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Montana Association of Planners

2025 Conference Program

October 6-8

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The Montana Department of Commerce is proud to support the annual conference for the Montana Association of Planners. Members of the Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) team are in attendance at the conference. The mission of the Community Technical Assistance Program is to provide technical assistance to encourage planning and sustainable development in Montana communities by working with local governments, planning departments, private developers, nonprofit organizations and the public. CTAP assists communities statewide through research and by providing both technical and legal guidance, education and training.

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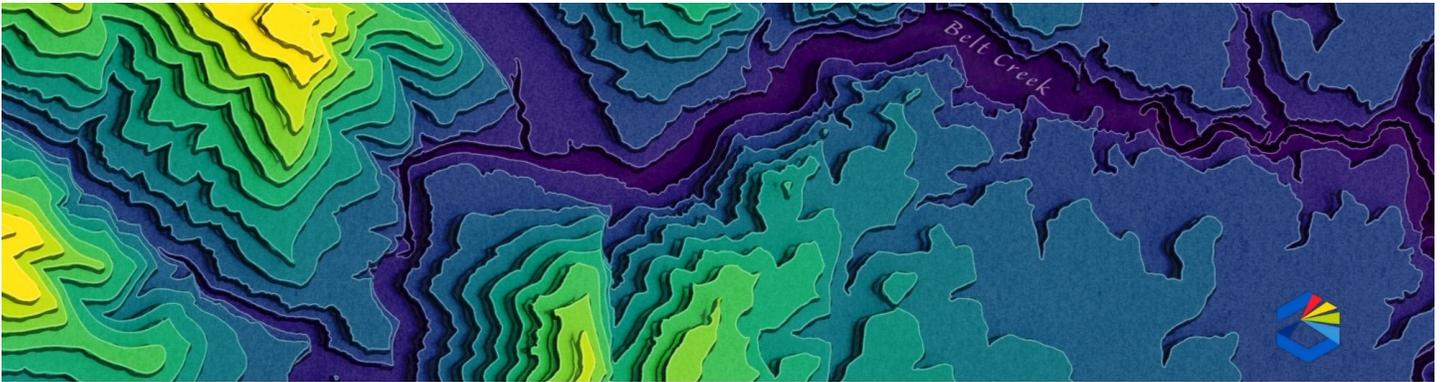
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Letter from the MAP President

Dear MAP Membership,

Welcome to the 2025 Montana Association of Planners Conference in the beautiful state capital, Helena, Montana! What a year it's been already, and we still have 3 months left. Despite increased political animosity across the country, tremendous uncertainty around federal government, and changing political landscapes I am continuously amazed at the excellent work planners do in Montana. You are all a resilient bunch, and I'm humbled to have represented our state as the MAP Board President. The success of our chapter, our work, and our professional growth is all due to you, so let's take a moment to reflect on that and appreciate each other.

It's been another busy year as an APA chapter, so there is much to share during our member update meeting. In the time since we last met in Lewistown, the Board completed our strategic plan, and embarked on implementing those goals and priorities. Right out of the gate in 2025 we dove headlong into a VERY busy legislative session (is it ever not anymore?) and responded admirably to a wide-ranging variety of proposed legislation. Our legislative committee continued to represent MAP professionally, and in many ways successfully. MAP is building our reputation as a valuable resource for technical and local expertise. I'm proud of the work we all did (shout out to our legislative co-chairs, Anna and Sean, who did an amazing job keeping us on track).

Another aspect of our strategic plan that we are tirelessly working towards is building our organizational capacity and effectiveness. Part of that effort is to get our chapter organized, documented, and legitimized. With some expert assistance, we are beginning to formalize governance processes and administrative best practices that will not only ensure MAP continues to grow and function, but will ultimately increase the capacity of our board to do the work that creates value for our members. I hope that shows in the quality and consistency of our chapter resources, including this conference.

In the near future the Board hopes to announce a few exciting initiatives to improve education and professional development opportunities for planners in the state. More to come on this, but for now rest assured that we will be tackling bigger opportunities, building relationships and partnerships, and growing our impact as professional planners.

I hope you all enjoy the conference. MAP relies heavily on our volunteer board members, committees, and generous sponsors to put on a great conference. This year we hit a new standard for sponsorship, which will allow us to continue increasing the quality of conference sessions, venues, and events to gather and celebrate the wins (and the losses!) together. As always, MAP couldn't do what we do without the support of our members, so thanks and keep on doing the hard work to manage the challenges and unique opportunities facing our great state. After all, #ItTakesAPlanner, and that means all of you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Wilson, AICP



President, APA Montana/Montana Association of Planners

2025 Montana Association of Planners Conference

October 6-8 2025

Abbreviated Schedule

	Community Planning & Design	Upskilling & Planning Practices	Infrastructure & Resource Planning	Tours
Monday, October 6				
8:00-9:00	Registration & Networking			
9:15-10:15	Brownfields Assessments, Case Studies and Community Development Location: Western Star Ballroom		Saving the Big Sky: 50 Years of Land Conservation in Montana Location: Iron Horse Ballroom	
10:30-11:30	The Community Planning Platform is Here! Location: Western Star Ballroom	Grounded Codes, Bold Futures: Managing Impacts Through Right-sizing Location: Empire Builder	Reimagining the College "M" through Parallel Service-learning Courses: What Did We Learn? Location: Iron Horse Ballroom	
11:45-12:45	Lunch & Keynote from Liz Lang APA Marketing and Communications Director			
1:00-2:30		Land Use Legislation and Cases Affecting Montana Location: Empire Builder		
2:45-3:45	Helena Forward: Planning for Equitable Housing, Sustainable Development, and Resilience in Montana's Capital City Location: Western Star Ballroom	Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and Natural Resource Management Policy Updates (NRMP) in MT: what is the process and what are the benefits? Location: Empire Builder	Issues and Trends for Funding Local Infrastructure Projects Location: Iron Horse Ballroom	Public Art Walk Meeting Location: Registration Table
4:00-5:00	Show up and Holler: Persistence, Patience, and Planning - How to get your Great Bikeway/Walkway Projects Constructed Location: Western Star Ballroom	Lost in Translation: RFP Assumptions from Both Sides! Location: Empire Builder	Exploring Housing Density and Potential Residential Development in the City of Bozeman Location: Iron Horse Ballroom	
6:00-8:00	Trivia Night at Ten Mile Creek Brewery			

Tuesday, October 7

8:00-8:30

Collaborative Planning for Thoughtful Neighborhood Design: A case study for creation and implementation of form-based code
Location: Western Star Ballroom

Overview of Montana's State Trust Lands and How They Fit into Community Planning
Location: Empire Builder

Montana State Library GIS Workshop: Using Authoritative Data and Addressing Tools for Smarter Planning
Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

8:30-9:30

9:45-10:45

Gallatin County's Future Land Use Map: Balancing Resource Protection and Housing
Location: Western Star Ballroom

Planning Impacts on the Environment and Natural Resources
Location: Empire Builder

Growing Active and Livable Communities with Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk/Move Audits
Meeting Location: Registration Table

11:00-12:00

Harnessing Internal Capacity for Meaningful Public Engagement
Location: Western Star Ballroom

Water Rights 101
Location: Empire Builder

12:15-1:15

Lunch & Keynote with Cole Mannix
Co-founder & President of Old Salt Coop

1:30-2:30

Collaborative Planning with Tribal Nations: Building Relationships
Location: Western Star Ballroom

The Good, the Bad, and the Dead: Legislative Update
Location: Empire Builder

How Different Types of Water and Sewer Facilities Impact Subdivision Design
Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

(Continued) Walk/Move Audit Group Planning Session

2:45-3:45

Collaborative Design and Pluralism in Montana
Location: Western Star Ballroom

Conflict and Communication: A Panel Discussion on Interacting with the Public, Colleagues, and Elected Officials
Location: Empire Builder

Rethinking Stormwater: Building Resilient Montana Communities
Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Helena's "Third Space" - The Last Chance Walking Mall
Meeting Location: Registration Table

4:00-5:00

Rose Hills: How Thoughtful Neighborhood Design Can Solve Housing and Boost the Tax Base
Location: Western Star

Montana Transportation Planning Academy
Location: Empire Builder

Floodplain Development in a Changing World
Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

5:00-5:30

4:45-5:45

Vendor Happy Hour - Conference Foyer & Oriental Room

6:30-8:00

Banquet & Award Reception at the Montana Club

Wednesday, October 8

8:30-9:30	Policy Meets Practice: Strategies to Encourage ADUs in Your Community Location: Western Star Ballroom	Beyond the Plan: Aligning Policy, People, and Progress in Butte-Silver Bow Location: Empire Builder	From Principles to Practice: Addressing Groundwater Challenges in Subdivision Development Location: Oriental Room	Assorted Tales of Mount Helena Meeting Location: Registration Table
9:45-10:45	Montana Economic Growth and Revealing the State's Hidden Housing Gaps Location: Western Star Ballroom	Storytelling & Planning Advocacy Location: Empire Builder	One Team, One Plan: Integrated Planning and Engineering in Eastern Montana Location: Oriental Room	
11:00-12:00		AICP Ethics Location: Empire Builder		
12:15-1:15	Lunch & MAP Member Meeting			

Detailed Conference Program

Monday, October 6th

8:00 am – 9:00 am
Registration & Networking

Coffee Bar and Light Breakfast Sponsored By



9:15- 10:15AM

Session Name: Brownfields Assessments, Case Studies, and Community Development

Credits: 1 CM Sustainability

Presenter(s): Jordan Green, AICP, CFM; Amanda Cooley, CFM; Jason Seyler

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

There are many “hidden gems” in Montana – where history is rich and hospitality is warm, but towns and cities struggle with having many abandoned, vacant, and underutilized properties. Brownfields funding is a golden ticket to bringing public assistance to this issue. As of the 2025 legislative session, Montana is now the newest state to welcome a dedicated Brownfields program! Come learn how you can use these resources to bring life to the dilapidated properties in your community.

Presenter Bio(s):

Jason Seyler is the Brownfields Coordinator for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. He has championed Brownfields redevelopment in Montana since 2009. Jason enjoys finding creative solutions for non-profits, local communities, businesses, and developers to assess and cleanup underutilized properties throughout Montana. Jason Seyler currently serves as vice-chairperson for the ASTSWMO Brownfields focus group and has been working collaboratively with other state programs since 2018.

Jordan Green is the Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Deer Lodge. He moved to Montana in 2021 from his home state of Kansas. He received a master’s degree from Kansas State in Regional and Community Planning. His job responsibilities are varied, but his primary responsibility is to act as the city’s planner. His primary planning focus for Deer Lodge is downtown revitalization through community involvement, economic development, and pedestrian-friendly design.

Amanda Cooley is the Planning Director for Powell County, Montana. She has served in this role for four years. She obtained her degree in Sustainable Land Use Planning from Weber State University with a minor in Botany and an emphasis in the use of GIS in 2018. During this time, she was published for work on Dark Skies initiatives in planning, and completed nationally recognized GIS research on Redlining. Prior to her career in planning, she started and managed small businesses.

Session Name: Saving the Big Sky: 50 Years of Land Conservation in Montana

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): John Wright, PhD & Robert Kiesling, MS

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

Six million acres of productive agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and open space have been conserved in Montana in the past half century. Land trusts, tribes, national NGOs, communities, and government agencies have used conservation easements and land purchases to achieve this. We will explore the Helena region, Rocky Mountain Front, and the Blackfoot watershed as applied case studies. This analysis is drawn from our book, *Saving the Big Sky: A Chronicle of Land Conservation in Montana*.

Presenter Bio(s):

John (Jack) Wright was formerly the Planning Director in Mineral County. He earned his PhD in Geography at UC Berkeley. Wright has created over 130 conservation easements in Montana and across the American West. He is the author/co-author of six books about land conservation.

Robert (Bob) Kiesling served as the Director of the Montana office of The Nature Conservancy for many years. He helped protect Pine Butte Swamp, Crown Butte, Wild Horse Island and many other places. He was a Director of the Montana Environmental Information Center. Bob has completed scores of land conservation projects across Montana as a consultant. He is now a conservation broker who works at Sweetwater Ranches. Bob earned his MS in Environmental Studies at UM in Missoula.

10:15AM- 10:30AM

Break Sponsored by



10:30AM- 11:30AM

Session Name: The Community Planning Platform is Here!

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Dani Arps & Dave Ritts

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

By utilizing an EDA grant, the Department of Commerce was able to do outreach across the state to planning professionals and analyze what planning tools, data and resources were needed most to assist planners with their daily tasks. This session breaks down that process and demonstrates the live Community Planning Platform site and how it will function in the future.

Presenter Bio(s):

Dani Arps worked for Teton County from 2021-2023 as the planner, floodplain administrator, grant administrator and GIS systems manager. She now works for the Department of Commerce in the Community MT Division, as a planner with the Community Technical Assistance Program, or CTAP, where she gets to help local governments with planning document updates, training for planning boards, supporting local planning efforts and helping maintain the Community Planning Platform content.

Dave Ritts is a GIS Analyst with the Montana Department of Commerce. He provides GIS support to the Census & Economic Information Center (CEIC) where he is the primary contact in the State of Montana for statistical boundary updates to the U.S. Census Geography program. He is also responsible for maintaining the CEIC data warehouse and website.

Session Name: Grounded Codes, Bold Futures: Managing Impacts Through Right-Sizing

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): TJ Dlubac, AICP

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description: This session will take the audience through a thoughtful journey to reimagine what updating land use regulations should mean. When managing for impacts on neighbors and communities, land use regulations can support rural communities become rooted in a bold future that is of their own making. Through case studies and audience interaction, we'll share success stories of communities who right-sized their regulations to their community needs.

Presenter Bio(s):

TJ brings fresh perspectives and out-of-the-box-thinking to communities looking for practical strategies to tackle big problems. His experience as a former public-sector planner and executive has given him the tools to navigate complex projects, and an understanding of how communities are shaped by policy and land use decisions. He is passionate about helping communities envision their long-term goals and offering commonsense strategies to achieve them.

Session Name: Re-imagining the College "M" Through Parallel Service-learning Courses: What did we learn?

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Sarah Church, PhD; Jodi Allison-Bunnell, MLS & Susanne Cowen, PhD

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description: We will present student research on the College M and associated trails, located in the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Projects explore infrastructure and facility design, environmental and vegetation considerations, Indigenous perspectives, the M's historic significance, and public perceptions of the M and area. This work informs planning decisions related to recreation, cultural resource management, public engagement, and sustainable use of shared and iconic local natural spaces.

Presenter Bio(s):

Dr. Sarah P. Church is an Associate Professor of Geography and Planning in the Department of Earth Sciences at Montana State University. She examines how and why people make land management decisions that impact water resources and soil health, including how stakeholder engagement processes influence social learning and behavior change. Dr. Church holds a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Utah and PhD in Planning from the University of British Columbia.

Jodi Allison-Bunnell is the Head of Archives and Special Collections, Senior Archivist, and an Assistant Professor at the Montana State University Library. Prior positions have included independent consultant, program manager for the Orbis Cascade Alliance, archivist at the University of Montana, and project archivist at the University of Maryland at College Park. In 2023, she was named a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists. She holds an MA and an MLS from the University of Maryland.

Dr. Susanne Cowan is an Associate Professor in the School of Architecture at Montana State University. Dr. Cowan researches historical and contemporary approaches to participatory democracy for neighborhood planning. She also conducts service-learning projects with local organizations, including a study of gentrification in historic

11:45AM- 12:45PM

Lunch Keynote from Liz Lang, APA Marketing and Communications Director

Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

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Presenter Bio(s):

An advocate for effective creativity, Liz Lang serves as Marketing and Communications Director at American Planning Association, leading marketing communication strategy, customer insight exploration, and content solutions. At APA, Liz is responsible for leading strategic, brand-building efforts for all of APA and its professional institute, AICP.

Liz has also led state-level training on issue campaign development as well as advocacy communications for influence and persuasion. Tenacious and focused, with an eye for what lies just beneath the surface, Liz is a firm believer that the small things can be big, and one size does not fit all. Liz's work has been honored with Gold, Silver, and Bronze Addy awards, Telly, Excel, and Communicator awards, and a Most Watched YouTube designation. Using a unique blend of insight, story and culture, Liz translates complexity into narrative—finding opportunity amid challenge. Prior to joining APA, Liz served as Global Chief Marketing Officer for Opportunity International, a nonprofit providing financial services to people living in extreme poverty. There she unified the global brand and forged key partnerships, developing the Opportunity cause marketing partnership program and boosting revenue and reach. Liz has also held leadership positions and developed successful multifaceted campaigns for top brands at major agencies including Havas Worldwide, Young & Rubicam, and boutique firm Translation.

1:00-2:30PM

Session Name: Land Use Legislation and Cases Affecting Montana

Credits: 1.5 CM Law

Presenter(s): Kelly Lynch, JD, AICP

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Overview of US Supreme Court, 9th Circuit Court, Montana Federal District Court, Montana Supreme Court, and Montana State District Court decisions regarding land use and planning. Attendees will learn the facts of each case, the statutes and precedent applied in the case, and the decision reached by the court. Each decision will be described in

the context of its application to current planning work, and the presenter will engage attendees in discussions of how the decisions could affect such work.

Presenter Bio(s):

Kelly has more than 20 years of experience as an attorney and local government advocate. She focuses on collaboration between public agencies, the private sector, and elected officials with diverse backgrounds to provide creative, efficient, and effective leadership for Montana's communities. Prior to joining the League in 2016, Kelly served as Community Development Division Administrator and Special Projects Legal Counsel for Montana Department of Commerce. She was previously an associate at Richard Watson and Gershon in Los Angeles and Deputy County Counsel for Santa Barbara County, California. Her particular planning obsession is regulatory takings and taking pictures of the properties where the big cases originated. Originally from East Helena, Montana, Kelly earned her Master's degree in Urban Planning from the University of California at Los Angeles, Luskin School of Public Affairs and her JD from the University of California at Los Angeles, School of Law. She earned her certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners in 2015.

2:30-2:45 PM

Break Sponsored by



2:45-3:45 PM

Session Name: Helena Forward: Planning for Equitable Housing, Sustainable Development, and Resilience in Montana's Capital City

Credits: 1 CM Sustainability

Presenter(s): Chris Brink, AICP, EDFP & Cody Ferguson, PhD

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

This session will explore how, through robust and creative community engagement, strategic use of geospatial technology, and the innovative use of a PRO Housing Grant, Helena is crafting data-driven and right-sized solutions to meet its housing needs and economic development goals while preserving and enhancing its identity and becoming more resilient.

Presenter Bio(s):

Chris Brink has nearly three decades' experience in community development and planning. He has served as the Director of the Helena Community Development Department since 2022.

Cody Ferguson is New Market Lead with Houseal Lavigne, where he manages planning projects across the West including comprehensive plan updates and zoning reforms. Cody worked as project manager working with the City of Helena on the Helena Forward Land Use Plan and is working with the City on updating its zoning and subdivision regulations.

Session Name: Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and Natural Resource Management Policy Updates (NRMP) in MT: what is the process and what are the benefits?

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Kelly Myla & Josh Elliot, PE

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Many counties in Montana are in the process of completing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) or Natural Resource Management Policy (NRMP). With a range of urban/rural landscapes, federal land ownership, forested and agricultural lands, and fire risk, each plan is unique but the process is similar. Understand the key components and the challenges and benefits to ensure that local needs are adequately considered.

Presenter Bio(s):

Myla is the Environmental Group Lead at DJ&A, with over 25 years of experience with natural resource issues in Montana. Myla and her team have completed multiple CWPPs across the state; specializing in supporting county-driven processes, where data, analytics, and community input come together.

After spending 12 years as a geotechnical engineer, Josh returned to school to earn a master's degree in resource conservation with a focus on natural resource law and policy from the University of Montana. Following this program, he began working for DJ&A where he now manages a variety of environmental projects for federal, state, and local agencies. With his engineering background and specialized knowledge related to natural resource law, regulation, policy, and planning, Josh is well-positioned to help local planners advocate for local needs during state and federal land management planning processes. He enjoys managing multidisciplinary projects and helping teams perform to solve complex problems within our legal structure.

Session Name: Issues and Trends for Funding Local Infrastructure Projects

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Amanda Cooley, CFM; Spencer Dodge & Rob Stapley

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

Local infrastructure is the backbone of Montana's communities, and the funding landscape has changed dramatically over the last year. Join MDT policy administrator Rob Stapley and transportation policy expert Spencer Dodge in a discussion around the current infrastructure funding landscape, a conversation that evolves almost daily! This session will bring you up-to-date with recent and ongoing changes at the state (MDT) and federal (US DOT) level. We will discuss administration priorities, new directives, issues, and opportunities. Local Planning Director, Amanda Cooley, will introduce the discussion and provide perspectives on how these changes are affecting planners at the local level.

Presenter Bio(s):

Amanda Cooley is the Planning Director for Powell County, Montana. She has served in this role for four years. She obtained her degree in Sustainable Land Use Planning from Weber State University with a minor in Botany and an emphasis in the use of GIS in 2018. During this time, she was published for work on Dark Skies initiatives in planning, and completed nationally recognized GIS research on Redlining. Prior to her career in planning, she started and managed small businesses.

Rob is the Administrator of the Policy Office at MDT. This is a relatively new office at MDT that focuses on transportation policy through work with department staff, state and federal partners and key stakeholders. His work focuses on influencing federal transportation laws to include rural states' needs and identifying and coordinating the department's legislative priorities with the goal of safely and efficiently moving people and goods across Montana.

Spencer is an experienced public affairs professional with a demonstrated history of working in transportation policy and funding. His professional interests include Grant Development and Management, Public Speaking, Conflict Resolution, Campaign Management, Facilitation, Negotiation, Public Involvement and Stakeholder Engagement. Spencer is a strategic administrative professional focused on transportation public policy with a Master's Degree in Conflict Resolution from University of Denver – Josef Korbel School of International Studies.

2:45-5:00 PM

Session Name: Public Art Walk Tour

Credits: 2.25 CM

Presenter(s): Amanda Reese & Max Hay

Meeting Location: Conference Foyer/Registration Table

Session Description:

Join members of the Helena Public Art Committee for a guided walking tour highlighting Helena’s vibrant public art scene. Explore downtown murals, sculptures, and community-driven installations—including the eclectic Rodney Street corridor. Learn how local artists, planners, and neighbors have collaborated to shape spaces that reflect Helena’s identity, spark dialogue, and foster connection. Comfortable shoes encouraged!

Presenter Bio(s):

Amanda Reese is a graphic designer, creative placemaker, and chair of the Helena Public Art Committee. With over a decade of experience organizing community-driven art projects and underground events, she brings a passion for blending culture, creativity, and public space. Amanda is deeply invested in making the city’s neighborhoods vibrant, inclusive, and uniquely expressive.

Max Hay is a local musician, community builder, and vice chair of the Helena Public Art Committee. Known for his creative energy and collaborative spirit, Max is dedicated to fostering connection through organizing live music opportunities, public art and grassroots projects across Helena.

3:45-4:00PM

Break Sponsored by



4:00-5:00PM

Session Name: Show Up and Holler: Persistence, Patience, and Planning - How to Get Your Great Bikeway/Walkway Projects Constructed!

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Gus Byrom & Richard Knatterud

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

The words “Show Up and Holler” emphasize the importance of making bikeway - walkway needs considered in the overall community, urban planning process; however, we feel it is important to add that to achieve real success, persistence, patience, and planning working together in unison with bikeway/walkway advocacy are essential. Real success depends upon a lot of cooperation with State transportation staff, local government decision-makers and staff, nonprofit organizations, and key, affected neighborhood groups.

Presenter Bio(s):

Gus Byrom has served as a city planning consultant in Colorado and past planning director for Helena and Lewis and Clark County. Gus just retired from the Montana Department of Commerce where he has been employed since 1986 primarily administering HUD-assisted grants to local governments for public facilities and housing, as well as assisting local governments prepare long term community growth plans. As a volunteer, Gus participated in two community-build sidewalk projects in Helena, one to provide a safe route to a neighborhood school and another to provide sidewalks along a busy commercial / motel corridor.

Richard is a retired civil engineer. He worked as a consultant in the upper midwest until he moved to Montana in 1991. He worked for the Departments of Environmental Quality, Transportation and Commerce until his retirement in 2021. He was a bicycle commuter twelve months a year for those thirty years. He is a graduate of North Dakota State University.

Session Name: Lost in Translation: RFP Assumptions from Both Sides!**Credits:** 1 CM**Presenter(s):** Aaron Wilson, AICP; Allison Mouch, AICP & Staron Faucher**Session Location:** Empire Builder Ballroom**Session Description:**

An effective RFP should set the stage for a strong project partnership — but too often, language that feels obvious to staff gets interpreted very differently by consultants. The result? Proposals that miss the mark and projects that start off on shaky footing. This interactive session will shine the spotlight on the disconnects between what communities think they're asking for — and what consultants actually read between the lines. We will explore different approaches to writing compelling RFPs that minimize confusion and maximize clarity. Using real-life examples, stories of self-reflection, lessons learned from both sides of the table, and no shortage of humor, presenters will show how to turn a Request for Proposal into a Request for Partnership.

Presenter Bio(s):

Aaron Wilson is the Transportation Planning Manager for the City of Missoula, where he oversees the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization, Missoula In Motion, and the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Program. His focus in this position is currently figuring out how we make ambitious plans and goals a reality. Prior to concentrating on Missoula's many transportation issues, Aaron gained experience understanding how our natural and built environment systems interact through work on land use planning, open lands preservation, and wildfire research. Aaron attended Cornell University where he received a Bachelor's degree in Ecology, and later earned a Master's degree in urban and regional planning at Portland State University.

Allison joined Orion Planning + Design in September 2016 and is currently based in Missoula, Montana. Bringing 17 years of professional planning experience to the team, her areas of specialization include comprehensive plans, code development, public engagement, project management, mapping, and analysis, with a focus on collaboration as a means of achieving positive outcomes. Mouch has wide-ranging experience working with private developers and public clients on forward-thinking land use and design solutions, fostering meaningful partnerships that result in sound policy and planning decisions. She is AICP and an active member of the American Planning Association (APA) as the Region V Board Director, past president of APA's Western Central Chapter, and former member of the Montana Association of Planners Board of Directors. She holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from Miami University (Ohio), and a master's degree in urban and environmental planning from the University of Virginia Charlottesville.

Staron Faucher is a Transportation Planner and Project Manager at AECOM in Dallas, Texas, specializing in thoroughfare planning, bike and pedestrian studies, corridor redevelopment, and land use analyses - but he is most passionate about advocacy planning and equity. Before joining AECOM, Staron was a transportation planner at Freese and Nichols, Inc. and the North Central Texas Council of Governments working Sustainable Development Projects. He received his Master in Regional and City Planning from the University of Oklahoma, and Environmental Studies from Baylor University. Staron is also a member of the American Planning Association's Ethics Committee.

Session Name: Exploring Housing Density and Potential Residential Development in the City of Bozeman

Credits- 1 CM

Presenter(s): Andrew Stickney, GISP & Gail Jorgenson

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

In May 2025, the City of Bozeman began creating maps of current and potential maximum housing density and identify areas for future residential development using land and improvement valuation, zoning data, and urban renewal status, and presence of planning projects. These data were gathered to support the City's efforts towards compliance with the Montana Land Use and Planning Act. This session describes the methods, software, analysis methods, and discusses the results of the project.

Presenter Bio(s):

Andrew is a GIS Analyst at HDR with over 12 years of experience in spatial data management and analysis in parks and recreation, urban planning and zoning, and natural resource management. He excels at using geographic information science, data, and systems to support multidisciplinary projects, conduct advanced spatial analyses, and create high-quality cartographic and geographic information products. His goal is to use geospatial tools to solve problems, tell stories, and create solutions.

Gail Jorgenson was born in Tucson, AZ, and moved with her family to Idaho during her teens. After raising her family and graduating college in Boise, she relocated to Bozeman, MT to be near her children and grandchildren. She loves Bozeman's people, culture, and landscape and thrilled to support the Bozeman Water Project. She hopes to leave a legacy of seizing opportunities, pursuing heartfelt goals, and embracing inclusivity in life's journey. Cheers!

6:00-8:00PM

Trivia Night at Ten Mile Creek Brewery

Sponsored By





Tuesday, October 8

8:00 am – 9:00 am
Registration & Networking

8:00-12:00PM

Session Name: Montana State Library (MSL) GIS Workshop: Using Authoritative Data and Addressing Tools for Smarter Planning

Credits: 4 CM

Presenter(s): Matt Trebesch

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

This hands-on workshop from the Montana State Library will cover updates on MSL GIS programs, including grants and data access. Participants will learn how to use MSDI framework data in ArcGIS Online and Pro for planning tasks. A focus will be on the addressing lifecycle—how local data is refined, aggregated into statewide datasets, and integrated into national systems. Includes demos and basic mapping exercises. No prior GIS experience required.

Presenter Bio(s):

Matt Trebesch is a GIS Analyst at the Montana State Library (MSL), where he manages projects like the MSL Flood Hub and COVID-19 dashboard, leads geospatial governance efforts, and administers the MSL ArcGIS Online platform in support of the agency and other state partners. He is also a project manager for the MGIA grant program. His background includes municipal GIS coordination and managing GIS for a 9-1-1 software vendor.

8:30-9:30AM

Session Name: Collaborative Planning for Thoughtful Neighborhood Design: A Case Study for Creation and Implementation of Form-based Code

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Paul Forsting, AICP

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

The City of Missoula and Missoula County adopted the Sx^wtpqyen Neighborhoods Master Plan, amending growth policies for a 2,000-acre area. IMEG supported the plan and code adoption process, applying intelligent growth principles to promote walkable, diverse, sustainable, and affordable neighborhoods. A new form-based code was adopted. IMEG also led the first three projects through the new review process, navigating emerging challenges and opportunities.

Presenter Bio(s):

Paul Forsting, AICP, is IMEG's Director of Planning for Montana, leading a statewide team of design professionals and project managers. He has delivered successful land use and environmental planning projects, including regulatory permitting, feasibility analysis, and preparation of resource management plans and environmental assessments. Paul excels at clearly communicating complex topics in public forums.

Session Name: Overview of Montana's State Trust Lands and How they Fit into Community Planning

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Deidra Kloberdanz & Rory Ruffner

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation, Real Estate Management Bureau staff will present a history of Montana's state trust lands and real estate programs on state trust lands, including commercial leasing. Development of the Real Estate Management Plan, relevant statutory requirements, and recent legislative changes will be covered.

Presenter Bio(s):

Deidra Kloberdanz is the Real Estate Management Bureau Chief in the Forestry & Trust Lands Division at Montana's Department of Natural Resources & Conservation. She oversees diverse real estate activities, including residential, commercial and renewable energy leasing, land transactions, and easements and rights of way on state trust land across Montana. Previously, Deidra worked in transportation and land planning and holds a degree in Community & Regional Planning from Iowa State University.

Rory Ruffner is the Property Management Section Supervisor for the Forestry & Trust Lands Division of the DNRC. Prior to joining the DNRC three years ago, he worked for the Dept. of Defense for nearly twenty years doing natural resource management, both in the field and in the office. One of his primary roles within the DNRC deals with the Commercial Leasing of State Trust Lands in rural and urban areas. Rory earned his bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Utah State University.

9:30-9:45AM

Break Sponsored by



9:45-10:45AM

Session Name: Gallatin County's Future Land Use Map: Balancing Resource Protection and Housing

Credits: 1 CM Sustainability

Presenter(s): Sean O'Callaghan AICP, CFM; Meghan Hazer Alvarez & Ashlie Gilbert

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

Gallatin County's Future Land Use Map was developed to protect sensitive natural resources, wildlife, and agriculture in a fast-growing county facing housing affordability challenges. This session will delve into the stakeholder engagement process to inform the careful curation of data for a suitability model, then cover subsequent steps to develop the final map and recommendations for adoption. Amendment criteria to protect the integrity of the data driven approach will also be discussed.

Presenter Bio(s):

Sean, Chief Planning Officer for Gallatin County, somehow makes policy wrangling look cool - if cool involves endless public meetings, questionable attempts to decode legislation, and routinely beating his head against the wall. A master of dry wit, Sean keeps the wheels of planning turning while pretending the legislative session is fun. He co-chairs the MAP committee where he advocates for sound planning policy decisions, fueled by caffeine, patience, and the occasional deep-sigh.

Meghan is the Community Development Manager for Gallatin County's Planning Department. She has experience in public and private sector planning, a Master of Science in Landscape Architecture, and a Master of Public Health with research focused on built environment factors and health outcomes, including exposure to greenspace and stress and zoning, liquor outlet density, and crime. Her current focus is long-range planning efforts, like the Future Land Use Map and zoning reform discussions.

Ashlie is a Senior Planner for the Gallatin County Department of Planning and Community Development. She received undergraduate degrees in Psychology and International Studies from the University of Utah in 2015 and a Master's in Earth Sciences, Emphasis in Geography, from Montana State University in 2022. Currently, Ashlie's focus as a planner is on long-range projects such as zoning reform and a model zoning code to promote affordable housing as well as subdivision review.

Session Name: Planning Impacts on the Environment and Natural Resources**Credits:** 1 CM**Presenter(s):** Leea Anderson**Session Location:** Empire Builder Ballroom**Session Description:**

This presentation explores the intersection of environmental regulation and urban planning, focusing on three critical areas: Pretreatment, Stormwater Management, and Sustainability. It aims to equip planners with the knowledge and strategies needed to support resilient, compliant, and future-ready communities.

Presenter Bio(s):

Leea Anderson is the Environmental Regulation Pretreatment Manager for the City of Helena. She has over a decade of experience in environmental compliance and regulatory enforcement, including water, wastewater, wastewater pretreatment, stormwater, land management, and sustainability. She previously worked for DEQ, Montana Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Land Management. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Interpretation and a B.S. in Environmental Science.

9:45-2:30 PM

Session Name: Growing Active and Livable Communities with Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk/Move Audits Tour (Continues after Lunch)**Credits:** 4 CM**Presenter(s):** Meg Ann Traci, PhD**Meeting Location:** Conference Foyer/Registration Table**Session Description:**

We will hold an Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk/Move Audit (I2Audit) workshop to teach the I2Audit practice and show its use in the Greater Helena area. We will present the I2Audit Primer and procedures then go on a community-led tour of a selected route planned to advance local short-term and long-term goals with coordinated policy, systems, and environmental changes. I2Audits help planners engage a range of community members and partners to build resilient plans and drive equitable outcomes.

Presenter Bio(s):

Meg Ann Traci, PhD is a Research Professor at the University of Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities and senior consultant on the Montana Disability and Health Program (MTDH). Mackenzie Jones, MPH, CHES, is the Montana DPHHS MTDH program manager. MTDH supports the disability community to drive futures of healthy and resilient communities. Charles Alvarez, Ability Montana; Kathleen Aragon, Bike Walk Montana; and other co-presenters, collaborators with MTDH on I2Audits for 10+ years.

10:45-11:00AM

Break Sponsored by



11:00-12:00AM

Session Name: Harnessing Internal Capacity for Meaningful Public Engagement: Building Trust and Impact Without Outsourcing the Mission**Credits:** 1 CM**Presenter(s):** Brock Cherry & Alaina Mattimiro**Session Location:** Western Star Ballroom**Session Description:**

Learn how the City of Great Falls set a new standard for public engagement during its Growth Policy Update. Through over 70 events, a 2,300+ response survey, Planning Week, and tools like mapping exercises and a telephone guest-book, the City blended in-person, online, and passive engagement to exceed Montana Land Use and Planning Act standards. This session shares practical strategies for deeply rooted, community-driven planning. Come learn how you can use these resources to bring life to the dilapidated properties in your community.

Presenter Bio(s):

Brock Cherry is the Planning & Community Development Director for Great Falls, MT. He's a city planner who jumps headfirst into tough conversations—armed with heart, a calculator, and a belief that good planning is just caring loudly about your hometown. From high desert towns to river valley cities, he's helping folks shape places they're proud to call home—with less red tape, more handshake, and room for everyone in the story.

Alaina Mattimiro is an Associate Planner for the City of Great Falls and has covered a wide range of work including code amendments, development projects, transportation planning, and long-range initiatives. A combination of degrees in Community and Regional Planning and Elementary Education built the basis for her crusade for education and outreach.

Session Name: Water Rights 101**Credits:** 1 CM**Presenter(s):** Nathaniel Ward**Session Location:** Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

This session is designed to provide new and seasoned land use planning professionals with basin water rights knowledge and understanding. This session will also go over new legislation and implications it may have on land use planning.

Presenter Bio(s):

Nate Ward is the Water Rights Bureau Chief for the Water Resources Division of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The Water Rights Bureau oversees all water right permitting (Post-June 30, 1973, water rights and change applications). Nate has 12 years of water rights experience with DNRC and has worked in regional offices both east and west of the divide.

12:15-1:15PM

Lunch & Keynote by Cole Mannix, Old Salt Coop

Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Presenter Bio(s):

Cole is part of an extended family that has ranched together since 1882 near Helmville, MT. He did an undergrad in biology, another in philosophy at Carroll College, then a masters in theology at Boston College. From '12-'16 he worked for a startup beef company called Salt of the Earth Ranchers Cooperative. From '17-'20 he worked for Western Landowners Alliance to advance policies and practices that sustain working lands, connected landscapes, and native species. As a co-founder and President of Old Salt Co-op, he is helping to build a regenerative marketplace for fine American meat. He and spouse Eileen Brennan live in Helena with two sons, Finn and Charlie.

1:30-2:30PM

Session Name: Collaborative Planning with Tribal Nations: Building Relationships

Credits: 1 CM Equity

Presenter(s): Megan Terry, PLA, SITES AP; Stephen Coe, PE, AICP

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

This session will discuss the unique planning challenges and successes experienced in Indian Country, from navigating jurisdictional complexities to celebrating culturally-informed community planning.

Presenter Bio(s):

Megan Terry is Landscape Architect and Sustainable SITES Accredited Professional focused on urban design, environmental resiliency, and rural connectivity. Her work focuses on implementing nature-based solutions and green infrastructure across the Intermountain West. Megan partners with rural and tribal communities to in multiple design and planning capacities, using landscape architecture as a tool for lasting, place-based impact.

Stephen Coe is a certified planner and environmental engineer with over 30 years of experience in environmental planning and permitting. At WET, he leads projects in air quality, stormwater, and mining, while contributing to regional planning efforts. With experience in both public and private sectors, he is known for blending technical expertise with inclusive public engagement. He holds a BS in Environmental Engineering and is licensed in seven states.

Session Name: The Good, the Bad, and the Dead: Legislative Update

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Anna Vickers & Sean O'Callaghan, AICP, CFM

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

A review of the 2025 Legislative Session land use bills by the Montana Association of Planner Legislative Committee.

Presenter Bio(s):

Anna, Planning Division Manager for Billings and Yellowstone County, bravely leads despite her calendar being 97% meetings and 3% coffee. As MAP Legislative Committee Co-Chair, she translates planner-speak into something lawmakers might understand. Known for wrangling zoning drama and acronyms like a pro, Anna's superpower is surviving legislative session with only mild sarcasm and a lot of snacks.

Sean, Chief Planning Officer for Gallatin County, somehow makes policy wrangling look cool – if cool involves endless public meetings, questionable attempts to decode legislation, and routinely beating his head against the wall. A master of dry wit, Sean keeps the wheels of planning turning while pretending the legislative session is fun. He co-chairs the MAP committee where he advocates for sound planning policy decisions, fueled by caffeine, patience, and the occasional deep-sigh.

Session Name: How Different Types of Water and Sewer Facilities Impact Subdivision Design

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Rachel Clark, PE

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

DEQ staff will discuss individual, shared, multiple user, public and municipal water and wastewater systems and how each system type drives the density and layout of a subdivision.

Presenter Bio(s):

Rachel Clark is the chief of the Engineering Bureau at the Department of Environmental Quality. She is a licensed professional engineer and has worked at Montana DEQ for over 20 years. Prior to that she worked for County, City, and State government in Alaska.

2:30-2:45PM

Break Sponsored by



2:45-3:45PM

Session Name: Collaborative Design and Pluralism in Montana

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Jordan Zignego, AIA, PhD, NCARB & Zachary Brown

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

Collaborative, community-based approaches to design and planning of the built environment has a unique set of difficulties, obstacles, and opportunities. We will be looking at case studies of collaborations between architectural students from the Montana Community Design Center and community organizations/stakeholders in order to understand what works best for collaborative and community engagement.

Presenter Bio(s):

Dr. Jordan Zignego is Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture at Montana State University and is the Director of the Community Design Center. Jordan combines his interdisciplinary passion with being of service by connecting architecture students to the community through design projects that benefit non-profits and government organizations. The Montana Community Design Center is rooted in pluralism and takes a collaborative and community-based approach to architecture and design.

Zach Brown is a Gallatin County Commissioner and former three-term State Representative. Zach is an avid outdoorsman, the son and brother of Bozeman small business owners, and a product of Montana's public education system. From 2014 to 2020, Zach worked as a nonprofit professional in Bozeman in addition to serving three terms representing Gallatin County in the Montana House of Representatives.

Session Name: Conflict and Communication: a Panel Discussion on Interacting with the Public, Colleagues, and Elected Officials

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Monica Plecker, AICP & Jordan Green, AICP, CFM

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Conflict is inevitable in planning – from tense public meetings to difficult one-on-one conversations with elected officials, colleagues, and community members. This interactive panel will feature three seasoned planners who will share real-life examples of navigating tough conversations in their work. They will discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of these experiences, highlighting what worked, what failed, and what they learned when it comes to building trust even amid disagreement, and communicating clearly under pressure. The panel will explore: Preparing for high-stakes conversations, navigating public anger and fear, building bridges with skeptical or oppositional elected officials, managing internal team conflict, and staying on top of the rumor mill.

Presenter Bio(s):

Monica Plecker is the Director of Public Works for Yellowstone County and currently serves as the board Treasurer. She has been involved in the Montana Association of Planners since 2012 and a board member since 2015. She is also a long-time member of the legislative committee. Monica began her career in Montana as a planner for the City of Laurel, eventually becoming Planning Manager for the City of Billings and Yellowstone County. While her work has transitioned from Planning to Public Works, she is still passionate about the work that MAP supports across the state. She earned a bachelors in Political Science and Public Policy from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA.

Jordan Green is the Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Deer Lodge. He moved to Montana in 2021 from his home state of Kansas. He received a master's degree from Kansas State in Regional and Community Planning. His job responsibilities are varied, but his primary responsibility is to act as the city's planner. His primary planning focus for Deer Lodge is downtown revitalization through community involvement, economic development, and pedestrian-friendly design.

Session Name: Rethinking Stormwater: Building Resilient Montana Communities

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Tyler Halligan

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

This session reframes stormwater as essential infrastructure that shapes development, land use, and community resilience. Using Montana-based examples, it explores how planners can integrate green infrastructure and runoff management into policy, site design, and growth strategies. Attendees will gain practical insights into planning more resilient communities—with water treated as a design element, infrastructure is future-ready, and stormwater as a tool for building stronger, healthier places.

Presenter Bio(s):

Tyler is a Stormwater Specialist with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. He holds a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry and an M.S. in Environmental Studies with a focus on environmental policy and environmental justice. Tyler's work spans science, policy, and public engagement. He focuses on practical problem-solving, bridging the gap between policy and implementation, and advancing place-based solutions for building resilient communities across Montana.

2:45-5:30PM

Session Name: Helena's "Third Space"- The Last Chance Walking Mall

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Zachary Coe & Sean Morrison, JD

Meeting Location: Conference Foyer/Registration Table

Session Description:

This session will be a walking tour of Helena's "Walking Mall," located on Last Chance Gulch between 6th Avenue and the Commerce Building. The Mall was created in the 1970s when "Main Street" was closed to vehicle traffic as part of Urban Renewal. The Mall has seen a recent surge in activity and interest, and showcases successful mixed-use development, with office space, residential (including low-income), breweries, bars, restaurants, a hotel, retail shops, and performance spaces.

Presenter Bio(s):

Zachary Coe is the Program Director for the Foundation for Montana History. He has written and provided historic tours in Helena, including tours of the Walking Mall. Mr. Coe has experience in museum curation and education, guiding historic tours, script writing, social media for history projects, exhibit design and grant writing. Mr. Coe has a BA in the History of Science and Technology, with a Minor in Writing, and MA in Public History from MSU-Bozeman.

Sean Morrison is a tax attorney in Helena, Montana, and currently serves as Secretary for the Walking Mall Foundation. Mr. Morrison has provided expert testimony in litigation related to tax increment financing districts and has assisted resort districts with formation and administration. Prior to returning to his hometown of Helena, Mr. Morrison worked for the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance in Washington, D.C., and attended Harvard Law School, JD 2015, and the University of Montana, BA 2009.

3:45-4:00PM

Break Sponsored by



4:00-5:00PM

Session Name: Rose Hills: How Thoughtful Neighborhood Design Can Solve Housing and Boost the Tax Base

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Jacob Kuntz

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

Rose Hills, a new neighborhood by Helena Area Habitat for Humanity, shows how thoughtful design can address housing needs, maximize infrastructure, and expand local tax base. This session explores how affordable, dense, and walkable development can align development and municipal goals. Learn how one of the nation's largest Habitat-led projects offers a scalable model for community-centered neighborhood planning.

Presenter Bio(s):

Jacob Kuntz is the Executive Director of Helena Area Habitat for Humanity, a role he has held for the past ten years. Under his leadership, the organization has expanded its impact through innovative neighborhood development, including the Rose Hills project—one of the largest Habitat-led initiatives in the country. He specializes in affordable housing strategy, community partnerships, and aligning development with long-term municipal goals.

Session Name: Montana Transportation Planning Academy

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Pam Langve-Davis; Mitch Buthod, AICP; Lora Mattox & Matthew Rohrback, AICP

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Join a panel discussion on transportation planning issues and opportunities from across the state, including an overview of working with the Montana Department of Transportation, translating MPO processes to the local level, infrastructure planning as part of a land use plan, and challenges and solutions for small, resource-constrained communities. There will be something for everyone to learn from in this engaging session.

Presenter Bio(s):

Pam Langve-Davis, MDT's transportation safety planner and project manager of Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan, coordinates proven safety strategies and provides technical assistance on community lead transportation safety planning efforts with consideration of the four transportation safety disciplines. With a focus on reducing roadway deaths and life altering injuries, Pam works with local and tribal communities to build committee networks and develop transportation safety plans.

Mitch Buthod, AICP, leads the MDT Statewide and Urban Planning Section's team of transportation planning professionals which manages the Urban Highway Program, oversees Montana's pre-NEPA/MEPA corridor planning processes, and assists local governments and MPOs with transportation planning, among various other

responsibilities. He holds a Bachelor's in Environmental Science (CU-Boulder) and Master's degrees in Water Resources Management and Urban and Regional Planning (UW-Madison).

Lora Mattox has served the City of Billings and Yellowstone County Planning Department for over 20 years. As Transportation Planning Coordinator since 2022, she oversees the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), managing the UPWP, federal planning funds, and compliance with state and federal requirements. Lora leads development of the LRTP, TIP, and PPP, ensuring MPO planning advances a safe, efficient, and equitable regional transportation system.

Matthew Rohrbach, AICP has been the city planner & grant administrator for Hamilton since 2019. Matthew manages a variety of current and long range planning duties for Hamilton in addition to grant writing/administration and fielding complaints about weeds. Prior to working for Hamilton, he worked as a planning consultant in Montana and as a transportation planner in Washington, Oregon, and Massachusetts. Matthew holds a BA in geography from the University of Montana and a master's of urban and regional planning from Portland State University.

Session Name: Floodplain Development in a Changing World

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Traci Sears, CFM & Shylea Wingard, MS, CFM

Session Location: Iron Horse Ballroom

Session Description:

Federal changes and transitions affect how floodplain management programs are administered at a state and local level. This workshop will delve into the floodplain program and it guides and influences development in high risk and flood prone areas. It will also provide useful tools and knowledge for planners in helping property owners manage and build in these sensitive areas.

Presenter Bio(s):

Traci Sears is the State of Montana National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Coordinator. With over 20 years in planning and floodplain management she is well positioned to share her background and knowledge with Montana planners and communities. Traci grew up near the ocean in Florida and has helped build Montana's landlocked floodplain program into one of the top programs in the nation.

Shylea has worked with Montana communities as the DRNC Floodplain planner for five years. Her background in agriculture and economics gives her a unique understanding of the labor and resource challenges communities face and makes natural resource management like floodplain a great fit. She has a Master's Degree from Purdue University.

4:45-5:45PM

Vendor Happy Hour

Location: Conference Foyer & Oriental Room

Sponsored by



6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Banquet & Award Reception at the Montana Club



Wednesday, October 9

8:30 am – 9:30 am

Session Name: Policy Meets Practice: Strategies to Encourage ADUs in Your Community

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Megan Harbaugh & TJ Dlubac, AICP

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

This session will help communities understand common land use, zoning, financing, and public information barriers to ADUs and develop strategies to overcome them using case studies and best practices from other communities.

Presenter Bio(s):

Megan is a proud graduate of the University of Montana and has nearly a decade of experience working with communities and bringing people together to achieve their goals. She earned her master's in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Colorado and works at Community Planning Strategies where she provides a range of community development services to small towns across the West.

TJ brings fresh perspectives and out-of-the-box-thinking to communities looking for practical strategies to tackle big problems. His experience as a former public-sector planner and executive has given him the tools to navigate complex projects, and an understanding of how communities are shaped by policy and land use decisions. He is passionate about helping communities envision their long-term goals and offering commonsense strategies to achieve them.

Session Name: Beyond the Plan: Aligning Policy, People, and Progress in Butte-Silver Bow

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Aren Murcar, AICP; Lauren Schubring, AICP & Julia Crain

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

From planning to action, this session explores how Butte-Silver Bow, MT is tackling housing challenges. Learn how a 2024 Housing Plan—developed with SCJ Alliance—led to real progress, including hiring a Housing Coordinator. Speakers will share insights on engagement, strategy, and implementation, offering a model for turning thoughtful planning into measurable community change.

Presenter Bio(s):

Aren is a Planner and Project Manager at SCJ Alliance's Spokane, WA office. He graduated from Eastern Washington University with a bachelor's in economics in 2013 and later returned for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program, graduating in 2019. Aren's background in economics complements his career in planning and helps him understand the balance between visioning and feasibility- an important piece of making planning projects become reality.

Lauren is a planner based in SCJ Alliance's Spokane office, where she leads community engagement efforts on a range of planning projects. She played a key role in the Butte-Silver Bow Housing Plan, helping design and implement inclusive public engagement strategies. With a background in nonprofits and supporting people with disabilities, Lauren brings a deep commitment to equity and accessibility that informs all aspects of her work.

Julia Crain is the Planning Director for Butte-Silver Bow, where she leads a wide range of efforts to strengthen community livability, support responsible growth, and guide strategic planning initiatives. Born and raised in Butte, Julia holds a bachelor's degree in public affairs from Seattle University and a master's in urban and regional planning from Portland State University.

Session Name: From Principles to Practice: Addressing Groundwater Challenges in Subdivision Development

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Rob Livesay, MS

Session Location: Oriental Room

Session Description:

Assessing potential groundwater impacts during subdivision review requires adequate data for informed decision-making and general knowledge of groundwater systems. This presentation will provide an overview of how groundwater systems function, highlight available groundwater resources and provide perspective on the challenges of reviewing for potential groundwater impacts during subdivision review.

Presenter Bio(s):

Planning Director and Floodplain Administrator for Ravalli County with an undergraduate degree in international field geosciences and masters degree in watershed hydrology.

8:30AM-11:00AM

Session Name: Assorted Tales of Mount Helena Tour

Credits: 2.25 CM

Presenter(s): Brad Langsather

Meeting Location: Conference Foyer/Registration Table

Session Description:

A walking tour of Mount Helena City Park focused on highlighting the park's unique relationship with Montana's Capital City.

Presenter Bio(s):

Brad Langsather has worked for the City of Helena as their Open Lands and Watershed Project Manager since 2008. He obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Biology from Fort Lewis College, Durango Co. in 1988 and embarked on a career as a professional forester that has spanned over 35 years. Prior to his tenure with the City of Helena, Brad managed forestry programs for the U.S.F.S., Louisiana Pacific Corporation, Smurfit Stone Container Corporation, and Sun Mountain Lumber, Inc.

9:30-9:45AM

Break Sponsored by



WGMGROUP

9:45-10:45AM

Session Name: Montana Economic Growth and Revealing the State's Hidden Housing Gaps

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Jeffrey Michael, PhD & Derek Sheehan, MA

Session Location: Western Star Ballroom

Session Description:

This two-part session begins with a review of UM BBER's economic outlook, highlighting current trends in employment, industry performance, and demographics in Montana and its sub-regions. The second part evaluates Montana housing demand using the concepts of missing households and structural vacancy rates. We estimate local housing demand-emerging from household formation decisions and changing housing costs— to evaluate long-term shortages and surpluses at the county level across Montana.

Presenter Bio(s):

Jeffrey Michael is the director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana. Dr. Michael has decades of experience in regional economic forecasting, public policy analysis, and environmental economics, including work on the economic impacts of the Endangered Species Act, climate change, and regulation on land use, infrastructure, property values and employment growth. Dr. Michael has a Ph.D. from NC State, M.S. from Univ. of Maine, and a B.A. from Hamilton College.

Derek Sheehan is an Economist with BBER at the University of Montana. He specializes in Montana's labor, industry, and housing markets, with a current focus on small-area housing demand and supply estimation using administrative, survey, and geospatial data. His analysis of state low-income housing program received the Polzin Prize for best paper from the Association of Business and Economic Research. He has an MA in Econ from the University of Montana and a BA in Econ from Virginia Tech.

Session Name: Storytelling & Planning Advocacy

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Liz Lang & Andrew Hagemeyer, AICP

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

Advocacy is about more than just facts and outcomes, it's about connection. And storytelling is one of the most powerful advocacy tools planners can use. Stories can open minds, bridge divides, and make the impact of planning feel real to people who may not really know what planning is.

This interactive workshop will help you move beyond process and through data to uncover the human impact that shapes decisions. Explore how to uncover and create stories that resonate with elected officials and decision makers. We'll break down the essential elements of compelling storytelling, practice tailoring messages, and discover how stories can be integrated into advocacy to increase recall and action.

Presenter Bio(s):

An advocate for effective creativity, Liz Lang serves as Marketing and Communications Director at American Planning Association, leading marketing communication strategy, customer insight exploration, and content solutions. Prior to joining APA, Liz served as Global Chief Marketing Officer for Opportunity International, a nonprofit providing financial services to people living in extreme poverty. There she unified the global brand and forged key partnerships, developing the Opportunity cause marketing partnership program and boosting revenue and reach. Liz has also held leadership positions and developed successful multifaceted campaigns for top brands at major agencies including Havas Worldwide, Young & Rubicam, and boutique firm Translation.

Session Name: One Team, One Plan: Integrated Planning and Engineering in Eastern Montana

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Rachel Laqua, AICP, Ryan Kopp & Katie Aitchison

Session Location: Oriental Room

Session Description:

Join us to discuss planning in Richland County, Montana. After the 2010s oil boom, the county is focusing on steady growth. Learn how a comprehensive, integrated approach—combining planning, engineering, and funding—supports progress. We'll explore internal and client collaboration, plus strategies for transparency, trust, and inclusive engagement in long range planning and everyday operations. We'll discuss how this model can guide other communities toward better coordination and outcomes.

Presenter Bio(s):

Rachel is a professional, certified planner with over a dozen years of high-level planning and project management experience, having served as principal planner for the City of Williston, North Dakota, before beginning a career with Interstate Engineering. She serves as contract Planner for Richland County and Fairview, MT, and her favorite view in Richland County is the sunrise/sunset over fields along the Yellowstone River.

Ryan is a lifelong Richland County Resident. He attended Montana Tech in Butte and returned to Richland County to work at Interstate Engineering in Sidney. Ryan has been involved in dozens of projects over the years, helping to improve the quality of life in the community that he and his family live in. He serves on the Sidney Chamber of Commerce and the Fairview School Board. Ryan's favorite view in Richland County is a growing lentil field with plenty of moisture on his family's farm.

Katie is a communications and engagement professional with 18 years of experience in marketing, event planning, public relations, and community outreach. She brings a strategic approach to public engagement, combining in-person outreach with digital tools to help communities share their stories and shape their futures. She guides meaningful conversations toward measurable results. Katie's connection to Richland County has grown through stories its residents share and their clear community pride.

10:45-11:00AM

Break Sponsored by



11:00-12:00PM

Session Name: AICP Ethics

Credits: 1 CM

Presenter(s): Staron Faucher, AICP

Session Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

Session Description:

An overview of APA Ethics cases and outcomes in 2024-2025.

Presenter Bio(s):

Staron Faucher is a Transportation Planner and Project Manager at AECOM in Dallas, Texas, specializing in thoroughfare planning, bike and pedestrian studies, corridor redevelopment, and land use analyses - but he is most passionate about advocacy planning and equity. Before joining AECOM, Staron was a transportation planner at Freese and Nichols, Inc. and the North Central Texas Council of Governments working Sustainable Development Projects. He received his Master in Regional and City Planning from the University of Oklahoma, and Environmental Studies from Baylor University. Staron is also a member of the American Planning Association's Ethics Committee.

12:15-1:15PM

Lunch & MAP Member Meeting

Location: Empire Builder Ballroom

