

Key Findings

The current zoning regulations do not reflect the County's plan for future growth and development.

Agricultural districts need a complete overhaul.

There are too many Part 1 zoning districts.

Residential zoning districts do not currently offer enough choice and variety in housing types.

Pyramidal zoning does not always reflect the County's core values.

There are conflicts created by proximity between City and County zoning districts in the transitional urban area surrounding the City limits.

Key Findings

Current and future development densities are hindered by the availability of infrastructure.

Outdated and disproportionate site design standards limit potential build-out even where density is encouraged.

Current cluster development provisions are ineffective and rarely used.

Landscaping and parking design standards are weak and do not reflect best practice.

The County lacks design standards for short-term rentals and tiny homes.

Design standards are needed for environmentally sensitive and natural areas, to protect both the resource as well as public health and safety.

Key Findings

Access to and design of park and open space amenities is not contemplated under the current zoning code.

Current design standards fail to create complete communities.

Sign regulations do not reflect recent case law restricting content-based regulation.

The zoning code needs to thoroughly address emerging trends.

Existing special districts no longer reflect best practices.

Significant confusion surrounds planned unit development and planned variations.

Key Findings

The current organization of zoning districts is confusing.

The existing zoning regulations are hard to read, interpret and lack general user-friendliness.

The zoning code does not provide enough enforcement tools.

The County's approach to variances and nonconformities does not support consistent application of the zoning code.

The existing regulations allow too much discretion without clear parameters.

Development standards and processes should be consistent.

ALIGN THE ZONING
REGULATIONS WITH
COMMUNITY VALUES AND
COUNTY PLANS FOR FUTURE
GROWTH AND
DEVELOPMENT.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Revise existing zoning districts to better align with land use designations.
- Create new zoning districts to better align with the intent of select future land use designations and current county policy.
- Rethink single-use districts that could be better integrated into comprehensive design standards or applied through a countywide zoning ordinance.
- Complete a zoning map amendment adopting the live/make designation in East Missoula. Seems like this could happen pretty quickly after district creation
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of the Part 1 rural zoning districts and seek opportunity to revise, consolidate or eliminate

INCORPORATE URBAN DESIGN
STANDARDS, DEVELOPMENT
INCENTIVES AND REVIEW CRITERIA TO
GOVERN THEIR APPLICATION
WHEREVER MISALIGNMENT IS PRESENT
BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTY ZONING.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Complete a detailed assessment of City and County zoning district and land use designation alignment issues. Prioritize the need for map amendments based on infrastructure availability and the most appropriate district assignment based on current land use designation.
- Coordinate with the City of Missoula on the development of the annexation plan to identify priority areas for zoning map amendments to anticipate increased densities, bonuses and clustering incentives to capitalize on infrastructure availability and expansion.
- Consider coordination on applications and consistency of site design and review criteria for prioritized areas.

INCENTIVIZE OR REQUIRE
DEVELOPMENT DENSITY IN
AREAS WHERE IT CAN BE
ACCOMMODATED BY
EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Investigate the creation of a fast-track permit review process to encourage the proactive rezoning of land
- Overhaul clustering provisions and density bonus requirements to better incentivize good development practice and conserve resources that are important to the community. Look at density bonuses in relation to clustering provisions to improve the clarity of these incentives within the regulations.
- Investigate the creation of a transfer of development rights program for areas in the County where development densities are expressly limited by the land use designation (Residential and Live/Make Neighborhood).
- Coordinate with the City of Missoula on potential sending zones within City limits or in areas anticipated for future annexation.

OVERHAUL SITE AND DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS TO ADDRESS DEVELOPMENT COMPREHENSIVELY AND PROMOTE QUALITY DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS THAT REFLECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Create a unified development design standards chapter that combines new and existing design standards and general and supplemental standards currently scattered throughout the code in one location
- Merge “Special” design standards with district standards to create greater continuity within the code.
- Overhaul parking requirements and address mobility standards in site design chapter.
- Overhaul landscaping requirements that apply to both site-specific conditions, streetscape and areas of parking/circulation.
- Develop design standards specific to parks and recreation to more fully integrate these amenities in the zoning.
- Develop a suite of lot and building typologies to clearly illustrate design standards.
- Establish a clear and consistent variance process.
- Collaborate with the City of Missoula to address 5G wireless facility siting and appropriate design standards.
- Expand upon existing design standards to create an “environmental suite” aimed at preservation of sensitive natural environments and protecting the public from hazards.

IMPLEMENT A GENERAL
REORGANIZATION AND
FORMATTING CHANGE TO
BETTER REFLECT BEST
PRACTICE IN CODE WRITING.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Revise/rename districts so they are an obvious reflection of the character and uses and easily understood by the average layperson.
- Consolidate all definitions in a separate chapter of the code; add definitions that are currently missing, cull outdated definitions and expand upon those that lack clarity.
- Eliminate planned variations in favor of a comprehensive PUD process.

CREATE A UNIFIED CODE THAT
INTEGRATES DEVELOPMENT
REGULATIONS, PROCESSES,
DESIGN STANDARDS AND
ENFORCEMENT COHESIVELY
ACROSS DEPARTMENTS.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- Overhaul and expand upon the enforcement section of the code; establish a clear enforcement process, benchmarks and create a dedicated Enforcement Officer position.
- Revise subdivision regulations for conformance and consistency with zoning regulations; pull out design standards appropriate for zoning code.
- Investigate the benefits of moving toward a unified development code that would fully integrate definitions, review processes and enforcement provisions between Community and Planning Services, Public Works, Environmental Health and Emergency Services.