

Guiding Themes



Grow in a Thoughtful and Proactive Way

Growth & Development • Annexation • Utilities & Service Provision • County Coordination • Open Space & Agricultural Preservation

One of the common sentiments shared by the Hamilton community is that the city needs to be smart about how it grows. Growing thoughtfully means taking the time to identify where growth can be accommodated; recognizing the constraints and opportunities associated with land ownership and different growth options; and coming up with achievable solutions to address community priorities. Being proactive means not waiting for problems to come to Hamilton, but rather building a foundation from which to better foresee and address community challenges before they become too big or vexing to solve.

Hamilton needs new residential development to respond to increased demand and supply shortages in the local housing market. Simultaneously with more homes and residents, new commercial development will be needed for daily services and to provide job opportunities. This future growth will likely be a balance of infill and incremental expansion of city boundaries in response to requests for infrastructure extensions—primarily water, sewer, and streets. Where and how that growth occurs are central questions of this plan.

While private development typically pays for extension of city infrastructure, all city taxpayers take on the long-term maintenance, operational, and replacement costs of that infrastructure. To be good stewards of the public's trust and tax dollars, the city needs to evaluate growth options and consider whether it can afford the long-term costs of that growth or if those costs will be disproportionately borne by existing taxpayers.

As development has rapidly occurred within and around Hamilton, residents see this planning process as an opportunity to focus growth within or close to the current city boundary. This theme emphasizes focusing growth in areas already served by city infrastructure, and expanding into areas further afield only if plans are in place for how development will connect to the city in a timely and cost-effective manner. This will require close coordination with Ravalli County to ensure both the city and county are on the same page for anticipated development, with agreements for close coordination and review of development proposals in areas where future development is anticipated. An incremental and coordinated approach to growth will enable Hamilton to address the community's needs while maintaining infrastructure, lessening development pressure on nearby open space and agriculture land, and ensuring we grow in a financially sustainable way.

To address this theme, this Plan's goals and policies include efforts to:

- Maintain a positive relationship with Ravalli County.
- Balance maintenance of existing infrastructure with incremental expansion of city services, promoting infill development wherever feasible; requiring extension of services to be concurrent with annexation and consideration of long-term costs; and amending development standards and fees so that they are clear, fair, and predictable.
- Ensure growth and infill provide frequent street connectivity, treescapes, and non-motorized transportation options; and pursue design quality while providing rational flexibility for development.
- Collaborate with businesses and non-profits to achieve community goals beyond City Hall; and continue public engagement efforts, transparency, and effective communication for regulatory and policy changes that emanate from the plan.