B.2 Implement over a period of time the recommendations of Section 10, "Future Studies," of the Billings West End Storm Drainage Master Plan contingent on the availability of funding.

OS1.B.3 Construct detention pond(s) and diversion channel(s) over time as identified in the studies recommended by the West End Storm Drainage Master Plan, and as development proposals are submitted consider overall drainage information.

OS1.B.4 Implement overtime a linear open space (green belt) concept to contain major 100-year overland flood flows as per the recommendations contained in Section 6.5, "Recommend Green Belt Configuration," of the Billings West End Storm Drainage Master Plan, May 1991 as determined by available funding. Refer to Map 8, Future Land Utilization, for the general location of proposed open space corridors.

* Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha, Nebraska, March 1970, *Report on Restudy of Yellowstone River and Tributaries*, Billings, Montana, Flood Control Project.

Policy C *Promote the protection of environmental resources, wildlife habitat, and historical and scenic resources in the West Billings area.*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



OS1.C.1 Complete a comprehensive inventory of environmental, scenic, and historical resources and wildlife habitat in the West Billings area. This data should be utilized in the review and evaluation of proposed subdivisions and development permitting. Features to be inventoried and located include:

Natural or scenic resource areas;

Groundwater recharge areas and natural drainages;

Urban and rural landscaped areas, such as golf courses, school sites, cemeteries, and active parks;

Public and private low intensity park and recreation sites, such as wildlife preserves, hiking, equestrian and biking trails;

Land reserved as open space or buffer areas as part of development;

Cultural, archaeological, geologic, and historic sites;

Major multi-functional river corridors, such as the Yellowstone River and other waterways such as Canyon Creek.

Linear open space, such as utility and trail corridors;

Areas designated as environmentally sensitive, stream corridor, or wetland by any local, state, or federal agency;

Natural hazard areas, rock falls, and landslides; and

View corridors.

Policy D *Develop innovative and workable plans and techniques to obtain and preserve open space and environmental resources.*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS1.D.1 Initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the cities of Billings and Laurel and Yellowstone County to incorporate policies with inter-jurisdictional significance. Examples of issues a MOU could address include:

The use of a variety of land development techniques to achieve open space;

Identification of open space corridors within and between urban growth areas;

Management of waterway and river systems on a watershed basis to protect these resources; and

Development of cooperative management plans and implementation strategies for open space areas of inter-jurisdictional significance.

OS1.D.2 Subdivision or development should take into consideration adverse impacts on any environmentally sensitive or unique site, waterway, floodway corridor or floodwater detention area, or special vistas of community-wide value in the West Billings planning area once these areas have been identified.

Policy E Sources of obtaining open space are through the regulation of critical areas, native growth protection areas within subdivisions, and open spaces designated on private property through an "open space" designation for tax assessment purposes. Other recommended methods include acquisition by purchase by government or private entities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS1.E.1 City and county officials should initiate a voter-approved mill levy or voluntary check-off program on county property taxes to raise funds for the acquisition of open spaces.

OS1.E.2 The City of Billings and Yellowstone County shall encourage open space planning and the protection of scenic resources using innovative programs, such as purchase or transfer of development rights, cluster development, open space tax assessment, and acquisition of easements.

OPEN SPACE GOAL 2 - Develop Parks in Conjunction with Schools to Achieve Joint-Use Facilities with Larger Recreational Areas

Policy A Assist school districts in selecting new school sites in West Billings to insure compatibility of school location with the linear open space network and parklands acquisition goals.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS2.A.1 Initiate a Memorandum of Understanding between Billings School District Number Two and the planning board to allow formal planning board review of school sites under consideration for acquisition.

OS2.A.2 The Planning Director should take the lead to continue the discussions pertaining to joint school-park development that have been initiated as a part of this planning process. Include in these meetings the City and County Parks Departments, the Yellowstone County Planning Department, and Billings Public Schools.

OPEN SPACE GOAL 3 - Promote Long-Range Interdisciplinary and Interagency Planning to Identify and Acquire, in Advance of Subdivision Development, One (or More) Large Parcels of Land for Development of a Multifunctional Community Park

Policy A The Yellowstone County Planning Department should work closely with the City and County Park Boards to identify a suitable community park site in cooperation with drainage designs for the area.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS3.A.1 Acquire a site for a new community park similar in scope to Rose Park or Pioneer Park. If possible, a site lending itself naturally to dual community purposes, such as floodwater detention and the protection of public safety should be acquired.

OPEN SPACE GOAL 4 - New Parklands Should Benefit Both the Individual Neighborhood and the Overall Community Park and Linear Open Space System

Policy A Future park and open space land, to be acceptable for acquisition by the public through the subdivision process, shall be suitable for both the neighborhood where the parkland dedication occurs and, if possible, community recreational use as a component of the linear open space network. Potential land that does not meet these suitability criteria should not be accepted unless it meets other critical needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OS4.A.1 Adopt flexible parkland acquisition criteria that seek maximum public benefit from subdivision parkland dedication, and promote cash in lieu payments for acquisition of suitable sites.

West Billings Plan

Resource Inventory and Analysis

Introduction

This resource inventory and analysis provides a concise view of what comprises the West Billings planning area during 1999. It is a brief summation and analysis of the primary factors influencing growth and development in the West Billings area. Relevant existing data has been utilized. Primary sources of information include the U.S. Census, Yellowstone County GIS, Engineering, Inc., knowledge of West Billings development trends, the 1999 Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan, the Parks 2020 plan, field surveys performed by JGA, and any appropriate studies previously completed. This data is intended to serve as background materials for the neighborhood plan, to identify past and current trends, and to present probable future growth and development expectations.

Although some of the available data resources are becoming outdated, the most current available data has been utilized to prepare this resource inventory. The Bureau of Census conducted a new decennial census in late 2000. Upon the availability of the 2000 Census data, this material should be incorporated into the data found in this section and all appropriate diagrams and projections should be updated.

Population Trends

Over the past several decades, population in Billings and Yellowstone County has been growing slow and steadily. This pattern of growth is likely to continue into the future, allowing the area to easily accommodate projected growth.

For now, residences coexist with farmlands below the Rimrocks.



Yellowstone County has the highest population of any county in Montana with an estimated 1998 population of 126,158 persons and Billings, the largest city in Montana, has with an estimated 1998 population of 91,750. This is an increase of 11.2% and 13.1% respectively over the 1990 population. Increased in-migration has accounted for much of the city's population growth.

By 1998, the Billings population of 81,125 represented nearly 72% of the Yellowstone County population. That percentage is expected to increase over the upcoming years as more of the county's population becomes urbanized. The total Yellowstone County population increased by 38,791 persons between 1970 to 1998, for an average of 1,385 persons or about 1.6% per year. Similarly, the City of Billings population increased by 30,169 between 1970 to 1998, an average of 1,077 persons or about 1.7% annually. These figures indicate that the City of Billings accounts for nearly 78% of the annual population increase for all of Yellowstone County.

The City of Billings and Yellowstone County are growing, but the West Billings planning area is growing at a faster rate. It is estimated that the West Billings area currently has over 11,000 residents. Between 1970 and 1998, the West Billings area grew by over 6,230 people or about 222 people every year, a 4.7% annual increase!

Billings-Area Populations Facts

In 1970, the population of the West Billings area was about 4,768

In 2000, the population of the West Billings area is about 11,000

During the next 20 years, it is expected that there will be an additional 6,200 people

The West Billings population is growing at a rate more than double that of the City of Billings

Housing Construction Trends

The 2000 population in the Billings urban area is estimated to have approximately 43,841 dwelling units containing 104,284 persons. The following data is taken from the 1999 Billings Urban Area Transportation plan that projects a distribution of anticipated dwelling units within the Billings urban area. It is significant to note that the West Billings area is projected to be one of the largest neighborhoods both in total dwelling units and the rate of anticipated growth. This distribution is important to understand as it illustrates where growth is assumed to occur in the community and where the associated construction and traffic impacts will likely occur.

Dwelling Unit Distribution

	2000 OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS	% CHANGE	2010 OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS	% CHANGE	2020 OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS	OVERALL % CHANGE
BILLINGS CENTRAL	29,727	6%	31,527	6%	33,327	12%
HEIGHTS	7,776	13%	8,816	12%	9,856	27%
LOCKWOOD	2058	33%	2,738	25%	3,418	66%
SOUTH HILLS	608	72%	1,048	42%	1,488	145%
STUDY AREA	3,008	27%	3,808	21%	4,608	53%

Source: Billings Urban Area 2000 Transportation Plan, August 1999

1999 West Billings Housing Facts

Total existing dwelling units 1,582 (including mobile homes and manufactured dwelling units)

774 (49%) housing units have been constructed before 1978

808 (51%) housing units have been constructed after 1978

Employment Trends

Employment is expected to increase significantly in the West Billings area. The Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan projects a large and growing concentration of employees, second only to the central area of Billings. It is anticipated that over the next 20 years an additional 1,840 jobs will be created, an 80% increase over employment existing in 2000.

Land Use Trends

The ratio of developed land to undeveloped land in West Billings has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, since 1978. What was productive agricultural land is being subdivided at an increasing rate and a significant number of housing units are being constructed. This is illus-

Billings-Area Employment Projections

	2000 EMPLOYEES	% CHANGE	2010 EMPLOYEES	% CHANGE	2020 EMPLOYEES	OVERALL % CHANGE
BILLINGS CENTRAL	60,058	8%	64,818	7%	69,578	16%
HEIGHTS	5,900	12%	6,580	10%	7,260	23%
LOCKWOOD	2,993	23%	3,673	19%	4,353	45%
SOUTH HILLS	151	106%	311	51%	471	212%
WEST BILLINGS	2,286	39%	3,185	29%	4,107	80%

Source: Billings Urban Area 2000 Transportation Plan, August 1999

trated by the fact that in 1978 there were 1,900 acres of developed land and by 1997 this had increased to 4,900 acres developed with another 5,000 acres subdivided or in the planning stages of subdividing. The total amount of developed land or land considered to be in some private development plan has grown to about 9,000 acres (an increase of about 35%) and the amount of land continuing with some type of agricultural utilization has decreased to about 6,990 acres (a decrease of about 42%).

West Billings Land Use Facts

West Billings includes about 22,859 acres

About 1,900 acres (8%) were subdivided and developed by 1978

About 4,900 acres (21%) were subdivided and developed by 1997

Approximately an additional 5,000 acres (22%) have been subdivided

but are undeveloped or are currently in a planning process for upcoming subdivision

RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

The largest land use in the West Billings area, except for agricultural uses, is residential. According to the Yellowstone County GIS, there are about 3,181 acres of residential land use, comprising approximately 14% of the area. Single-family housing comprises the great majority of this land use with approximately 1600 dwelling units existing. A very small number of multi-family units exist near the east boundary of the study area. With the development of water and sewer systems and appropriate zoning, an increase in multi-family units could be expected.

COMMERCIAL LAND USE

Small pockets of commercial land use are found at intersections along Shiloh Road and South of King Avenue primarily serving the local residents. There are approximately 880 acres of commercial land use, comprising only about 4% of the study area. Current zoning does not allow significant areas of commercial development to occur. East of the planning area boundary and within the Billings' City Limits, an extensive area of commercial development exists, especially along King Avenue and Grand Avenue.

INDUSTRIAL LAND USE

Significant concentrations of industrial land utilization are located primarily south of King Avenue, throughout the length of the planning area. There are approximately 427 acres of industrial land use, comprising about 2% of the study area. The most common and very visible industrial land use is gravel extraction but other light fabrication and construction operations exist.

GRAVEL RESOURCE AREAS

Significant gravel deposits exist in this area and in order to notify future residents and/or developers the areas of potential gravel mining are located on Map 8, Future Land Utilization. The primary gravel source area (QT-3) is 50 to 90 feet above the river and is primarily north of the BBWA Canal. Deposits consist of 20 to 30 feet of well-washed gravel. The secondary gravel source area (QT-1, QT-2) parallels the Yellowstone River. It is 20 to 40 feet above the river, primarily between the river and Interstate 90. QT-2 deposits consist of 40 to 60 feet of sandy gravel and QT-1 consist of 20 to 40 feet of coarse gravel and sand.

Source: Arthur Gosling, "Water Resources of the Yellowstone River Valley", U.S. Geological Survey, 1973

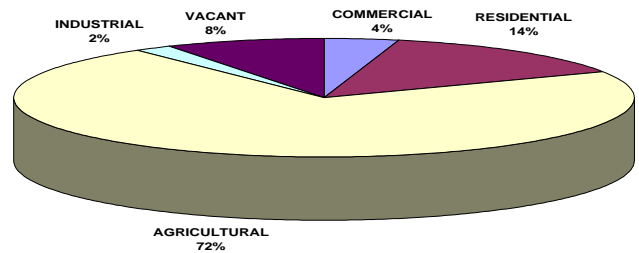
AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

Agriculture, historically, has been the dominant land usage within the West Billings area. During the past 20 years, agriculture has been severely impacted by growing residential development. Currently there is about

Existing West Billings Land Use

TYPE OF USE	ACRES
COMMERCIAL	860
RESIDENTIAL	3,181
AGRICULTURAL	16,490
INDUSTRIAL	427
VACANT	1,901
TOTAL	22,859

Source: Yellowstone County GIS, 1999
JGA Architects Engineers Planners

**EXISTING LAND USE IN THE STUDY AREA**

16,490 acres of agricultural land, comprising about 72% of the West Billings area. During the past 20 years, due to residential, commercial, and industrial development, the land utilized for productive agriculture has been declining an average of about 160 acres every year. In addition, if the land that has been subdivided but not actually developed is considered, an average of nearly 400 acres of farmland is removed from production every year.

Parks and Recreation

The West Billings area has a system of 15 dedicated but generally undeveloped public parks and three private recreational facilities. Each park site provides a somewhat different recreational or open space opportunity. The Parks 2020 Plan classifies West Billings parks into five general cate-

Few residents in newer subdivisions need to be reminded of the aridity of this climate.



gories: Local, Neighborhood, Community, Regional, and Specialty Parks. Parks may sometimes fall under more than one classification. The Parks 2020 Plan recommends 13 park sites to be funded for development.

Although the plan was originally adopted in 1998, these recommendations generally have not been implemented. Yellowstone County does not have a working system for funding development of county parks.

1. Local or Subdivision Parks are subdivision specific, smaller parks designed as an active play area, primarily for younger children in a neighborhood. Local parks should provide facilities, such as sand boxes, playground equipment, shade trees, and sitting areas. Subdivision parks are two acres or less, serve a quarter-mile radius, and consist of open lawn areas and a playground. There is one developed local or subdivision park in West Billings with six additional recommended for development by the *Parks 2020 Plan*.

Cloverleaf Park, 4.6 acres, developed

Grand Acres Park, .29 acres, undeveloped

Rush Acres Poly Park, 4.0 acres, undeveloped

Cynthia Park, <1 acre, undeveloped

Dokken Park, .8 acres, undeveloped

Byron Nelson Park, 4 acres, undeveloped

Robert Trent Jones Park, <1 acre, undeveloped

2. Neighborhood Parks provide both active and passive recreation opportunities in a defined neighborhood or area. In addition to specific activities, the park should provide picnic areas, shade trees, sitting areas, and in some parks, walking opportunities. Neighborhood parks are from 10 to 20 acres in size, service a half-mile radius, and have open lawn areas, picnic facilities, and playgrounds. The West Billings area currently has six neighborhood parks recommended for development by the *Parks 2020 Plan*.

C/S 820, undeveloped

C/S 685, undeveloped

Well Garden Park, 8.7 acres, undeveloped

Clydesdale Park, 6.3 acres, undeveloped

Rush Acres Colton Park, 10.0 acres, undeveloped

Yellowstone Meadows Park, 2.5 acres, undeveloped

3. Community Parks provide a wide range of both passive and active recreational opportunities for the entire community. A community park should have a focal point to attract users and provide a special identity to the park. Community parks are more intensely developed than other types of parks and should have adequate buffer spaces between active recreation areas and surrounding neighborhoods or commercial development. Good vehicle access and parking must be provided. These parks should be handicapped accessible and maintained for intensive use by all age levels. Community parks are generally from 10 to 20 acres in size, service a radius of 1½ miles, and consist of open lawn areas, landscaping, picnic facilities, and sports fields and courts. The Parks 2020 Plan identifies the need for community parks in the West Billings area but does not establish a specific location.
4. Regional Parks provide multifunctional, resource-based development that incorporates recreation, conservation, open space, and special uses. These parks are intended to serve a regional population as well as the local community. Regional parks are at least 20 acres in size and service a 2-1/2 mile radius or larger. West Billings has an partially developed regional park with one additional park site recommended for development by the Parks 2020 Plan.

Phipps Park, 354 acres, partially developed

Sharptail Park, 51 acres, county gravel pit and future park in Parks 2020 Plan
5. Specialty Parks and Open Space provide recreational opportunity based either on a natural feature of the site or unique park facilities. These parks can be both private and public facilities. Open space in and around West Billings, in addition to formally dedicated parkland, plays an important role in softening urban development. Open space can be in addition to parks and recreational land and can take the form of agricultural land, floodways, streambeds, waterways, and non-buildable lands.

Yellowstone Country Club, private golf course

Oscar's Dreamland, private

Zoo Montana, 70 acres, private

Street System

The Roads that Connect Us

West Billings' roadway network is classified in the following manner:

FREEWAYS:

Interstate 90

ARTERIAL STREETS:

South Frontage Road
Neibauer Road
Central Avenue
Molt Road
Story Road
48th Street West
64th Street West
Laurel Airport Road
Hesper Road
Grand Avenue
Zoo Drive
Duck Creek Road
56th Street West
72nd Street West
Danford Road
King Avenue West
Rimrock Road
Wise Lane
Shiloh Road
Danford Drive
62nd Street West

COLLECTOR STREETS:

Rudio Road
46th Street West
54th Street West

ROADWAYS WITH SIGNIFICANT GROWTH- RELATED IMPACTS:

King Avenue West
Shiloh Road

The *Billings Urban Area 2000 Transportation Plan* was finalized as of August 1999. It was the source of the following street system information. West Billings streets are classified into the functional categories of Freeway, Arterial, Collector, and Local.

The functional classification system distinguishes streets and roadways according to their function within the entire transportation network.

1. Freeways serve high speed, long distance travel movements and provide little access to adjacent lands.
2. Arterial streets are intended to provide a high level of mobility; arterial streets have limited access, favor mobility functions (higher speeds and long distance continuity) over land access functions. Arterial streets provide connections to both freeways and collector streets.
3. Collector streets collect traffic from primary access points (local streets) and carry it to arterial streets for longer distance travel. Ideally, collector streets provide access to, but not through, residential neighborhoods and do not have long continuity, which attracts the long distance, high-speed traffic that is not appropriate for residential areas.
4. Local streets are intended for low traffic volumes, short distance travel, low speed intra-neighborhood traffic, and feed into collector streets for travel.

Regional Roadway Network

Billings is the largest city in the state and the largest transportation hub in the central and eastern portions of the state. Key roadway linkages between Billings and other urban areas in Montana include the freeways: I-90 (to I-25), I-94, and Montana 3 / US 87.

Near the Billings Urban Area, few roadways cross the Yellowstone River or climb up the Rimrocks to provide north-south connections. Zimmerman Trail is the only route over the rims within the West Billings area. Zimmerman Trail traverses residential areas and presents significant topographic constraints and is less than ideal as a north-south transportation link.

As of 1998, no roadways in the West Billings planning area were over capacity. Shiloh Road, from Monad Road to Grand Avenue, was nearing capacity. Projections for the year 2020 predict that

Shiloh Road from Zoo Drive North to Rimrock Road will be over capacity and King Avenue West from Shiloh to 48th Street West will be nearing capacity.

“Committed” Roadway improvement projects:

Shiloh Interchange - with I-90, and rebuilt connection to Shiloh Road.

Shiloh Road - widening to five lanes from Grand Avenue to Rimrock Road

Utilities

The West Billings area is served by solid waste collection, electric, telephone, and natural gas services in addition to the City of Billings water and sanitary sewer services.

West Billings Water And Sanitary Sewer Facts:

In 1978 there were approximately 775 individual wells and septic systems

In 1998, there were approximately 1,600 well and septic systems, a 106% increase.

The West Billings groundwater is “a fragile, artificial system that is declining in both the quality and quantity of water”

Source: Yellowstone County GIS, 1999 Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Ground Water Study, to be completed summer 2001

WATER AND SANITARY SEWER

Nearly all existing development in the West Billings area outside of the Billings city limits is served by individual well and septic systems. The City Public Utilities Department has indicated they will continue to consider requests to provide municipal water and wastewater service to the West Billings area. The existing city sewer plant would likely be able to handle the additional volumes generated by extension of service to the area extending to 56th Street West. Provision of water service to the area extending to 56th Street West is possible but will eventually require additional incremental capital improvements at the city water plant as development proceeds. The long-range plans of the City of Billings include extending water and sewer services to 72nd Street West. Generally, the property owner or developer requesting service is responsible to pay the cost of extensions to the City’s water and wastewater system.

Average daily usage - winter is 15-17 million gallons per day.

Average daily usage - summer 45-46 million gallons per day.

Source: Carl Christensen, Director - Public Utilities Department, City of Billings, February 23, 2000.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

For development review in the West Billings area, the City of Billings and Yellowstone County informally refer to the *Billings West End Storm Drainage Master Plan*, Engineering, Inc., 1991. This storm water management plan has never been adopted formally. The Army Corps of Engineers prepared another storm water management plan in the 1970's.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha, Nebraska, March 1970, Report on Restudy of Yellowstone River and Tributaries, Billings, Montana, Flood Control Project.

ELECTRIC SERVICE

The Montana Power Company and Yellowstone Valley Electric Co-op, Inc. provide electric service.

SOLID WASTE

Areas inside of the city limits are served by the City of Billings solid waste disposal service. The area outside of the City limits is privately served by BFI.

NATURAL GAS

Natural gas is provided by Montana-Dakota Utilities via pipeline or by private companies via tanks and local piping requiring periodic filling services.

In the end, plans like this one increase the simple enjoyment everyone in a community gets from being in that community.





The Visual Preference Survey

Overview

The Visual Preference Survey involved people.

During the spring of 1999, nearly 500 area residents took an active part in helping to define the character of desired future growth and development in West Billings. They participated in a Visual Preference Survey, a component of the West Billings Plan. The basis for undertaking this visual survey was the saying...."You can't get what you want, until you know what you want". The purpose of the Visual Preference Survey is to give residents an opportunity to tell the Billings community what they want West Billings to look like as it grows and develops. A community cannot create credible plans unless it can first see and understand the vision it holds for itself. This Visual Preference Survey is one of several tools used to gain public input in the planning process. Public input is the foundation of the West Billings Plan.

With the assumption that a picture is more specific and clearly understood than words, the Visual Preference Survey was presented to groups who attended either public meetings or private organization meetings held throughout Billings. Diverse groups from throughout the Billings community participated including monthly planning meetings, Billings West Rotary Club, Montana State University Billings, Mission Ridge, Golden K Kiwanis Club, Breakfast Exchange Club, Billings Board of Realtors, Yellowstone County Commission, Yellowstone County Board of Planning, and others.

By conducting a visual preference survey as a part of the West Billings Plan:

A large number of people were involved.

There was an easy process for people to express their opinions.

An awareness was developed about what people like and dislike about the built environment around Billings

The community has a clearer picture of the expectations and desires people have for future development in West Billings

How did the Visual Preference Survey work?

Participants were asked to rate 106 slide images of different kinds of development. To present a wide variety of possibilities from around the region, images were gathered from Billings and also other communities including Bozeman, Helena, Great Falls, Cody, Powell, Fargo, Dickinson, Bismarck, and Calgary. The visual survey looked at ten categories of issues to help define a desired community character:

Arterial and commercial streets

Sidewalks

Signs

Commercial development

Parking lots

Trees and landscaping in commercial development

Residential development

Vistas

Public art

Overhead versus underground utility lines

The following is a summary of nearly 500 public comments gathered from 12 Visual Preference Survey presentations. The ratings and summary comments were calculated by taking the average response from all survey participants. Images receiving a rating of less than -5 were considered to be strongly disliked and images with a score of greater than +5 were considered to be strongly liked. In all examples, the images shown in this report represent the likes and dislikes of a majority of participants.

What Participants Said They Desired For West Billings:

The Character of Arterial and Commercial Streets

- ❑ There really is not a good example of the desired arterial street in Billings.
- ❑ Streets such as Shiloh should contain a landscaped center median.
- ❑ Commercial streets should be equally favorable for both the movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- ❑ Lighting should respect the local conditions and architectural style of adjacent development.
- ❑ Street trees are very important in defining the character of the community and desired.



*This type of street received the lowest score.
Slide 31 Average Rating -3.14
40.95% rated -5 to -10*



*This type of street received the highest score.
Slide 40 Average Rating 4.44
52.7% rated +5 to +10*

The Character of Sidewalks

- ❑ Commercial streets should have sidewalks designed for the pedestrian's safe and enjoyable walking experience.
- ❑ Pedestrian walkways along commercial streets should be separated from traffic lanes by an ample landscaped boulevard buffer.



*This type of sidewalk received the lowest score.
Slide 47 Average Rating -1.59
25.08% rated -5 to -10*



*This type of sidewalk received the highest score.
Slide 46 Average Rating 6.05
73.65% rated +5 to +10*

The Character of Signs

- ❑ Large billboard and tall free-standing signs are very undesirable, unwanted, are out of scale with adjacent development, and incompatible with the character of West Billings.
- ❑ Small signs that are associated directly with an adjacent business are desirable.
- ❑ Signage should be developed in conjunction with landscaping.
- ❑ A large number of continuous signs, the “sign-upon-sign look” that results in visual clutter along a street, are very undesirable.



*This type of sign received the highest score.
Slide 106 Average Rating 6.05
74.08% rated +5 to +10*



*This type of sign received the lowest score.
Slide 99 Average Rating -5.85
62.86% rated -5 to -10*



*This type of commercial development received the highest score.
Slide 18 Average Rating 4.64
59.05% rated +5 to +10*

*This type of commercial development received the lowest score.
Slide 63 Average Rating -2.44
31.11% rated -5 to -10*



The Character of Commercial Development

- ❑ Commercial development should be compatible with adjacent development in mass, architectural style, and site landscaping. This is especially important when commercial uses abut residential uses.
- ❑ Smaller commercial “villages” with a “residential” character, expressive and visible roof areas, and significant areas of landscaping are very desirable.
- ❑ Commercial strip development with large flat roof areas and “token” small areas of landscaping are very undesirable.
- ❑ National chain stores should customize their standard building designs and site designs to be compatible and complementary to the local area and adjacent development.
- ❑ Exterior lighting of commercial developments should be compatible with the character of the area and adjacent land use.

The Character of Parking Lots



*This type of parking lot received the highest score.
Slide 82 Average Rating 4.62
49.2% rated +5 to +10*



*This type of parking lot received the lowest score.
Slide 78 Average Rating -2.46
35.87% rated -5 to -10*

- ❑ Large areas of trees and landscaping in parking lots are very desirable.
- ❑ Large barren parking lots with no landscaping or only perimeter landscaping are very undesirable.
- ❑ Public spaces within a parking lot such as walkways to building entrances and places to sit near building are very desirable.
- ❑ Trees and landscaping should be distributed throughout parking lots, not just around the perimeter.
- ❑ Landscaped areas should be large enough to be effective buffer, visually break-up larger parking lots and help define the character of a commercial development.

The Character of Trees and Landscaping in Commercial Development

- ❑ More trees and landscaping in West Billings are far better than less.
- ❑ The use of street trees is strongly desired.
- ❑ The use of landscaping as a visual buffer and to help define the character of both residential and commercial developments is strongly desired.



*The use of street trees received the highest rating.
Slide 42 Average Rating -7.35
90.16% rated +5 to +10*

The Character of Residential Development

- Residential development should have paved streets.
- West Billings should have a mixture of housing types while maintaining a human scale and neighborhood character.
- Garages should not dominate the streetscape.
- Adjacent housing developments should be compatible in both mass and architectural style and visually buffered with effective landscaped buffers.

West Billings Vistas



*Maintaining vistas received the highest score.
Slide 67 Average Rating 4.95
61.27% rated +5 to +10*

- As much as possible the natural character or public view of the Rimrocks must not be diminished or compromised by commercial or residential development.

- Vistas or views in West Billings should be protected from visual impact by residential or commercial development, signage, utility poles, lighting, or tall installations such as communications facilities.



*Disrupting vistas received a low score.
Slide 66 Average Rating -1.14
24.76% rated -5 to -10*

Public Art

- The use of public art in conjunction with commercial development is very desirable.



*Placing utility lines above ground received the lowest score.
Slide 71 Average Rating -3.13
43.95% rated -5 to -10*

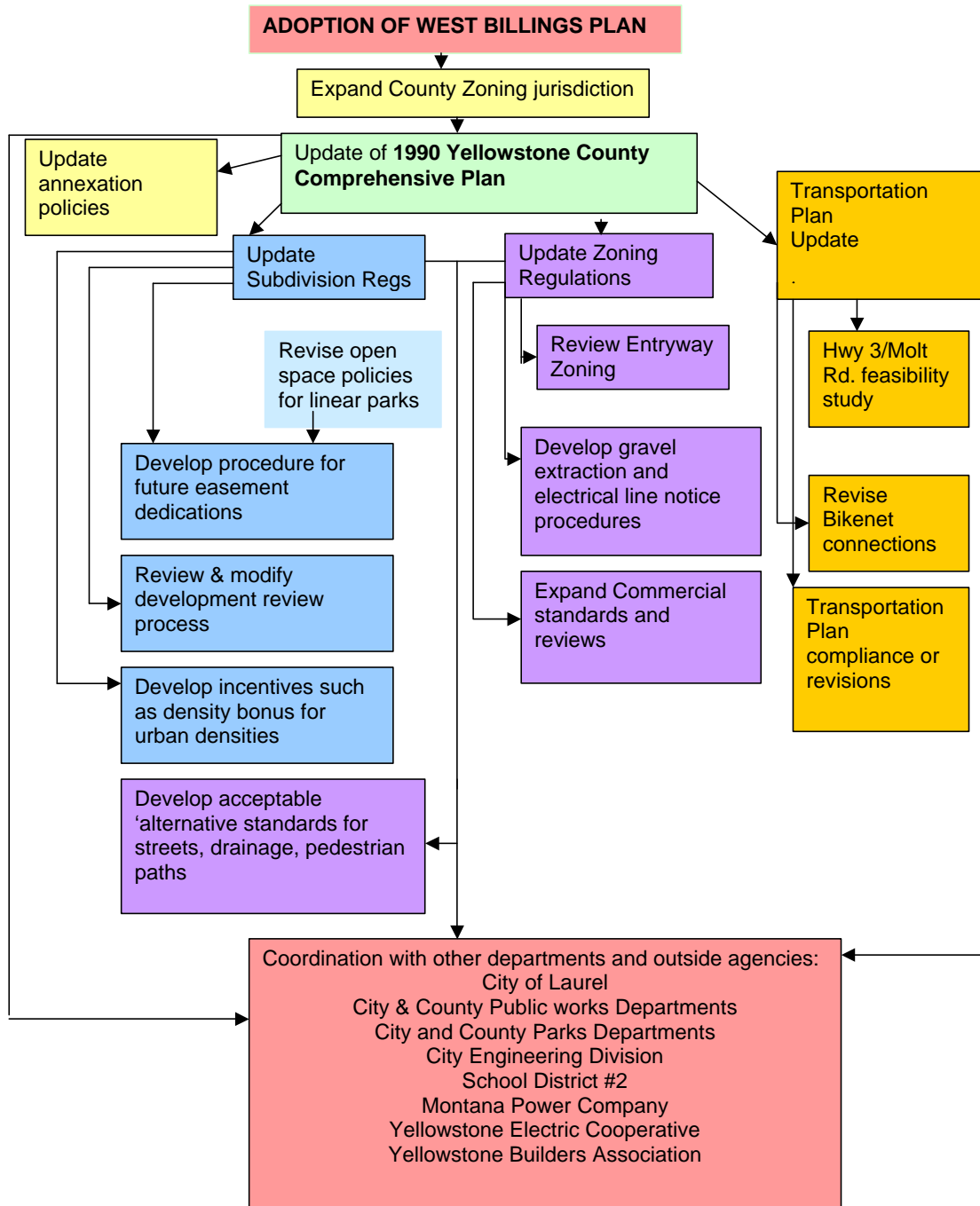
Overhead versus Underground Utility Lines

- Underground utility lines are very desirable.
- Where power poles are absolutely required, the large poles, as installed along Grand Avenue west of 24th Street West, are undesirable and are not compatible with the preferred character of West Billings.



*Placing utilities underground received the highest score.
Slide 77 Average Rating 3.34
34.29% rated +5 to +10*

West Billings Plan Implementation Flow Chart



CITY/COUNTY PLANNING WEST BILLINGS MASTER PLAN FISCAL IMPACTS			
PROJECT	TIME	COST	STAFF TIME
Update of 1990 Yellowstone County Comprehensive Plan/Growth Policies	18 - 24 months	\$80,000+/-in house	2 FTE
<i>Expansion of County Zoning Jurisdiction</i>	<i>3 - 6 months</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
Update of Annexation Regulations and Policies	6 - 9 months	\$11,000	.25 FTE
Update of Subdivision Regulations and Policies	6 - 9 months	\$27,000	1 FTE
Update of Zoning Regulations	12 - 18 months	\$45,000	1.5 – 2 FTE
<i>Development of procedure for review of future easements in subdivisions</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>\$4,200</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
<i>Review entryway zoning districts</i>	<i>2 months</i>	<i>\$1,200</i>	<i>.25 FTE</i>
<i>Expand Commercial development standards</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>\$12,500</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
<i>Review and modify the Development Review Process</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>\$3,800</i>	<i>.25 - .5 FTE</i>
<i>Develop Gravel Mining and Electrical Line Notice procedures</i>	<i>3 months</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
<i>Development of Density Bonus and other incentives</i>	<i>6 - 9 months</i>	<i>\$7,000</i>	<i>.5 - .75 FTE</i>
<i>Development of acceptable alternative standards for streets, drainage and pedestrian paths</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>\$18,000</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
<i>Hwy 3/Molt Road feasibility study</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>	<i>Consultant</i>
<i>Revise Bikenet Corridors for consistency with Plan</i>	<i>1 month</i>	<i>\$1,000</i>	<i>.25 FTE</i>
<i>Review & revision of Transportation Plan</i>	<i>1 month</i>	<i>\$2,200</i>	<i>.5 FTE</i>
TOTAL	6 – 18 months	\$244,900	9 FTE
TOTAL SPECIFIC TO WEST BILLINGS PLAN	1 – 6 months	\$56,900 in house & \$25,000 consultant fee	4.25 FTE

Prepared by Yellowstone County Board of Planning, June 2001.

The logo for the West Billings Plan features a dark, rectangular background with a photograph of trees and a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a lens flare effect. The text "West Billings" is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, and "Plan" is in a white, cursive script font. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the text.

West Billings Plan

Appendix

1. Glossary
 - Acronyms
 - Definitions
2. Maps
 - Map 1: Land Characteristics
 - Map 2: Legal Subdivisions
 - Map 3: Water and Waste Water Systems
 - Map 4: Generalized Existing Land Use
 - Map 5: 1978 Development
 - Map 6: 1997 Development
 - Map 7: Existing Generalized Zoning
 - Map 8: Future Land Utilization
 - Map 9: Planning Area Boundary

Acronyms

CIP	Capital Improvements Program
GIS	Geographic Information System
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
LOS	Level of Service
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
PUD	Planned Unit Development

Definitions

Adequate public facilities: Facilities that have the capacity to serve development without decreasing levels of service below locally established minimums.

Affordable housing: Residential housing that is rented or owned by a person or household whose monthly gross housing costs, including utilities other than telephone, do not exceed thirty (30%) percent of the household's gross monthly income.

Agricultural land: Land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticulture, viticulture, floriculture, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, Christmas trees, seed, or livestock, and has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.

Annexation: The act of incorporating an area into the domain of an incorporated city.

Arterial roadways: A class of roadway serving major movements of traffic not served by interstate highways. These roadways are generally four lanes, have higher speeds, and more traffic. Arterials are intended primarily for traffic movement and secondarily for access to abutting properties.

Assisted housing: Housing which is subject to restrictions on rents or sales prices as a result of one or more project based government subsidies.

Available public facilities: Facilities or services that are in place or that a financial commitment is in place to provide the facilities or services within a specified time.

Buffer: An area contiguous with a critical area that is required for the integrity, maintenance, function, and stability of the critical area.

Capital facilities: Public structures, improvements, pieces of equipment or other major assets, including land, that have a useful life of at least 10

years. Capital facilities are provided by and for public purposes and services. For the purpose of this plan, capital facilities are surface water management, solid waste disposal, law and justice, general government, parks and recreation, airport, transportation, education, fire protection, sanitary sewer, and public water supply systems.

Capital improvement: Land, improvements to land, structures (including design, permitting and construction), initial furnishings and selected equipment.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): A plan that matches the costs of capital improvements to anticipated revenues and a time line. CIPs are usually prepared for six or more years, updated annually, and coordinated with the master planning process.

Central Water System: A non-municipal water system for the provision of water for human consumption from an approved community well, hauled water source, treated surface water source, bottled or dispensed water supply.

Central Sanitary Sewer System: A non-municipal sanitary sewer system for the collection, transportation, treatment, and disposal of sewage that is an approved system other than an individual septic system.

City: All land included within the municipal limits of an incorporated city. In Sheridan County this includes Sheridan, Dayton, Ranchester, and Clearmont.

Collector road: Collector roads serve to collect and distribute traffic from and to neighborhoods and commercial areas and connect it to arterial roadways. This class of road provides direct access to land and features more driveways and lower speeds. Traffic loads are intended to be lower than on arterials, therefore these roadways tend to have two lanes.

Commercial: Any land development activity except activity intended solely for residential, industrial, and/or light industrial uses.

Comprehensive Plan: A generalized coordinated land use policy statement of the governing body of a city or county adopted pursuant to legislation of the State of Wyoming.

Conservation: The planned management of natural resources.

Consistency: Means that no feature of a plan or regulation is incompatible with any other feature of a plan or regulation.

Countywide: All of incorporated and unincorporated Sheridan County.

Critical areas: Includes the following areas and ecosystems: wetlands; areas with critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; frequently flooded areas; and geologically hazardous areas.

Cultural resources: Includes sites, structures, objects, or remains, which convey historical, architectural or archaeological information of local, state, or national significance.

Density: The number of families, persons, or housing units per acre or square mile.

Development regulations: Any controls placed on development or land use activities by the city or county including, but not limited to zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, aesthetic review recommendations, and binding site plan ordinances.

Fiscal impact: The fiscal costs and constraints of implementing policies or regulations.

Floodplain: Land adjoining a river, stream, watercourse, or lake having a one percent chance of being inundated in any given year with flood waters resulting from overflow of inland waters and/or the unusual and rapid accumulation of surface runoff from any source.

Geologically hazardous areas: Areas that because of their susceptibility to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, are not suited to the siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health and safety concerns.

Goal: An action statement expressing a means of achieving a planning theme. A general condition, ideal situation, or achievement that reflects societal values or broad public purposes.

Ground water: All water that is located below the surface, more specifically, subsurface water below the water table.

Growth Policy: A plan intended to establish a vision and direction for the future of all West Billings, based on the mission statement, public input, and direction of the Planning Board. A generalized coordinated land use policy statement of the governing body of a city or county adopted pursuant to legislation of the State of Montana.

Household: All persons who occupy a housing unit that is intended as separate living quarters and having direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements.

Impact Fee: Charges levied by the city or county against new developments for a pro-rata share of the capital costs of facilities necessitated by the development.

Implementation strategies: Linkage from a plan to actions designed to achieve stated goals. Implementation strategies present the specific intent of this plan, and, taken together, constitute an agenda for action by the

planning commission, elected officials, and the citizens of Sheridan and all of Sheridan County. Implementation strategies are non-regulatory measures or recommendations intended to carry out the Vision 2020 plan. These strategies are the desired results of public actions that are specific, measurable, and lead to the achievement of a goal.

Infrastructure: Facilities and services needed to sustain the functioning of an urban area.

Leapfrog development: Development that occurs beyond the location of existing infrastructure and creates scattered urban developments within traditionally low density areas.

Local road: A roadway with the primary function of providing access to abutting properties. This type of road is typified by limited traffic control, slow speeds, low traffic volumes, two paved or unpaved lanes, and numerous driveways.

Long-term commercial agricultural significance: The growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.

Low-income: A household whose income is between 50 percent and 80 percent of the city or county median income.

Manufactured housing: Factory-assembled structures intended solely for human habitation, installed on a permanent foundation with running gear removed, and connected to utilities on an individual building site.

Master Plan: See "Comprehensive Plan".

Median income: The income level that divides the income distribution into two equal parts, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of units including those with no income.

Minerals: Includes gravel, sand, rock, coal, and valuable metals.

Mineral lands: Lands primarily devoted to extraction of minerals or that have known or potential long-term commercial significance for the extraction of minerals.

Mixed-use: A construction project that includes both commercial and residential uses.

Multifamily use: A structure or portion of a structure containing three or more dwelling units.

Municipal water and wastewater: Water and wastewater (sanitary sewer) services provided by the City of Billings or other municipality for domestic purposes and for adequate fire flow purposes.

Natural resource: Naturally occurring components of the earth's surface, such as timber, soils, water, or a mineral deposit.

Net density: Density of development excluding roads, critical areas and required buffers, drainage detention/retention areas, swales, and areas required for public use.

Pedestrian-friendly development: Development designs that encourage walking by providing site amenities for pedestrians. Pedestrian friendly environments reduce auto dependence and may encourage the use of public transportation.

Planned Unit Development: A design technique that allows a land area to be planned and developed as a single entity containing one or more residential and/or commercial clusters or complexes which can include a wide range and mix of compatible housing types and compatible commercial uses. The intent of allowing a residential and commercial mix is to allow appropriate small-scale commercial, public or quasi-public uses if such uses are primarily for the benefit of the residential development and the surrounding neighborhood.

Public facilities: Includes streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems, storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks and recreational facilities, and schools.

Public services: Includes fire protection and suppression, law enforcement, public health, education, recreation, environmental protection, and other governmental services.

Public water system: Any system of water supply intended or used for human consumption or other domestic uses, including source, treatment, storage, transmission, and distribution facilities where water is being furnished to any community, collection, or number of individuals, but excluding a water system serving one single family residence.

Purchase of development rights (PDR): The one-time purchase of the right to develop resource lands for non-resource purposes.

Planning Board: The Yellowstone County Board of Planning. Authorized by the State of Montana Statutes and appointed by the City of Billings and the Yellowstone County Commission to conduct city and county planning.

Regional service: A governmental service established by agreement among local governments that delineates the government entity or entities responsible for the service provision and allows for that delivery to extend over jurisdictional boundaries.

Regional significance: This term describes growth-planning issues and impacts which extend beyond the boundaries of an individual municipal

government and require coordinated, multi-jurisdictional supported planning solutions. The cooperation between Sheridan County and the City of Sheridan in land use planning is an example of regional significance.

Right-of-way: Land owned by a government or an easement over the land of another, used for roads, ditches, electrical transmission lines, pipelines, or public facilities.

Solid waste: A general term for discarded materials destined for disposal, but not discharged to a sewer or to the atmosphere.

Sprawl: A pattern of unplanned and unmanaged growth that results in the development of non-agricultural, lower density residential and commercial uses throughout a large area. Sprawl is considered a negative impact to many concerns presented by local residents as important to the quality of life in Sheridan County such as view sheds, wildlife habitat, natural resources, traffic, land utilization, open space, and general quality of development.

Strip commercial: An automobile oriented linear commercial development pattern with high volume traffic generating uses, vehicular entrances for each use, a visually cluttered appearance, and no internal pedestrian circulation system.

Theme: A statement of philosophy that defines a planning vision or concept. The themes contained in this plan are derived from citizen input and community participation in a planning process and are the foundation of the plan.

Urban governmental services: Those services historically and typically delivered by cities including storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with rural areas.

Urban growth: Growth that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural projects or uses, or the extraction of mineral resources. When allowed to spread over wide areas, urban growth typically requires urban governmental services.

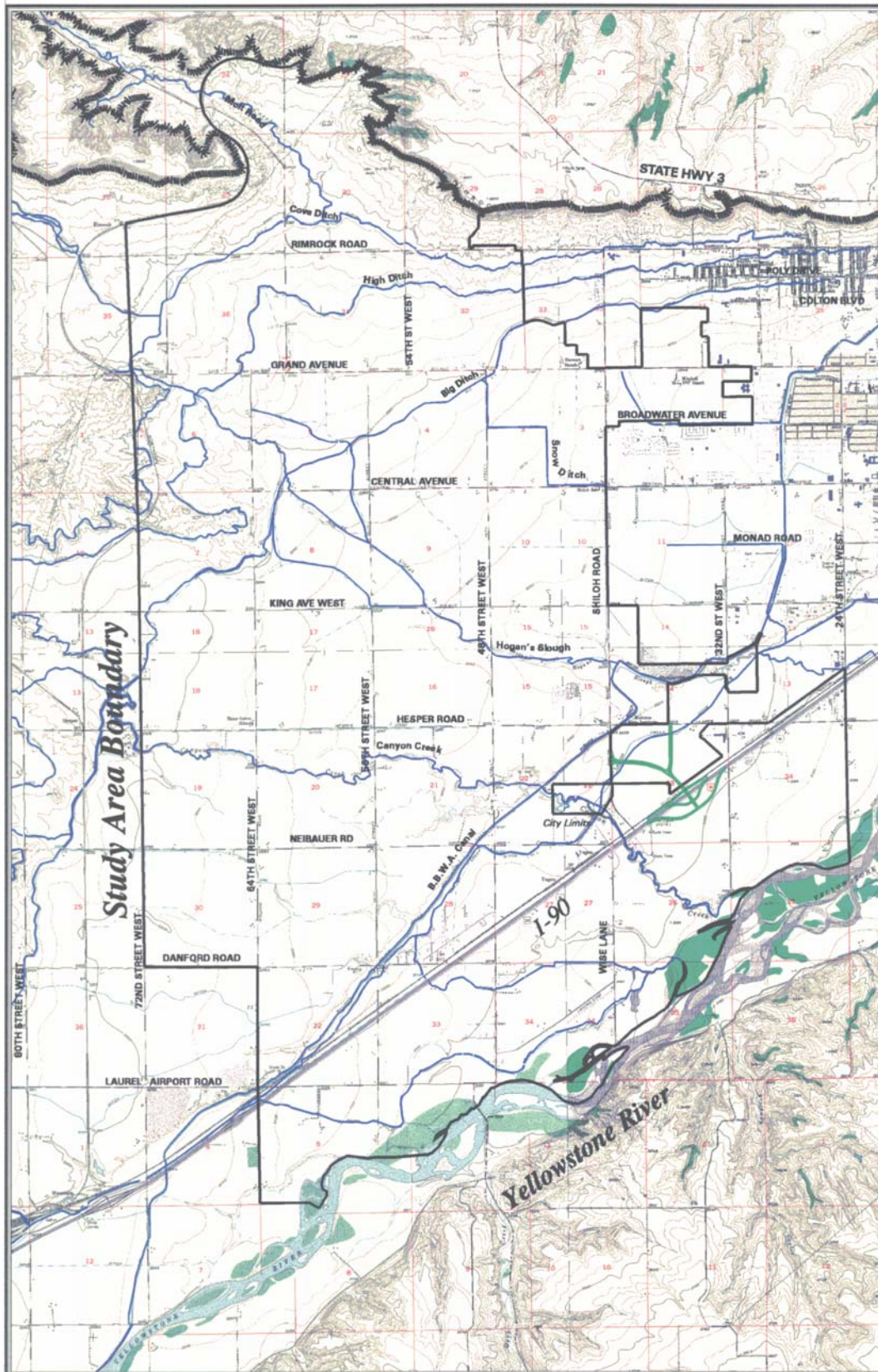
Utilities: Enterprises or facilities serving the public by means of an integrated system of collection, transmission, distribution, and processing facilities through more or less permanent physical connections between the plant of the serving entity and the premises of the customer. Included are systems for the delivery of natural gas, electricity, telecommunications services, water, and for the disposal of sewage.

Wetland: Areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that

under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands typically include swamps, bogs, marshes, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include artificial wet areas such as irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities.

Wildlife habitat: Predominantly undisturbed areas of natural vegetation and/or aquatic systems used by, and necessary for the survival of wildlife.

Zoning: The process by which the city or county legally controls the use of property and physical configuration of development upon tracts of land within its jurisdiction. Zoning is an exercise of the police power and must be enacted for the protection of public health, safety, and the general welfare.



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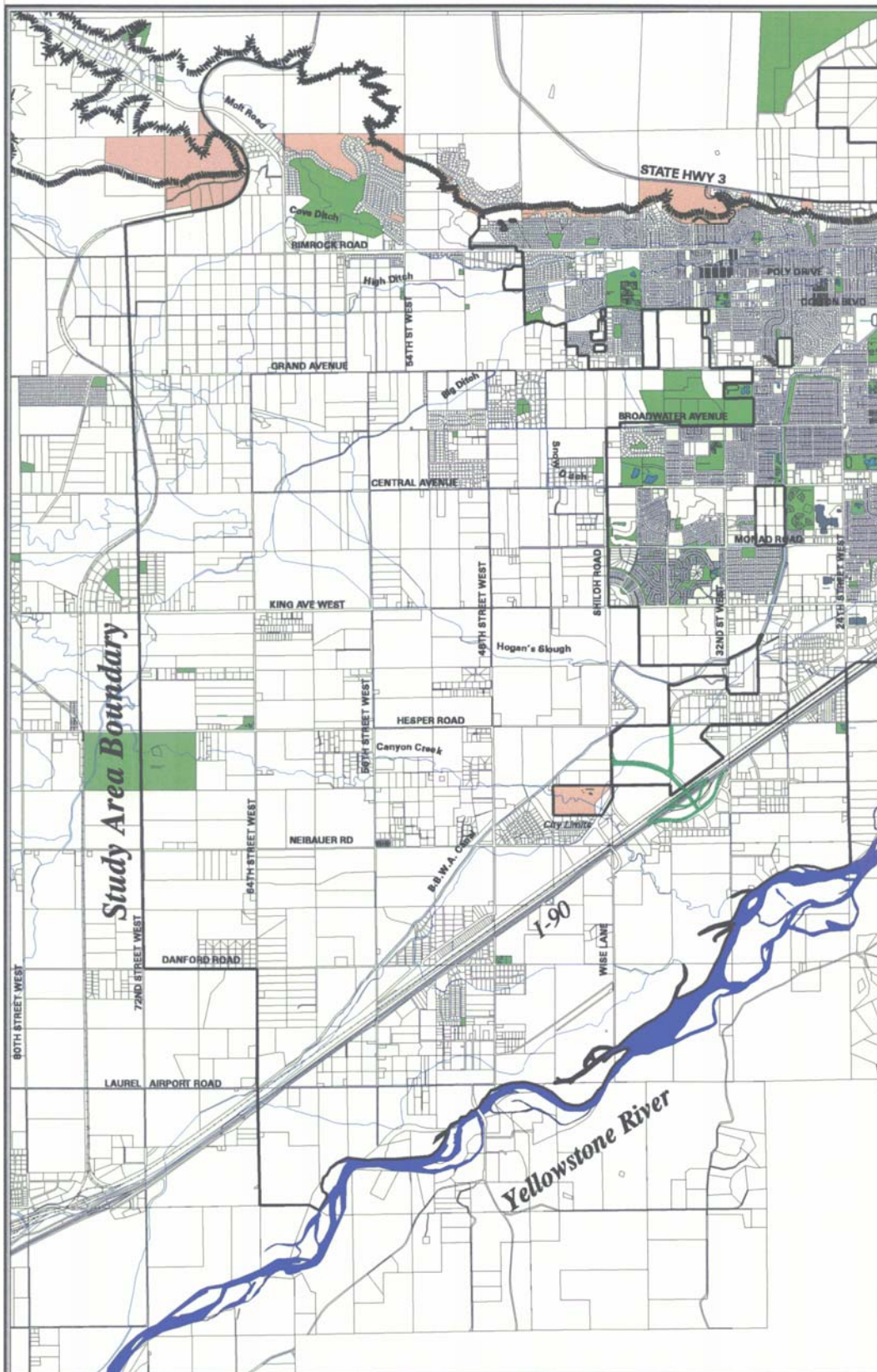
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YELLOWSTONE COUNTY BOARD OF PLANNING
WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 1
LAND CHARACTERISTICS

SCALE: 1" = 4800'

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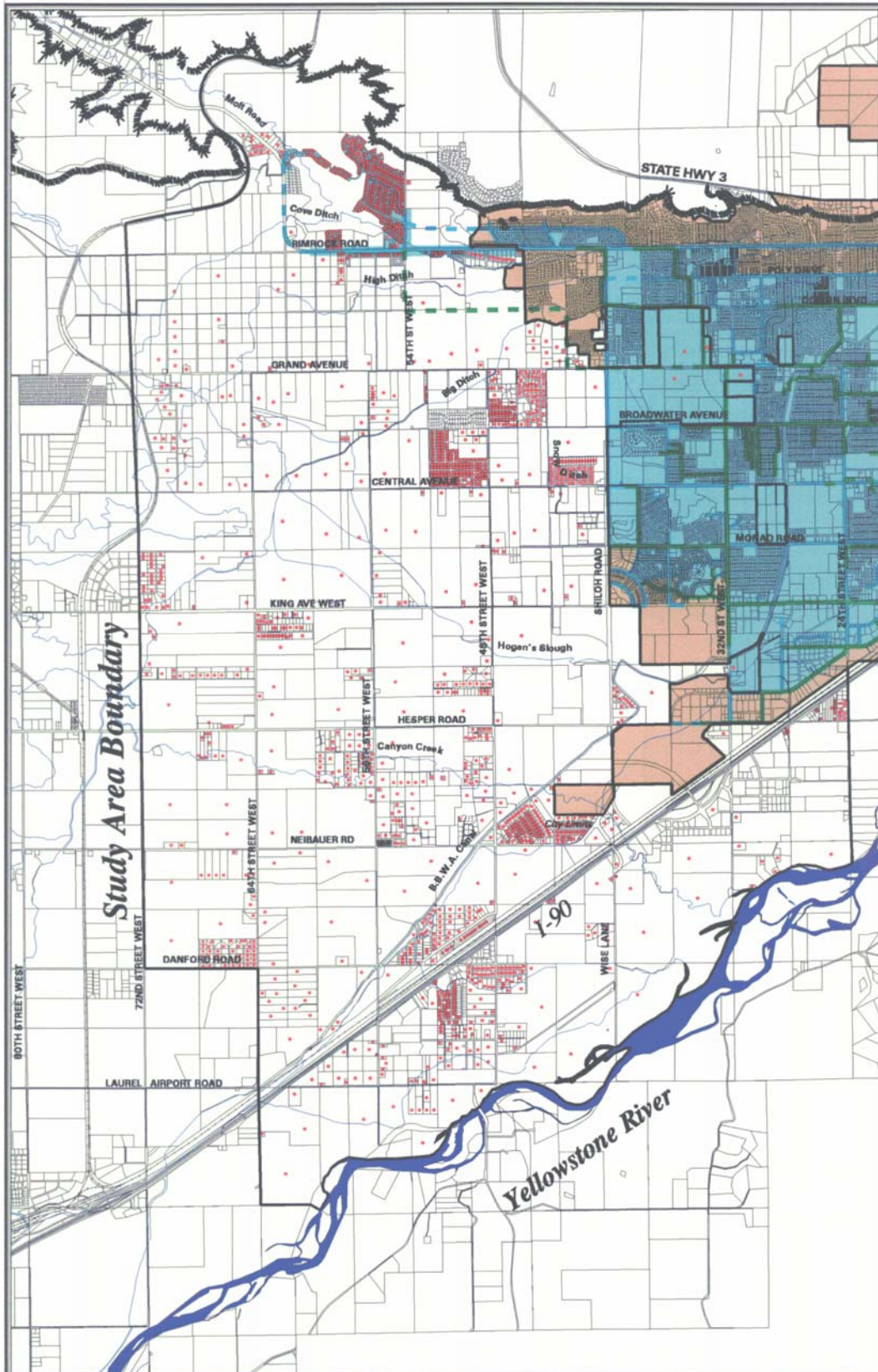
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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 2
LEGAL SUBDIVISIONS

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LEGEND

- Existing Public Water Systems
- Future Public Water Systems
- Existing Public Wastewater Systems
- Future Public Wastewater Systems
- Dwellings (Private water or sewer)

- Water Service Area
- Water & Wastewater Service Area



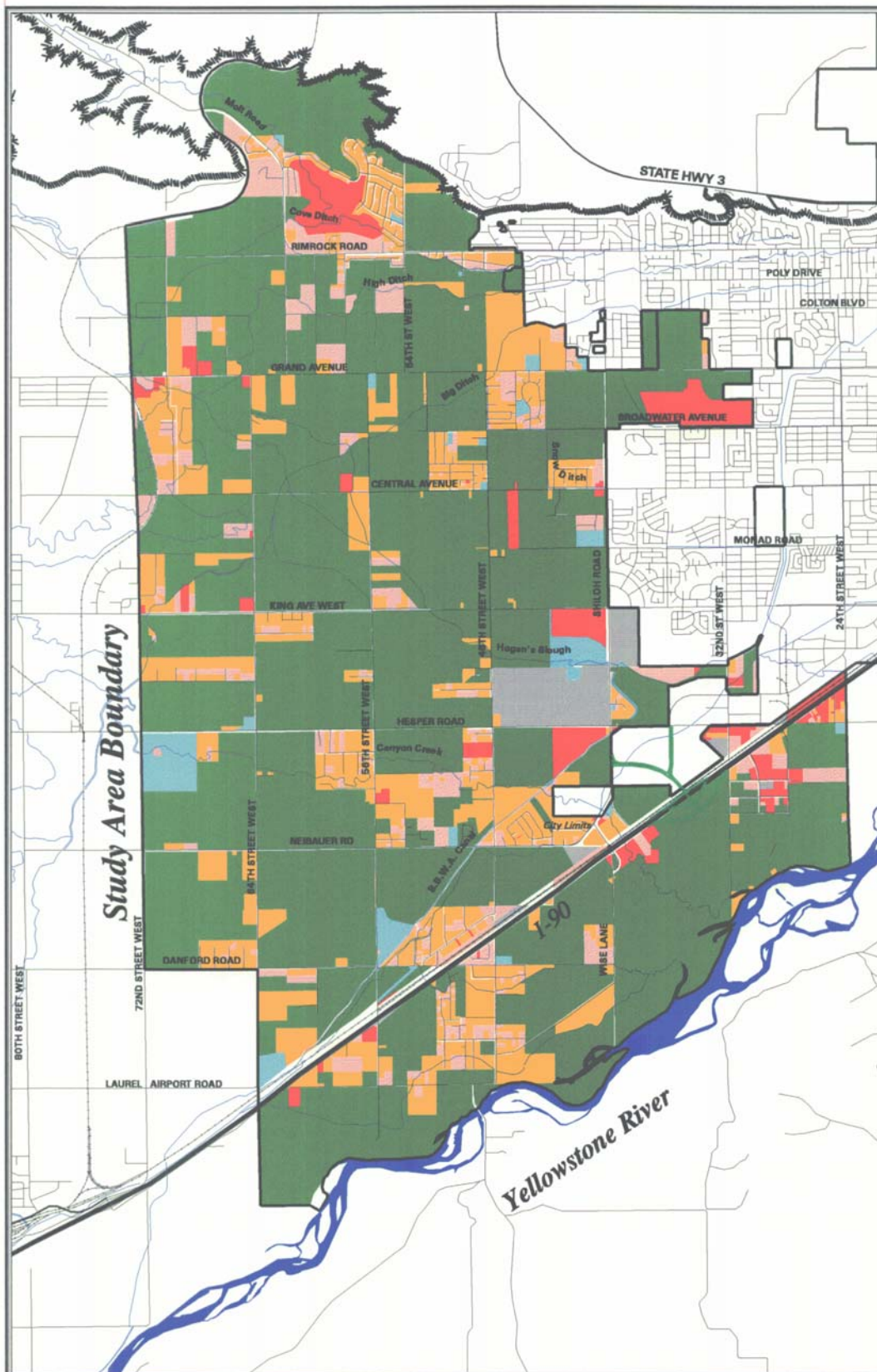
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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 3
WATER & WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

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LEGEND

- Public/Exempt
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Vacant



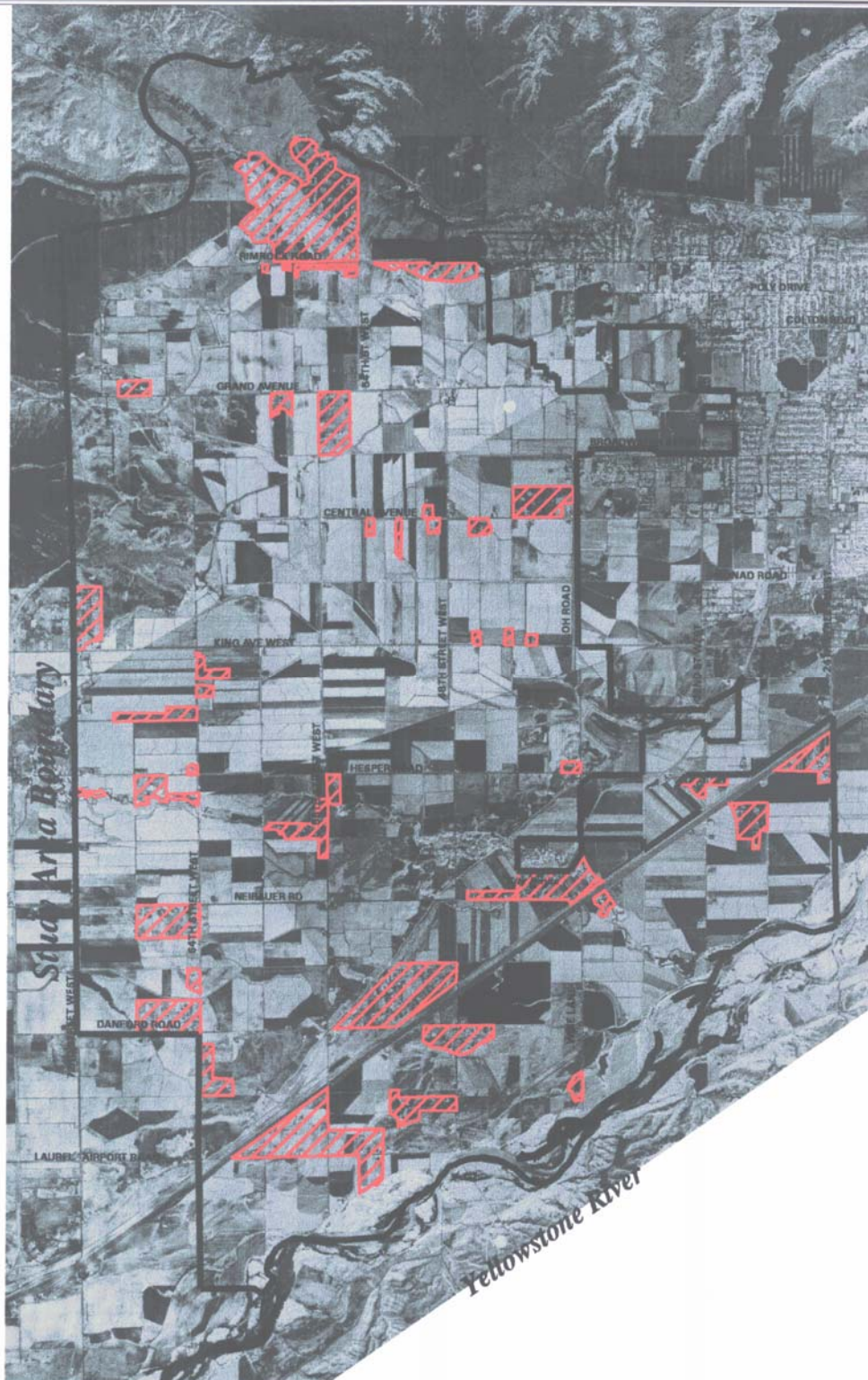
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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 4
GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE

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LEGEND

 Generalized Existing Development



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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 5
1978 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

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BOTH STREET WEST



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LEGEND

 Generalized Existing Development



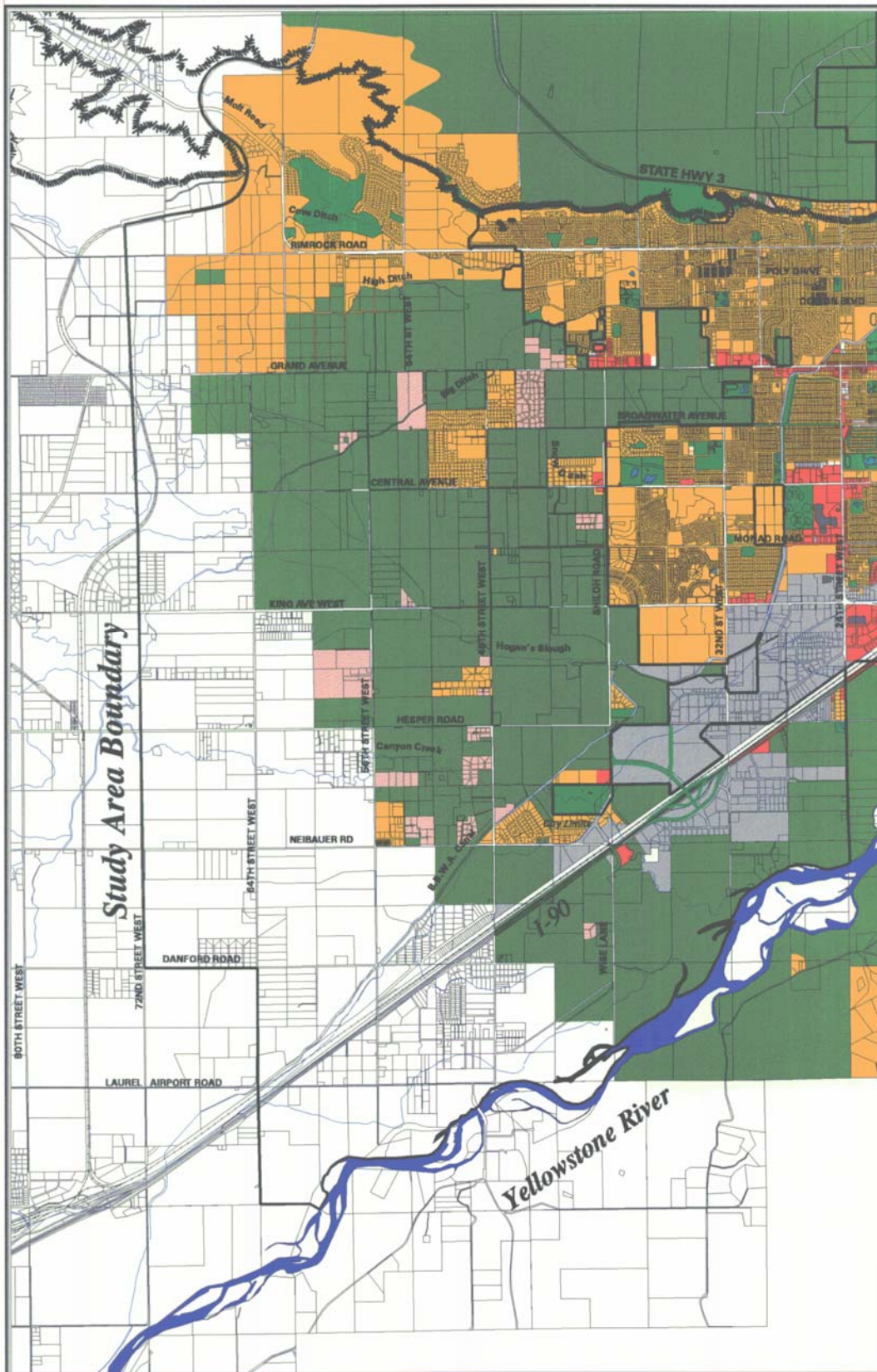
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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 6
1997 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

SCALE: 1" = 4600ft

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LEGEND

- Public
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Agricultural/Residential

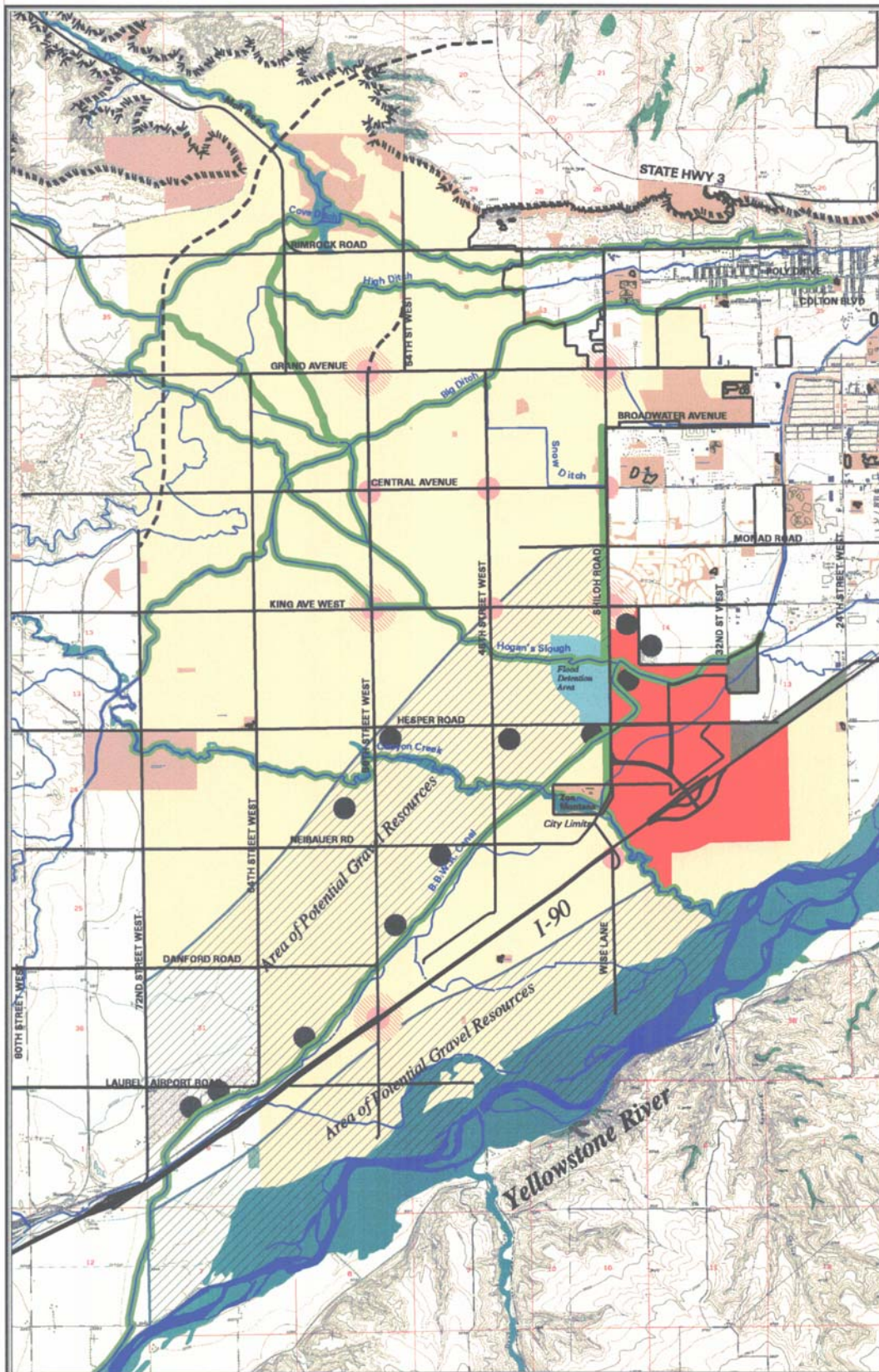


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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 7
EXISTING GENERALIZED ZONING

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LEGEND

- Parks/Public Areas/Recreation/Schools
- Open Space Corridors
- Existing Gravel Extraction Areas
- Residential Development Area
- Non-Residential Development Area
- Agricultural or Open Space
- (100 Year Floodplain)
- Potential Gravel Mining Area
- Arterial Roads
- Road Extension/Realignment
- Rimrocks
- COMMERCIAL CENTERS**
- Neighborhood Centers
- Approximately 15-20 acres
- Community Centers
- Regional Centers



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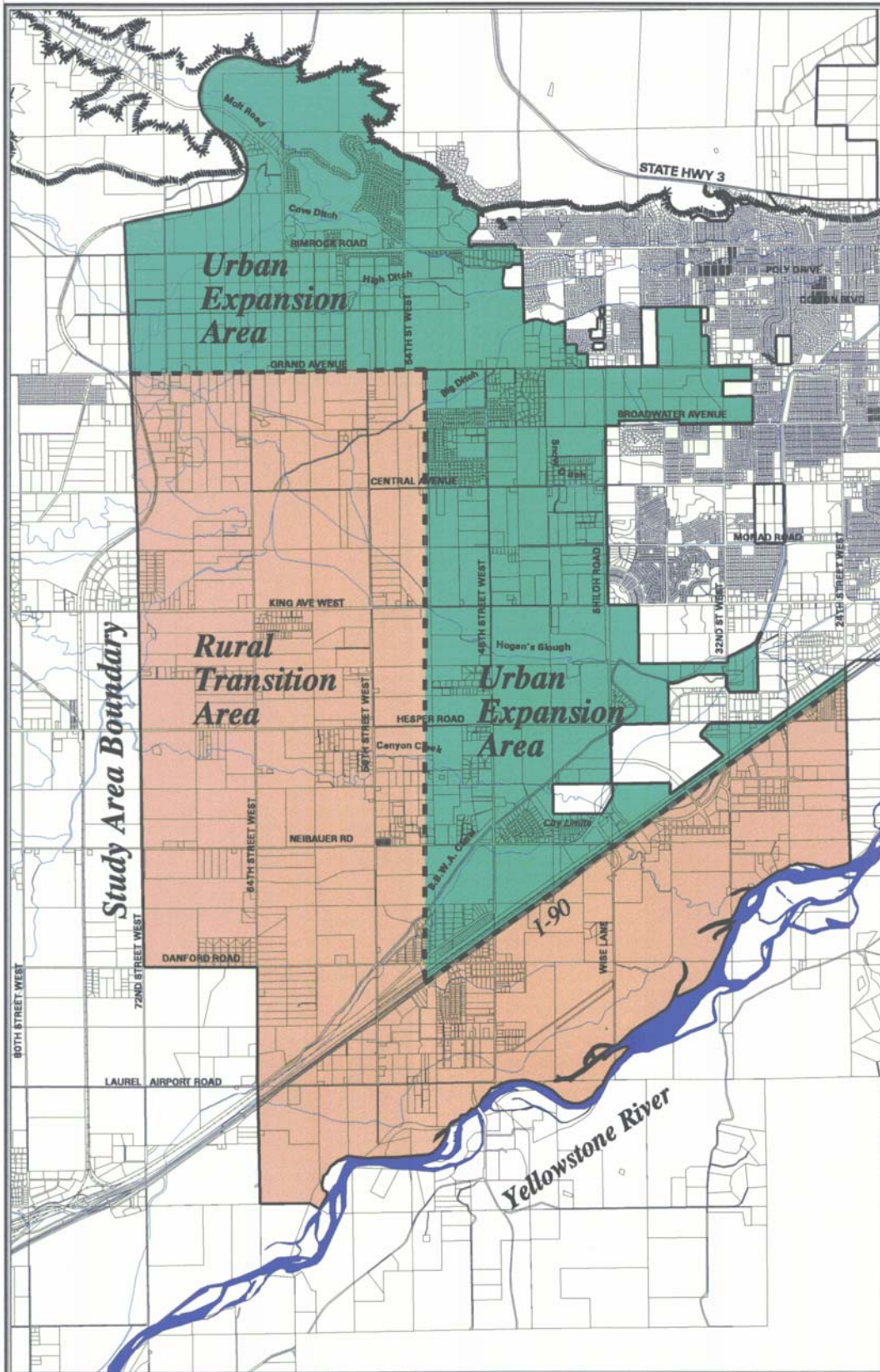


YELLOWSTONE COUNTY BOARD OF PLANNING
WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

MAP 8
FUTURE LAND UTILIZATION
JANUARY 2001

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LEGEND

- Urban Expansion Area
- Rural Transition Area

Billings City Limits



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WEST BILLINGS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
MAP 9
PLANNED GROWTH

SCALE: 1" = 4600'

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