



2015 Legislative Session Policy Statement

Montana Growth Policy Laws

Background: The Growth Policy is the fundamental planning document for local communities, providing the present and future context for growth and development. Its purpose is to create a community vision with respect to how we use our land. Its goals, objectives, and strategies reflect the natural setting, population, housing and economic patterns as well as the unique character and quality of life that provides a sense of place.

The Growth Policy is not a regulatory document but provides a framework and rationale for the regulations, programs and initiatives that communities undertake in order to realize the goals and objectives set forth in the Policy. The Policy reflects wide ranging public participation as well as careful research of current conditions and trends.

Current statutes allow for each local government with a planning board to prepare a growth policy and provide a list of elements to be addressed in the document. The extent to which each is addressed, however, is determined at the local level. In recent years, the list of required elements has been expanded to include additional items of critical concern, including sand and gravel resources and an evaluation of wildfire potential. These additions have enabled Montana communities to better anticipate challenges and issues associated with community development.

MAP believes that the current list of required elements is adequate to formulate good land use policies, as well as address associated areas of concern including housing and economic development. The statutes also do not restrict the inclusion of additional elements that may be of local concern. The statutes do require regular monitoring and updating to keep growth policies relevant and effective.

Position: MAP does not believe that additional requirements and/or other changes to the Montana Growth Policy Statute (Montana Code Annotated 76-1-601 through 606) are warranted at this time and such changes would present an undue burden to local governments, particularly as they struggle with shrinking budgets and increasing demands on infrastructure and services.