

PRIMARY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 2008 GROWTH POLICY

Land Use Element

1. ISSUE: *Neighborhoods are experiencing pressures from new development and land use changes.*

GOAL: Predictable land use decisions that are consistent with neighborhood character and preferred land use patterns identified in neighborhood plans.

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve neighborhood integrity.
- Empower neighborhood groups.

2. ISSUE: *The current zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations do not always prevent incompatible uses in and adjacent to existing County townsites.*

GOAL: New developments that are sensitive to and compatible with the character of adjacent neighborhoods and County townsites.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain a high quality of life for new and existing residents.
- Reduce conflicts between neighbors.

3. ISSUE: *Rural townsites are not prepared to handle increased growth.*

GOAL: Growth management tools available to rural townsites.

OBJECTIVES:

- Empower communities to direct growth.
- Use County resources and services more efficiently.
- Create a sense of community.

4. ISSUE: *Urban sprawl threatens the rural character of land surrounding Billings, increases the cost of providing public services, and threatens the vitality of the city core and downtown area.*

GOAL: Contiguous development focused in and around existing population centers separated by open space.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure the continued functionality of natural systems.
- Use County resources in a cost effective manner.
- Create attractive communities.

5. ISSUE: *There is a serious lack of affordable housing for low to moderate income households..*

GOAL: Affordable housing for all income levels dispersed throughout the County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life of low income people. Preserve and rehabilitate the existing supply of affordable housing.
- Promote social equity and diversity.
- Create more affordable housing and work towards replacing affordable housing lost during redevelopment projects.
- Provide rental and ownership housing options for the diverse workforce.

6. ISSUE: *There is a desire for more mixed use neighborhoods.*

GOAL: More housing and business choices within each neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve quality of life.
- Encourage more live-work environments.
- Reduce commuting and subsequent drain on natural resources and traffic congestion.

- Develop more self-contained neighborhoods.

Economic Development Element

1. ISSUE: *We need to continue a cohesive focus in economic development.*

GOAL: Coordinated economic development efforts that target business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life for residents.
Strengthen area economy.

- Create living-wage jobs.

2. ISSUE: *Lack of living-wage jobs.*

GOAL: Increase the median income of households and individuals.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Attract and retain businesses that offer competitive wages and benefits.
- Reduce dependency on social programs.

3. ISSUE: *Entryways to our communities should be attractive and not present physical barriers discouraging economic development.*

GOAL: Attractive and accessible communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage new businesses to locate in Billings and gateway areas.
- Reduce travel time through town.
- Convey a business-friendly attitude.
- Increase the visual appeal of our highway and railroad corridors.

4. ISSUE: *Government supported programs and improvements are not sufficiently funded.*

GOAL: Improved public services and facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Construct safe and efficient infrastructure.
- Respond in a timely manner to public service needs.

5. ISSUE: *Surrounding communities in the County need economic development to sustain them.*

GOAL: Preserve and sustain the rural community centers throughout the County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve rural culture and living options.
- Promote business development to provide local services and less dependence on travel to Billings.

6. ISSUE: *Billings needs to attract businesses that pay higher wages.*

GOAL: Provide citizens with greater financial stability.

OBJECTIVES:

- Focus on attracting skilled labor positions in clean industries.
- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Strengthen area economy.
- Create living-wage jobs.

7. ISSUE: *The economic development of Billings Heights is overlooked.*

GOAL: Business development and rejuvenation in the Heights.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve quality of life for Heights residents.
- Create more jobs near where people live to reduce commuter traffic.
- Capitalize on existing infrastructure and facilities.

8. ISSUE: *The quality of our schools is a determining factor for whether businesses locate in Billings.*

GOAL: Promote excellence in education and safe and healthy school facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Highlight educational quality as a business recruitment tool.
- Attract and retain educated citizens.
- Provide future taxpayers a quality education.

9. ISSUE: *Neighborhoods provide the character and strength of the community and the quality of neighborhoods should be preserved.*

GOAL: Preserve neighborhood character and quality of life.

OBJECTIVES:

- Empower neighborhoods.

12. ISSUE: *The Billings economy faces a severe shortage of skilled workers in a number of sectors (a problem that will worsen as the population ages).*

GOAL: Community-wide planning and preparation of a skilled workforce to meet the diverse and growing economic development needs of the community.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve coordination between the business community, economic development agencies and school districts.
- Increase educational attainment for high demand, well-paying jobs.
- Increase per capita income.
- Increase local workforce availability to attract new clean industry jobs.

Aesthetics Element

1. ISSUE: *There are areas in the City and County that are unattractive and present a poor image of the community.*

GOAL: Visually appealing communities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the image of the community.
- Instill pride in the community.
- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Preserve the community assets such as the Rimrocks, the Yellowstone River, the downtown and the major street thoroughfares.

2. ISSUE: *New development and signs, cell towers, power lines and other structures could reduce the visual quality of the rims.*

GOAL: Unobstructed views of the rimrocks surrounding the City of Billings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the visual image of Billings.
- Protect a publicly recognized landmark.

3. ISSUE: *Urban interstate corridors through the County are unattractive.*

GOAL: An inviting and attractive urban interstate corridor through the County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve signage standards.
- Provide more aesthetic open space.
- Develop more greenspace.
- Develop attractive and well-maintained rest areas.

Natural Resources Element

1. ISSUE: *The quality of the Yellowstone River and the associated riparian habitat is threatened.*

GOAL: A healthy river ecosystem system that supports multiple uses.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure high water quality.
- Ensure continued recreational access.
- Protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

2. ISSUE: *Water is an important resource and it is becoming scarcer.*

GOAL: A sustainable supply of clean water.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public health.
- Reduce the cost of groundwater remediation.

3. ISSUE: *Due in part to the arid nature of our environment and the remoteness of some developments, there is an increased risk to human life and property from wildfires.*

GOAL: Minimize loss of life and property damage resulting from wildfires.

OBJECTIVES:

- Save lives and property.
- Utilize fire protection resources more efficiently.
- Protect the natural environment.

4. ISSUE: *Weeds detract from the beauty of an area, pose a fire danger, and reduce the productivity of agricultural land.*

GOAL: Controlled weed populations.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve range productivity.
- Preserve native vegetation.
- Reduce the risk of wildfire and potential for erosion.

5. ISSUE: *Human encounters with wildlife often result in a painful consequence for wildlife, pets, and humans.*

GOAL: Reduced opportunities for negative human and wildlife encounters.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce needless injury or death of wildlife and pets.
- Minimize property damage caused by wildlife.
- Protect human life and property.

6. ISSUE: *Certain development is damaging our natural resources.*

GOAL: Protection of groundwater, surface water, riparian areas, air quality, and productive agricultural land.

OBJECTIVES:

- Use City and County resources in a cost effective manner.
- Protect public health.
- Ensure the continued functionality of natural systems.

Open Space and Recreation Element

1. ISSUE: *Some neighborhood parks appear to receive more funding for improvements than other neighborhood parks.*

GOAL: Rational consideration of neighborhoods for park expenditures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide well-maintained and equipped neighborhood parks and improve undeveloped parks.
- Create neighborhood parks designed to meet the needs of the neighborhood.
- Empower neighborhoods to provide direction for budgetary decisions.

2. ISSUE: *Billings and Yellowstone County need more major recreation facilities and need to improve those we already have.*

GOAL: Recreation facilities that serve the diverse recreational needs of Billings and Yellowstone County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Meet the recreation needs of City and County residents.
- Improve the quality of life of residents.
- Encourage the development of all athletes.

3. ISSUE: *Private land development sometimes restricts access to public land.*

GOAL: Accessible public lands.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve relations between users and landowners.
- Ensure the public use of public land.

4. ISSUE: *Billings and surrounding County townsites need more multiple use trails.*

GOAL: A multi-purpose trail network integrated into the community infrastructure that emphasizes safety, environmental preservation, resource conservation and cost effectiveness.-

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop non-motorized connections between residential neighborhoods and work places.
- Provide convenient access to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Improve quality of life for residents.

5. ISSUE: *Public access to areas above and below the rimrocks is limited and decreasing each year.*

GOAL: Protect and increase the availability of public access to natural areas and trails near the rims.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public use of a well-recognized and economically valuable natural resource.
- Increase recreation options for residents.
- Preserve a unique Billings' feature.

6. ISSUE: *Public access to areas along the Yellowstone River is limited and decreasing each year.*

GOAL: Protect and increase the availability of public access to natural areas and trails along the River.

OBJECTIVES:

- Protect public use of a well-recognized and economically valuable natural resource.

- Increase recreation options for residents.
- Preserve a unique Billings' feature.

Transportation Element

1. ISSUE: *Speeding in City neighborhoods and outlying communities.*

GOAL: Safe traffic speeds consistent with the surrounding uses.

OBJECTIVES:

- Decrease pedestrian-vehicle accidents.
- Promote non-motorized transportation modes.
- Promote cooperative speed enforcement.

2. ISSUE: *Safe and efficient traffic circulation around and through the City.*

GOAL: Efficient cross-town and in-town traffic.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce travel times.
- Create convenient traffic connections.
- Employ adaptable design options.
- Provide multiple intercity travel options.

3. ISSUE: *Lack of adequate traffic control.*

GOAL: Improved traffic flow and reduced congestion.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce potential harm to people and property.
- Maintain safe and efficient traffic flow.

4. ISSUE: *The design of roads, streets, and pedestrian facilities can be more attractive and functional.*

GOAL: Visually appealing rights-of-way that serve the needs of all modes of travel.

OBJECTIVES:

- Employ smart, cost effective designs.
- Use designs that recognize the needs of all users.
- Incorporate attractive visual elements into rights-of-way design.

5. ISSUE: *Obstacles to efficient and safe traffic flow.*

GOAL: A safe and efficient transportation system characterized by convenient connections and steady traffic flow.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify obstacles to traffic flow.
- Remove or minimize impediments to traffic flow.
- Manage traffic demand.

6. ISSUE: *Deteriorated conditions of City streets and County roads.*

GOAL: City streets and County roads maintained at safe standards.

OBJECTIVES:

- Equitably share the cost of maintaining roadways.
- Timely response to public needs.

7. ISSUE: *Resources for transportation improvements should be rationally allocated throughout City neighborhoods and County townsites.*

GOAL: Rational consideration of all City neighborhoods and County townsites when allocating transportation improvement funds.

OBJECTIVES:

- Select projects based on a needs assessment.
- Reduce waste through coordination of projects.

8. ISSUE: *Lack of adequate bicycle facilities.*

GOAL: Additional bicycle facilities throughout the City and the County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide needed facilities for recreational and commuter bicyclists
- Encourage bicycling as a cost-effective, healthy alternative to driving
- Promote safe bike riding options

9. ISSUE: *Deterioration of air quality due to vehicle emissions.*

GOAL: Reduce carbon emissions from vehicles.

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain healthy air quality levels.
- Act locally to fight global warming.
- Support alternative transportation modes.

10. ISSUE: *Some bicyclists do not follow traffic laws and can cause unsafe situations.*

GOAL: Vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists safely and courteously sharing facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure equitable and safe use of public transportation facilities.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- Educate users of the responsibilities.

11. ISSUE: *There are more motorcycles, bicycles and motor scooters on the roadways.*

GOAL: All transportation modes safely and courteously sharing facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure equitable and safe use of public transportation facilities.
- Encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- Educate users of the responsibilities.

Public Facilities and Services Element

1. ISSUE: *Residents are not adequately informed of County and City projects.*

GOAL: An effective public notification system.

OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance public involvement.
- Provide timely and accurate public notification.
- Increase contact with news media.

2. ISSUE: *Dilapidated and unsafe properties in City neighborhoods and County townsites.*

GOAL: Sanitary and safe properties.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide helpful and responsive public services.
- Improve the community image.
- Increase property values.

3. ISSUE: *Safety is a concern in neighborhoods and outlying County townsites.*

GOAL: Protect public lives and property.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure adequate public service to all residents.
- Utilize scarce resources wisely and employ cost effective techniques.
- Maintain acceptable levels of service in existing City neighborhoods when expanding service to new areas.

4. ISSUE: *Funding for community facilities and infrastructure is very limited.*

GOAL: Equitable collection and distribution of funding for public services and facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure users pay fair share for public services and facilities.
- Ensure facilities and services are maintained in existing neighborhoods as new neighborhoods are added.
- Explore new sources of funding as appropriate.

5. ISSUE: *Public funds are not distributed rationally throughout City neighborhoods and County townsites.*

GOAL: Rational consideration of all City neighborhoods and County townsites for public funds expenditures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and prioritize neighborhood needs.
- Empower public to provide direction on capital improvements expenditures.
- Leverage public funds with other resources.

6. ISSUE: *There are vacant structures around Billings and in the County that could be reused.*

GOAL: Adaptive reuse of vacant structures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Conserve resources.
- Preserve historic or cultural landmarks.
- Take advantage of economic development opportunities.
- Preserve neighborhood integrity.

7. ISSUE: *Community services are not always available to everyone.*

GOAL: Equitable provision of community programs and services.

OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance public access to community services and programs such as libraries, public transportation, and the like.
- Encourage civic participation.

8. ISSUE: *Subdivision review, zoning applications, and other development permit review are not always conducted in a streamlined and timely manner.*

GOAL: Predictable and timely development review procedures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Expedite review process.
- Actively enforce development regulations.
- Be responsive to applicants' needs.
- Provide adequate Planning Department staff for review purposes.

9. ISSUE: *Maintenance of existing K-12 school facilities and planning for new schools is critically important to maintaining existing communities built around the neighborhood school concept and fostering new communities surrounding school sites.*

GOAL: Coordinated land use and facility planning among local governments, school districts and private industries.

OBJECTIVES:

- Shared community vision.
- Increased communication and problem solving.
- Encourage joint-use facilities and collocation of needs for cost-effectiveness and community building.

10. ISSUE: *Multiple community interests (including local government, arts organizations, and social organizations) are competing for tax dollars for facility development and maintenance, resulting in taxpayer fatigue and overall declining support for capital and maintenance projects.*

GOAL: Adequate funding for necessary public facilities' maintenance and improvement without overburdening taxpayers.

OBJECTIVES:

- Coordinated and prioritized capital improvements planning for all community interests.
- Identify shared funding sources.
- Coordinated bonding requests to balance all interests.

Cultural and Historic Resources Element

1. ISSUE: *Historic landmarks and structures are being lost to neglect and development.*

GOAL: Identification and protection of the historical, archeological, and cultural resources of Yellowstone County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve awareness of historic and cultural resources.
- Increase property values through structural rehabilitation.

2. ISSUE: *Cities must link economic development with quality of life. Businesses and professionals are attracted to a culturally aware city.*

GOAL: Actively maintain existing cultural institutions in Billings and support additional venues and interest.

OBJECTIVES:

- Promote the community's rich historical and cultural heritage.
- Capitalize on Billings' cultural assets to attract and recruit businesses.

3. ISSUE: *Public art is seen as an important part of the Billings landscape.*

GOAL: A visually appealing and attractive landscape.

OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance the natural and built environments with art.
- Support cultural appreciation and education.

4. ISSUE: *There is no requirement for surface archeological surveys to be conducted prior to many development processes, nor is there a provision for salvaging any sites that are discovered.*

GOAL: Preservation of archeological, historic, and paleontological resources within Yellowstone County.

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve unique cultural assets.
- Support cultural appreciation and education.

- Follow State Historic Preservation Office guidelines.

Community Health Element

1. ISSUE: *Existing neighborhood plans lack sufficient detail to address emergency preparedness.*

GOAL: Neighborhoods and communities prepared to react to natural disasters and other emergencies.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and acknowledge emergency risks in the community.
- Educate neighborhoods and communities of risks and how to prepare and prevent them.
- Prepare emergency plans so that all responders and citizens know what to do.

2. ISSUE: *Not all neighborhoods are planned with ways to access nutritious foods.*

GOAL: Accessible, affordable and nutritious food for everyone.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce malnutrition, diabetes, heart disease, and other nutrition related diseases.
- Ensure equal opportunities to healthy food sources.
- Support local farm produce.

3. ISSUE: *Some roadways are not designed to accommodate pedestrians and therefore create inconvenient and unsafe conditions.*

GOAL: Safe roadways supportive of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce traffic conflicts among multiple user groups.
- Support and encourage walking and bicycling for exercise and transportation.
- Provide safe walking routes to schools.
- Reduce vehicle carbon emissions.

4. ISSUE: *Physical activity is not seen as a viable means of getting from place to place.*

GOAL: Physically active, healthy citizens.

OBJECTIVES:

- Neighborhoods designed in ways that promote physical activity.
- Reduce healthcare costs.
- Reduce vehicle carbon emissions.

5. ISSUE: *Neighborhoods lack a sense of community, which is contributing to neighborhood decline.*

GOAL: Healthy, safe neighborhoods and communities with sense of pride.

OBJECTIVES:

- Citizens with a sense of belonging.
- Safe places to live and raise children.
- Local governments who are responsive to neighborhood needs.

6. ISSUE: *Some neighborhoods are not safe.*

GOAL: Active, safe neighborhoods with a high quality of life.

OBJECTIVES:

- Address neighborhood nuisances to promote safety.