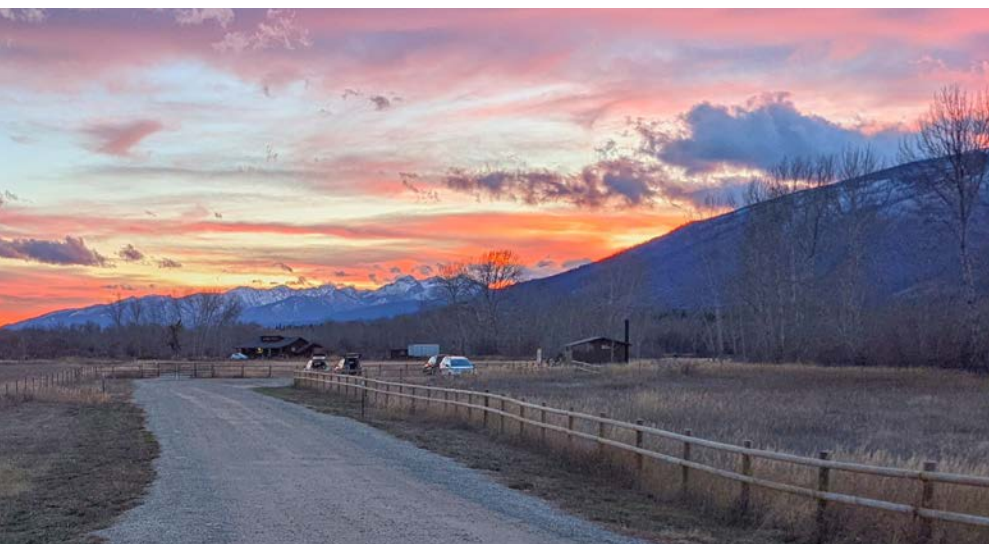




Envision HAMILTON

MONTANA

Honoring the past, celebrating the future.



CITY OF HAMILTON, MONTANA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Adopted 16 August 2022



Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to the Hamilton community members who contributed to the development of this Comprehensive Plan.

RESOLUTION NO. 1487

**A RESOLUTION OF THE HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL TO ADOPT A REVISED AND
UPDATED CITY OF HAMILTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, in accordance with Section 76-1-604, Montana Code Annotated, the City of Hamilton City Council is authorized to adopt, adopt with revisions or reject a proposed Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton Planning Board has prepared a Comprehensive Plan updating the City's existing 2015 Growth Policy pursuant to Montana Code Annotated Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 601 et seq; and

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton Planning Board has elected to call the 2022 update a Comprehensive Plan rather than a Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, on July 18, 2022 the City of Hamilton Planning Board held a properly noticed public hearing to allow any interested party to submit testimony or other comments regarding the 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, after considering the recommendations and suggestions elicited at the public hearing, the City of Hamilton Planning Board recommended that the Hamilton City Council adopt the 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan as an update of the City of Hamilton's 2015 Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, on August 2, 2022, the City of Hamilton City Council adopted Resolution No. 1485, a Resolution of Intent to adopt, adopt with revisions or reject the proposed 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan Update; and

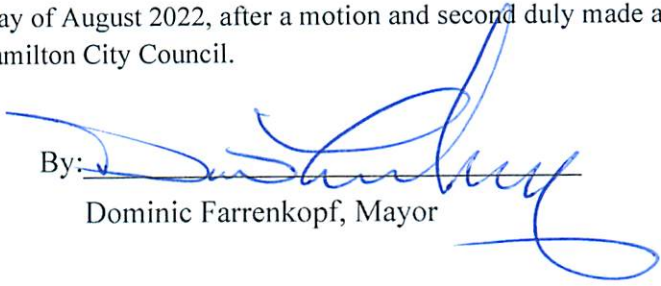
WHEREAS, on August 16, 2022 the City of Hamilton City Council held a properly noticed public hearing to allow any interested party to submit testimony or other comments regarding the proposed 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan has been available for public review online and at Hamilton City Hall 223 South Second Street, Hamilton, Montana.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Hamilton, Montana, that the 2022 City of Hamilton Comprehensive Plan, attached hereto and by this Resolution made a part hereof, is hereby adopted as the official Comprehensive Plan for the City of Hamilton.

PASSED AND ADOPTED, this 16th day of August 2022, after a motion and second duly made at a regularly scheduled meeting of the City of Hamilton City Council.



By: 
Dominic Farrenkopf, Mayor

Attest: 

Rose M. Allen, City Clerk

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1 / Introduction

Overview of Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan Update

Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan (a.k.a Growth Policy) is a big-picture, long-range public policy document that guides the city's decision-making on land use, transportation, public infrastructure, and a variety of other topics. The city's Comprehensive Plan sets goals and policies for how Hamilton intends to address growth and future community needs.

Comprehensive Plan, Growth Policy, What's the Difference?

In 1999 the Montana legislature changed the terminology from “comprehensive plan” to “growth policy.” What transpired was a shift towards managing current growth trends through a short-term lens as opposed to taking a more comprehensive, long-range approach. While Hamilton’s current Growth Policy (adopted in 2015) takes a traditional comprehensive planning approach, the city has chosen to call this update a comprehensive plan, as it is more reflective of what the document actually is—a long-range visionary guide for Hamilton’s future. Envision Hamilton includes all state law requirements for growth policies, it simply goes by another name.

A Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted and used by a local government as a general guide for decisions regarding the community’s physical development. It is not a regulation; rather, it is an official statement of public policy to guide growth and manage change for the betterment of the community. (Montana Department of Commerce, “Montana’s Growth Policy Resource Book”)

Context

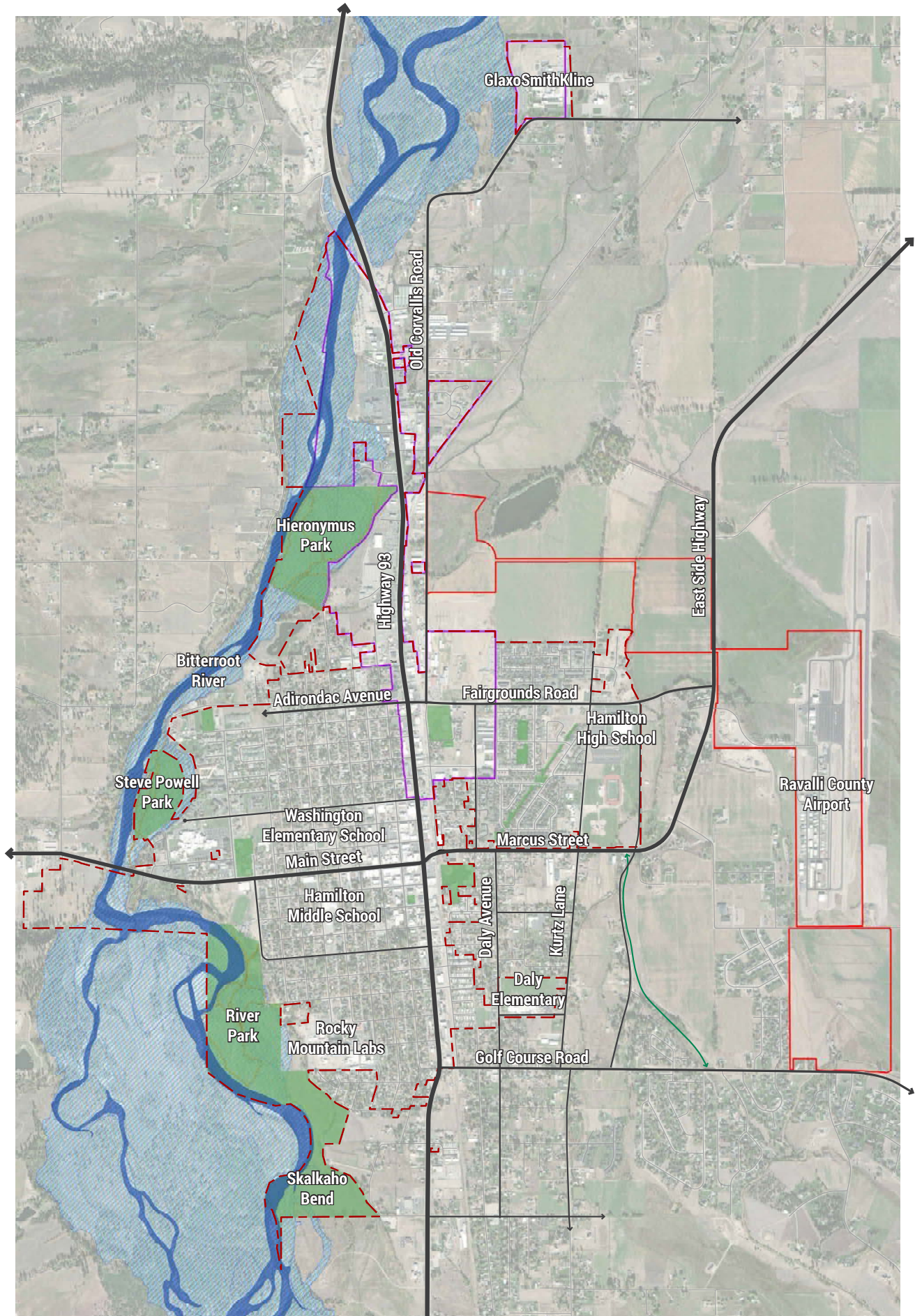
Hamilton is a small city in the Bitterroot Valley, roughly an hour south of Missoula, between the Bitterroot Mountain Range to the west and the Sapphire Mountain Range to the east (Map 1). The city’s population is roughly 5,000 people with up to 20,000 people living in the surrounding area. While Hamilton and the Bitterroot Valley have grown steadily since the 1990’s, in the last few years the rate of in-city growth has increased substantially. Recent growth trends are likely due to multiple factors including shifting demographics and consumer demands, job opportunities, quality of life amenities including nearby public lands and the Bitterroot River, and Hamilton’s proximity to Missoula.

Hamilton city limits encompass an area of roughly 1,600 acres, much of which lies between the Bitterroot River and US Highway 93. East of Highway 93 the city limits are roughly bound by Marcus Street to the south, Fairgrounds Road to the north, and Freeze Lane to the east. Within the city limits, there are several pockets of wholly surrounded unincorporated areas where city services are not currently available.

Hamilton’s economy is unique for a small community in that there are a sizable number of jobs in medical research, namely GlaxoSmithKline and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Rocky Mountain Laboratories (Rocky Mountain Labs), which together employ roughly 800 people. Hamilton is also the Ravalli County seat, serving as a regional center for a relatively large geographic area, and with employment opportunities including schools, hospital, services, Forest Service, etc.



Map 1. Regional Context



Map 2. City of Hamilton

Why Now?

Growth in and around Hamilton is impacting the city's ability to cost-effectively maintain public infrastructure and provide services to residents, businesses, and visitors. As the city grows, a primary concern is the availability of affordable and attainable housing. Growing demand and competition for housing has made it increasingly challenging to not only afford rising rents and home prices but to even find an available space to call home. Hamilton's housing crunch is also impacting the local economy with employers large and small citing struggles with attracting labor because new or prospective employees cannot find suitable housing options. Limited housing supply is creating a high demand for both annexations and infill, trends which are expected to continue. At the same time, Hamilton's growth presents opportunities for economic development and innovation.

Attainable housing is non-subsidized housing that is affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the area's median income)

Affordable housing is generally defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

The question then becomes, how does Hamilton grow in a way that preserves what people love about the community while also responding to community needs and capitalizing on new opportunities? This Comprehensive Plan, Envision Hamilton, is the city's proactive approach to create a community-driven plan addressing city growth in the coming years, and to lay out a clear path for implementation.

State law requires that growth policies be reviewed every five years to evaluate whether an update is needed. In autumn of 2020, the City of Hamilton conducted a review of the current growth policy (adopted in 2015) and concluded an update was needed due to population growth, changing demographics, increased development activity, rising housing costs, and local growth impacts.

To Grow or Not to Grow

Hamilton and the surrounding area have seen relatively steady population growth over several years. While the strength of key employers, such as Rocky Mountain Lab, GlaxoSmithKline, Bitterroot Health, and the Forest Service have been attractants, many other residents have come to Hamilton for its high quality of life, small town character, downtown, and access to public lands and outdoor recreation. With the increased ability to work remotely, partly spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, an increased share of people on the move are choosing their next home based more on quality-of-life amenities than solely on access to a particular job or office.

Growth in and around Hamilton is anticipated to continue, spurred by a strong local job market and the area's appeal as a quality-of-life destination. Understanding the potential effects of this growth, city leadership committed to undertake the Envision Hamilton Comprehensive Plan Update. This decision does not reflect a choice to grow or not to grow, rather it is recognition that growth is here and the city can either be proactive in addressing resulting impacts or let growth trends chart an uncertain future for the community.

During the update of this plan community members wrestled with how to best respond to growth pressures and the changes it brings to the community. The City of Hamilton does not have to grow. The city could choose to constrain growth by not approving annexations, stopping capacity expansions of the water and wastewater systems, stopping acquisition of water rights, and/or curtailing residential and commercial development through stricter development regulations.

Hamilton does not exist in a vacuum and limitations on development imposed by the city do not apply to areas outside city limits, nor would they do anything to limit the demand to live and recreate in Montana and the Bitterroot Valley. Directing growth only to areas outside the city of Hamilton would increase growth pressures in nearby municipalities and in outlying county areas where development would take up more land due to it being served by individual wells and septic systems, not city water and sewer. Growing in this manner would result in fewer homes being built on more land, more traffic on Highway 93, increased pollution of ground and surface water, and limited commercial/manufacturing growth. Additionally, people coming into Hamilton to work, shop, or conduct business consume city services (police and fire, roads, water, sewer, etc.) yet their tax dollars do not go to paying the operational and maintenance costs of those services.

The likely outcomes of Hamilton constraining city growth include rising housing costs, fewer job opportunities, and further strain on city services. In contrast, allowing for the city to grow in a thoughtful manner will result in more homes being built on less land, a greater array of housing options, more opportunities for job growth, limited impact on water quality, and more cost-effective use of city resources.

In early conversations with the community, respondents spoke about the need and desire for infill and incremental annexation of areas adjacent to the city to enable more housing and employment opportunities, cost-efficient provision of services, and preservation of surrounding landscapes.

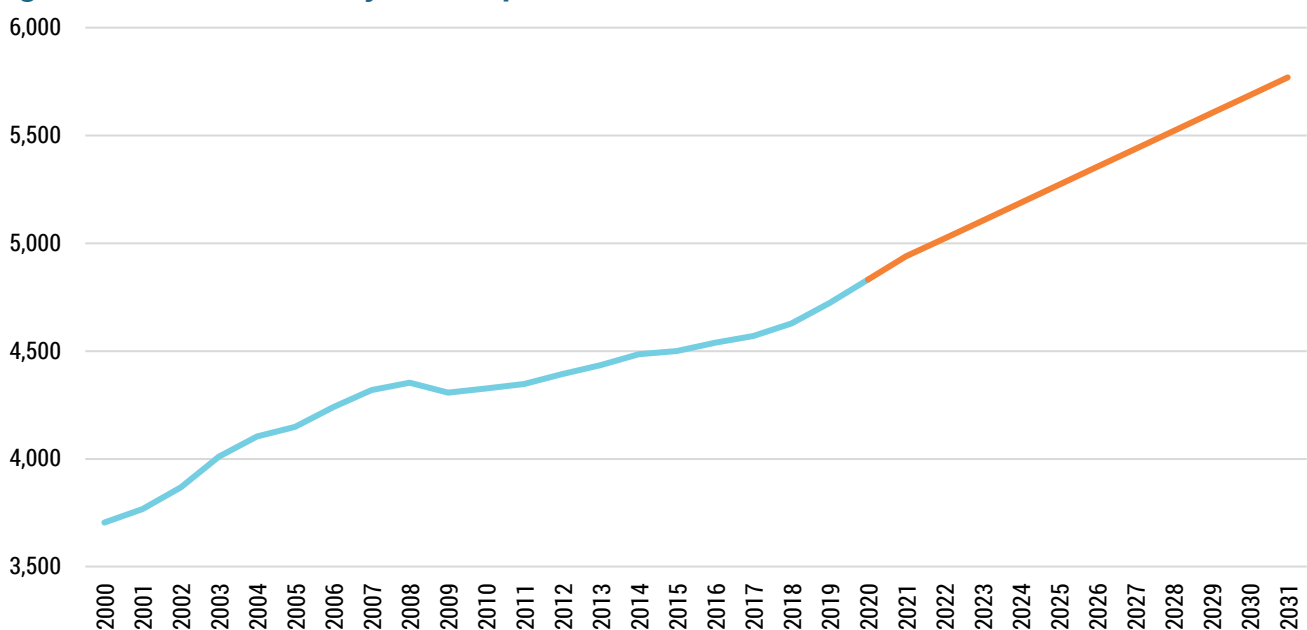
Projected Residential Growth

Hamilton's population is projected to increase by 17% over the next ten years (Figure 1). This equates to an *anticipated need for 420 homes (200 single-family and 220 multi-family) to accommodate projected population growth*. If over the next ten years, the City of Hamilton were to take on a greater share of overall county growth this number could be larger.

At the time of writing, approximately 100 homes are nearing completion or already under construction across nearly 20 acres, including 31 single-family and 78 multi-family units, nearly all located in the northeast section of the city. The increase in the proportion of multi-family units is a trend that will likely continue as Hamilton is seeing greater demand for a variety of housing types that meet the needs of varying demographics and income levels, including townhomes, cottage courts, single-family homes, live/work units, apartments and condominiums, and accessory dwelling units.

At typical Hamilton residential densities of between three and five units per acre (roughly the density of Hamilton's west side neighborhoods), the additional 310 homes needed over the next ten years could be estimated to take up anywhere between an additional 60 and 110 acres of land, though redevelopment and infill opportunities could lessen the overall acreage needed for development. As a comparison, Hamilton High School, and its associated parking and fields between Fairgrounds Road and Marcus Street, is about 55 acres.

Figure 1. Historic and Projected Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019 and 2022 Hamilton Impact Fee Study

Projected Employment Growth

In terms of anticipated job growth, Hamilton is projected to see an approximate 7% increase in jobs over the next ten years (Figure 2). *An anticipated 333 jobs and 128,000 square feet of commercial building space would be needed to accommodate the projected population growth.*

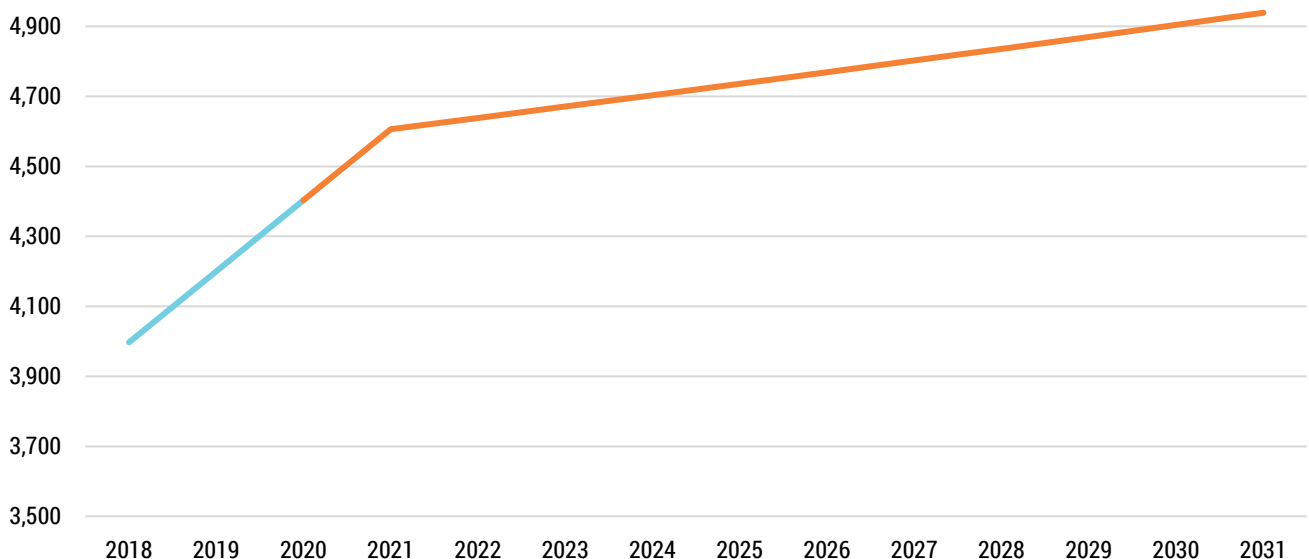
The additional commercial square footage needed over the next ten years could be estimated to take up anywhere between an additional 30 to 60 acres of land, though redevelopment and infill opportunities could lessen the overall acreage needed for commercial development. As a comparison, the current sites of Rocky Mountain Labs and GlaxoSmithKline are each approximately 30 acres.

Potential Infill and Growth Areas

Within city limits, and shown in Map 3, there were approximately 78 vacant parcels at the time of writing (72 total acres of land), of which 35 acres are zoned for residential use, and 37 acres available for commercial development.

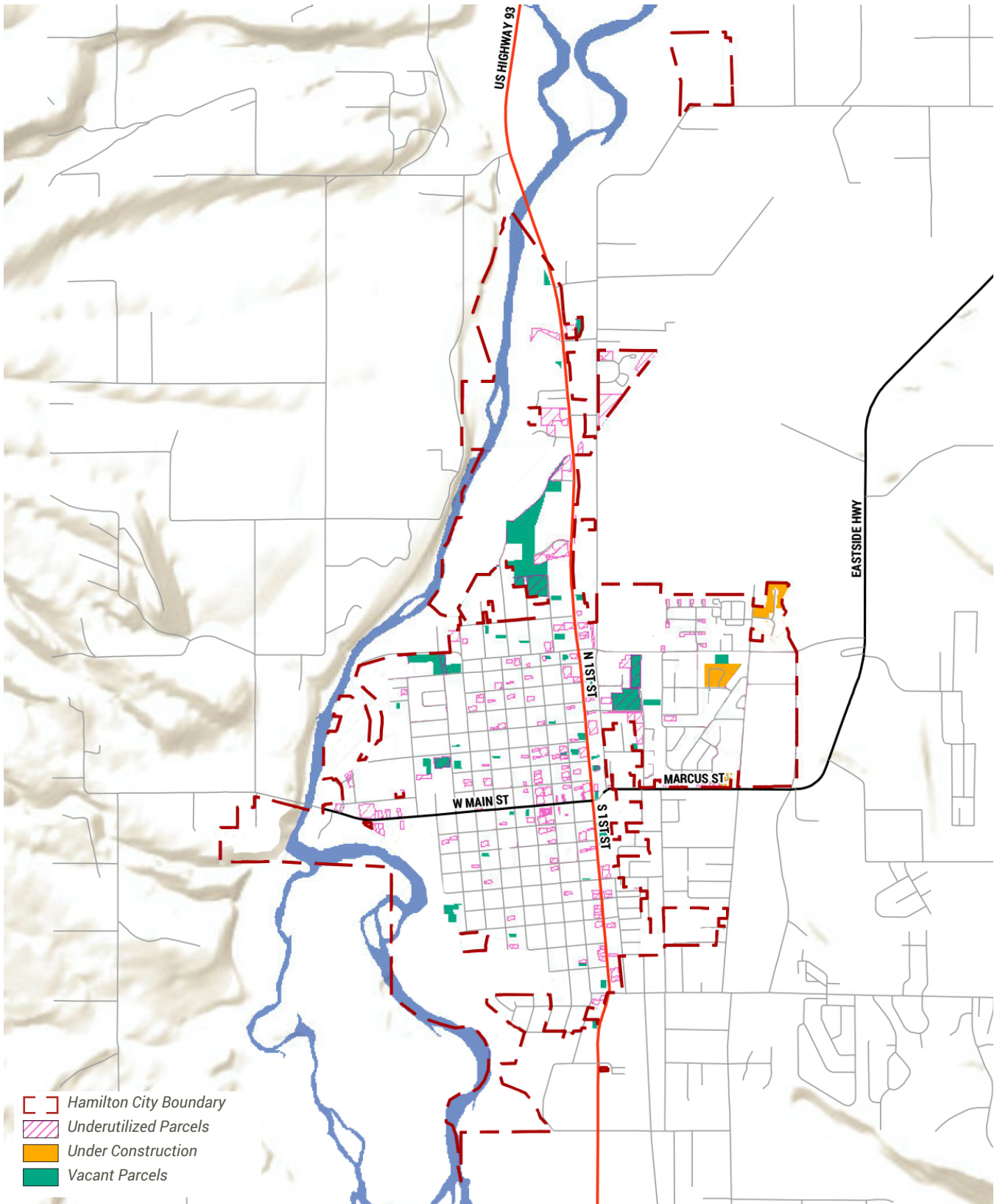
The North Hamilton Urban Renewal District (NHURD) is one of the financial tools that the city could use to help fund infrastructure improvements needed to spur infill development in the city. With much of the remaining vacant land within the NHURD, any additional property tax value increment can be collected and put toward additional public improvements in the District. Capitalizing on the available land for infill and redevelopment could reduce the overall acreage needed for expansion of city boundaries.

Figure 2. Historic and Projected Employment Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019 and 2022 Hamilton Impact Fee Study

Map 3. Infill and Growth Areas



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Relationship to Other Plans

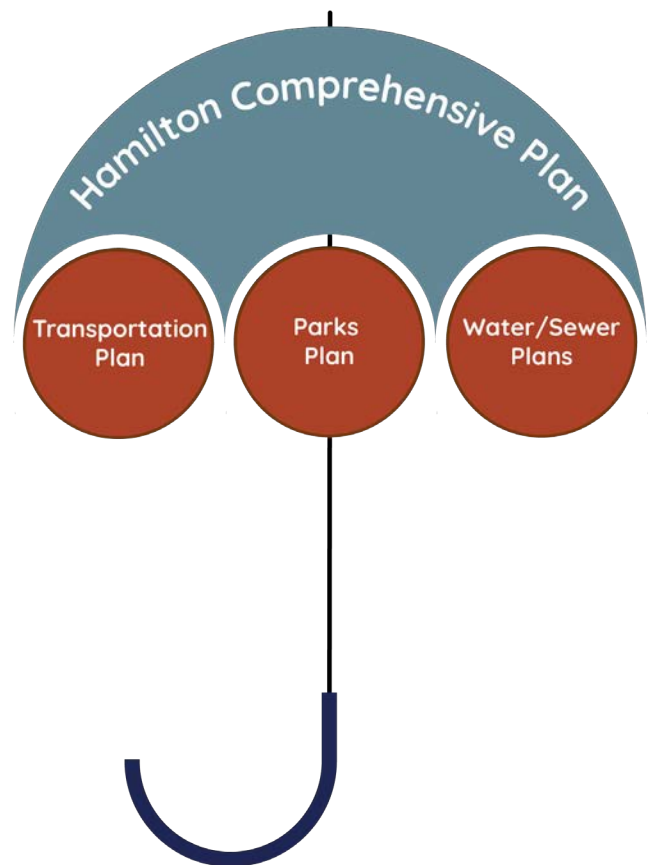
Hamilton’s Comprehensive Plan serves as an overarching guiding document on issues related to growth and development, land use, transportation, public infrastructure, economic development, and a host of other related topics under the city’s purview. While the Comprehensive Plan is not regulatory, it guides development of city regulations, guidelines, policies, and functional and sub area plans. Together these documents are intended to achieve the vision, goals, and policies outlined in the comprehensive plan. Adopted city plans are intended to implement the Comprehensive Plan (Figure 3). Additional detail on these plans is provided in Appendix B, Planning Framework.

Plan Organization

Hamilton’s Comprehensive Plan is structured to clearly articulate how the community’s vision for the future can be achieved and to meet requirements of state law. To that end, it is organized under the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1. Introduction**, outlines the purpose and background of the Comprehensive Plan and the process for its development.
- **Chapter 2. Vision and Guiding Themes**, defines and illustrates aspirational view for the Hamilton community, and description of the guiding themes that emerged from public engagement.
- **Chapter 3. Goals and Policies**, details the goals and policies that structure and guide the comprehensive plan.
- **Chapter 4. Issues and Opportunities**, describes the key issues and opportunities facing the community.
- **Chapter 5. Land Use Framework**, illustrates and describes a guide for land use in the City of Hamilton.
- **Chapter 6. Implementation**, defines key action items to implement and review the comprehensive plan.
- **Chapter 7. Infrastructure Strategy**, outlines Hamilton’s strategy for the development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure.
- **Chapter 8. Existing Conditions**, provides an inventory of key characteristics for Hamilton.
- **The Appendices** provide further detail on subdivision review processes, Hamilton’s planning framework, and community engagement .

Figure 3. Plan Structure



Plan Outreach and Engagement

Overall Outreach At-A-Glance



Phase 1. Visioning

The outreach campaign kicked off in June 2021 with direct emails, social media posts and updates, newspaper articles, and tabling events, directing potential respondents to the project website.

- **Online Questionnaire.** An online questionnaire was launched in mid-June, and available through early August at www.envisionhamilton.com. Over 350 people responded to this questionnaire, offering feedback focused on what community values and what respondents would like to see improved.
- **One-On-One Interviews.** In mid-July 2021, the project team conducted 20 individual interviews to gain an idea of what attendees felt are the biggest issues and opportunities that the City of Hamilton is facing. Interviewees included city and county leadership, city and county staff, city board and committee members, employers, developers, real estate professionals, community groups and organizations, and Hamilton area residents.
- **Small Group Workshops.** On July 14th and 15th, the team hosted a series of small group meetings, with approximately 60 people attending over the course of six meetings. Each meeting provided an overview of the comprehensive plan update process and asked attendees to provide feedback on key issues and opportunities centered around the three emerging themes from the online questionnaire.

Phase 2. Opportunities

The Phase 2 outreach campaign kicked off in October 2021 with direct emails, social media posts and updates, and newspaper articles.

- **Small Group Workshops.** Between November 8th and 18th, the city hosted a series of five small group meetings, with nearly 100 people attending. The first in-person meeting was held with property owners within the city's anticipated growth area. The four remaining meetings were to review the plan update process to-date; review existing conditions highlights; and to work in small groups to identify a housing mix and potential location for additional needed housing within and adjacent to the city. These housing and land use exercises directly informed the land use framework map and category descriptions.
- **Visual Preference Questionnaire.** An online questionnaire was launched in mid-February, and available through early May at www.envisionhamilton.com. Over 250 people responded to this questionnaire, identifying the community's support for different housing types and character; parks and recreation amenities; and character of mixed use and commercial uses. The imagery selected has been included within the land use categories to help define what each use should allow and look like.

Phase 3. Draft Plan

The Phase 3 outreach campaign kicked off in June 2022 with direct emails, social media posts and updates, and radio announcements regarding the release of the Draft Envision Hamilton Comprehensive Plan. Open houses and drop-in sessions were held through the weeks of June 13 and June 20, and the Draft Plan available online for comment and review of posted comment from June 10 through July 8.

Plan Outreach and Engagement

1 | Foundation

[June 2021 – October 2021]

~120
attendees

Events: *Tabling events, one-on-one interviews, Committee of the Whole meeting, small group workshops, community organization meetings*

373
respondents

Digital Engagement: *Questionnaire #1, photo upload and tag the map platform*

Notification/Media: *Project website and city email lists, Ravalli Republic and Bitterroot Star articles, presence at community events/tabling events*

Key questions: *What do you love about Hamilton? What would you improve about Hamilton?*

2 | Opportunities + Choices

[October 2021 – May 2022]

~190
attendees

Events.: *Property owners meeting; land use workshops (3 in-person and 2 virtual), community organization meetings, high school workshops*

251
respondents

Digital Engagement: *Questionnaire #2, photo upload and tag the map platform*

Notification/Media: *Project website and city email lists, Ravalli Republic and Bitterroot Star articles*

Key Questions: *Location and type and character of future development*



3 | The Plan

[May 2022 – August 2022]

~60 attendees

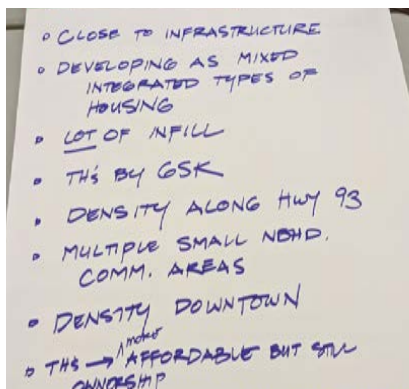
1,066 total plan views

Events: *Property owners meeting, open house events and drop-in sessions; Committee of the Whole meeting; presentations to community groups; Planning Board Public Hearing and City Council meetings*

Digital Engagement: *Digital plan review platform*

Notification/Media: *Project website and city email lists, radio announcements*

Key Questions: *Draft plan review and comment*







2 / Vision & Guiding Themes

Overview

The Comprehensive Plan's overall vision and guiding themes were developed early in the planning process and refined to highlight key areas that people care about as growth occurs. While each theme deals with individual issues and elements, they are interconnected. Along with the overall Vision, they set the structure for the goals and policies outlined in Chapter 3, and the land use framework and map shown in Chapter 5.

Hamilton's vision serves as both an aspiration for the city's future as well as a reflection of the collective values held by the community.

Hamilton Vision

Throughout history, Hamilton and the Bitterroot Valley have been shaped by the forces of change. Our resilience and shared gratitude for this place allows Hamilton to welcome and adapt to change while holding onto the values intrinsic to our community. As Hamilton welcomes new residents, the city will remain a safe place that values community connections, diversity, and the natural beauty of the Bitterroot Valley.

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.



Maintain Small-Town Character

Social Fabric • Amenities • Downtown • Recreation • Scenic Viewsheds • Walkability

One of the highest ranked values of the community is to maintain the character of the city and Hamilton's small-town feeling. When asked how residents define small-town (see Appendix C, Public Engagement), many responses focused on interaction with others, whether running into a neighbor while on a walk or having a conversation with local business owners while doing errands. Physical planning and design of spaces for connectivity can increase this social engagement, by including park space, increasing walkability, densifying areas of businesses, and integrating and diversifying housing types and neighborhoods.

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

- Enhance the city's walkability and compactness, with the ability to easily access downtown, schools, daily services, and other city amenities; focus on increasing connections across Highway 93 to ensure safe routes to parks and schools; and support business by providing alternative means of getting to daily services (i.e. walking, and biking).
- Ensure continuation of park development in conjunction with new neighborhoods; investigate trail connections within and around the city, especially between activity hubs, such as schools, parks, and existing trailheads; and expand the types of recreation facilities and programs.
- Continue the focus on and improvements for downtown, identifying additional community space(s) for events and interaction, and increasing residential housing in walkable proximity to downtown businesses.
- Look at image and safety enhancements for Highway 93 in cooperation with MDT, including signage and landscape improvements, land use and zoning updates, access improvements, safe crossings, additional controlled intersections, and speed limit reductions.



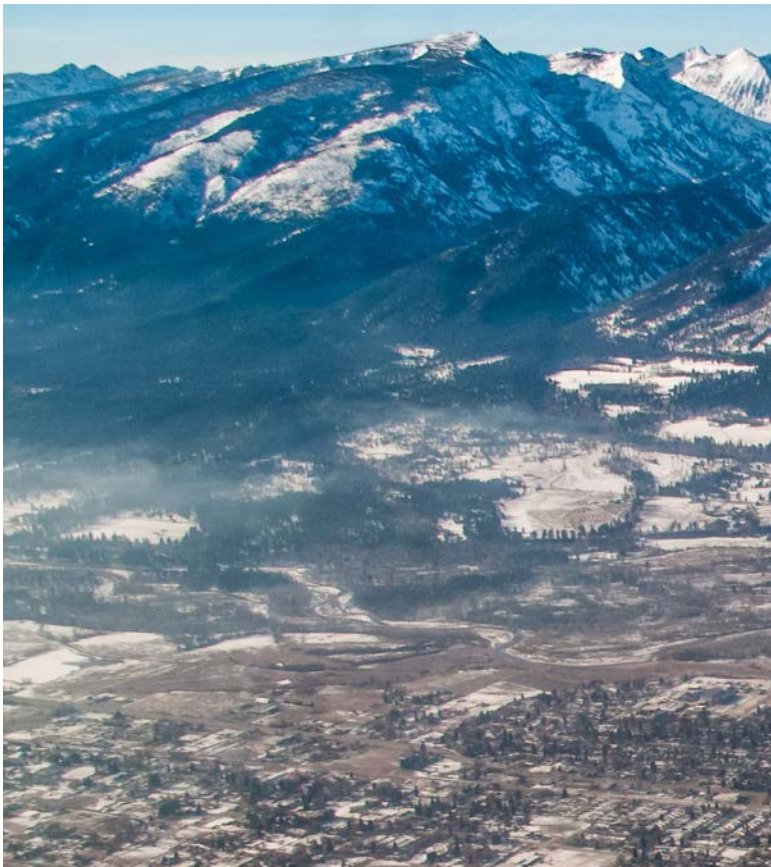
Strengthen Self Sufficiency and Resiliency

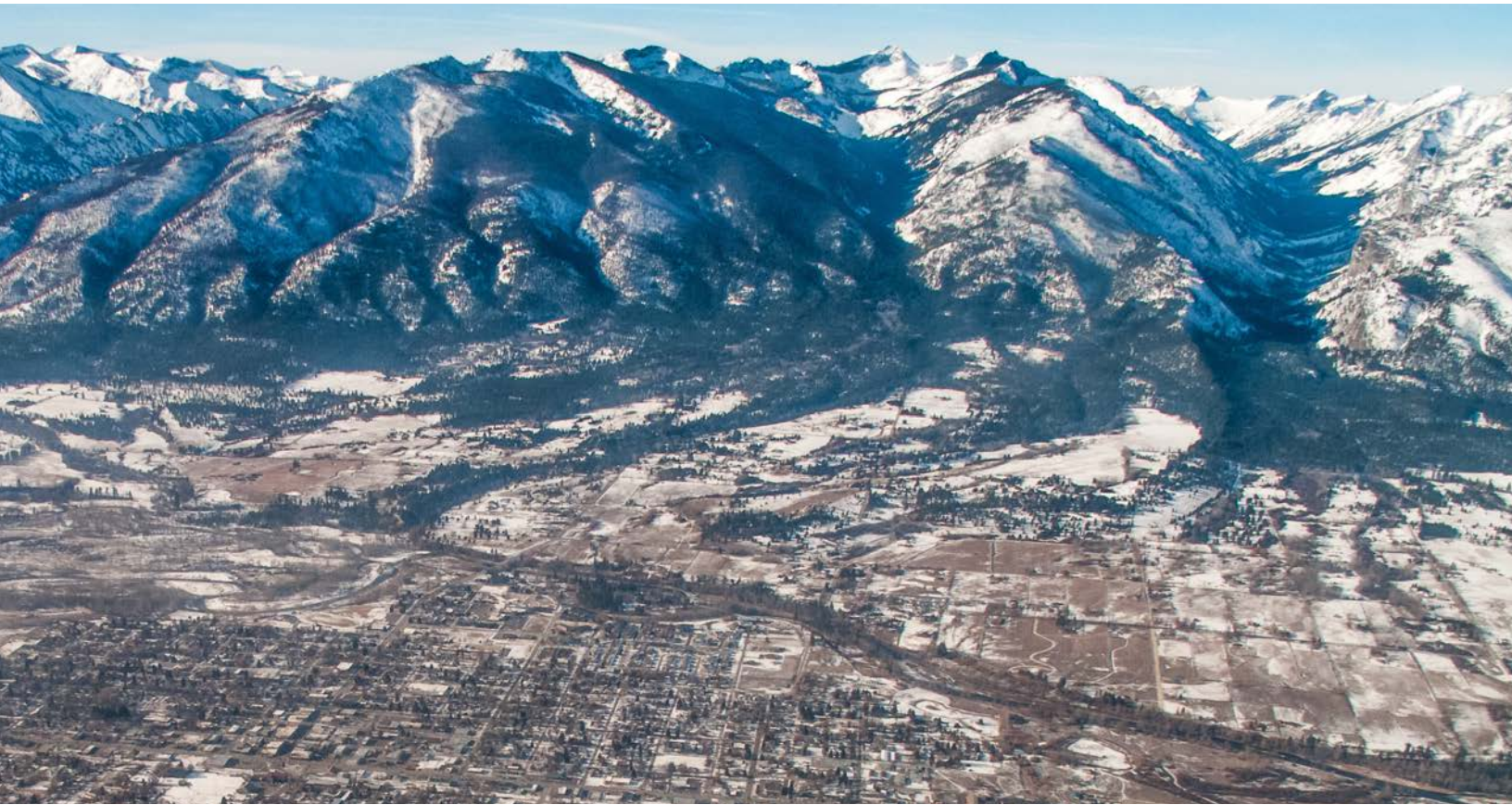
Economy and Job Base • Housing Supply and Cost • Locally-Owned Business • Environment and Natural Resources • Hazards • Health and Safety

In both online questionnaire and in-person conversations, access to housing was identified as a high priority for the community. In addition the team frequently heard that “I don’t have to leave town for anything. Everything I need is in Hamilton”. While most communities try to achieve a job to housing balance of one to one, Hamilton is in a unique position of providing a substantial number of institutional jobs for a large surrounding area. While employees will continue to live in surrounding areas, the city and its residents have expressed the desire to house more of the workforce in the city, mitigating commute time and traffic. This need for additional housing will likely take the form of new housing types and products not currently seen in the city, leaning toward multifamily units, or smaller lots of single-family homes. Important in the development of these neighborhoods is a desire to better integrate housing type, size, and product to encourage more natural transition and integration of housing rather than compartmentalized higher density products. These “new” housing types and products are actually reminiscent of housing patterns prevalent in Hamilton’s west side neighborhoods, with a mix of large- and small-scale single-family homes, small multi-unit (two- to four-unit) projects, and larger multi-unit developments. At the same time, the city must ensure it maintains a commitment to a clean and healthful environment, plan efficient water delivery, and mitigate public health impacts of wastewater systems.

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

- Support the established regional job base of the medical and biotech hub and preserve and identify additional land areas to accommodate new and expanding businesses.
- Encourage continued construction of housing; and look to increase and integrate diversity in housing type, size, location, and cost while incorporating design elements that enhance community character.
- Continue to support locally owned businesses, including emerging start-ups, incubator spaces for shared services, co-working models, etc.
- Work to protect and conserve the Bitterroot River and its associated floodplain and wildlife habitat, while allowing recreational access and trail connectivity.
- Work to improve and mitigate infrastructure concerns, including water line leakage and reparation of septic and cess pool systems to preserve the city’s wells, and maintain Bitterroot River water quality and quantity.





3 / Goals & Policies

Overview

The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan are intended to inform city decision-making with respect to programs and projects, strategic goals, development opportunities, service provisions, and planning for capital improvements. They are not mandates but rather provide a policy guide for the community. Many of the goal statements and supporting policies are aspirational, with the intent that functional plans and regulatory amendments will align with these goals and policies.

Community members, employers, partners, city staff, and elected officials should use the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety, but it is the goals and policies, along with the future land use map and categories that articulate the vision of the Hamilton community for future growth, development, and enhancement of the city. In order to implement this Plan, the city will need to update development regulations, including zoning, subdivision, and public works standards. These goals and policies are intended to serve as a baseline for the changes, and guide those updates. The level of detail and specificity will be addressed as part of this subsequent process. Chapter 6, Implementation describes how the city and its partners intend to put many of these goals and policies into action.

Housing

Goal #1: Meet the housing needs of current and future Hamilton residents.

- A. Encourage development of a variety of housing types and densities in newly developing areas, including townhouses, duplexes, condominiums, apartments, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and mixed-use buildings.
- B. Expand housing options in existing neighborhoods by encouraging:
 - Compatible infill development on vacant and underutilized lots.
 - Conversion of internal spaces to small basement or upstairs apartments.
 - Development of ADUs.
 - Construction of compatibly scaled apartments/condominiums, townhomes, and clusters of small single-family homes.
- C. Look at opportunities to integrate affordable housing into existing and new neighborhoods.
- D. Work with housing organizations and the private sector to lessen the housing cost burden for renters and buyers.
- E. Encourage the development of housing that meets the needs of varying populations, including individuals with disabilities, aging populations, populations requiring group homes, homeless and other vulnerable populations, families, and one- to two-person households.

Complete Neighborhoods

Goal #2: Develop neighborhoods that provide a sense of place and meet the everyday needs of residents.

- A. Encourage development of neighborhoods that:
 - Allow residents to comfortably accomplish their daily needs on foot or bike.
 - Provide a range of housing options.
 - Provide safe and convenient access to jobs, retail, services, and public places.
- B. Promote buildings that are appropriately scaled and designed in relation to the street in order to promote walkability and encourage community interactions.
- C. Provide safe walking and biking routes to Hamilton schools.
- D. Design neighborhood streets for low vehicle speeds and safety for all transportation users.
- E. Preserve the history of Hamilton's built environment.

Infrastructure

Goal #3: Maintain existing infrastructure.

- A. Give preference to maintaining existing public services and facilities.
- B. Monitor infrastructure conditions and needs on a routine basis.
- C. Maintain an efficient and equitable system of fees and development requirements to minimize long-term infrastructure and public service costs.

Goal #4: Provide for efficient and cost-effective delivery of public infrastructure and services.

- A. Link infrastructure planning with capital improvements programming.
- B. Ensure the city has sufficient water and water rights to serve projected growth.
- C. Expand city infrastructure in ways that support logical development patterns and further economic or housing objectives.
- D. Consider future maintenance and replacement costs when extending infrastructure.

Goal #5: Build and maintain a safe and functional multimodal transportation system.

- A. Coordinate transportation and land use decisions to ensure development is served by a motorized and non-motorized transportation system that is safe and functional for users of all ages and abilities.
- B. Develop a system of non-motorized facilities that connect neighborhoods, jobs, downtown, parks, and services.
- C. Focus transportation expenditures on corridors connecting key destinations in the city.
- D. Prioritize low-cost, low-tech, and quick-build projects that respond to existing deficiencies in the transportation system.
- E. Work with Ravalli County and the Montana Department of Transportation on providing safe and seamless connections between city, county, and state motorized and non-motorized transportation systems.
- F. Work with transportation providers and other interested parties on exploring options for increased public transportation service in Hamilton and the Bitterroot Valley.

Infill & Annexation

Goal #6: Maintain a compact pattern of growth that balances infill, redevelopment, and development in newly annexed areas.

- A. Identify an adequate supply of buildable land to meet housing needs and diversify housing choice.
- B. Direct development to areas where adequate public services and facilities presently exist or are planned to be provided to protect and efficiently utilize past capital improvements.
- C. Promote infill development that is served by infrastructure and furthers housing and neighborhood policies contained in this Plan.
- D. Require concurrent annexation in order to extend facilities and services outside existing city boundaries.

Coordination

Goal #7: Coordinate with Ravalli County on growth and planning related issues in the greater Hamilton area.

- A. Provide joint guidance on growth-related factors including, but not limited to, future land use, infrastructure and services, and development standards.
- B. Maintain and strengthen active communication with Ravalli County on land use, infrastructure, and the provision of public services within the Hamilton Planning Area.

Goal #8: Maintain and expand non-profit partnerships.

- A. Partner, fund and collaborate with local non-profit service providers to offer adequate levels of assistance for human-service's needs, including housing and homelessness services, mental illness and substance use disorders, food access, workforce development, and education.
- B. Work with local non-profits on issues and projects of mutual interest.

Goal #9: Strengthen communication with Hamilton residents, property owners, and businesses.

- A. Provide for transparent and active communication with the public.
- B. Work with private businesses and landowners to further mutual interests.
- C. Collaborate with the business community, educational institutions, and economic development organizations in efforts to further economic objectives.

Parks & Recreation

Goal #10: Maintain and expand upon a safe and functional city parks and trails system that supports community needs now and in the future.

- A. Prioritize maintenance of current levels of services at existing parks, trails, and outdoor recreational areas.
- B. Coordinate the locations of future parks with growth and the needs of new neighborhoods.
- C. Develop connections between parks through a system of pathways and linear parks.
- D. Maintain and expand access to the Bitterroot River.
- E. Expand recreation programs and opportunities.

Goal #11: Improve the health and diversity of the city's urban forest.

- A. Educate and encourage citizens and community groups to maintain a healthy and diverse tree canopy.
- B. Continue to manage and expand the city's urban forest within public rights of way and parks.

Highway 93

Goal #12: Improve the Highway 93 corridor.

- A. Tailor development regulations and guidelines to improve the visual aesthetic of the Highway 93 corridor and promote attractive entrances to Hamilton.
- B. Support creative strategies to revitalize vacant, blighted or otherwise underutilized buildings and sites on the Highway 93 corridor.
- C. Coordinate with the Montana Department of Transportation to improve motorized and non-motorized transportation safety along the Highway 93 corridor.

Economy

Goal #13: Strengthen the local business environment.

- A. Work with locally owned businesses to identify, understand, and respond to factors needed for them to succeed.
- B. Support local artisan businesses.
- C. Support the local agricultural economy.
- D. Allow and encourage the growth of low impact light industrial development.
- E. Support the tourism economy while also considering local impacts.

Goal #14: Increase the number of living wage jobs in Hamilton.

- A. Build on the strength of Hamilton's existing industry clusters and work with employers to identify how the city can support their growth.
- B. Support the Bitterroot College and Hamilton schools in growing job training programs and educational curriculum that provides the skills necessary for employment in the local economy.

Goal #15: Build resiliency and elasticity to better respond to economic disruptions.

- A. Evaluate potential benefits and costs associated with growth of different economic sectors.
- B. Support economic diversification.

Environment

Goal #16: Reduce environmental impacts.

- A. Minimize impacts to ground and surface water quality.
- B. Expand use of new technologies that minimize environmental impacts.
- C. Investigate policies to reduce climate change impacts.
- D. Identify local impacts of climate change and potential adaptation strategies.
- E. Reduce light pollution.
- F. Promote energy conservation and efficiency for existing and new city-owned facilities.

Downtown

Goal #17: Sustain downtown as Hamilton's vibrant hub of commercial and social activity.

- A. Prioritize the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians.
- B. Encourage uses that attract consumer traffic to downtown, with preference for active spaces at ground-level including retail, restaurants/bars/cafes, entertainment, and public spaces.
- C. Manage downtown parking to balance the needs of shoppers, employees, residents, and businesses while avoiding the negative environmental, urban design, and economic impacts associated with an oversupply of parking.
- D. Identify programs, projects, and policies that will help downtown businesses stay in place and grow.
- E. Promote placemaking and public art efforts that add vitality and activity to downtown.
- F. Encourage and incentivize incremental redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and building improvements that are sensitive to the historic character of downtown.
- G. Increase the supply of housing in and adjacent to downtown.





4 / *Issues & Opportunities*

Overview

The community engagement and outreach process highlighted key issues and opportunities related to future growth in both housing and economic development, and where and how to accommodate and utilize infrastructure most efficiently to meet Hamilton's Vision. This chapter provides a summary of the key issues identified by the community.

Housing

Hamilton’s housing issue stems from two interrelated factors. First, with increasing rents and home prices there are too few attainable or affordable housing units. Second, there is a general lack of supply at all price levels and unit types (e.g. rental/for sale and single-family/multi-family), which contributes to affordability concerns.

Housing Availability

One reason there are so few available housing units is that between 2008 and 2015, Hamilton, like the rest of the country, under-built housing and is now playing catch up. During that eight-year period, only 63 housing units were built compared to 271 between 2016 to 2021.¹ Both rental and ownership options are extremely difficult to find in Hamilton and Ravalli County. Between 2010 and 2020, the estimated respective homeowner and rental vacancy rates went from 4.2 and 11.4 to 0.0 and 0.0.² These figures are from U.S. Census estimates and while anecdotal data indicate that the actual 2020 homeowner and rental vacancy rates were not 0, the trend indicated a drastic drop in housing availability.

¹ City of Hamilton Building Department
² US Census, 5-Year ACS Estimates

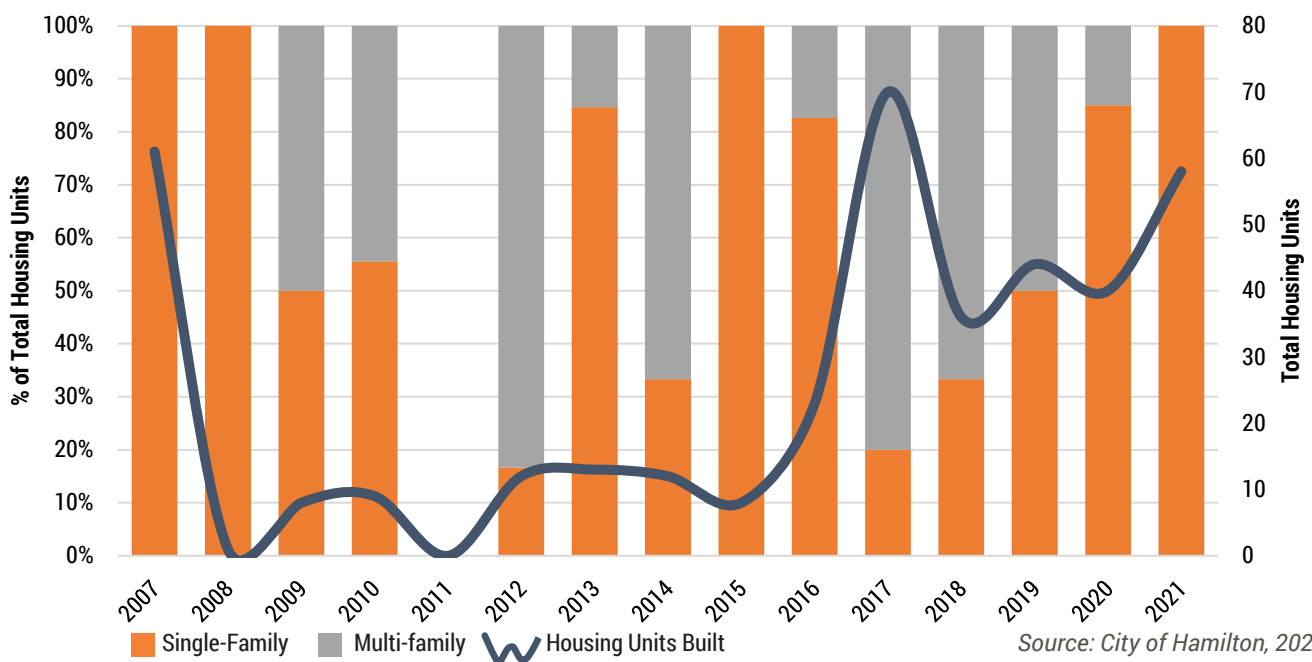
More recent data show that, between 2020 and 2021 new, for-sale listings in Hamilton were down 15% in Hamilton.³ As of June 2022, an internet housing rental search yielded three available apartment units in the City of Hamilton.

Since 2016, the share of single-family housing constructed in the city has generally been on the decline, while the pace of multi-family construction has increased. Between 2007 and 2015 multi-family units represented 23% of all newly constructed housing. That figure jumped to 41% between 2016 and 2021. This trend will likely continue due to affordability and local demand (Figure 4).

The city's west side, especially adjacent to downtown, tends to integrate single- and multi-family housing more seamlessly compared to newer, east side developments. Multi-family units have been isolated at the northeast corner of the existing city boundary, are not as well integrated into the surrounding single-family neighborhoods, and do not have easy access to services, parks and trails, as do older west side neighborhoods.

³ Montana Regional Multiple Listing Service

Figure 4. Single- and Multi-Family Units Built, 2007 - 2021



Housing At-A-Glance

2,232

Total housing units
(63% single-family and
37% multi-family)

(City of Hamilton, 2021)

\$306,370

2021 median home
value within Hamilton

(Zillow, August 2021)

\$505,000

Median sales price in
Hamilton, May 2022

(Montana Regional Multiple
Listing Service)

216

Units built since 2016

(City of Hamilton, Building
Permits, 2022)

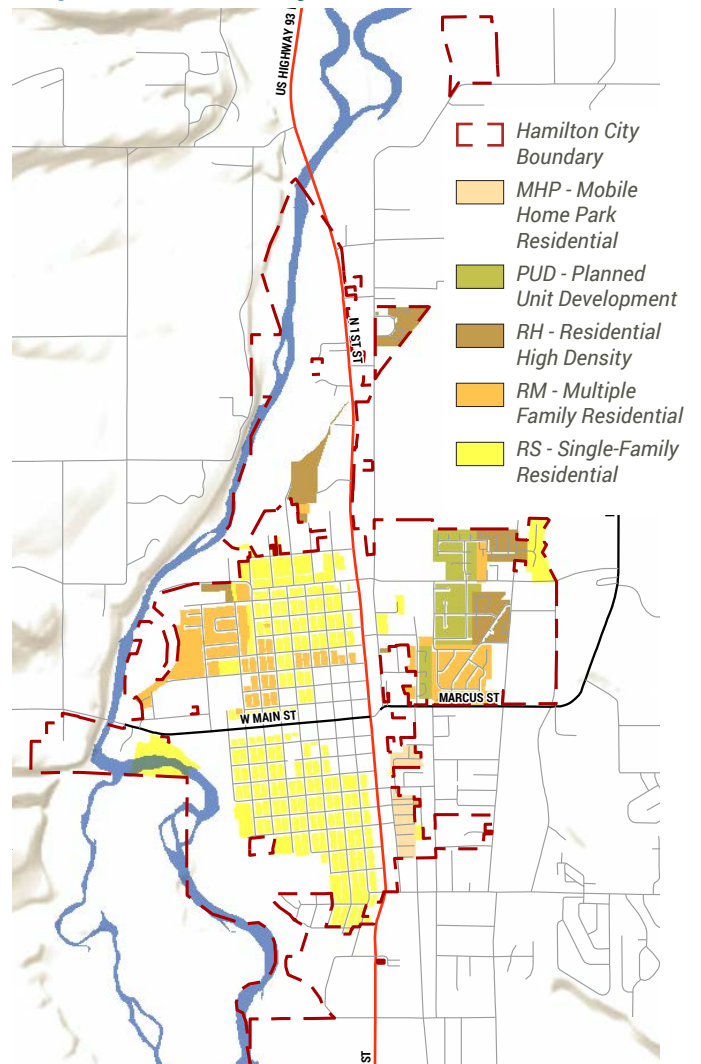
92%

Homeownership rate

(U.S. Census Bureau, ACS
5-Year Estimates, 2019)

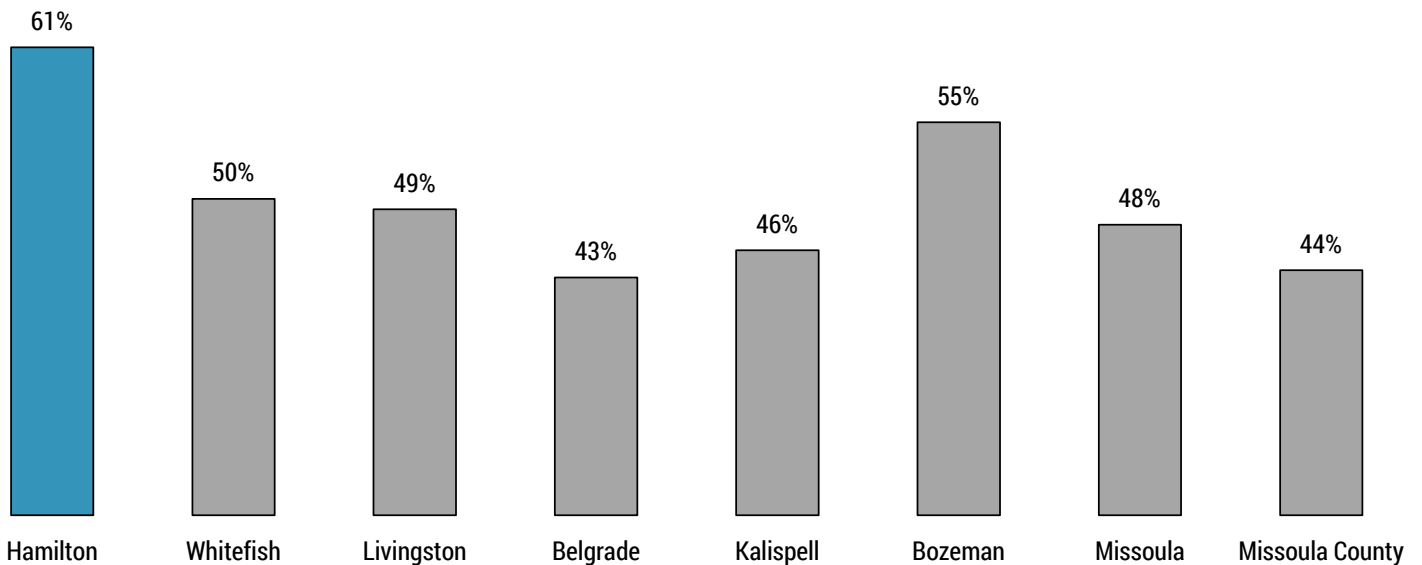
Median county sales price has risen 75%
since 2017; 39% between 2020 and 2021

Map 4. Residentially Zoned Areas, 2022



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Figure 5. Housing and Transportation Costs as Percent of Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019 and Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2019

Attainable housing is non-subsidized housing that is affordable to households with incomes between 80 and 120 percent of the area's median income)

Housing Affordability

As documented above, there is not enough housing stock in Hamilton to serve demand for existing and new residents. This is particularly true for housing units at attainable or affordable price points. Between May 2019 and May 2022, the median sales price for a home in Hamilton went from \$309,000 to \$505,000, a 63% increase.¹ For rentals, between 2015 and 2020, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit in Hamilton increased by 16% and by 37% for a four-bedroom unit.² These increases are beyond gains in median household income. While new housing construction is on the rise in Hamilton, the local housing market is not adding homes affordable to households earning anything near the 2020 median household income of \$36,000³.

Compared to other Montana cities in terms of housing affordability (housing cost vs. income), Hamilton falls in the mid-range (Figure 5). Looking at the cost of housing and transportation provides a better understanding of affordability, and with both factors included, Hamilton looks less affordable than other cities and is likely due to the 20% of the population who commute outside the city for work and lack of transit in the area.

Housing Insecurity

Hamilton's housing crisis has a pronounced impact on low-income individuals and households. According to the Bitterroot Homelessness and Housing needs assessment "The primary cause of housing instability/insecurity and homelessness in Ravalli County is a lack of affordable housing."⁴ Unlike common perceptions of homelessness in larger cities, homelessness in Ravalli County requires "using a lens wide enough to include those who are doubled up with family or friends, living in structures unintended for permanent housing, or at imminent risk of losing their housing - as well as those living in a shelter or on the streets." Other key findings from the Housing Needs Assessment include:

1. A significant and growing number of community members live in campers and recreational vehicles year-round.
2. A significant portion of Ravalli County's homeless are families with children.
3. A significant portion of Ravalli County's homeless have a disability.
4. People experiencing homelessness in Ravalli County are long-term residents.
5. People experiencing homelessness in Ravalli County generally have an income.
6. People experiencing homelessness in Ravalli County are mostly connected to available public benefits and helping resources.

Housing insecurity can have ripple effects for individuals and the community, limiting people's ability to find or maintain employment, access needed services or resources, and/or leave a situation that might be detrimental to their health or safety. To address concerns around affordable housing, the Housing Needs Assessment includes several recommendations including local incentives for new building, affordable housing, and increased density.

Hamilton's housing availability and affordability condition will likely worsen over the next decade unless a significant number of housing units are constructed. To respond to the varying needs of Hamilton's population there needs to be a variety of housing units made available for rent and purchase, including single-family homes, townhomes, and multi-family units. The city is one piece of the housing puzzle. To respond to the housing crisis in a meaningful way requires partnerships with local and state government, housing providers, developers, and the public.

Affordable housing is generally defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

¹ Montana Regional Multiple Listing Service

² Department of Housing and Urban Development

³ ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2020

⁴ Bitterroot Homelessness and Housing Needs Assessment

Complete Neighborhoods

Throughout the development of this plan, when asked “what do you love about Hamilton,” common sentiments from community members focused on small town feel, chance encounters with friends, the look and feel of buildings, and the ability to easily access daily needs on foot or bike. These sentiments point to a community interest in complete neighborhoods. Complete neighborhoods are places where people have safe and convenient access to many of the goods and services needed in daily life—school, work, groceries, recreation, open space, commercial areas, etc. Complete neighborhoods have well connected street networks that make walking and biking safe and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities. Complete neighborhoods also have a range of housing options and building types, including a mix of single-family and multi-family homes along with well-maintained historic structures and new builds.

Each resident deserves a great neighborhood—more than simply a place to live—they bring the community together at schools, work, parks, coffee shops, public spaces, and on sidewalks. Complete neighborhoods create a sense of identity around a shared environment and shared experiences on a human scale. Through the land use framework and goals and policies in Chapter 3, this Plan provides a vision and framework for enhancing the quality, diversity, and safety of our neighborhoods. It speaks to each neighborhood by addressing the effects of growth and land use changes, as well as attainable housing options. Above all, this Plan supports and encourages pride and investment in all neighborhoods, recognizing and celebrating their diversity, while adapting to the impacts of future growth and market changes. Creating and recreating resilient neighborhoods will require attention to physical details, connectivity, and encouragement of mixed and integrated land uses.



Infrastructure

A key goal of this plan is identifying areas most appropriate for future development based on access to existing infrastructure or, where that is not available, areas where infrastructure extensions are cost-effective for the city. The goals, policies and actions embedded in this plan emphasize updates to facility master plans to ensure infrastructure capacity upgrades are being planned commensurate with growth. The Land Use Framework was developed in close alignment with this intent—to identify development in areas already served, or easily served by city streets, water, and sewer. Further plans and studies will need to be undertaken after this Plan to anticipate phasing, costs, and design of infrastructure extensions as development occurs.

As infrastructure projects are undertaken, the city will need to evaluate the cost of those improvements in light of revenue generated from new development. This will allow the city to think more critically about the fiscal impacts of growth, particularly with respect to tax revenues generated and ongoing maintenance, operations, replacement, and staffing costs. Bolstering programs for regular maintenance and replacement of infrastructure should be prioritized and documented in a Capital Improvements Plan. This plan for ongoing maintenance, replacement, and extension of infrastructure should estimate ongoing annual costs versus one-time costs, which will assist in mitigating future infrastructure maintenance liabilities.

The city could anticipate a water rights deficit at a population of 10,000

Water

Hamilton supplies potable water to city residents and a limited number of properties southeast of city limits. The 2020 estimated population of Hamilton's water service area is 4,979. The water system includes groundwater wells, a ground level water storage tank, booster pumps, and a distribution network of pipes, valves, and hydrants. Demand on these facilities is increasing commensurate with Hamilton's population growth.

Water Supply

The city's water supply consists of seven groundwater wells with a combined capacity of 3,685 – 4,430 gallons per minute (gpm). While the city's wells are in operable condition, they are not able to pump to their full potential due to the age of pumps and piping.

In 2020, the city conducted a water rights needs assessment, which found that Hamilton will have a water rights deficit beginning in 2044 when the projected water service population increases to approximately 10,000 people. This deficit will occur when water production demand exceeds the current production water right. There is also a projected peak flow water right deficit, though this deficit can be offset by increased water storage capacity. As Hamilton grows, the city will likely need additional water rights for the eventual need to drill a new city well.

Water Storage

The city is currently served by a 1-million-gallon reservoir located on city-owned property outside of city limits. Potable water is delivered to the reservoir via the city distribution system, potable water wells, and the High School Well Field Booster Station. Moving forward, Hamilton will need to expand water storage capacity to keep up with growth trends and to avoid a peak flow water rights deficit.

Aging septic systems could contribute to contamination in wells and the Bitterroot River

Water Distribution

Hamilton's water distribution system consists of over 42 miles of mains ranging in size from two-inch to twelve-inch in diameter. The majority of the distribution system is steel pipe installed in the early 1900s. The age of the distribution system contributes to a high amount of water loss due to leakage. Water lost due to leaks accounts for roughly 40% to 45% of water pumped and treated, as compared to a national average of 15%.

Since 2014, the city has replaced approximately 7,020 feet of water main and abandoned 4,200 feet of leaking main. The city conducts leak detection annually and fixes found leaks. Despite these efforts, water loss remains high. One reason is that as water mains are replaced and leaks are fixed, water pressure is exerted in other areas of the system and new leaks emerge. In addition, the city's older water mains are undersized by current standards to provide adequate fire and peak day flows. Hamilton's water distribution system needs regular maintenance and replacement of existing mains. Water main replacements will reduce water loss, improve peak day and fire flows, reduce treatment and pumping costs, and reduce the potential of contamination due to leaking water mains.

The city has a water leakage rate of 40% to 45%, compared to a national average of 15%

Wastewater

Wastewater Collection

Hamilton's wastewater collection system consists of 25 miles of gravity mains, four miles of forced sewer mains and six lift stations. Lift stations and gravity sewer mains are generally in good condition though infiltration (groundwater entering sewer) is present along older mains in areas with high groundwater. Sewer mains in older areas of the city, west of Highway 93 are more susceptible to infiltration as most mains are made of vitrified clay pipe. The city is working to replace these mains with PVC as budget allows. As Hamilton grows there will be a need for installation of an additional lift station.

Wastewater Treatment

The city's wastewater treatment plant operates an extended aeration system and serves city residents and businesses. The plant was constructed in 1984, with updates completed in 1998, 2009, 2015, and 2016. Effluent is discharged to the Bitterroot River. The plant has a design flow rate of 1.984 million gallons per day (mgd) and as of June 2021, an average flow rate of 0.685 mgd. Organic and solids loadings are relatively consistent throughout the year. During summer months, the plant influent flow conditions increase due to groundwater infiltration into the system. The irrigation ditch system that surrounds the collection system contributes to the elevated groundwater. While the plant has physical capacity for growth, as more connections are made the city will need to improve treatment processes to remove more nutrients to protect water quality in the Bitterroot River and meet discharge permit requirements from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

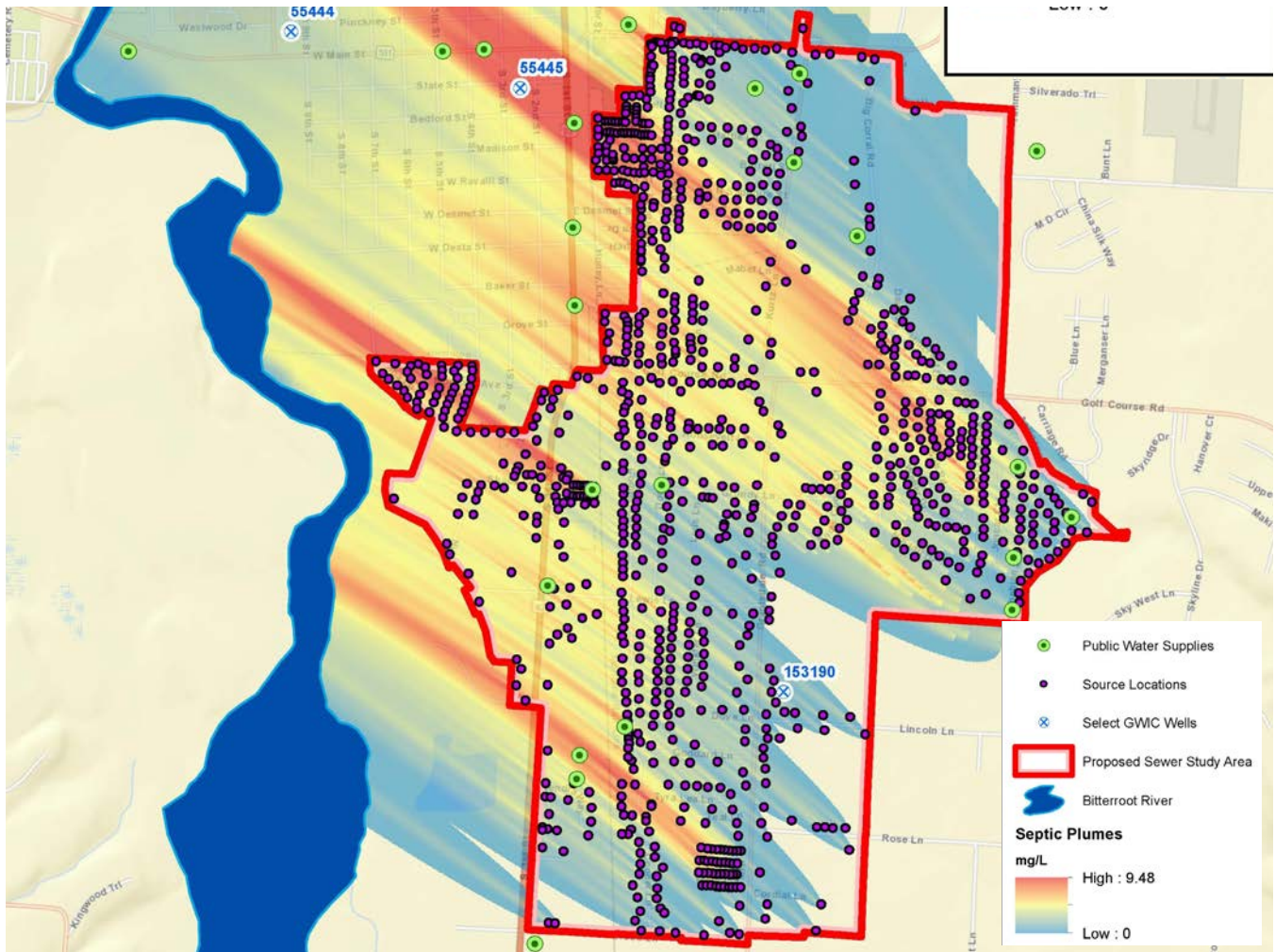
Southeast Hamilton Wastewater

Within Ravalli County, immediately southeast of Hamilton (generally southeast of the Main Street/ Highway 93 intersection) there is a high concentration of individual septic systems and cesspools. Many of these systems are older and would not be permitted under current standards. These systems discharge a variety of contaminants into the groundwater including nutrients, pathogens, organic matter and solids, that can ultimately reach the Bitterroot River and/or the aquifer (Map 5). This poses a risk of contamination to both private and city wells. In order to mitigate this public health and environmental risk the city would need to extend sewer mains to this area and work to connect properties. As a first step in evaluating this work, the city

developed a preliminary engineering report for southeast Hamilton that looks at how Hamilton could extend sewer. The Southeast Hamilton Sewer Study is available on the city's website and summarized in greater detail in Chapter 7, Infrastructure Strategy.

To expand sewer to these areas will be a costly endeavor that may not make fiscal sense but is imperative from a public and environmental health perspective, due to water quality impacts. Completing sewer extension to this area is only the first step. Individual property owners would need to agree to hook into a new sewer main, pay hookup fees, and annex into the city. The city would likely need to seek grants to offset costs, and partner with outside organizations to complete this work.

Map 5. Septic Locations and Plume



Source: Southeast Hamilton Sewer Study

Transportation

Automobile Infrastructure

The City of Hamilton currently operates and maintains roughly 28 miles of streets and 8.5 miles of alleys. This number does not include Highway 93, Main Street, and Marcus Street which are maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The city's street maintenance budget comes primarily from fuel tax money and a street maintenance levy while new public road construction is funded primarily by private development. The streets on Hamilton's east side are generally newer, having been constructed with residential developments in the last 20 years. Hamilton's west side has much older roads, many of which were constructed at one time roughly 30 years ago. As a result, a large percentage of west side streets are due for significant maintenance or reconstruction. Without maintenance, the average life of a city street is in the range of 20 to 25 years. Regular maintenance will expand the life of a street, including chip sealing, crack sealing, and mill and overlay. By doing regular pavement maintenance the city can delay the need for full reconstruction, reducing long-term costs. While regular pavement maintenance is vital to the longevity of any city's street network, it is not the only obligation of the city's street department. Hamilton's street department is charged with an assortment of critical daily tasks including street sweeping, grading alleys and shoulders, plowing, painting lines, signage, and patching potholes. These daily tasks tend to comprise the majority of the street section's capacity which has prevented the city from being able to conduct ongoing, regular pavement maintenance in-house.

Non-Motorized Infrastructure

With regard to pedestrian connectivity, Hamilton can be geographically characterized by two separate and distinct built environments with Highway 93 serving as the boundary. Neighborhoods west of Highway 93 are generally older and have a dense grid of tree-lined streets that provide good connectivity and a pleasant experience to walk or bicycle along. In contrast, on the east side of Highway 93, most of the neighborhoods developed between 1950 and present day have more inconsistent development patterns, often resulting in long stretches of roadway without east-west connectivity and few if any pedestrian facilities. The major corridors accessing Hamilton's west side from the east include Golf Course Road, Marcus Street and Fairgrounds Road. Fairgrounds Road is the only street with pedestrian facilities.

In addition to facility deficiencies, several physical barriers may also deter people from walking. The most significant barriers include lack of sidewalk connectivity, railroad crossing accessibility, inadequate crossings, and roads designed for automobile usage. Key roadways lacking sidewalks along long stretches include:

- Marcus Street
- Ravalli Street
- Pine Street
- Adirondac Avenue
- New York Avenue
- Franklin Street
- River Street
- Saranac Avenue
- North 6th Street
- Golf Course Road

Hamilton does not have many roadways with dedicated bicycle facilities. Main Street, Kurtz Lane, Marcus Street, and Fairgrounds Road are the only Hamilton streets with select sections having dedicated bike lanes. Though there are few bike facilities, most roads on the west side of Hamilton are generally attractive to bicycling. Westside streets generally have relatively low traffic volumes and are wide enough to facilitate safe passing of bicyclists by motorists within a shared lane. While Hamilton does enjoy low traffic speeds and volumes, the overwhelming key to increasing bicycle use is to provide additional facilities.

In addition to a deficiency of on-street bicycle facilities, a number of physical barriers may also deter people biking including connectivity issues, wide crossings, high-volume roads, narrow streets, railroad crossings, driveway access management, roads designed for automobile usage, and bicycle parking.

Hamilton also has several streets and roads that pose challenges to bicyclists as they travel to and from destinations. Some of these include:

- Highway 93
- Golf Course Road
- Marcus Street
- Pine Street
- Old Corvallis Road
- Daly Avenue
- Kurtz Lane between Golf Course and Marcus Street

The City of Hamilton needs to create a safe and connected non-motorized transportation network to allow people to utilize walking or biking as viable transportation options throughout Hamilton, not just in and around downtown. Many of these improvements have been included as actions and strategies within Connect 93, the City of Hamilton Transportation Plan, and the City of Hamilton Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. These actions need to be implemented. Coordination needs to occur with Ravalli County on extensions and standards for both streets and trail systems. General roadway and trail alignments have been included in the Land Use Framework with the intent to promote high levels of non-motorized connectivity throughout Hamilton. The city adopted a complete streets policy in 2014 to ensure newly constructed streets facilitate multimodal transportation options. The complete streets policy will be implemented as streets are constructed and reconstructed, with a focus on street designs that provide a safe and welcoming environment for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities.

Infill & Annexation

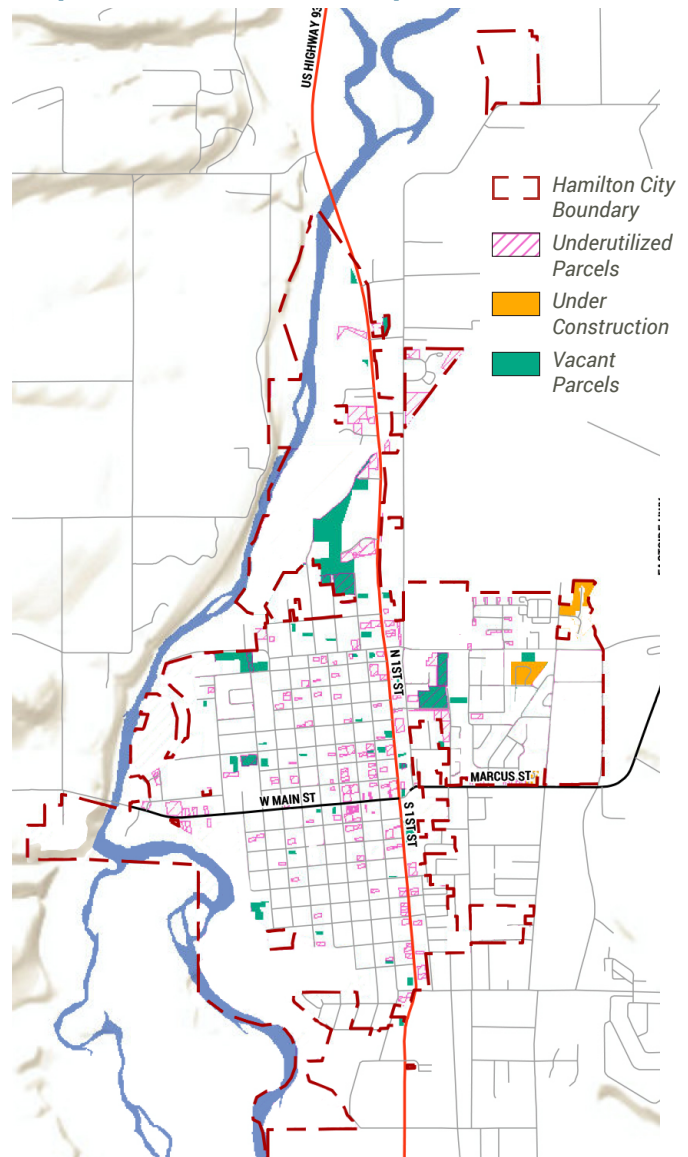
As Hamilton grows, that growth will likely be accomplished through a balance of infill development and incremental expansion of the city's boundary through annexation. The intent of this plan, through the land use framework and goals and policies, is to provide a guide for that balance.

Infill

Focusing development to areas within existing city limits makes for efficient use of land by lessening the need to extend city infrastructure (water, sewer, streets, and stormwater) and expand service areas for police and fire. This results in a more financially sustainable development pattern as it reduces infrastructure and service costs relative to newly generated tax revenues; costs which are paid for by city taxpayers. For example, a housing unit built in the city that does not require extending public streets, water and sewer mains, and police and fire service areas, will more often than not generate more in tax revenue than the marginal increase in infrastructure and services costs to serve that unit. Whereas a housing unit built outside the city, requiring extensions of the aforementioned infrastructure and services, will require the city to take on the long-term costs associated with the operation, maintenance, and replacement of that infrastructure or service. If the per unit cost exceeds tax revenue generated from that unit, it creates an unfunded liability that, at some point, must be made up for by the city and its taxpayers. This is not to say that the city should not consider extending services but rather that those decisions need to be made thoughtfully with a full understanding of costs and revenues in order to avoid placing undue cost burdens on city taxpayers.

Infill refers to building on vacant or underutilized lands within existing development patterns, typically inside city limits. Infill is critical to accommodating growth and encouraging development patterns that are environmentally and financially sustainable.

Map 6. Infill and Redevelopment Areas



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

At the same time there is a limit to how much infill the city can accommodate both with respect to available of land in the city and avoiding increasing density to a point where core community values are sacrificed (see Chapter 2, Vision and Guiding Themes).

Within the city limits, as of June 2022, there are 78 vacant parcels (72 total acres of land), of which 35 acres are zoned for residential use, and 37 acres available for commercial development (Map 6). While these areas could accommodate additional residential and commercial development, there are several limiting factors including, infrastructure deficiencies, location of floodplains, irregularly shaped lots, and regulatory constraints. The city intends to prioritize infill by encouraging development in these areas. One financial tool available to the city is funding from the North Hamilton Urban Renewal District (NHURD), which utilizes tax increment financing . With much of the remaining vacant in-city land within the NHURD, these funds can be used to fund public infrastructure improvements required for development to proceed. By capitalizing on available land for infill and redevelopment in this way, the overall acreage needed for city expansion can be reduced.

Annexation

While the city aims to encourage infill development, incremental expansion of the city boundary will also be necessary to provide sufficient buildable land for residential and commercial development. The City of Hamilton’s approach to annexation is driven by landowner petitions for annexation, guided by Montana Code Annotated, Section 7-2-46. The exception being annexations of wholly surrounded areas, as defined in MCA 7-2-45. There are several areas in Ravalli County that are wholly surrounded by the city and which do not currently receive city services. In order to annex these wholly surrounded areas, the city needs to develop a plan for extension of services (per MCA 7-2-4732) which outlines how the city plans to provide services (water, sewer, streets, police, and fire) to those areas.

The land use framework and future land use map in Chapter 5 outline areas outside the city where future growth is likely to occur. One of the more likely areas for near-term annexations is within Hamilton’s northeast quadrant—north of Fairgrounds Road, between Old Corvallis Road and East Side Highway. There are several small to large undeveloped parcels in this area as well as existing city water and sewer lines. For all annexations, the land use framework and future land use map will guide the city’s review of annexation requests. Along with the land use framework, it will be crucial for the city to review annexations in light of fiscal and environmental impacts as well as community benefits. New development in areas proposed for annexation should be thoughtfully designed to provide internal and external multimodal connections, a range of housing options, and sufficient parkland to meet the needs of residents.

Tax increment financing allows local governments to divert property tax revenues to public infrastructure and other improvements.

Coordination

The City of Hamilton does not exist in a vacuum and cannot plan as if actions outside its boundary do not impact the city and its residents and vice versa. Many organizations are addressing issues around land use, housing, transportation, environmental impact, and the provision of public services. Coordination with local and regional partners can result in lowered costs, increased efficiency, and reducing duplication in the provision of public services. On matters of land use and transportation, coordination with Ravalli County is vital to ensure growth in and around Hamilton is coordinated in a way that supports community needs, promotes fiscal sustainability, preserves community character, and makes Hamilton a stronger and more resilient place. Throughout the update of this Plan, community members have highlighted the need for city-county coordination on growth in the surrounding Hamilton area.

In recent years, the City of Hamilton and Ravalli County have coordinated successfully on several projects, a primary example being the extension of city sewer to the Ravalli County Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD) and Ravalli County Airport. At the departmental and elected levels, city and county staff and officials regularly communicate and coordinate with one another to improve operations, reduce redundancies, and share resources. Additionally, Ravalli County has a representative on Hamilton's Planning Board and North Hamilton Urban Renewal District (NHURD) Advisory Board, and the county planning department submits county subdivision proposals within two miles of the city's boundary to the city for comment.

As Hamilton and Ravalli County continue to grow, and the complexities of providing services and meeting community needs increases, it will become imperative

for the city and county to bolster and formalize coordination efforts related to planning for growth. With in-city developable lands becoming increasingly scarce, development pressure on immediately adjacent county land will grow. How these areas develop will have a direct impact on traffic patterns, the public cost of providing services and maintaining infrastructure, and the character of the Hamilton community.

Throughout the development of this Plan, community members have clearly expressed an interest in maintaining Hamilton's small-town character, preserving nearby agriculture lands, and growing in a fiscally responsible manner.

In addition to the county, the city currently coordinates with multiple governmental and non-profit partners and agencies. Partnership and coordination efforts with those listed below should continue and be strengthened to ensure implementation efforts within this Plan.

- Ravalli County Economic Development Authority
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana Department of Commerce
- Local non-profits including the Bitter Root Land Trust, Bitterroot Water Forum, B.E.A.R, Bike Walk Bitterroot, Bitterroot Climate Action Group, Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement District, and Hamilton Downtown Association
- Housing organizations and non-profits including, S.A.F.E., Human Resource Council, Lighthouse Family Shelter, and the Salvation Army
- Montana Rail Link (MRL) and Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF)

Parks & Recreation

Parks are important in establishing and maintaining the city's quality of life, ensuring health and wellbeing, and contributing to the city and region's economic and environmental sustainability. Access to the public lands, rivers, and outdoor recreational opportunities was listed as one of the top responses from the community regarding what they love about the City of Hamilton.

Overall, with nearly 5,000 residents and almost 260 acres of park space, the city has 52 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (Figure 6), well over the national benchmark and best practice of ten acres per 1,000 residents. While this seems high, it is important to keep in mind that these amenities serve a much larger population, including County residents and Hamilton visitors. In addition, the city's schools also contribute to overall park acreage and facilities.

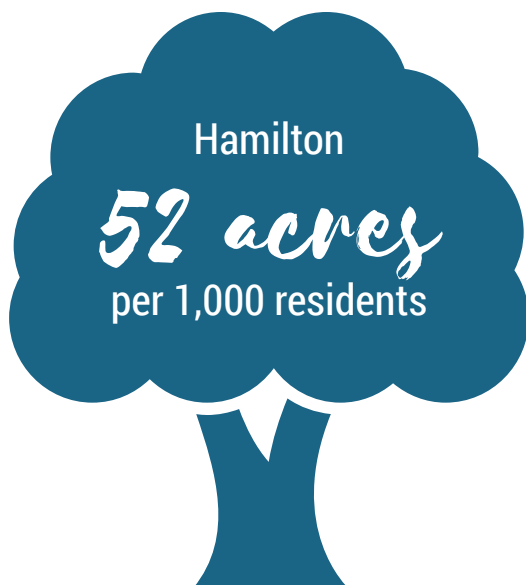
Map 7 shows this large acreage and distribution of parks, generally indicating good coverage and accessibility

city-wide. The number of high-quality parks along the Bitterroot River at the west edge of the city allows a high level of access from nearly all the neighborhoods west of Highway 93. On the east side of Highway 93, several smaller parks within the Arbors contribute to overall level of service to east side neighborhoods, but connectivity to the river parks is limited due to the barrier of Highway 93.

Also shown on Map 7 is the trail network, shown in brown. City-wide, over seven miles of paved and unpaved trails exist, but primarily within each park. Connectivity between parks is accommodated on-street, and often without designation.

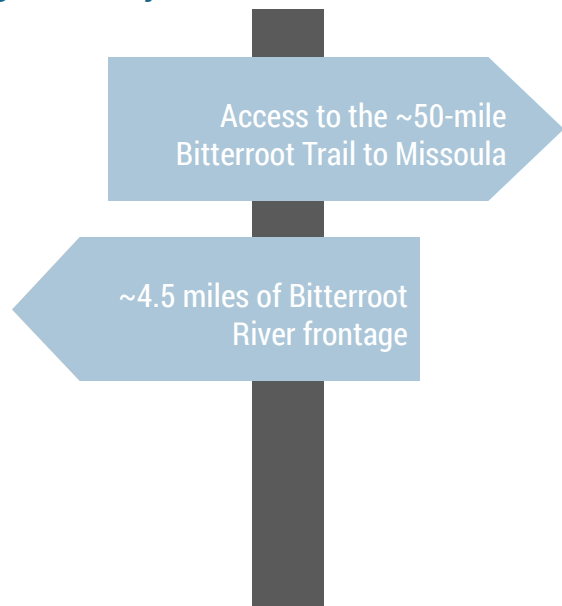
As the Bitterroot River extends the length of the city's western edge, access to this amenity is crucial. Fishing access is accommodated at the Main Street crossing, and boating access is allowed at an undesignated site at the north end of the city off of Highway 93.

Figure 6. Park Acreage



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Figure 7. Key Statistics



Source: Bitterroot Trail, City of Hamilton GIS database, 2021

Recreation At-A-Glance

256

Acres of local parks
(~10% of the city's land area)

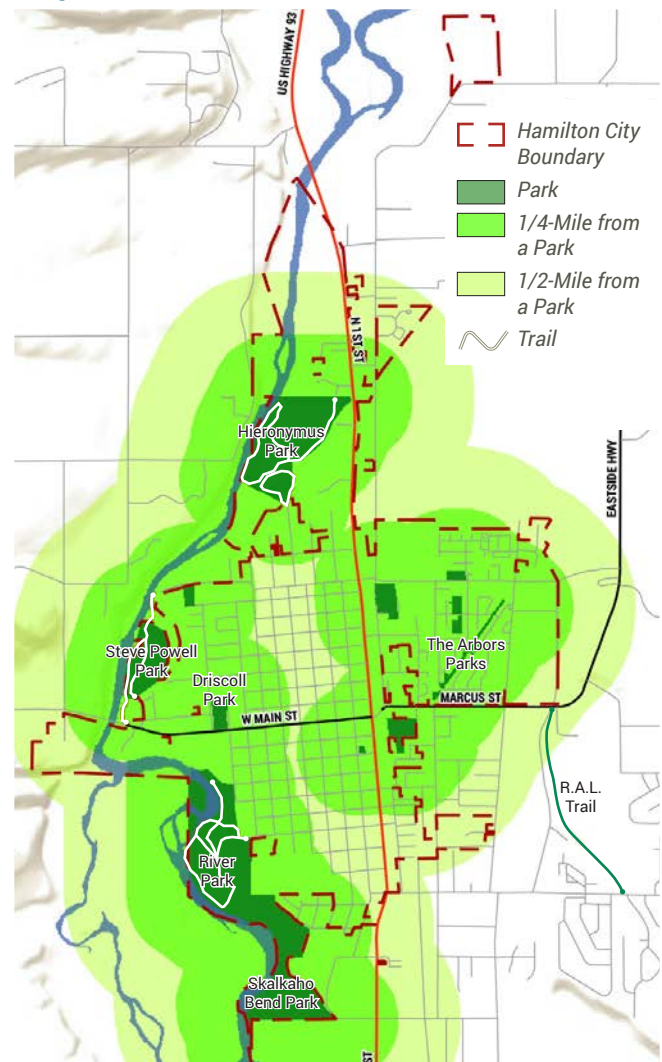
7+

Miles of trails within the city
(plus ~one mile of the privately-owned, but publicly accessible R.A.L. Trail)

83%

City residents live within a ten-minute walk to a park
(as compared to national average of 55%)

Map 7. Current Parks and Levels of Service



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Figure 8. Parks Acreage and Features

Park	Acres	Ownership	Features
Skalkaho Bend Park	69.8	City of Hamilton	River access, trails
River Park	67.2	City of Hamilton	River access, 2.9 miles of trails, playground, grass field
Hieronymus Park	62.0	City of Hamilton	River access, 2.4 miles trails, pond, picnic area
Steve Powell Park	22.1	City of Hamilton	River access, 1.8 miles of trails
Vester Wilson Fields	6.8	City of Hamilton	Baseball fields, batting cages, basketball court, pump track
Ravalli County Ball Fields	6.7	Ravalli County	Baseball fields
North Bridge FAS	4.9	MDT ROW	Vehicle/boat access to Bitterroot River, parking
Claudia Driscoll Park	4.8	City of Hamilton	Skate park, playground, bandshell, picnic area
The Arbors Parks (multiple)	3.9	HOA	Paths, playgrounds, basketball court, open grass, picnic areas
Heritage Place (multiple)	3.1	HOA	Paths, playgrounds, basketball court, open grass, picnic area
Dog Park	2.0	City of Hamilton	Open field for dogs
Stonegate Meadows	1.7	HOA	Playground, basketball court, open grass, picnic area
Demmons FAS	1.0	MT FWP	River access, parking
Legion Park	0.5	City of Hamilton	Playground, splash pad, seating/picnic area

Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Through public feedback, the community has expressed interest in diversifying the range of recreational activities. While the city boasts a range of great natural parks, good playgrounds, and skate park, there is a need for additional recreational facilities and amenities. Highest priority items identified through an online questionnaire were additional trail networks, diversity in playground types, public spaces, shelters, ice rink, indoor recreational and sports facilities, and community gardens.

As the city population increases, so will the need for access to park space and amenities. While the city is currently well-served by the amount of park space per resident, the distribution, access, and facilities will need to be looked at. Even with an anticipated population increase of 830 residents over the next ten years, additional park acreage isn't necessarily required to meet best practice standards. However, to maintain current levels of service, an additional 46 acres of park space would be needed. More importantly will be the distribution of, and amenities within, parks, particularly expanding parks access east of Highway 93 connecting riverfront parks, and building trail connections throughout Hamilton.

As the city's parks inventory expands and staffing remains stable, it becomes a challenge to maintain levels of service in operations and maintenance. Exacerbating this rate of updates and maintenance is increased usage by residents in outlying areas, contributing to the cost of maintenance, but not providing tax revenue for a consistent funding source. A more stable source of funding not only for construction of facilities, but for ongoing operations and maintenance, such as a parks district, should be investigated in the future, and could be part of a subsequent Parks Master Plan.

A city-wide Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan is needed to holistically look at and prioritize improvements for existing parks; need, diversification, and location of new facilities; and funding for construction and ongoing operations and maintenance. The Master Plan should also investigate changing subdivision requirements for provision of parks and open space and developing a fee-in-lieu program to directly fund city-owned parks and facilities.

Highway 93

Highway 93 is five-lane highway that traverses Hamilton on a north-south axis. It is part of the U.S. National Highway System and is operated and maintained by MDT. Locally, it is the primary north-south vehicular route and the city's only arterial road. At a regional level, it is a primary route connecting to Missoula, Interstate 90, and Canada to the north and Lost Trail Pass and Idaho to the south. Within the city, Highway 93 has five signalized intersections and one rapid flashing beacon for pedestrian crossings. While Highway 93 functions well in moving vehicles through Hamilton, there are local concerns regarding non-motorized connectivity, safety, and the aesthetic of the Highway 93 corridor through Hamilton.

Non-Motorized Connectivity

Highway 93 effectively bisects Hamilton, creating a barrier that is difficult for pedestrian and bicyclists to cross. While there are sidewalks along the entire length of the Corridor, Highway 93 is not an inviting space for non-motorized users due in part to high traffic volumes and vehicle speed, no buffer from vehicles, and auto-oriented land uses. Non-motorized connectivity issues are most apparent at the Highway 93-Main/Marcus Street intersection, the entrance to downtown Hamilton and what many people consider to be the center of Hamilton. Improving the ease and safety of crossing Highway 93 has long been a priority of the city. Primary, non-motorized connectivity concerns along the Highway 93 corridor in Hamilton include:

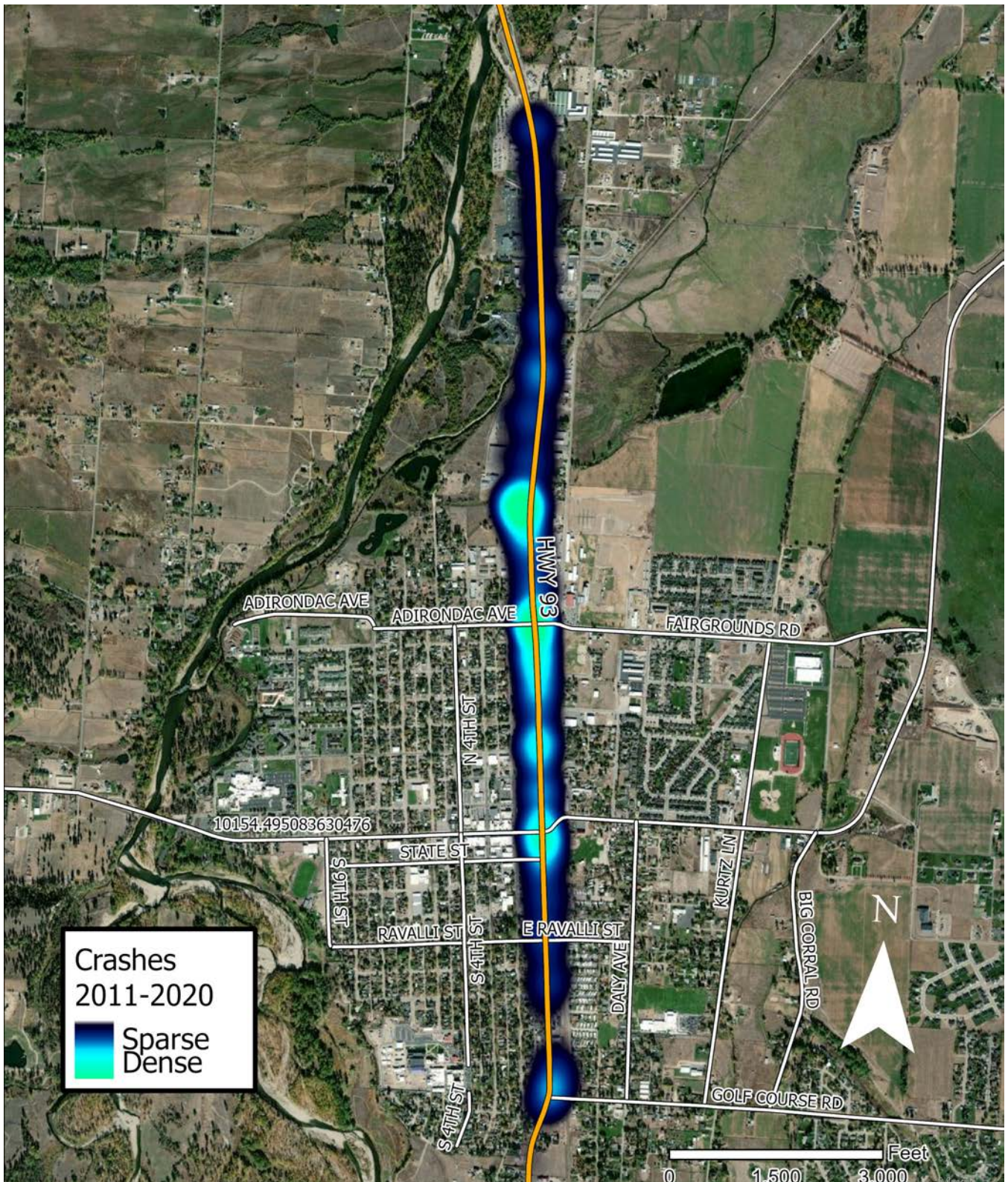
- Lack of sidewalks along Marcus Street, leading to Highway 93 and downtown
- Long crossing distances at intersections
- Pedestrian signal times are too short, particularly for children

- At certain intersections it is difficult for turning vehicles to see pedestrians in the crosswalk
- Vehicles commonly drive faster than posted speed limits
- Lack of bicycle facilities

Safety

In addition to the non-motorized safety issues highlighted above there are several additional safety concerns along Highway 93 needing to be addressed. The crash map (Map 8) shows crashes on Highway 93 between 2011 and 2020. As can be seen from the map, crashes have occurred along the entire corridor with clusters at the Fairgrounds Road and Main/Marcus Street intersections as well as along a section of northern Highway 93 adjacent to Super 1 Foods and Bob Wards. The crash cluster along the northern stretch of Highway 93 has been of particular concern for the community. There are several factors leading to safety concerns and high crash rates in this area, including numerous approaches along a short stretch of highway, high vehicle speeds as speed limits transition between 25 and 45 mph, and land uses that generate a high number of trips and left-turning movements. While these factors contribute to safety concerns along the entire Highway 93 corridor, they are most pronounced in the area north of Fairgrounds Road. As development pressure continues along north Highway 93 and Old Corvallis Road it is anticipated that these safety concerns will worsen if left unaddressed.

Map 8. Crashes, 2011 - 2020



Aesthetics

Hamilton community members have long expressed an interest in improving the visual aesthetic of the Highway 93 corridor. As the primary route through Hamilton, the appearance of the Corridor should reflect the quality of the Hamilton community. Aesthetic concerns highlighted by the community include:

- Lack of landscaping and streetscape amenities
- Expansive parking lots abutting the street
- Too many signs that are out of scale with surrounding buildings
- Vacant, unmaintained lots

Connect 93

In 2020, the City of Hamilton adopted the Connect 93 Action Plan which looked at improving safety, visibility, and appearance at the Highway 93-Main/Marcus Street intersection (Figure 9). Connect 93 explores different ways of balancing vehicular, pedestrian, and bike mobility to make this intersection safer and more connected and to improve the sense of place around this

important gateway within Hamilton. While the plan is specific to this one intersection it addresses issues that are prevalent throughout the Highway 93 corridor, with the intent that strategies identified in the plan can be replicated in other locations.

Coordination with MDT

Addressing any of the issues outlined above requires close coordination with MDT. Recognizing this, the city has worked closely with MDT to address community concerns specific to Highway 93. Coordination efforts have been informed by local functional plans, including Connect 93, as well as MDT standards and policies. Addressing connectivity, safety, and aesthetic concerns along Highway 93 requires balancing the needs of local and regional travelers, property and business owners, and local residents. While finding the right strategy for any one issue takes time, the City of Hamilton remains committed to working with MDT and interested stakeholders to address issues of mutual concern along the Highway 93 corridor.

Figure 9. Illustration of Highway 93 and Main/Marcus Street Intersection Improvements



Economy

Hamilton is home to 41% of Ravalli County jobs

Hamilton is Ravalli County's largest community (in population) and economy (in jobs). It functions as the area's service center, providing about 1,500 jobs in the retail and service industry and is the area's main medical provider. The biotech industry has been a mainstay, with Rocky Mountain Lab and GlaxoSmithKline and a third soon to be added. Hamilton leads the county in total employment, representing over 40% of its jobs (Figure 10). Historically, institutional uses, professional offices, retail and services, and biotech have been the biggest industries in Hamilton, accounting for the vast majority of the area's jobs. The largest institutional employers are the Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital, the City of Hamilton, Bitterroot National Forest, Hamilton School District, and Ravalli County; institutional uses make up 70% of Hamilton's jobs. The remaining job base includes a large number of entrepreneurs and local businesses (Figure 12). Existing business retention and expansion is a priority and will continue to build on these existing industries to account for new jobs.

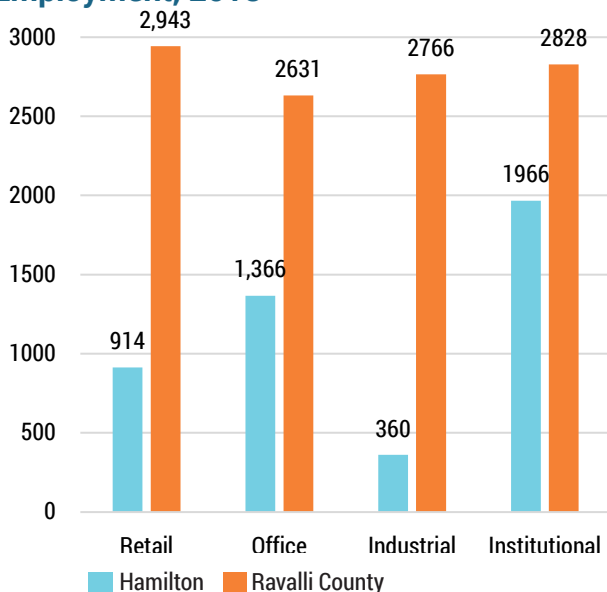
Continued coordination with Ravalli County will be needed to utilize and benefit from the Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD) extending east of Highway

93 to the Ravalli County Airport. While the general focus within the TEDD is to accommodate employment, areas adjacent to this should accommodate housing to support workers, and a mix of smaller scale commercial daily services.

In addition to the biotech industry, the tourism economy related to outdoor recreation brings in additional city revenue. Along with that revenue comes impacts in the form of additional, seasonal traffic, limited parking, potential overuse of recreational amenities and public lands, and competition in housing supply in the form of short-term rentals. While the community supports this destination tourism, coordination with Glacier Country Destination Stewardship could be investigated to help mitigate some of the mentioned impacts.

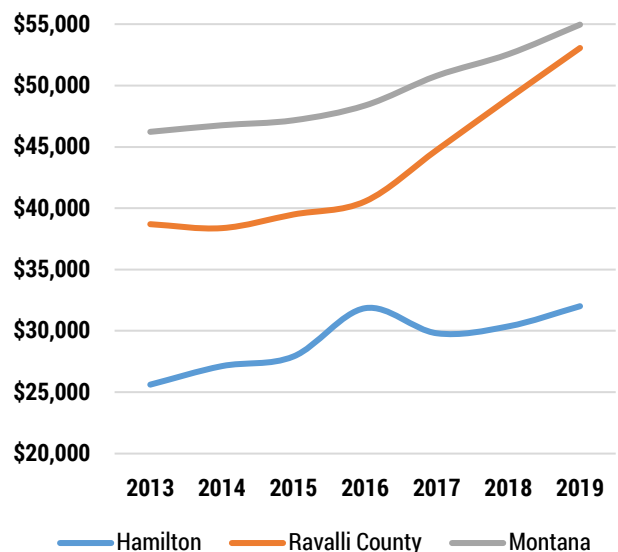
While the city's median household income increased 7.4% from 2017 to 2019 (Figure 11), the county and state have both increased at greater rates (18.6% and 8.2% respectively). As housing value increased (11.1% from 2017 to 2019), income did not keep the same pace, and over the past few years has fallen further behind as housing values have increased exponentially.

Figure 10. Share of Ravalli County Employment, 2018



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, 2020 Annual Average QCEW; US Census Web Application OnTheMap, 2018

Figure 11. Median Household Income, 2013 - 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019

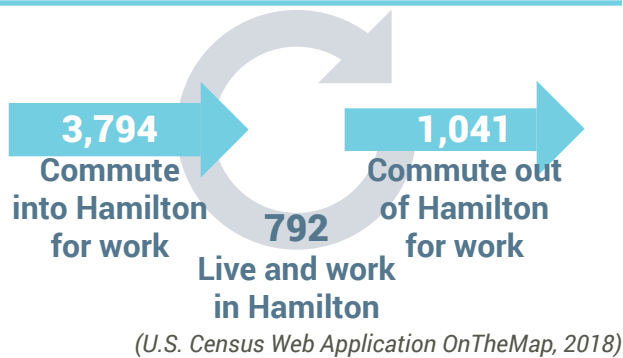
Between 2017 to 2019, median household income increased 7.4%, while home values rose 11.1%

Economy At-A-Glance

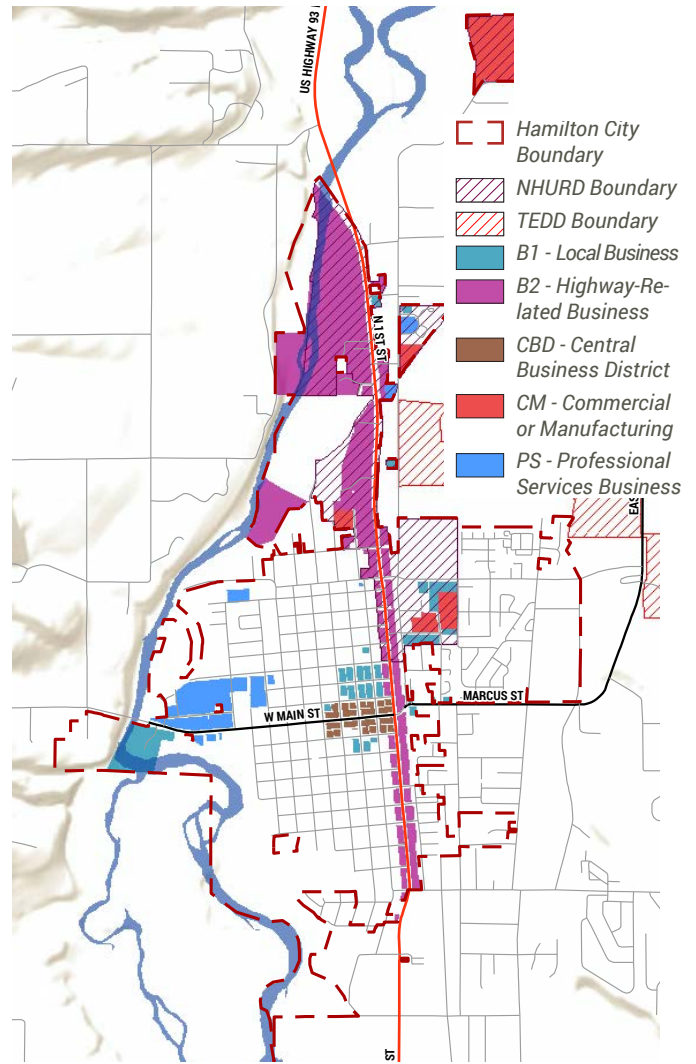
\$32,006 Median household income, 2019
 (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019)

\$36,117 Median household income, 2020
 (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2020)

96% Employed city residents over 16 years of age
 (U.S. Census Bureau, Forecasts for 2021 and 2026)

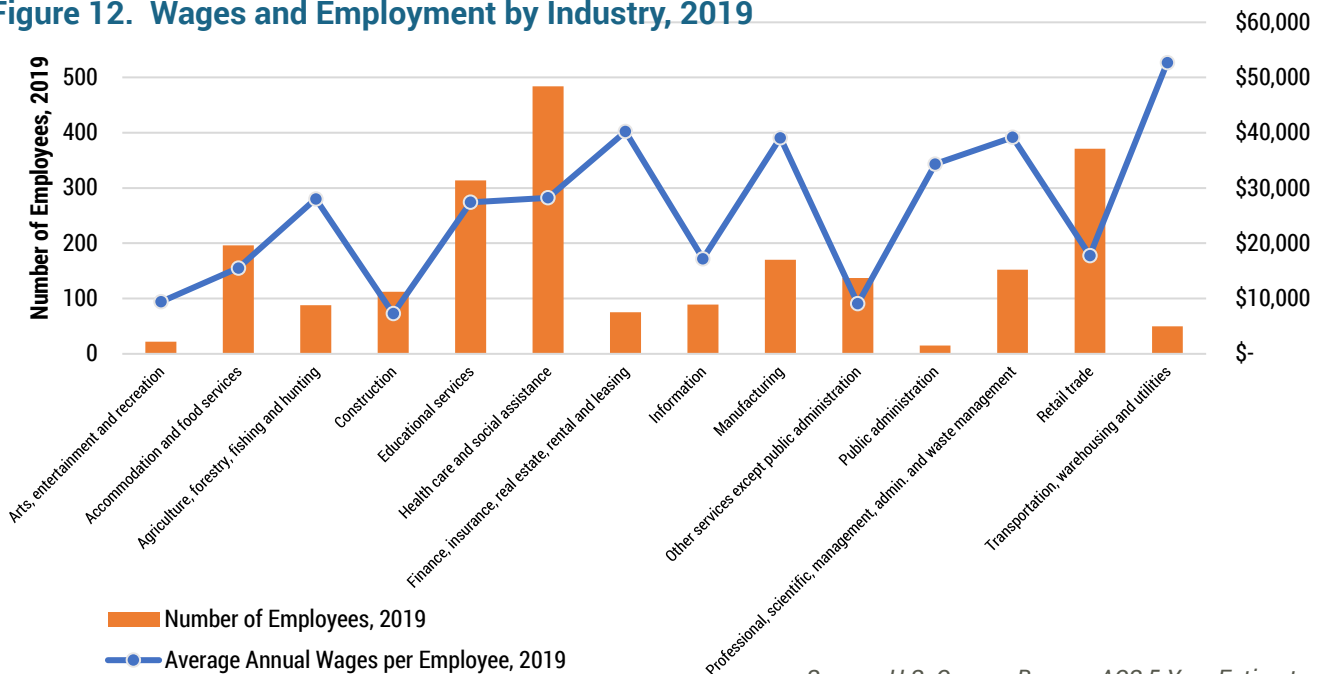


Map 9. Employment Areas



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021

Figure 12. Wages and Employment by Industry, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019

Through initial outreach, many employers have mentioned that increasing housing costs and limited availability have recently affected the ability to attract workers. Further discussed in the housing section, this is not just a residential issue, but also that of economic development growth for the city.

Commuting patterns show that as of 2018, over three times as many people commute into Hamilton to work as compared to Hamilton residents who commute to work outside the city. Land use patterns and the availability of attainable housing within the community will influence commuting patterns, the length of commutes, and overall affordability indices.

Downtown

Downtown Hamilton is the commercial, civic, and social hub of Hamilton. The walkable business and cultural district attract residents and visitors to a wealth of locally owned shops, restaurants, art galleries, professional offices, personal services, a library and museum, churches, and government facilities. The downtown Hamilton Commercial Historic District is a registered Historic District, highlighting 16 structures of significance within eight square blocks.

Not only does downtown attract for its aesthetic charm, shopping, and dining, it is also the most financially productive area in the city on a taxable value per acre basis (Figure 13). While the cost of maintaining infrastructure and providing services (water, sewer, roads, stormwater, police, fire, etc.) is not included in the calculation, the graphic illustrates how greatly downtown parcels contribute to fund city services relative to acreage. Roadways, utility piping, police wages, etc. cost roughly the same regardless of the intensity of development they serve, however, the land efficiency, centralized mix of uses, and multiple small properties, allow downtown to “pay its way” for city services over other development types. With this contribution to overall city revenue, downtown serves as not only a social center, but as an economic engine.

In 2014 Hamilton adopted a Downtown Master Plan, which provides strategic guidance to enhance the area through business vitality, branding, and design. The Master Plan is largely to be implemented by the Hamilton Downtown Association (HDA), DHBID, and the city. There has been recent progress with plan implementation on wayfinding and moving forward with Connect 93. It is critical that downtown’s stakeholder-partners continue efforts to coordinate the Master Plan and guide downtown’s vitality.

Montana’s brick and mortar businesses have been impacted as the rest of the global economy by the rising market share of e-commerce. This trend has been counteracted by steady population growth countywide, and currently there are few vacant storefronts in Hamilton’s downtown core.

Opportunities for downtown success are well identified in the Downtown Master Plan and incorporated as Envision Hamilton policy by reference. The city, HDA and DHBID must coordinate to implement the Master Plan. Select efforts include:

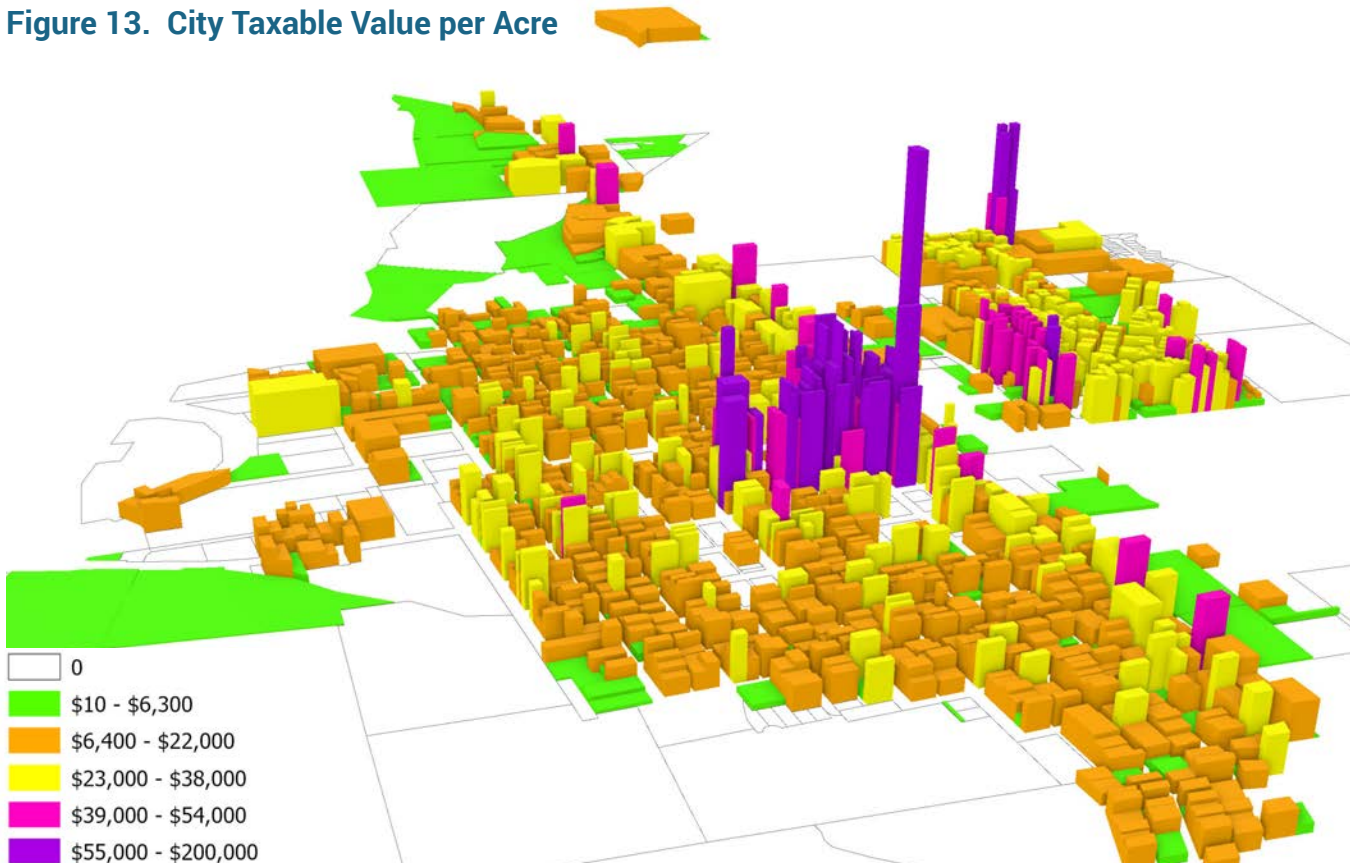
- Promote all efforts that increase foot traffic downtown.
- Encourage murals and artistic treatments, façade restoration and improvements, low-intensity events, and placemaking exercises to contribute to a sense of place and vibrancy.

- Extend service hours, pop-up shops, and coordinated retail promotions that attract new sales, generating wealth and a larger sense of community prosperity.
- Expand tree canopy and complete sidewalks on key routes, encouraging non-motorized mobility to the commercial core.
- Continue parking enforcement and public parking lot incentives to circulate auto-oriented consumers on the pavement and into downtown storefronts.

The city is an Affiliate Community of Montana Main Street (MMS), a coordinating program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation sponsored by the Montana Department of Commerce. MMS provides grant assistance for downtown planning and projects, and HDA has been a sub-recipient on prior grants. The city can eliminate a required partial funding match and access expanded training opportunities by elevating its member status.

There is also indication that community members are interested in directly funding aesthetic and event improvements downtown, but there is currently no mechanism for them to do so on a charitable basis. HDA is incorporated as a 501(c)(6), a lobbying designation that unlike other non-profits cannot count funds as tax-deductible and DHBID is a special property tax assessment district. A new foundation under 501(c)(3) could accept charitable donations for the explicit purpose of downtown enhancement. Successful downtown efforts also typically have the association and BID under a single institutional umbrella to coordinate improvements, finances, and events. This recommendation should be implemented as soon as is feasible.

Figure 13. City Taxable Value per Acre



Taxable values based on building and land values. Source: City of Hamilton, 2021



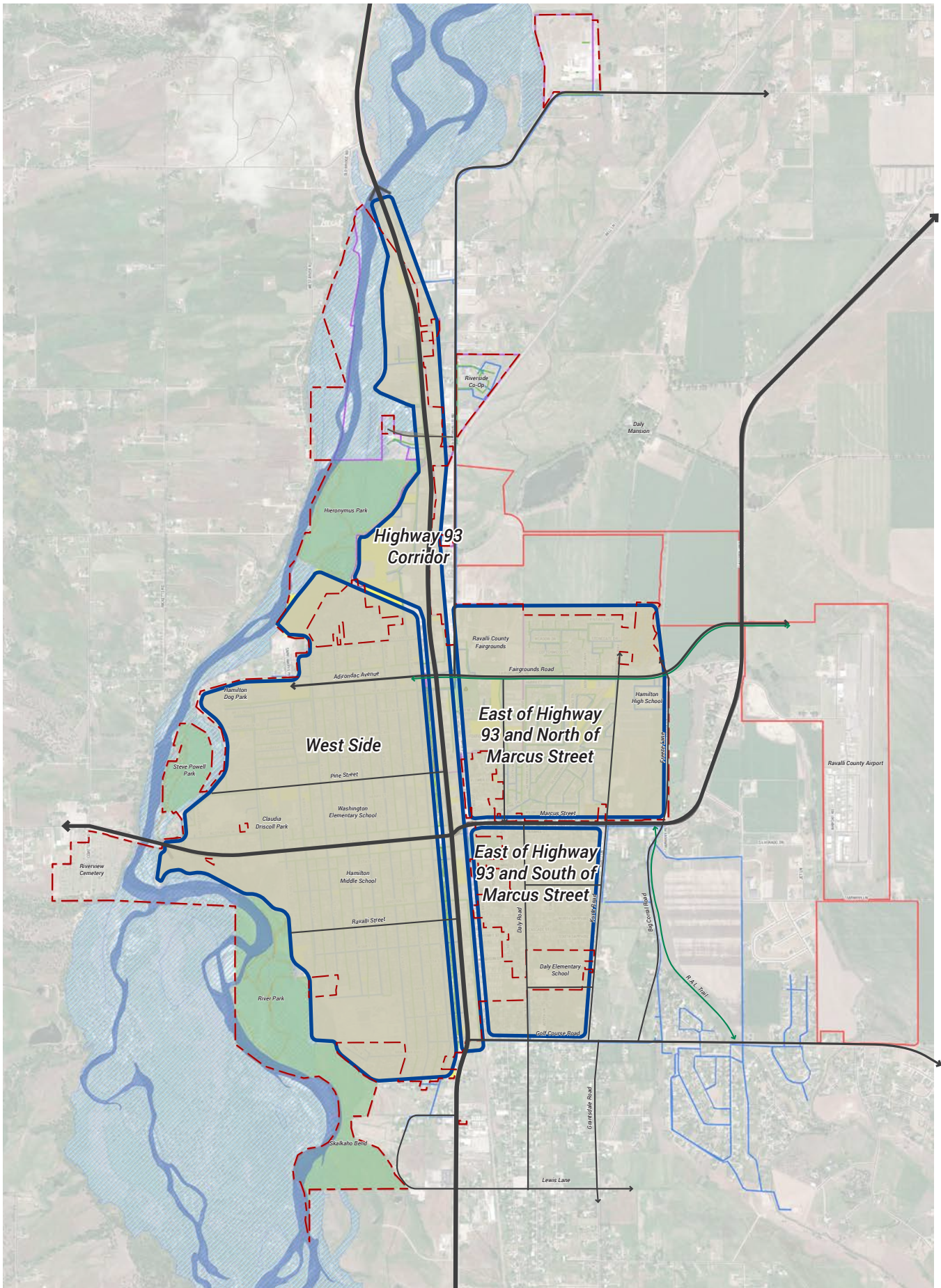


5 / Land Use Framework

Current Land Use Pattern

Hamilton's current land use pattern (Map 10) can be generally defined by four geographical areas:

- **West Side.** The West Side generally consists of downtown and the residential neighborhoods between Highway 93 and the Bitterroot River. This area has a well-connected transportation network on a 380' by 380' street grid. Residential neighborhoods, while seeing some redevelopment and infill, specifically on the north side, are relatively stable. Civic uses, including Hamilton Middle School, Bitterroot College, parks, city and county facilities, and the Bitterroot Public Library. Large employers include Bitterroot Health and Rocky Mountain Laboratory. Four parks (Hieronymus, Steve Powell, River, and Skalkaho Bend) serve as a transition between developed areas and the Bitterroot River. The entire West Side is served by city water and sewer infrastructure, aside from small, scattered parcels at the southern edge of the city boundary, and at northwest areas along the river.



Map 10. Current Land Use Pattern

- ***East of Highway 93 and South of Marcus Street.*** This area consists of a range of residential neighborhoods, varying in both age, housing type, and acreage. This area is characterized by older subdivisions (pre-1976), including mobile home parks, ½- to 1-acre residential lots, with interspersed larger undeveloped lots. North-south connectivity is provided through Daly Avenue, Kurtz Lane, and Big Corral Road. East-west connectivity is limited to Golf Course Road with few east-west streets, creating a disconnected transportation network. Much of the area is not within the existing city boundary and is not served by city sewer, while a few residential areas are served by city water. Institutional uses include Daly Elementary School and the Vester Wilson Athletic Complex, a city park.
- ***East of Highway 93 and North of Marcus Street.*** This area is home to Hamilton's newer developments including a mix of single-family neighborhoods and multi-family complexes. The Hamilton High School is also located in this area along with Ravalli County Fairgrounds and the Ravalli County Road Department. This area has a well-connected transportation network with most developed areas served by city water and sewer. This area includes Old Corvallis Road.
- ***Highway 93.*** The Highway 93 corridor bisects on a north-south axis and accommodates the majority of the city's retail and offices uses outside of downtown. Nearly all the west side street network connects into Highway 93, with signalized intersections at Fairgrounds Road, Pine Street, Main Street/Marcus Street, Ravalli Street and Golf Course Road. The railroad runs north-south along the east side of the highway, limiting connectivity to neighborhoods and commercial areas east of Highway 93.

Anticipated Growth

Through initial community outreach efforts, anticipated growth areas (Map 11) and the city's approach to growth were preliminarily identified and then refined through public land use workshops. The growth areas, and the city's general approach to growth, defined below align with the plan's three guiding themes.

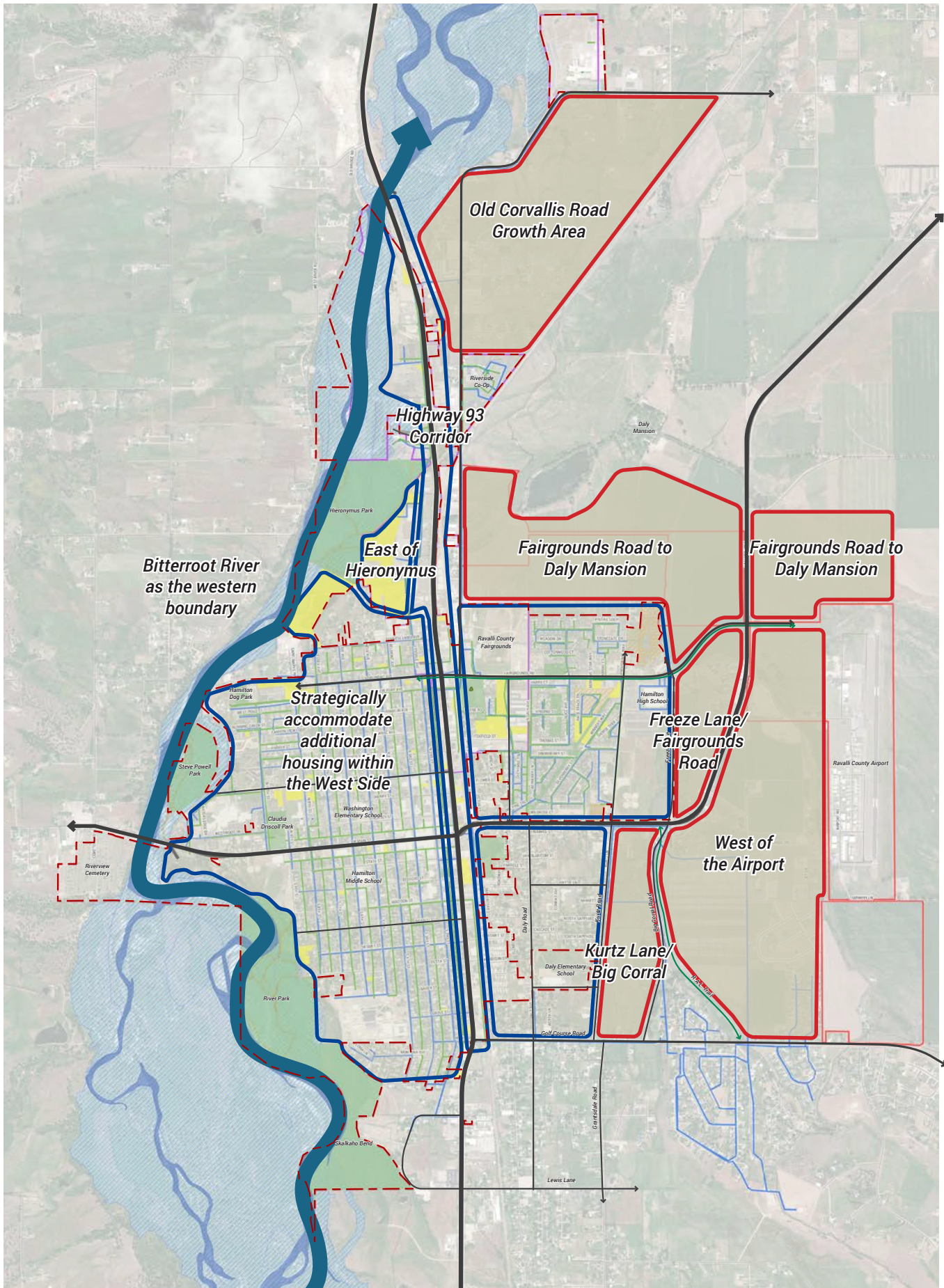
Bitterroot River as the western boundary. Throughout the plan's development the Hamilton community expressed broad support in using the Bitterroot River and its associated floodplain area as the western boundary for the city. Aside from the existing Riverview Cemetery, future development within this planning horizon is not anticipated to cross the river corridor, due to environmental and infrastructure constraints and costs.

Strategically accommodate additional housing within the West Side. Through the public engagement process community members identified a common strategy in prioritizing redevelopment of areas within the existing city. As these areas redevelop, they are anticipated to include a wider range of housing types, including single-family homes, ADUs, townhomes, and apartments with higher densities near downtown and Highway 93 and along primary transportation corridors. This type of redevelopment and infill should prioritize scale and form of development to ensure that it aligns with surrounding neighborhoods.

- ***East of Hieronymus.*** This area has the potential to accommodate higher density infill development and benefits from being close to open space, is centrally located and close to services. In order for development to occur, infrastructure needs to be extended including water, sewer, and streets.

Anticipated growth east of Highway 93. Most new residential and commercial development is anticipated east of Highway 93. Small scale infill opportunities exist along and south of Marcus Street but will require additional connectivity and extension of city services. Larger-scale areas for neighborhood expansion are outlined below. Any potential extension of city boundaries in this area are anticipated to be driven by requests for annexation from landowners.

- ***Kurtz Lane/Big Corral.*** The area along Kurtz Lane, between Marcus Street and Golf Course Road consists of larger parcels that could be developed into housing near Daly Elementary, with extension of city water and sewer.
- ***Freeze Lane/Fairgrounds Road.*** This area could allow for additional neighborhoods in close proximity to Hamilton High School and capitalize on an improved Fairgrounds Road realignment to the East Side Highway.
- ***Fairgrounds Road to Daly Mansion.*** Development within this area could capitalize on expected road and sewer extensions from Old Corvallis Road east to the Ravalli County Airport and could accommodate additional neighborhoods and commercial areas in support of planned and future employment uses within the Ravalli County Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD). These areas could also capitalize on the agricultural history of the city and provide views of and connections to the Daly Mansion.
- ***Old Corvallis Road.*** With improved roadway connections, this area could capitalize on direct access to Highway 93 and commercial uses along Highway 93 and Old Corvallis Road, as well as non-motorized connections to GlaxoSmithKline and other large employers in Hamilton. Coordination with the railroad, Ravalli County, and landowners will be critical for improving transportation access and connectivity and extending city water and sewer. Key to this area will be the preservation and potential expansion of existing agricultural operations in the area.
- ***West of the Airport.*** Sandwiched between the Ravalli County Airport and Eastside Highway lies land that could include light industrial/manufacturing and opportunities for workforce housing compatible with surrounding commercial and airport-related uses, building off expansion of the airport and anticipated sewer extensions.



Map 11. Anticipated Growth Areas

Future Land Use Map

What Is It?

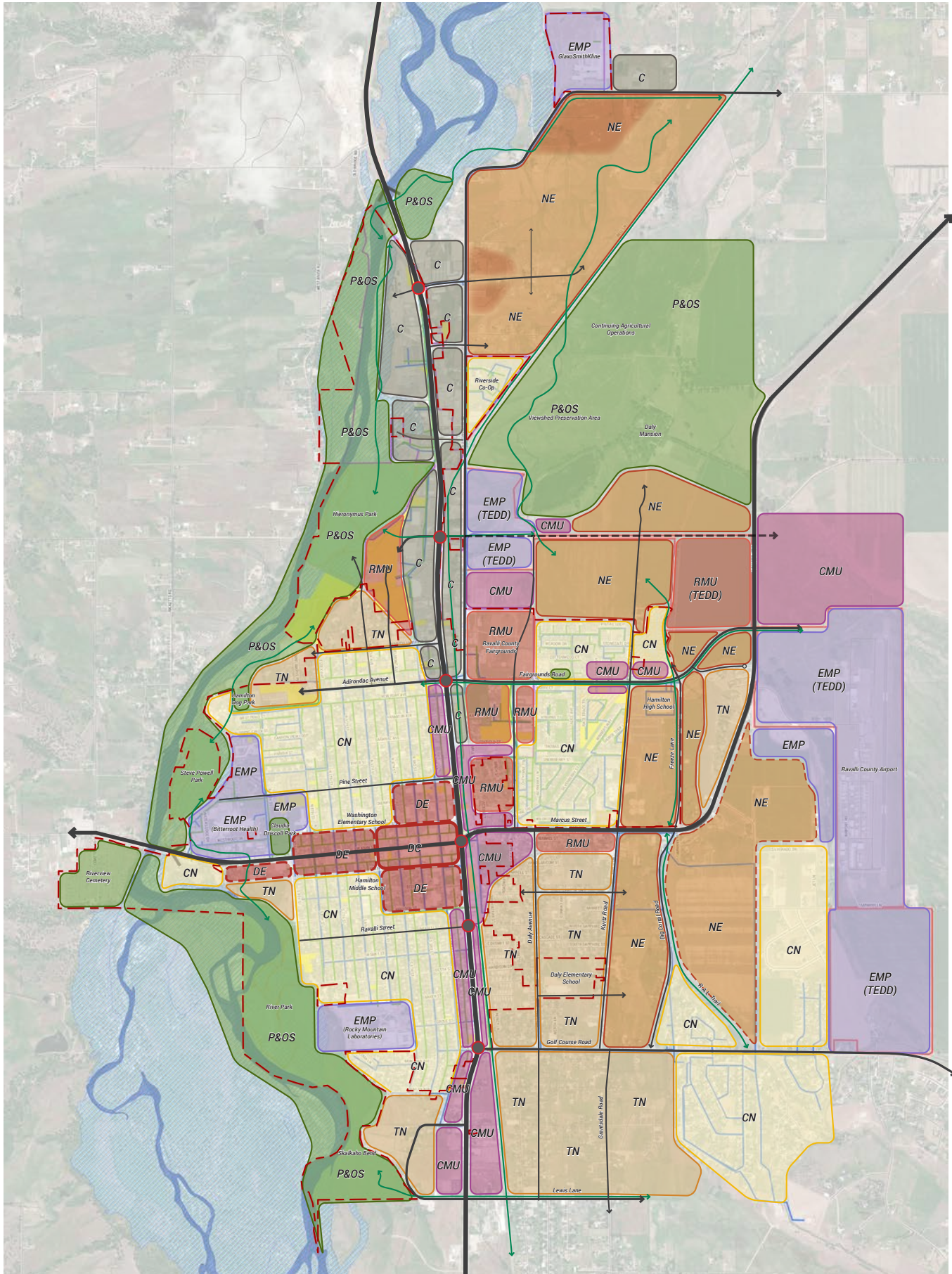
The future land use map (Map 12) visually illustrates the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and serves as a guide for growth and development within and adjacent to the city. The map assists in planning for future improvements for parks and recreation, economic development, utility extensions, and transportation connectivity. It is intended to be used by the city to help analyze development submittals, annexations, initial zoning and rezoning applications, and identify capital improvements needed as part of continued growth and development.

Relationship with Development Review

While the future land use map is not regulatory, it does provide guidance for updates to both the zoning text and map as well as in reviewing proposed annexations and subdivisions. Any proposed zoning amendments are a legislative action and will require separate public review and public hearing. Any proposed subdivisions, annexations, or zoning amendments should comply with the adopted future land use map and the goals and policies within this Plan.

Key goals of the future land use map and associated land use categories are:

1. Move toward inclusion of a greater mix of housing options, including townhomes, apartments, duplexes, etc.
2. Strategically infill and redevelop neighborhoods, within and immediately adjacent to the city limits, to provide a compatible range of housing types and attainable price points.
3. Provide higher density housing near existing community amenities and transportation corridors, including downtown, Hamilton High School, parks, and commercial areas.
4. Locate new neighborhoods adjacent to or within close proximity to existing city infrastructure, including streets, parks and trails, schools, and utilities (water and sewer).
5. Investigate areas adjacent to the existing city boundary that are not currently served by city utilities and define a strategy for utility connection.
6. Allow for continued development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) throughout new and existing neighborhoods to help mitigate housing supply issues.
7. Integrate differing housing types more seamlessly and avoid segregating multi-family developments from single-family neighborhoods.



Map 12. Future Land Use Framework Map

- City of Hamilton Boundary
- Sewer Lines
- Water Lines
- Trails
- Park
- Floodplain
- North Hamilton Urban Renewal District
- Targeted Economic Development District
- Vacant Parcel
- Parcel Under Construction
- Underutilized Parcel
- Core Neighborhoods (CN)
- Transitional Neigh. (TN)
- Vacant Parcel
- Downtown Core and Expansion Area (DC/DE)
- Employment (EMP)
- Commercial Mixed Use (CMU)
- Residential Mixed Use (RMU)
- Commercial (C)
- Parks & Open Space (P&OS)
- Trail
- Roadways (existing and potential)
- Traffic Signal (existing and potential)



Land Use Designations

Overview

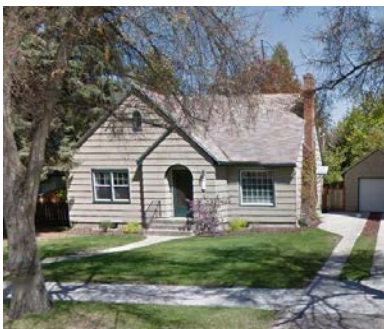
Future land use designations work in tandem with the future land use map. These designations are not regulatory but can be implemented by one or more zoning designations. Each category identified on the future land use map is detailed on the following pages, each providing an overview of appropriate development and redevelopment opportunities for housing, commercial, employment, recreation, civic, and other uses. The future land use designations have been developed with community input as part of this process, specifically through the character of imagery provided, and with the goal to implement the overall vision and themes of Hamilton's Comprehensive Plan.

Each future land use designation includes a list of the zoning districts which implement that future land use designation. It is anticipated that when Hamilton's zoning regulations are updated this section of the plan will be updated to reflect and new and/or altered zoning districts.

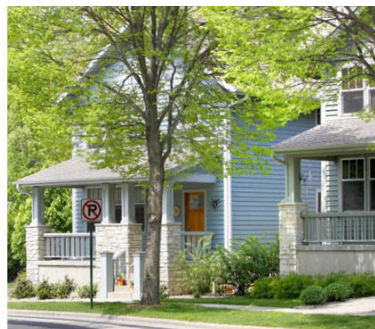


Core Neighborhoods (CN)

- **General Description.** Existing neighborhoods that will remain intact with compatible infill of existing vacant and underutilized lots, and development of ADUs to support housing needs.
 - Overall density of these neighborhoods will stay relatively constant, with an increase as infill and redevelopment occur.
- **Primary Uses.** A mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, duplex to fourplex, apartments/condominiums, and ADUs.
- **Secondary Uses.** Civic space and gathering areas, small-scale parks/playgrounds, small neighborhood commercial areas (i.e., corner stores).
- **Streets/Connections.** Continued enhancements to streetscape, including sidewalk extensions; connections between the off-street paths and on-street non-motorized network.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Single-Family Residential (RS), Multiple-Family Residential (RM), Residential High Density (RH), Public and Institutional (PI)



Single-Family Detached with Driveway



Single-Family Detached with Alley



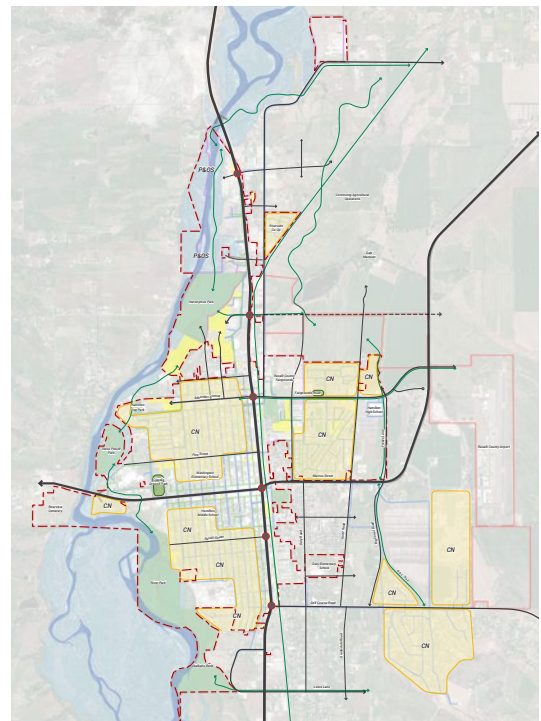
Stacked Duplex



Fiveplex



Accessory Dwelling Unit above Garage

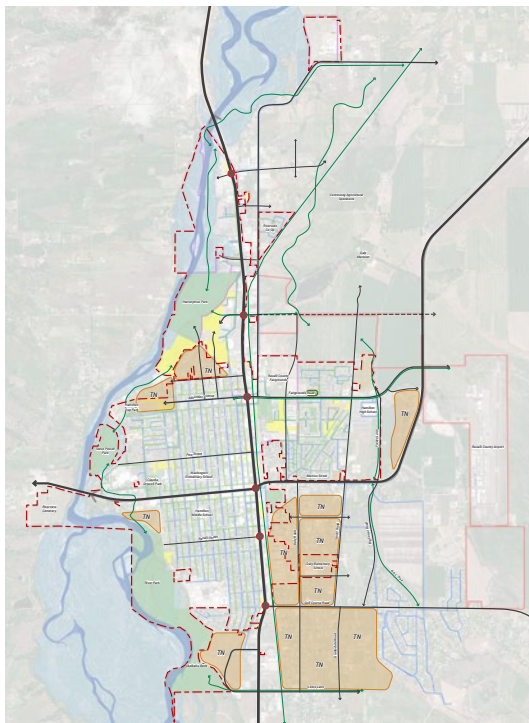


General Location of Core Neighborhoods



Transitional Neighborhoods (TN)

- **General Description.** Existing neighborhoods that are expected to grow as annexations occur, infrastructure improvements are planned and made, and existing larger lots are developed.
 - Continued compatible infill of vacant lots, and redevelopment of larger parcels.
 - Overall density of these neighborhoods will likely increase as infill and redevelopment occurs.
- **Primary Uses.** A mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, duplex to fourplex, apartments/condominiums, and ADUs.
- **Secondary Uses.** Civic space and gathering areas; parks, courts, fields, and playgrounds; small neighborhood commercial areas (i.e., corner stores).
- **Streets/Connections.** Additional roadway connections should be accommodated as new development/redevelopment is approved, overall improving inter-connectivity. Large-scale improvements to streets (including Daly and Kurtz) will be needed as growth occurs.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Single-Family Residential (RS), Multiple-Family Residential (RM), Residential High Density (RH), Public and Institutional (PI)



General Location of Transitional Neighborhoods



Single-Family Detached



Single-Family Attached Townhomes with Parks/Open Space Areas



Fourplex with Alley



Single-Family Cottage Courts



Neighborhood Expansion (NE)

- General Description.** New neighborhood areas, accommodating an integrated mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, apartments and condominiums, cottage courts, and ADUs.
 - Varying residential densities with a mix of single-family and multi-family housing options. Higher residential densities are encouraged but not required. Large areas of any single housing type are discouraged.
 - Park and trail connections and small-scale commercial areas should be integrated into neighborhood design.
 - Ongoing agricultural transition and the right-to-farm should be considered for new neighborhoods.
- Primary Uses.** A mix of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, duplex to fourplex, apartments/condominiums, and ADUs.
- Secondary Uses.** Park space and small-scale commercial.
- Streets/Connections.** Roadway connections should be identified through the area and right-of-way preserved prior to/as development occurs to ensure connectivity; intersection densities should be similar to the West Side Core Neighborhoods; incorporate off-street trails and greenways throughout.
- Implementing Zoning Districts.** Single-Family Residential (RS), Multiple-Family Residential (RM), Residential High Density (RH), Transitional Neighborhood Business (B), Planned Unit Development Overlay (PUDOD), Public and Institutional (PI)



Single-Family Detached, Small Lot with Alleys



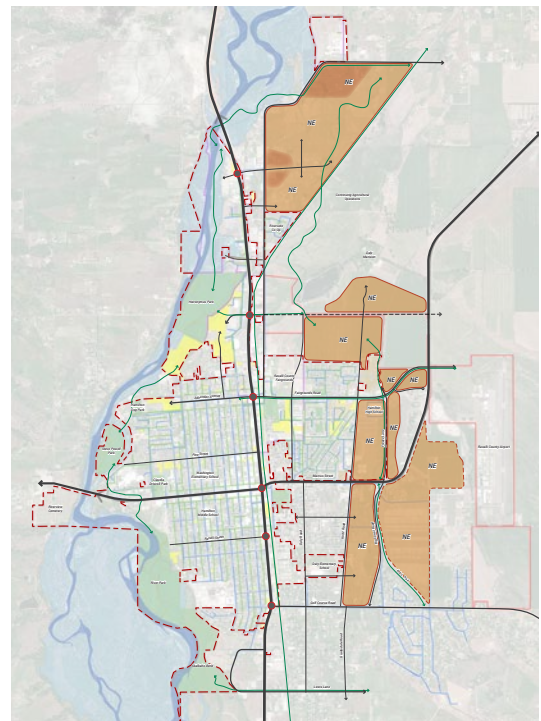
Triplex with Alley



Single-Family Attached, Garden Court Townhomes



Multi-family Apartments, Two Story Units

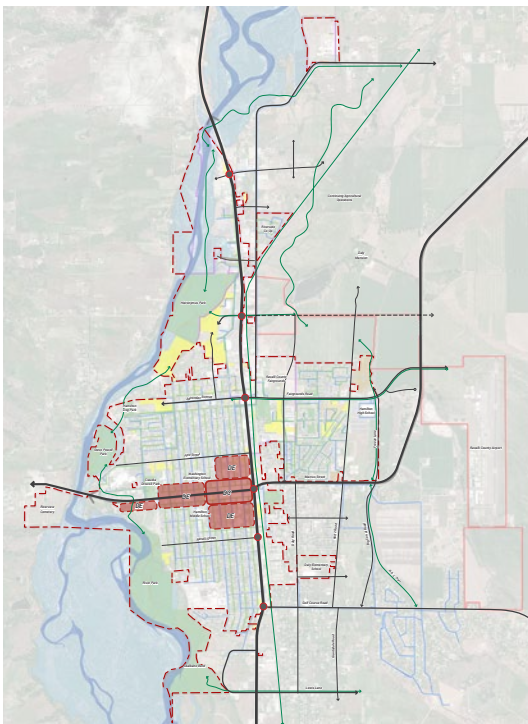


General Location of Neighborhood Expansion



Downtown Core and Expansion Area (Main Street, West Main Street, and north/south to State Street) (DC and DE)

- **General Description.** Preservation of the downtown core, its existing buildings, and level of connectivity. . Expansion of higher density housing in and adjacent to downtown.
- **Uses.** Ground-level retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses, with space for office and residential in upper stories.
 - Focused infill and redevelopment to incorporate additional housing.
 - Apartments and condominiums, limited to upper stories along Main Street between Highway 93 and 5th Street.
 - Potential for standalone residential buildings within the expansion areas.
 - Transition along West Main Street from residential uses to commercial/office spaces.
- **Streets/Connections.** Multimodal streetscape improvements and landscaping along Main Street, with enhancements along perpendicular streets (including flexible space for gathering spaces, markets, etc.).
 - Highway 93/Main Street/Marcus Street roadway improvements, and continued bike/pedestrian improvements along Marcus Street.
 - Parking accommodated through a range of on-street and alley-loaded parking facilities, small surface lots, and improved wayfinding to parking areas. Street-facing, off-street parking lots are discouraged.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Downtown Core: Central Business District (CBD), Public and Institutional (PI), Downtown Expansion: Central Business District (CBD), Transitional Neighborhood Business (B), Local Business (B-1), Public and Institutional (PI)



General Location of downtown Areas



Downtown Mixed Use Buildings



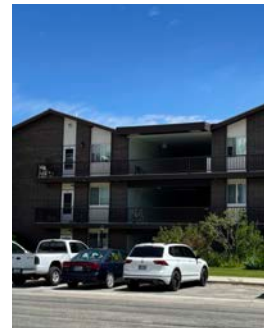
New Commercial Building with Similar downtown Character



Neighborhood Commercial/ Transition from Residential into Commercial



Preservation and Adaptive Reuse



Multi-family Residential



Employment (EMP)

- **General Description.** Areas for continued employment expansion, which builds upon the existing biotech industry; employment sites are generally 20 acres and larger, with large format buildings for research and development surrounded by open space for employees; these are generally secured, gated facilities, with no public access on-site. Coordination with Ravalli County will be needed to ensure alignment with TEDD development.
- **Uses.** Biotech technology, research and development, industrial and manufacturing, and associated buildings, site amenities, etc. (e.g., RML, GSK)
 - A mix of higher-density housing and supporting commercial are encouraged adjacent to these employment areas
- **Streets/Connections.** Sites should be located with convenient access to Highway 93, Old Corvallis Road, and/or East Side Highway; additional sites should accommodate road improvements and connections to the facilities.
 - Pedestrian connections and green space are provided, which offer connections to non-motorized networks and visual relief and natural protection from adjacent uses.
 - Off-street connections are provided between these facilities and the city-wide trail network.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Commercial or Manufacturing (CM), Manufacturing or Industrial (MI), Local Business (B-1), Professional Services Business (PS), Public and Institutional (PI)



Rocky Mountain Laboratory
(photo credit: Ravalli Republic)



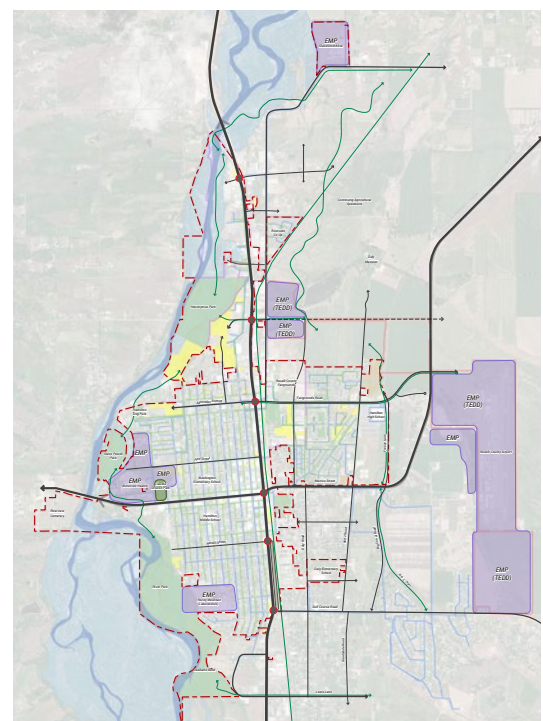
Light Industrial/Commercial



GlaxoSmithKline
(photo credit: BNBuilders)



Light Industrial/Commercial

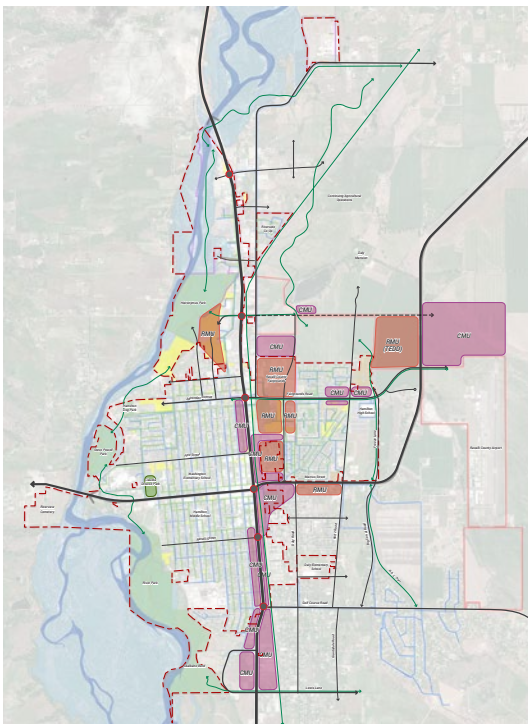


General Location of Employment Areas



Mixed Use (Residential and Commercial) (RMU and CMU)

- **General Description.** Strategic infill and development of areas which can accommodate additional housing and a mix of commercial uses. Residential mixed use areas are intended to have a higher proportion of residential with the option for 100% residential in higher density developments. Commercial mixed use areas are intended to allow for a greater variety of commercial uses (including employment generators) while still allowing for a significant residential component in higher density developments.
- **Uses.** A mix of retail, office, and residential uses; with a preference for vertical mixed use.
 - Areas along Highway 93 will generally have more commercially oriented uses with residential and/or offices on upper stories or behind main buildings, coupled with access management enhancements.
 - West side areas not fronting Highway 93 will likely have a more residential focus. East side areas not fronting Highway 93 will likely be predominantly residential with options for neighborhood commercial and employment generators that are compatible with surrounding land uses.
- **Streets/Connections.** Additional street connectivity to be accommodated at a smaller scale, by providing bike/pedestrian access to residential areas located between commercial areas and the Bitterroot River.
 - East side areas will need street connectivity with intersection densities similar to west side neighborhoods. Non-motorized connectivity will be provided through pedestrian and bicycle facilities within public street rights-of-way as well as through a connected network of separated paths. West side areas will need to connect to the existing local street network.
 - Implementation of Hamilton's Access Control Plan will take place as development occurs to improve safety and mobility on Highway 93. Opportunities for access management should be addressed concurrent with development.
 - Additional roadway connections should be provided between Highway 93 and Old Corvallis Road.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Residential Mixed Use: Transitional Neighborhood Business (B), Local Business (B-1), Planned Unit Development Overlay (PUDOD), Public and Institutional (PI); Commercial Mixed Use: Local Business (B-1), Planned Unit Development Overlay (PUDOD), Public and Institutional (PI); Only along Highway 93: Highway Related Business (B-2).



General Location of Mixed Use Areas



Mixed Use Retail/Commercial with Residential above



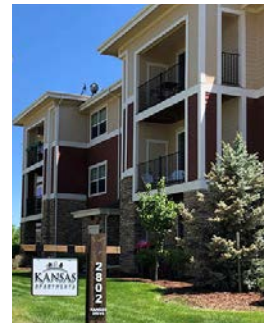
Mixed Use Retail/Commercial with Residential above



Mixed Use Commercial



Neighborhood Commercial



Multi-family Residential



Commercial (C)

- **General Description.** Areas north of Fairgrounds Road primarily along the east frontage of Highway 93 to remain primarily highway commercial with options for residential on upper floors or behind main buildings.
- **Uses.** Buildings for commercial use, similar to the existing condition along Highway 93 north of Fairgrounds Road that includes retail, commercial, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, offices, and flex spaces.
- **Streets/Connections.**
 - In coordination with MDT, implement Hamilton's Access Control Plan and consider additional access management improvements along Highway 93
 - The East side area could benefit from a trail system along or adjacent to the railway or improved north-south connections.
 - Additional roadway connections should be provided between Highway 93 and Old Corvallis Road.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Highway Related Business (B-2), Public and Institutional (PI).



Neighborhood Commercial



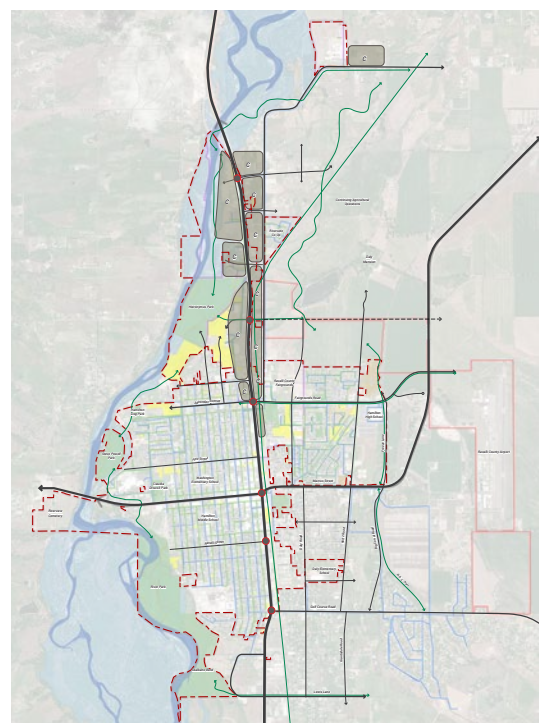
Corridor Frontage Commercial



Commercial Street



Commercial with Plaza Areas

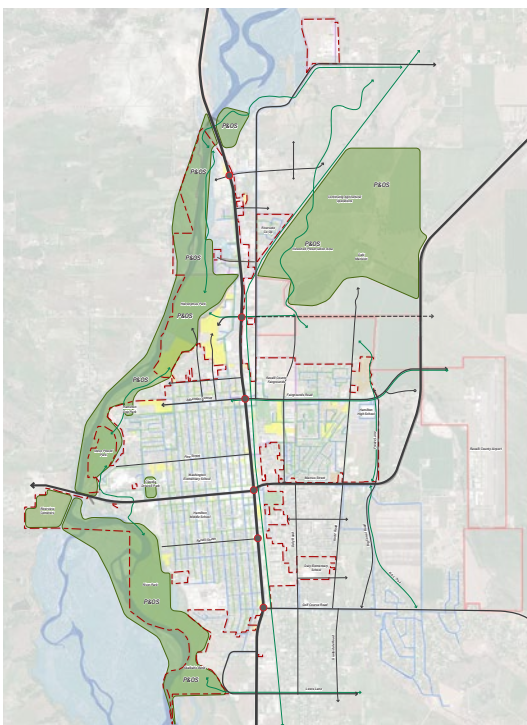


General Location of Commercial Areas



Parks and Open Space (P&OS)

- **General Description.** A wide range of parks and open space, through enhancement of existing parks and open space areas, and incorporation of additional space to expand recreational experience and programming options.
 - Focus on providing access throughout the community and enhancing access on the east side of Hamilton.
 - Focus on connections and providing better access to and between the series of River parks (e.g., Hieronymus Park, Steve Powell Park, River Park, and Skalkaho Bend).
 - Work with property owners along the Bitterroot River to identify connection opportunities.
 - Expand the Robert Anthony Leonardi (R.A.L.) Trail across Marcus Street, past Hamilton High School, and into the new Neighborhood Expansion areas.
 - Provide a mix of open space and active recreational areas on the East side of Hamilton.
- **Uses.** Outdoor recreation, natural open space, trails, pocket parks, playgrounds, sports fields, picnicking areas, community gardens, and water access.
 - Parks should offer year-round recreational options for all ages and abilities.
 - Include linear pathways and connections between neighborhoods and open space areas.
 - Areas of open space provide passive recreation opportunities on areas primarily along the Bitterroot River but could be expanded on the east side of the city to include non-irrigated lands that support the preservation of sensitive areas and large- and small-scale agricultural operations.
 - These areas are intended to support the community with non-motorized transportation connections.
- **Implementing Zoning Districts.** Planned Unit Development Overlay (PUDOD), Public and Institutional (PI).



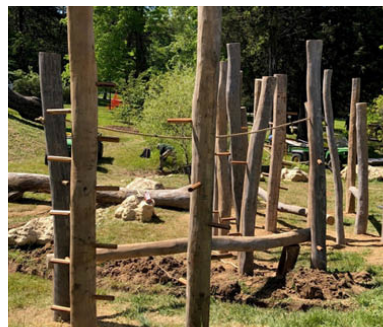
General Location of Parks and Open Space



Multi-Use Open Space Trails



Multi-Use Neighborhood Trails



Natural Playgrounds



Developed Playgrounds



Natural River Areas



Agricultural Areas



Outdoor Ice Rink



Indoor Sports Facility



Public Spaces



Community Gardens



Park Shelters



Splash Parks





6 / Implementation

Overview

This chapter is intended to provide specific direction for plan implementation by city Staff, City Council and Boards, and community partners. Implementation of the goals and policies described in Chapter 3, are reliant on a series of specific action items outlined in the Action Plan. Coordination between this plan, facility specific plans, and the to-be-developed Capital Improvements Plan will be necessary to ensure the vision, goals, and policies of this plan are met.

Because implementation can take time, city elected officials, leaders, and staff must reassess and prioritize these action items annually. Implementation measures may be adjusted over time based on availability of new or improved information, changing circumstances, and anticipated effectiveness, so long as they remain consistent with the intent of this Comprehensive Plan.

Action Plan

Each action is organized by timeframe and includes information on associated policy and element (e.g. housing, complete neighborhoods, infrastructure) as well as implementing partners. Actions have been prioritized based on feedback from community members and plan update steering committee.

ACTION	ASSOCIATED GOALS & POLICIES
<i>Ongoing Action Items</i>	
Organize joint meetings between the city and Ravalli County elected bodies, planning boards, and urban renewal district boards to coordinate on growth related issues.	CO Goal 7
Engage in regional housing discussions to address housing supply and affordability concerns.	CN Goal 2
Implement recommendations from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.	CN 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D; IN 5A, 5B, 5D
Implement recommendations from the Connect 93 Action Plan.	CN 2C, 2D; IN 5A, 5B, 5C, 5E
Coordinate with the Hamilton Downtown Association and Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement District on implementing the Hamilton Downtown Master Plan.	IN Goal 4; DT Goal 17
<i>Short-Term Action Items</i>	
Develop regulatory and/or financial incentives for the production of deed restricted affordable housing.	H 1C, 1D
Work with housing and human service providers to address the needs of Hamilton and Ravalli County's unhoused population.	H 1C, 1D, 1E; CO 8A
Update zoning regulations to allow for a greater mix of housing types in all residential zoning districts and in commercial zoning districts where housing is compatible with allowed uses.	CN Goal 2
Update zoning to allow for a greater array of commercial uses in close proximity to residences.	CN 2A
Develop design standards for motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities to provide for a safe and connected transportation network that expands concurrently with new development.	CN 2A, 2C, 2D; IN 4C, 4D, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5E

Legend: Elements: H = Housing; CN = Complete Neighborhoods; IN = Infrastructure; I&A = Infill & Annexation; CO = Coordination; P&R = Parks & Recreation; HI = Highway 93; EC = Economy; ENV = Environment; DT = Downtown

ACTION	ASSOCIATED GOALS & POLICIES
<i>Short-Term Action Items (continued)</i>	
Update zoning and subdivision regulations to require greater street connectivity and intersection density.	CN 2A, 2D
Develop standards for parks in new subdivisions.	CN 2A; P&R 10B
Update zoning regulations to provide guidance on building form and scale.	CN 2B
Update the Water Facilities Plan and Wastewater Facilities Plan.	IN 3A, 3B, 4B, 4C
Create a city-wide Capital Improvement Plan.	IN 4A, 4C
Require annexations to have water rights or cash in lieu of water rights adequate to serve development.	IN 4B
Identify potential funding sources for operation and maintenance costs for approved capital projects at the time projects are approved.	IN 4D
Update the city website.	CO 9A
Update zoning and subdivision regulations to provide standards and clarity for newer development products including, but not limited to townhomes, accessory dwelling units, mixed-use residential/commercial, cottage housing, and community land trusts.	CO 9A, 9B
Engage local businesses in a discussion on how the City of Hamilton can assist in their sustained success.	CO 9C; EC 13A, 13B, 14A
Update zoning to include landscape and design standards for the Highway 93 corridor.	HI 12A, 12B
Enroll in the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields Program	HI 12B; ENV 16A, 16B
Coordinate with Glacier Country Destination Stewardship.	EC Goals
Update zoning in commercial districts to allow low impact industrial and manufacturing uses that are compatible in scale with surrounding development.	EC 13B, 13C, 13D, 15B

Legend: Elements: H = Housing; CN = Complete Neighborhoods; IN = Infrastructure; I&A = Infill & Annexation; CO = Coordination; P&R = Parks & Recreation; HI = Highway 93; EC = Economy; ENV = Environment; DT = Downtown

ACTION	ASSOCIATED GOALS & POLICIES
<i>Short-Term Action Items (continued)</i>	
Explore creation of a Parks and Recreation District to create a stable funding mechanism for ongoing and future maintenance of city parks.	P&R Goal 10
Develop a system for cash in-lieu of parkland for new subdivisions.	P&R 10B, 10C
Develop a Parks Master Plan.	P&R 10B, 10E
Work with Hamilton School District to make public use of school recreational facilities.	P&R 10E
Update zoning and public works standards to include requirements for dark sky compliant outdoor lighting.	ENV 16E
Develop a public art policy.	DT 17E
<i>Mid-Term Action Items</i>	
Update subdivision regulations to implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.	CN Goal 2
Update zoning to include provisions for the preservation of historic structures.	CN 2B, 2E; DT 17F
<p>Work with MDT, Ravalli County, Montana Rail Link, Hamilton School District, property owners, and/or local nonprofits on filling gaps in the non-motorized transportation network with particular focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcus Street • North-south connections east of Highway 93 • East-west connections west of Highway 93 • Safe Routes to Schools • Kurtz Lane • Daly Avenue • Golf Course Road 	CN 2A, 2C; IN 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E; CO 8B, 9B; P&R 10C; HI 12C; ENV 16C
Develop an Annexation and Extension of Services Plan.	IN 4B, 4C
Review new development considering both potential city revenues generated and the long-term operational and maintenance costs to taxpayers.	IN 4C, 4D; I&A 6B, 6C

Legend: Elements: H = Housing; CN = Complete Neighborhoods; IN = Infrastructure; I&A = Infill & Annexation; CO = Coordination; P&R = Parks & Recreation; HI = Highway 93; EC = Economy; ENV = Environment; DT = Downtown

ACTION	ASSOCIATED GOALS & POLICIES
<i>Mid-Term Action Items (continued)</i>	
Work with Ravalli County, private landowners, businesses, and the airport on extending infrastructure to the airport in a manner that supports the goals and policies of the city's Comprehensive Plan.	IN 4C; CO 7B, 9B, 9C; EC 14A
Develop an off-street trail network that connects residences, parks, commercial areas, and employment centers.	IN 5B; P&R 10C
Encourage the expansion of electric vehicle charging stations.	IN 5D; ENV 16B
Undertake a Corridor Plan for North Highway 93 to address issues around safety, connectivity, mobility, and accessibility.	IN 5E; HI 12C
Establish a Parks Board.	P&R Goal 10
Develop level of service and maintenance standards for city parks.	P&R 10A
Create a park volunteer program.	P&R 10A, 10E, 11A
Develop a trail system connecting riverfront parks.	P&R 10C, 10D
Develop a sports and recreation facility.	P&R 10E
Expand use of natural systems for managing stormwater and surface water runoff.	ENV 16A, 16B
<i>Long-Term Action Items</i>	
Develop a pavement preservation program.	IN 3A, 3B
Encourage septic users near city services to annex and connect to city sewer and water.	ENV 16A

Legend: Elements: H = Housing; CN = Complete Neighborhoods; IN = Infrastructure; I&A = Infill & Annexation; CO = Coordination; P&R = Parks & Recreation; HI = Highway 93; EC = Economy; ENV = Environment; DT = Downtown

Plan Review and Amendment

Planning is an iterative process. All types of plans must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis to reflect current conditions. Changes in development practices, legislation, grant programs, budgets and numerous other factors may alter priorities or make certain policies outdated. It is important that regular reviews of the Comprehensive Plan be part of the city's planning program.

The city's Planning Board and planning staff will utilize the following process for regular review of the Comprehensive Plan and amend as conditions warrant.

Annual Review

On an annual basis the Planning Board will conduct a review of the Comprehensive Plan to:

1. Review work completed towards implementation of the goals and policies.
2. Assess if the city is on the right track towards implementation and if not identify potential remedies.
3. Identify future work for the coming year.

Five-Year Review

Upon the fifth year after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan the Planning Board and city staff will undertake a comprehensive review process to evaluate the plan. Evaluation criteria include:

1. Are the community's goals and policies current and valid?
2. Have circumstances, information assumptions, needs or legal framework changed?
3. Does additional public input suggest the need for changes?
4. Are the community planning process and planning products providing effective direction to local officials and staff?
5. Are there new data that should be incorporated into the Plan?
6. Does the Action Plan reflect the completion of work items?
7. Should new action items be identified and/or timelines modified?
8. What issues have emerged that the Plan should address?

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7 / Infrastructure Strategy

Overview

Montana State law requires comprehensive plans to include a strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure, including drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sewer systems, solid waste facilities, fire protection facilities, roads, and bridges. The state of Hamilton's public infrastructure and infrastructure related goals and policies are addressed throughout this plan. While the comprehensive plan is intended to be an overarching guide for infrastructure development, maintenance, and replacement, the details of the city's infrastructure strategy are outlined in the following facility plans.

City Facility Plans

Water Facilities Plan

The Water Facility plan defines the condition of the existing water infrastructure; estimates future demand; and describes improvements necessary to protect water resources and accommodate existing users and future growth. The Water Facilities Plan was adopted in 2010 and many of the identified projects have been completed. As a result, the plan needs to be updated to reflect current demands, needs and growth trends.

Wastewater Facility Plan

The Wastewater Facility Plan grew out of the goal to develop an organized approach to protecting and managing impacts to ground and surface waters in the Bitterroot Valley. To achieve this goal the Wastewater Facility Plan provides a long-range approach to maintaining and expanding the city's infrastructure to responsibly manage wastewater. The plan provides a long-term plan for ultimate expansion of the facilities, while identifying a program for immediate upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant to assure permit compliance and meet near-term capacity requirements. At the time of adoption in 2006 it was anticipated that the plan would satisfy the city's wastewater management needs for 15 to 20 years. As it has been over 15 years and the city has completed most of the plan's recommendations, the Wastewater Facility Plan is also in need of updating.

Southeast Hamilton Sewer Preliminary Engineering Report

Adopted in 2020, the Southeast Hamilton Sewer Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) outlines the necessary planning and engineering required to address sewer infrastructure improvements in the area generally east of Highway 93 and between Marcus Street and Blood Lane. The majority of properties in this area are served by individual septic systems, many of which would not be permitted for installation under current standards. Many of these older systems are in high density areas with high groundwater and discharge nutrients, pathogens, organic matters, and solids. This creates a risk for ground and surface water contamination, which can ultimately impact City of Hamilton public water supply. The PER recommends an extension of the city's gravity sewer system which connects to the city's wastewater treatment plant. Implementation is anticipated over phases.

Transportation Plan

The 2010 Hamilton Area Transportation Plan was a joint effort between the City of Hamilton, Ravalli County, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The plan contains an analysis of the area's multimodal transportation system including an examination of traffic operations, roadway network, transit service, non-motorized transportation, trip reduction strategies, and growth management techniques. The plan provides recommendations for improvement projects and programs that will address and mitigate transportation related concerns and meet future needs. While the plan is over ten years old, many of the recommendations remain relevant and continue to inform transportation decision-making, particularly with respect to network expansion east of Highway 93 and north of Marcus Street.

Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

The Hamilton Non-Motorized Transportation Plan was adopted in 2012 and provides recommendations for creating a safe and connected network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities both in and adjacent to the City of Hamilton. The city has incrementally implemented recommendations as local funding and grant opportunities arise and in concert with private development. While some of the specific facility recommendations have been amended based on updated best practices and recent growth trends, overall the plan remains relevant as several of the recommended improvements are still needed and have yet to be implemented. The greatest need for non-motorized infrastructure improvements is the area east of Highway 93 where the bulk of Hamilton’s residential growth is occurring.

Access Control Plan

The Hamilton Access Control Plan was developed in 2014 by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in cooperation with the City of Hamilton and Ravalli County. The plan was developed to improve safety, preserve function and mobility, and manage existing and future accesses in a consistent manner along Highway 93. The plan defines specific access locations and modifications consistent with the plan’s guidelines, goals, and objectives. The plan is utilized by MDT and the city in guiding access control when development, redevelopment, or construction occurs along the Highway 93 Corridor.

Connect 93

Connect 93 is a plan specific to improving safety, accessibility, and the visual aesthetic of the area around the Highway 93-Main/Marcus Street intersection. The plan’s specific focus is on non-motorized improvements and connecting Hamilton across Highway 93. Connect 93 serves to implement recommendations from several existing plans including the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, Transportation Plan, and Downtown Master Plan.

Impact Fees

Impact fees are a one-time fee for new development to pay for the cost of infrastructure required to provide service. These fees provide the city the means of balancing the cost of new infrastructure between existing customers and new customers – essentially have growth pay for its capacity impact on local infrastructure. The portion of existing facilities and future capital improvements that will provide service (capacity) to new customers is included in the impact fees. As of spring 2022 the City of Hamilton was in the process of updating its impact fee schedule for police, fire, transportation, water, and wastewater and exploring the possibility of a parks impact fee.

Capital Improvement Plan

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a budgeting and financial tool used to identify capital (public facility) needs, establish priorities, and schedule and fund projects to either construct or improve existing new facilities. The plan identifies specific projects, costs, priorities, timetables, and funding sources. CIPs can be an effective tool for taking a coordinated approach to managing city facilities and resources and for implementing long range planning goals and policies. While the City of Hamilton does not have a CIP this plan calls for the development and adoption of a CIP as a means of strategically managing the development and replacement of public infrastructure within the budgetary constraints of the city.

Development of Public Infrastructure

The city's overall strategy for development of new public infrastructure is best summarized as a three-prong approach outlined below. The above referenced planning documents, in concert with city public works standards, local zoning, and other local and state requirements are intended to guide infrastructure development.

1. **Private Development** will pay for public infrastructure expansion associated with that development either through the developer paying for and constructing the public infrastructure required to serve that development and/or through payment of impact fees to fund the additional service capacity required by the development.
2. **Grant, Foundation, and Private Funding** will be sought out to finance the expansion of public infrastructure where there is a public health or safety benefit or where the goals and policies of this plan are furthered.
3. **City Financing** may be used for development of public infrastructure where there is a public health or safety benefit or where the goals and policies of this plan are furthered. Potential city financing sources include, but are not limited to, general fund, North Hamilton Urban Renewal District, special improvement districts, water and wastewater funds, impact fees, and/or bonding.

Maintenance and Replacement of Public Infrastructure

The City of Hamilton Public Works Department is charged with ongoing maintenance and replacement of infrastructure for the city's water, wastewater, and transportation systems. The Public Works Department continually monitors infrastructure conditions and performs maintenance and replacement as budget allows and in-line with city priorities. Street maintenance is primarily funded through a city-wide streets maintenance district and state gas tax. Water and wastewater maintenance and replacement is primarily funded through associated service fees. Grant funding for maintenance and replacement of public infrastructure is continually sought out. The Public Works department utilizes a GIS-based system to track infrastructure needs and as of 2022 is looking at expanding this system to provide a more robust and comprehensive approach to asset management.

The city's fire station and apparatus needs are managed by the Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department. At the time of writing, the fire department is in the process of building a new fire station and replacing fire trucks to better serve the growing needs of the community. As Hamilton grows, so do requirements for fire protection. As a result, Hamilton's fire department is continually evaluating fire needs and planning for future maintenance, replacement, and expansion to maintain sufficient fire protection for city residents and businesses.

Infrastructure maintenance and replacement is also accounted for in evaluation of development proposals. As called for in this Plan's policies, Hamilton's development review process includes an evaluation of long-term infrastructure costs (maintenance and replacement) relative to forecasted revenues generated from a particular development to ensure new development does not overburden the city's infrastructure budget.





8 / Existing Conditions

Overview

Each of the following subsections provide an overview of relevant data points based on the key issues and opportunities discussion from public outreach, and meet state statutes for inclusions within a comprehensive plan.

The following topics are included within this chapter:

- Population
- Natural Environment, including surface water, groundwater, sand and gravel, and the wildland-urban interface
- Local Services, including fire protection, law enforcement, library, and education
- Land Use

Note that key statistics and data points for Housing, Infrastructure, Parks and Recreation, and Economy are included in Chapter 4, Issues and Opportunities.

Population

The community's population has grown steadily

Hamilton's rate of population growth has been steady, averaging 100 new residents per year since 2016. Over the next ten years, the population is anticipated to increase 17%, from a current estimated population of 4,939 to an estimated total of approximately 5,800 residents in 2031 (Figure 14).

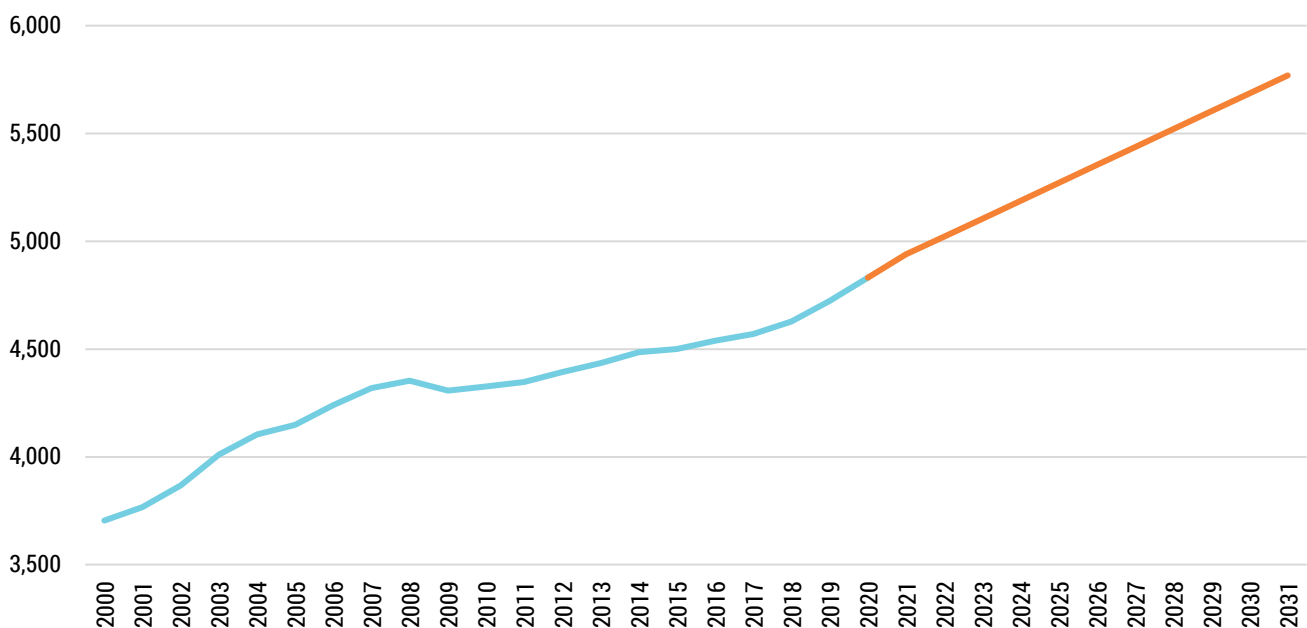
Hamilton's age distribution is changing

Similar to many Montana communities, Hamilton had seen an aging trend during the beginning of the 21st century. However, beginning in 2014 demographic trends began to shift with increases in young families moving to Hamilton. Between 2014 and 2019 both the under 5 and 30 to 44 age groups increased in total number and population share (Figure 15). This trend is further evident when looking at Hamilton school enrollment. Between 2016 and 2021 total district enrollment has remained steady, increasing by less than 1%, while combined kindergarten and first grade enrollment increased by 22%. (Montana Office of Public Instruction).

At the same time, while the 65+ age group still makes up over a quarter of Hamilton's population, their share of the total population has decreased in recent years despite slight increases in total numbers. However, the city's senior population will likely remain a sizable share of the future population given Hamilton's appeal for retirees and the fact that nearly half of the city's population is over 45.

The composition of households in Hamilton is changing along with age distribution. Between 2010 and 2019 Hamilton saw increases in average household size (+8%), the number of family households (+15%), and the number of four-person households (+15%). While this data may further illustrate that more families are moving to Hamilton, it should be noted that nearly 80% of households in Hamilton are one- or two-person households.

Figure 14. Historic and Projected Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019 and Tischler Bise

Population At-A-Glance

Taken together these trends have implications for how the city provides services and plans for growth. For example, as seniors and school-age children are more likely to not have access to an automobile, this data echoes the need to provide safe, non-motorized transportation options. Additionally, these changing demographics and household characteristics will also impact demand for different housing types based on a variety of factors including household size, accessibility, and proximity to goods and services.

A wide range of educational attainment

Nearly 40% of the population 25 and over holds a secondary degree. Of those secondary degree holders, 25.6% have also obtained a graduate or professional degree, making Hamilton unique in its upper end of educational attainment for a community of its size (over 10% of the total population), but reflective of a community with so many institutional and biotech jobs.

4,939

Estimated city population, 2021

(Tischler Bise, 2021)

**43.5
to 40**

Median age change, 2010 to 2019

(U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019)

2.83 to 2.84

Average family size change, 2010 to 2019

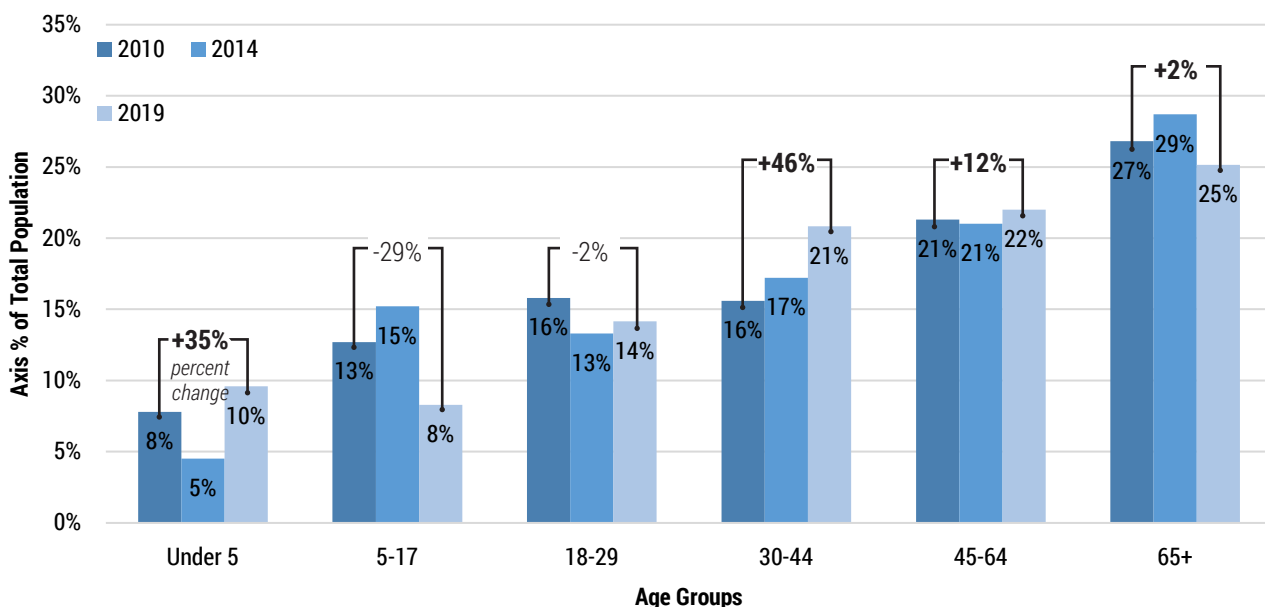
(U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019)

39.3%

Population 25 and over with secondary degrees

(U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019)

Figure 15. Change in Age, 2010 - 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019

Natural Environment

Surface Water

The watershed is the total area drained by a river and its tributaries. More frequently watersheds are the basis for managing water resources. Traditionally, water quality improvements have focused on specific sources of pollution, such as sewage discharges. While this approach may be successful in addressing specific issues, it often fails to address the chronic problems that contribute to a watershed's decline. Watershed management addresses a wide a range of factors that contribute to a healthy watershed.

The federal Clean Water Act requires Montana DEQ to assess whether Montana waters are meeting water quality standards and prepare a report (called the Integrated Report) every two years. Water bodies not meeting standards need pollution reduction studies, called a Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and water quality improvement plan. A TMDL is the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. TMDLs plan provide an approach to achieve water quality standards.

Montana DEQs most recent integrated report was completed in 2020 and lists the Bitterroot River between Skalkaho Creek and Eight-Mile Creek (which includes Hamilton). The TMDL Plan for the Bitterroot Watershed was completed in 2014.

Groundwater

In the Bitterroot Valley, groundwater occurs within the loose soils, consisting of clay, silt, sand, and gravel mixtures. Most wells in the valley center will penetrate groundwater within 10 to 25 feet from the ground surface. This groundwater occurs in an unconfined aquifer that does not have a protective cover. Spills and waste disposal onto the land surface have the potential to be washed down to the aquifer.

The groundwater is recharged from irrigation canals on the east terrace, and from tributary streams in the Skalkaho Creek drainage and replenished by precipitation and irrigation water that infiltrates the land surface. The leakage from surface water appears to be the dominant groundwater recharge process. In certain areas, the infiltration of excess irrigation water may dominate. Throughout the Bitterroot Valley, the groundwater level will rise each spring with the onset of runoff, filling of irrigation canals, and the application of irrigation water to the land surface. The groundwater level will then decline in elevation through the fall and winter months. In the Bitterroot Valley, groundwater flow occurs from the margins of the valley toward the center, and downstream. At locations east of the Bitterroot River, the groundwater flow direction is primarily westerly and northerly. West of the Bitterroot River, groundwater flow direction is primarily easterly and northerly.

Land use in the Hamilton area is dominated by agricultural and residential lands. Urban/commercial land use is located along Highway 93. The agricultural land use dominates the upland recharge area to the Hamilton wells. Agricultural practices can impact groundwater quality due to land application of chemicals, spills at chemical mixing stations, and concentration of animal wastes. Potential contamination from urban sources include automotive related land use, dry cleaners and other uses with chemical processes. These uses pose a substantial risk from point sources to the Hamilton area aquifer.

Stormwater management in the Hamilton area consists of dry wells that discharge directly to groundwater. In the event of spilled chemicals entering a dry well, a significant impact to groundwater may occur. Southeast of town is an area with high septic density that poses a significant threat to groundwater quality complicated by antiquated systems.

Sand and Gravel

Sand and gravel are important natural resources found throughout Ravalli County. Sand and gravel resources provide the foundation upon which our infrastructure is built, defining where, how and to what extent development occurs. Our roads, bridges and highways are all constructed using gravel; the houses we live in, buildings we work in and sidewalks we walk on utilize the resource as well. Access to local gravel resources reduces costs associated with transportation and processing fees, thereby reducing the overall cost of development. The potential for local extraction of sand and gravel resources also affects the overall economic climate by providing jobs and serving local construction industries.

Although sand and gravel is an important construction and road maintenance resource, sand and gravel operations can have environmental and community impacts and it is important to develop this resource without comprising the quality of the life for Hamilton area residents. As of 2022 there are no sand and gravel operations in the City of Hamilton and two located in the planning area near the Ravalli County Airport.¹

¹ Montana DEQ

Wildland Urban Interface

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is where human development overlaps natural areas, typically forests and rangelands. WUI landscapes are often a patchwork of publicly managed and privately owned land. Throughout the West, the WUI frequently takes the form of suburban subdivision adjacent to, and rural homesites within, undeveloped land.

A primary concern of the WUI is potential for wildland fire. Lightning-caused wildfires spread from public landscapes into urbanized areas. Increased population density and public land use results in human-caused fires that cross boundaries and impact both human development and wildlands. Increased fuel loads, extended drought conditions, and widespread residential development elevate WUI fire risk.

The 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan identified Ravalli County as the most vulnerable to wildfire risk in the state, and in 2018 Headwaters Economics determined more than 5,000 of the county's homes were located in high wildfire hazard areas. Most of these create an informal border of unincorporated private lands adjacent to the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF).

While WUI proximity makes Hamilton potentially vulnerable to wildland fire, a range of factors mitigate risk. The city is located on the valley floor roughly 3 miles from the forest boundary. Additionally, almost all of Hamilton lies east of the Bitterroot River which offers a natural fire barrier. As the river is intended to serve as western border for the city, the potential for future annexations near the WUI is low.

In case of imminent fire danger, the Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) has 29 personnel and a fire chief on its roster, and all city properties are served by HVFD. New developments are required to meet building and Public Works standards that mitigate fire risk, including fire walls where required, hydrants, and emergency egress. The city is also developing a new fire station to modernize the HVFD's response capabilities. HVFD further maintains coordinated inter-agency dispatch with all fire response agencies in Ravalli County including municipal and rural fire districts, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and BNF.

To mitigate countywide fire risk, Fire in the Root is coordinating stakeholders to update the Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), originally adopted in 2006. A CWPP includes WUI measures, and its update will solicit input from BNF, DNRC, and all fire response jurisdictions including Hamilton. DNRC also has a designated countywide Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator, offering no-cost home and neighborhood fire risk assessments for home hardening and ignition zone safety improvements.

Because of the distance between the municipal boundary and wildlands, a dedicated fire department, adopted Public Works and Building Code standards that consider fire response and suppression, and resources freely available to improve defensible space on private properties, Hamilton has determined it does not need to delineate a wildland-urban interface within the city or adopt additional regulations thereto. Hamilton supports all efforts that lower Ravalli County's exceptional wildfire risks, including CWPP updates.

Public Services

Fire Protection

The Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) comprises both the City of Hamilton Fire Department and the Hamilton Rural Fire District (HRFD). The City Fire Department is governed by Hamilton City Council, and HRFD is governed by an elected five-member Board of Trustees. HRFD contracts for services with the City of Hamilton.

HVFD serves an area of approximately 110 square miles, serving an estimated population between 10,000 to 15,000 with multiple stations. Station #1 is the city's main fire station located at 175 South 3rd Street in downtown Hamilton. Station #2, Charlos Heights Fire Station, is a rural station located on Highway 93 South of Hamilton. Station #3, Skalkaho Fire Station, is a rural station located on State Route 38 (Skalkaho Highway). There are presently 29 volunteer firefighters on the active roster and a full-time Fire Chief.

As of this writing, Hamilton is developing a new fire station. The downtown station was built in 1907, and emergency response needs have since far outgrown its equipment and personnel capabilities. City expansions have also trended north and east, consistently further from downtown. The updated station will centralize a modernized facility at the intersection of Skeels Avenue and Foxfield Street. It is expected to begin service Fall 2023.

HVFD participates in Fire in the Root, a cooperative organization with representatives from each of Ravalli County's fire districts that works to address fire issues countywide. HVFD also coordinates dispatch with neighboring jurisdictions and can respond to calls in other communities and on public lands.

As the city grows, it is anticipated that an additional fire station may be required nearer the north end of HVFD's service area, as may additional paid or volunteer personnel and updated equipment. Future needs will be assessed periodically, and any expansions will be made commensurate with growth and requirements for fire service.

Law Enforcement

The Hamilton Police Department (HPD) provides around the clock emergency law enforcement services within the city. HPD currently employs 13 sworn officers including the Chief of Police, a Lieutenant, two Patrol Sergeants, a Detective, eight Patrol Officers, as well as a non-sworn Code Enforcement Officer.

In 2019 Hamilton completed construction of the Justice Center at 910 West Main Street, built to meet the growing space needs of HPD and funded with municipal bonds. The facility houses HPD, as well as the City Court and City Attorney's office.

As the city grows, it is anticipated additional HPD personnel and updated equipment may be required to meet the law and code enforcement needs of the community. Future needs will be assessed periodically, and any expansions will be made commensurate to provision of adequate levels of service.

Library

The Bitterroot Public Library (BPL) is a library district whose service area includes the Hamilton, Corvallis and Victor School District boundaries. Its sole facility is a Carnegie library on city owned property. The Library Board is a joint board, with two members appointed by Ravalli County, two by the City of Hamilton, and the fifth appointed by the other Board members. The Board governs all Library operations and the district is funded by a mill levy.

The library provides a variety of physical and digital holdings for public use. It hosts frequent year-round events on- and off-site for diverse ages and interests, and has a community meeting room available by reservation.

Consistent population growth in the Valley has led to increased strain on Library resources. A 2021 Facility Summary found BPL's per capita space well below regional peers, while between 2001 and 2019 operational hours grew by 25%, circulation by nearly 40%, and program participation by over 80%.¹

As of this writing, the Library is exploring potential expansion options. These include into the downtown fire station once HVFD relocates to its new facility. Future needs will continue to be assessed by the BPL Board, and any expansions will be made commensurate to provision of adequate levels of service.

Education

City of Hamilton residents are served by the Hamilton School District #3 (HSD). HSD has three main campuses: Hamilton High School, Hamilton Middle School, and Daly Elementary. Washington Elementary additionally provides Early Kindergarten at Cherry Street and North 5th Street. Recently the District has reorganized grade years between campuses several times. Between the 2014-15 and 2021-22 school years, total HSD enrollment fluctuated between a low of 1,472 and a high of 1,588 students (the latter most recent), with no distinct trend across this period.² U.S. Census data suggests Hamilton's under-five age group is trending upward. HSD also owns property that houses Bitterroot College, a program of the University of Montana.

As the city grows, HSD may require additional facilities and personnel to meet the needs of the K-12 population. Future needs will continue to be assessed by HSD's elected school board, and any expansions will be made commensurate to provision of adequate levels of service.

¹ <https://bitterrootpubliclibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-final-facilities-Report.pdf>

² <https://gems.opi.mt.gov/school-district-data>

Land Use

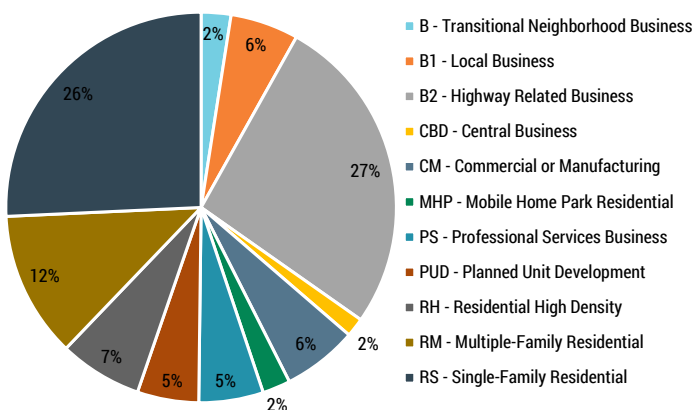
Current Land Use

Current land use in the city is relatively evenly split on a percentage by acreage basis (Figure 16 and Map 13) between business, residential, and public services (including schools, parks, and civic uses).

By taking into account the overall parcel acreage and developed building square footage for commercial uses the current floor area ratio (FAR) is only at a .02, which identifies a potentially larger amount of land available than needed for employment uses. Overall residential densities are roughly 2.6 units per gross acre. As the city continues to grow and develop, it will be important to maintain this balance, but also to infill and even redevelop some commercial areas.

Over the past 40 years, much of Hamilton's in-city growth has occurred east of Highway 93 including neighborhoods such as Heritage Place, Stonegate, and the Arbors. However, during this timeframe most of the Hamilton area's population growth took place outside city limits, within Ravalli County. Typically, these developments occurred in subdivisions of lots one-acre or greater served by individual well and septic systems.

Figure 16. Percentage of Land Use by Zoning



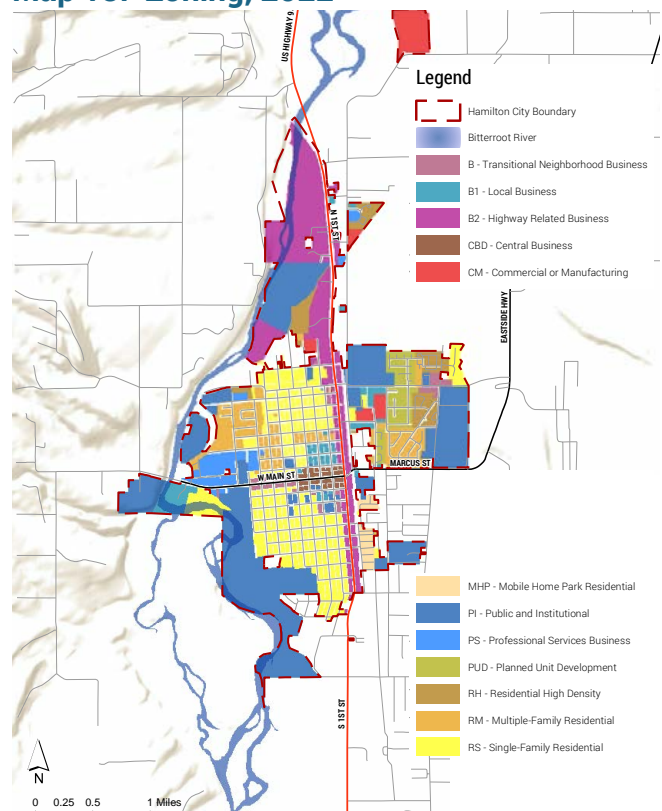
Source: City of Hamilton, GIS database 2021

City-wide gross commercial FAR = .02 and city-wide gross density = 2.6 units per acre

Some of these areas, particularly on the southeast side of Hamilton, are experiencing issues with contamination from aging and failing septic systems and cesspools, potentially impacting ground and surface water quality.

With growth pressure increasing, there is less land and water available to support growth than in years past. As a result, the City of Hamilton has seen a slight uptick in demand for in-city development where a greater number of housing units and commercial developments can be built due to the ability to connect to the city's water and sewer systems. This trend is anticipated to continue with the outcome being less impact on water quality and the potential for a greater number and variety of single-family and multi-family housing units in Hamilton.

Map 13. Zoning, 2022



Source: City of Hamilton, GIS Database, 2021



HAMILTON
MONTANA