



APA MONTANA & APA IDAHO 2026 JOINT CONFERENCE



September
9-11

University of
Montana Western
Dillon, Montana



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Title: Accessing Montana's Elevation Data – LiDAR at Your Fingertips

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Through a series of short lectures followed by hands-on exercises, this session provides an introduction to lidar and working with lidar-derived products in ArcGIS Pro. Topics include: lidar 101, where to access lidar for Montana, deriving rasters from the lidar point cloud, and raster analysis. Attendees will have access to laptops to gain experience working with lidar-derived data in ArcGIS Pro. Seats are limited (20) and basic experience with ArcGIS software is required.

Speakers:

- **Troy Blandford**

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Title: Planning and Zoning Workshop

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Whether you're new to a commission or a seasoned practitioner, join us for a practical workshop on key planning principles, zoning laws, and effective decision-making. Learn how to navigate land use policies, handle public hearings, and guide smart growth in your community.

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Mobile Tour: Walk Audit - Part 1

Meet at Jaycee Park (near the band shell) | 1 hour

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Title: From Vision to Viability: Using Interactive Development Impact Tools to Shape Downtown Plans

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

This lecture explores how interactive development impacts spreadsheets and can connect downtown vision to real-world feasibility. Participants will learn how scenario-based tools link land use, density, phasing, and financial outcomes to support better planning and decision-making. The session demonstrates how interactive models improve transparency, strengthen plan credibility, and help communities test trade-offs, align stakeholders, and move downtown plans from concept to implementation.

Speakers:

- **Ben Levenger, AICP, PLA**

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Title: From the Front Lines: The December 2025 Lincoln County Flood Disaster

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

In December 2025, a historic flood damaged communities and infrastructure across Lincoln County, Montana. Through photos, videos, and firsthand experience, the local Floodplain Administrator will describe how the disaster unfolded, emergency actions, recovery challenges, and mitigation efforts. The presentation also explores the complexity of serving the public while being impacted personally - highlighting lessons in preparedness, communication, property-owner assistance, and resilience.

Speakers:

- **Jesse Haag**

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Title: Exploring the Use of In-person and Virtual Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk/Move Audits in Engaging People in the Dillon Master Downtown Master Plan

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Session information coming soon.

Speakers:

- **Dani Arps, AICP Candidate**

2:20 - 3:50 PM

Title: The Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel: Case Studies from Montana and Idaho

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) provides technical assistance panels (TAP's) of volunteer experts to help communities in addressing land use and development issues. ULI Idaho which includes Montana has undertaken TAP's in a number of communities in both states addressing a variety of topics, including growth management, housing, economic development, corridor improvements and neighborhood revitalization. This session will consist of a panel of participants from some of these TAP's.

Speakers:

- Diane Kushlan, FAICP
- Karlee May
- Brad Cramer, AICP

2:20 - 3:50 PM

Title: Room to Roam, Room to Grow: Planning for Wildlife and Communities Together

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

As western communities value healthy wildlife populations and also face growth pressures, protecting wildlife connectivity and sensitive lands requires more than vision—it demands implementation. Join our convergence of planning and ecology where we'll highlight mapping of sensitive lands, best practices to address land use opportunities at various scales, and discuss the co-benefits of co-location between wildlife connectivity, housing, transportation, and economic development.

Speakers:

- Kristina Kachur Webb

2:20 - 3:50 PM

Title: Small Towns with Big City Problems

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Panel Discussion: See how the planners of (Victor Idaho, list the other cities participating) navigate the challenges of being a small tourism focused community and how they address issues related to housing, transportation, partnerships, public outreach, and the limits of state legislation.

Speakers:

- Kimberly Kolner, AICP

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Title: Ethics Session

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

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

Speakers:

- **Staron Faucher, AICP**

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Title: Working Lands, Working Communities: Planning for Agricultural Viability in the Mountain West

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Agricultural viability is more than preserving farmland—it is a strategy for building resilient communities. This session explores how planners, producers, local governments, and conservation partners can sustain working lands while accommodating growth. Drawing on Idaho case studies, participants will learn practical tools and collaborative approaches that strengthen local economies, food systems, and long-term community resilience.

Speakers:

- **David Anderson**

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Title: Moving Plans Into Action

Plans That Don't Just Sit on a Shelf & Chicken and the Egg

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Across the Mountain West, communities face shared challenges that cross jurisdictions, sectors, and landscapes. This session explores how innovative, community-supported plans can bridge divides by serving as practical tools for decision-making, investment, and implementation. Using real-world examples, we will discuss ways to align land use, transportation, infrastructure, funding, and fiscal balance; prioritize projects; track progress; and keep plans active, collaborative, and connected to outcomes that support a shared future.

Speakers:

- **Aaron Qualls, AICP**
- **Rachel Granrath, AICP**
- **Maureen Gresham, AICP**

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Trivia Night on Campus

Lewis and Clark Room on Campus

Join us in the Lewis and Clark Room for a fun, fast-paced evening of trivia and friendly competition! Gather a team or come solo to meet new colleagues and test your knowledge across several fun topics.

8:30 AM

Chapter Welcome

Jordan Green & Hilary Patterson

8:45 - 9:45 AM

Title: Keynote: Headwaters

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Keynote information coming soon.

Speakers:

- Kelly Pohl

9:55 - 10:55 AM

Title: Innovation Without Boundaries: Carrying Entrepreneurship Across Sectors

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Building on a definition of entrepreneurship as vision-driven innovation and risk-taking amid uncertainty, this panel brings together planning professionals from multiple sectors to share strategies for overcoming common challenges. Through a moderated discussion, panelists will explore staffing and capacity constraints, political barriers, organizational dynamics, client relationships, and regulatory uncertainty while offering practical insights for advancing a vision in complex environments.

Speakers:

- Daniel Pauly, AICP

9:55 - 10:55 AM

Title: The Changing Landscape of Implementation

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

In 2026, the City of Boise revamped its incentives for affordable and sustainable housing development to provide expanded benefits and improved functionality. The implementation process included creating resources for developers, developing a staff training program, and fostering cross-department collaboration. This session will focus on the implementation process and lessons learned.

Speakers:

- Sebrina Mortensen

9:55 - 10:55 AM

Title: Bridging Transportation Safety and Community Health: Collaborative Safe Streets and Roads 4 All (SS4A) Planning with the Chippewa Cree Tribe

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Transportation safety and public health are closely connected in rural and tribal communities. This session highlights a collaborative SS4A Safety Action Planning effort on the Rocky Boy's Reservation involving the Chippewa Cree Tribe, MT DPHHS, MSU AHEC and WTI. Presenters will share lessons on culturally responsive engagement, Safe System planning, cross-sector collaboration, and integrating local knowledge, community strengths, and health priorities into transportation planning.

Speakers:

- **Jennifer MacFarlane, MPH**
- **Mike Geboe, MA LAC**
- **Grace Behrens, MPH**
- **Matt Madsen, MPH**

9:55 - 10:55 AM

Title: Shared History: Local Historic Preservation Planning in Idaho and Montana

Room 4 - Library | CM TBD

Both our states are part of the national historic preservation program, administered by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS runs the National Register of Historic Places and a system of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), and Idaho/Montana SHPOs administer the Certified Local Governments (CLG) program. Planners who guide the CLGs will give short presentations and discuss common challenges of working with Federal/State programs and preserving historic sites in the "wild west."

Speakers:

- **Sheri Freemuth, AICP**
- **Caitlin Long, AICP**

11:10 AM - 12:10 PM

Title: You Next: Practicing Youth Engagement and Youth Leadership in Planning Youth Futures

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

As planners, we are tasked to always look to the future and keep the next generations in mind as we plan. We can also not just look to, but listen to the future, by engaging youth, and creating space for them to influence and lead planning processes. This session examines two projects – Boise's Youth Roadmap and Idaho Youth Homelessness Assessment – specifically focused on youth, and the different approaches and methods they employed to live by the ideal of "nothing about us without us."

Speakers:

- **Ellen Campfield Nelson, AICP**
- **Garrett Lamm**

11:10 AM - 12:10 PM

Title: From the Ski Towns to Rural Outposts: Trends, Typologies, and Emerging Needs in Gateway Communities

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Rural communities are often grouped together, despite major differences between them. This interactive session explores gateway and recreation communities across the Mountain West, sharing new data on how they have changed over the last decade and introducing a practical rural community typology. Participants will classify real communities, discuss planning challenges, and explore strategies to better support rural places.

Speakers:

- **Lindsey Romaniello**

11:10 AM - 12:10 PM

Title: Navigating Data Center Development

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Learn how Idaho planners from Kuna and Pocatello and Montana planners from Missoula and XX have navigated data center proposals. This session will highlight tools for planners including zoning codes, mitigating impacts, and public outreach to encourage a proactive approach to data center development.

Speakers:

- **Dr. Kris Smith**
- **Jennifer Flynn**
- **Marina Lundy**
- **Patrick Swart**
- **Svein Newman**

11:10 AM - 12:10 PM

Title: Turning a requirement into a resource: a workshop on building intentional public participation plans

Room 4 - Library | CM TBD

In this workshop, we'll stop asking how you can lead more engagement – and start asking how can your engagement be more effective? We'll do that by providing tools, examples, and thought partnership for you to develop aligned public participation goals, methods, and evaluation standards.

Speakers:

12:10 - 1:30

Chapter Business Meetings

1:30 - 2:45 PM

Title: Micromobility & Mobility Hubs

Developing Nampa Mobility Hubs & Scaling Micromobility

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Session information coming soon.

1:30 - 2:45 PM

Title: Montana CTAP and State-level Assistance in Planning

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Session information coming soon.

Speakers:

- **Dani Arps, AICP Candidate**

1:30 - 2:45 PM

Title: Negotiating Community Benefits: A Hands-on Workshop

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) are increasingly being used to align major development projects with local priorities. As communities evaluate proposals for data centers, energy infrastructure, and other large-scale developments, planners play a critical role at the intersection of land use, public engagement, and long-term community outcomes. This interactive workshop introduces participants to the fundamentals of CBAs. Following a brief overview of CBA principles and emerging applications in the United States, participants will work through a realistic development scenario using a facilitated negotiation exercise that explores stakeholder priorities, competing interests, and opportunities for consensus. The session will conclude with a discussion of practical considerations for planners, including public engagement, implementation challenges, and strategies for supporting transparent, community-centered decision-making. Participants will leave with a foundational understanding of Community Benefit Agreements, hands-on experience navigating a negotiation scenario, and practical tools for evaluating how CBAs can support more effective planning processes.

Speakers:

- **Dr. Kris Smith**
- **Jackson Rose**

1:30 - 2:45 PM

Title: The Housing "Love Triangle" of Supply, Demand, and Legislation for Middle and Little Communities

Room 4 - Library | CM TBD

Recent legislation from Helena, Boise and Washington are shaking up housing on both sides of the divide. Little and middle cities often face unique challenges in the new housing "love triangle" - supply and demand, and legislation. Limited resources, different paradigms - what to do? Hear from little and middle community planners and housing professionals on lessons learned, hopeful outcomes, and not getting your heart broken.

Speakers:

- **Don Matson, AICP**

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Title: The Planners' Eras Tour: Navigating Chaos, Growth, and Career Development

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Session information coming soon.

Speakers:

- **Allison Mouch, AICP**
- **Staron Faucher, AICP**
- **Ben Hitchings, FAICP, CZO**
- **Aaron Wilson, AICP**

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Title: Building Above, Monitoring Below: Groundwater and Growth in Montana

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

As Montana continues to experience population growth and land development, protecting groundwater resources has become increasingly important for ensuring long-term water security. This session explores the role of groundwater monitoring plans in evaluating the potential impacts of subdivision development on aquifers, wells, and connected water resources.

Speakers:

- **Rob Livesay**

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Title: From Plans to Action: Implementing Downtown Improvements in Small communities

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

How do small communities turn downtown plans into real projects? This session features two complementary case studies that highlight practical, community-driven approaches to implementing downtown improvements. Speakers will share lessons learned from Bellevue, Idaho's temporary pop-up plaza demonstration and Sandpoint, Idaho's transition from a free parking system to a managed parking program. Together, these projects illustrate how pilot projects, public engagement, data, and phased implementation can help communities build support, test ideas, and move from planning to action. Attendees will gain practical insights and transferable strategies for advancing downtown revitalization in communities of all sizes.

Speakers:

- **Jason Welker**
- **Brian Parker, AICP**
- **Aaron Mondada**
- **Ellen Campfield Nelson, AICP**

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Title: Building Safer Communities Through Floodplain Management and Mitigation- Dillon Case Study

Room 4 - Library | CM TBD

Flooding is a shared risk that continues to impact communities throughout the country. Dillon is one such community that has historically struggled with flooding. In 2009, the City and County identified and completed mitigation projects on Blacktail Deer Creek. The focus on this training is floodplain management and how mitigation, regulations, permitting, and mapping work together to assist communities and property owners. Floodplain Management, like other land use programs, is often hard to quantify, but it is critical for public health, safety, and welfare. When appropriately administered, floodplain management can help guide safe development.

Speakers:

- **Traci Sears**

4:15 - 5:15 PM

Title: Urban Renewal and Fire District Working Group

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

The Victor Urban Renewal Agency and Teton County Fire and Rescue have come together to create a working group to determine the best strategies that can be mutually beneficial without having the fire district opt-out of the city's newest urban renewal district. Learn how education and collaboration can help your city grow together.

Speakers:

- **Troy Butzlaff**

4:15 - 5:15 PM

Title: Across the Divide: How Pressure Sewer Expands Wastewater Options for Mountain West Communities

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Planners across the Mountain West face shared challenges: growth, aging wastewater systems, tough terrain, and fragmented governance. This session uses case studies from MT, WY, and CO to show how pressure sewer supports resilient, cross-jurisdiction planning. A guided discussion lets attendees compare their approaches to real project outcomes and deepen practical decision-making skills.

Speakers:

- **David Benson**

4:15 - 5:15 PM

Title: From Safe System to Safer Streets: Practical Approaches to Transportation Safety

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

The Safe System Approach is reshaping how communities improve transportation safety, but what does it look like in practice? This session combines an overview of Safe System principles with a hands-on look at right-sized Road Safety Audits (RSAs) that fit the corridor, community, budget, and decision at hand. Participants will learn how agencies can apply proven safety strategies, adapt RSAs for projects of varying scales, and develop practical, implementable recommendations for rural highways, main streets, and growing communities.

Speakers:

- **Katie Carlos**
- **Nick Foster, AICP**

4:15 - 5:15 PM

Title: Understanding Short-Term Rentals in the Rural West: Trends, Impacts and Strategies

Room 4 - Library | CM TBD

Short-term rentals have become a major planning issue across the rural West. This session explores data on STR trends, housing impacts, and community change, while examining regulatory approaches used across the Intermountain West. Through interactive discussion, participants will evaluate how these strategies may or may not fit Montana and Idaho's unique local, political, and economic contexts and lets collaborate on potential policy solutions for western communities.

Speakers:

- **Lindsey Romaniello**

5:30 - 6:30 PM

Vendors & Sponsor Happy Hour

Beier Auditorium on Campus

7:00 - 9:00 PM

Evening Event Awards

Lewis and Clark Room on Campus

8:30 - 9:30 AM

Title: Keynote: A Planners Playbook for Managing the Future: Six Steps for Building Community Readiness and Resilience

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

In a rapidly-changing world, local governments need new tools to prepare their communities for the future. And they need planners to help lead the way. This keynote will present six steps that planners can use to build the readiness and resilience of their communities. The heart of this approach is to draft and implement a new kind of document called a Community Readiness Plan. This is a future-focused, action-oriented strategic plan designed to help communities prioritize key emerging issues and select implementation measures to systematically address them. In this way, local governments can improve their ability to manage disruption in the years ahead. Come learn how to apply this exciting new approach in your community as we work to plan for a shared future!

Speakers:

- **Ben Hitchings, FAICP, CZO**

9:40 - 10:40 AM

Title: From Application to Energization and Beyond: Collaborative and Effective Approaches to Reviewing Large Electrical Infrastructure Projects

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

Elmore County, Idaho's geography and natural resources have made it a hub for energy development. This session explores how the County evaluates solar, wind, natural gas, and related infrastructure proposals while balancing growth, public safety, and long-term planning. Panelists will discuss permitting, funding public services during construction, project lifecycle planning from development through decommissioning, and utility perspectives on energy development.

Speakers:

- **Daniel Pauly**

9:40 - 10:40 AM

Title: Pro-Housing: Recent Montana and Idaho Legislation Housing Impacts

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

Panel presentation, discussion, and Q&A on: (1) Montana's recent changes to land use planning and new statewide financing tools (Go Montana Fund, downpayment assistance programs), and (2) Idaho's new statewide housing legislation passed during the 2026 session. The panel will also share examples of how this legislation is being applied in Montana and Idaho communities, including new zoning reforms, tracking tools, and funding mechanisms.

Speakers:

- **Ellen Campfield Nelson, AICP**

9:40 - 10:40 AM

Title: How to Prepare a Community Readiness Plan to Manage the Future: An Interactive Workshop with Ben Hitchings and Kelly Pohl

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

In a rapidly-changing world, local governments need new tools to prepare their communities for the future. This hands-on workshop will demonstrate how to prepare a Community Readiness Plan -- a new kind of document developed to respond to this challenge. This is a future-focused, action-oriented strategic plan designed to help communities prioritize key emerging issues and select implementation measures to systematically address them.

Session participants will learn how to scan emerging issues to select priorities for their community and then divide into break-out groups to prepare customized action plans. In so doing, they can increase the readiness and resilience of their communities to manage the future. Presenters will use instant polling to engage session participants and crowdsource priority emerging issues for discussion and action planning. Come join us to learn more about this exciting new approach and how to apply it in your community!

Speakers:

- **Ben Hitchings, FAICP, CZO**
- **Kelly Pohl**

9:30 - 10:30 AM

Mobile Tour: Beaverhead Trails Coalition Hike

Meet at Trailhead | 45 minute hike

10:50 - 11:50 AM

Title: Connecting Land Use Plans for Resilient Communities

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

How can communities move beyond stand-alone plans and toward coordinated action? This session will explore how Community Wildfire Protection Plans, comprehensive plans, hazard mitigation plans, and other local planning tools can be aligned to support safer, more resilient, and more consistent land use decisions. Participants will leave with a practical framework for connecting plans and maps, identifying implementation opportunities, and building partnerships across jurisdictions and disciplines.

Speakers:

- **Courtney Long**

10:50 - 11:50 AM

Title: Montana Land Use Law Update

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

This session will offer an overview of foundational case law and then focus on recent federal and state court decisions relevant to land use in Montana. Attendees will learn the facts of each case, the law applied, and the decision reached by the court. The cases will be described in the context of their application to local government and planning, and the presenter may engage attendees in discussions of how the decisions could affect such work. The presenter will also briefly summarize some cases that may land before the Supreme Court of the United States in the upcoming term.

Speakers:

- **Mitch WerBell**

10:50 - 11:50 AM

Title: Idaho Land Use Law

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Session information coming soon.

Speakers:

12:30 - 2:00 PM

City & County Roundtables

1:30 - 3:00 PM

Mobile Tour: Bannock Ghost Town

Details coming soon.

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Title: More Than a House: Planning for Equity in Places Shaped by Extraction, Industry, and Legacy Landscapes

Room 1 - Beier Auditorium | CM TBD

A house is more than a structure. It is often the foundation of stability, opportunity, and generational wealth. Using Butte, Montana as a case study, this session explores how historic mining claims continue to shape housing, redevelopment, and equity today. Attendees will gain insight into complex ownership conditions, learn to recognize when technical land issues become equity issues, and leave with a new perspective on how historic ownership patterns continue to influence opportunity.

Speakers:

- **Megan Terry**
- **Julia Crain**

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Title: The State Made Me Do It: Planning in the Era of Preemption

Room 2 - Lewis & Clark Room | CM TBD

As states across the Mountain West take a more active role in local land use, communities face new pressures around zoning, housing supply, and development approvals. This session examines state preemption trends through case studies from Montana, Utah, and California, offering practical strategies for modernizing local zoning and housing policy before state mandates require action — while preserving local character and community priorities.

Speakers:

- **Cody Ferguson**

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Title: Building Energy Economies in Rural Communities

Room 3 - STC Room | CM TBD

Whitehall, Montana, is the location of the world's first proposed hydrogen-powered business park, with hydrogen produced as a byproduct of next-generation wind turbine technology. This clean-energy model offers greater versatility than traditional wind-energy systems, is more cost-effective overall, and provides abundant energy for manufacturing and other high-energy users. Learn how a rural community is planning economic growth and community resiliency around small-scale, clean-energy systems.

Speakers:

- **Tim Blake**

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