

# Our Missoula Unified Development Code: Zoning District Mapping

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## Overview/Summary:

This memo documents the methodology, assumptions, and criteria used to establish the new zoning districts as part of Missoula’s Code Reform effort. The process integrates policy objectives, adopted land use guidance, amenity-based analysis, street typologies, and existing conditions to create a streamlined and equitable zoning map.

## Policy Guidance from Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan:

Through the engagement and planning process of the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan multiple policy objectives relate to how the City should be mapping new zoning districts. These are listed below

- Update zoning districts to better match land use context and identified Place Types. *(Implementation Action Item A7)*
- Ensure that zoning increases housing opportunities near multi-modal transportation infrastructure. *(Policy Objective #1 in Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan)*
- Do not limit higher density to neighborhoods vulnerable to gentrification. *(Implementation Action Item A23)*

- Establish transitions between higher intensity development in commercial zones and adjacent residential neighborhoods. *(Implementation Action Item A61)*
- Where possible, collapse overlays into equivalent base zones or develop unique base zones to capture the intent. *(Implementation Action Item A9)*
- Zone for higher density housing near transit stations, places of employment, higher education facilities and other appropriate population centers. *(Implementation Action Item A18)*
- Incorporate recommendations related to Street Types into the UDC and map. *(Implementation Action Item A50)*

Along with these policy statements, City Council also adopted guiding principles for the City’s Code Reform effort. The 9<sup>th</sup> principle directly relates to the Zoning map and states, “Map zoning districts to support equity; sustainability and resilience; a vibrant public realm; and a walkable and healthy community”.

## Chapter 1: Amenity Mapping

Amenity and proximity to services mapping is not new to the City of Missoula. The City has been measuring proximity to services and amenities in the [Our Missoula Development Guide](#)(OMDG) since 2018. In these documents proximity to infrastructure and services is called Residential Suitability. This model uses walking distance (1/4 mile) to public schools, developed parks, commuter trails, transit lines, commercial zoning, and grocery stores and 500ft buffers from existing sewer and water lines. The OMDG was used as a measurement tool to look at trends in residential development and determine how the City is performing against the previously repealed Our Missoula 2035 Growth Policy.

The current Title 20 Zoning Map which was adopted and amended over the years has never been in full compliance with the repealed Future Land Use Map adopted as part of the 2035 Growth Policy. Because of this, implementation of the community’s vision of growth has never come to full fruition. Under the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MCA 76.25) a jurisdiction’s zoning map must be in substantial compliance with the community’s vision for growth, known as the Place Type and Street Type maps in the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan. Following State Law and the community’s vision for growth in the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan the City determined that the Zoning Map established in Title 20 needed a broad overhaul.

In order to establish a new zoning district map in the most unbiased way possible staff looked to guidance from the Land Use Plan and Guiding Principles of Code Reform, listed in in the above section, as well as methodology derived from the Our Missoula Development Guide.

The first step in this model is the collection of geospatial data relating to the amenities/services that the Land Use Plan guides staff to use. To do this we used the following layers and sources:

- Mountain Line Transit Routes (Source: Mountain Line)
  - [Missoula Maps Web Service](#)
- Developed Parks
  - [PDF Version of Parks](#)
- Commuter Trails (Source: Missoula Maps)
  - [Missoula Maps Web Service](#)
- Public Schools (Source: Montana Cadastral paired with Federal Databases)
  - [National Center for Education Statistics Public School Locations](#)
- Local Food Options (Source: Garden City Harvest and Abundant Montana)
  - [Community Garden Locations](#)
  - [Abundant Montana Map](#)
- Grocery Stores that accept WIC (Source: Montana Cadastral paired with DPHHS)
  - [Map Locations based on DPHHS](#)

Straight line buffers are created on these datasets using GIS software. Walking distance in planning is typically measured by a 15-minute walk time, which corresponds to approximately ¼ mile distance of buffers that are created. The buffers then need to be ‘cleaned’ or cut off at impenetrable areas using ground-truthing. For instance, the Kim Williams trail’s ¼ mile buffer extends across the Clark Fork River. But there are only 4 bridges that cross the Clark Fork. Another instance of this is the CS Porter Middle School, the ¼ mile buffer extends across Reserve St however, for parents to let their kids walk across Reserve St is deemed too risky by most.

Once the buffers are created for existing services and amenities this methodology uses a point system to rank areas. Frequent Transit (15-minute turn-around times) are weighted higher, since with this type of transit service a rider can get to Downtown in a very short amount of time. All other amenities listed above including 30 minute and 1 hour transit are treated similarly. Once the individual buffers are combined into a layer by using the [Unioning](#) tool, the points are tallied to determine where the highest level of services exist within city limits.

Other considerations to amenity/service mapping are planned infrastructure within the timeline of the Land Use Plan. Staff utilized the proposed route for the Bus Rapid Transit, which goes from the Central Transfer station along Stephens and then along the Brooks Corridor and back. Staff also used the Street Typologies, more specifically Regional Mixed-Use, Regional Connector, Community Mixed-Use, and Neighborhood Mixed-Use street

types adopted in the Land Use Plan. These street types are designated and designed to provide multi-modal infrastructure for local residents and the wider community to access services and amenities ranging from small-scale neighborhood commercial services to intensive community-wide commercial centers.

## Chapter 2: Constraint Mapping

Constraint mapping delves into environmental and built environment constraints that necessitate a closer evaluation of zoning district mapping and potentially lower the intensity of the zoning district. The constraints evaluated in the zoning district mapping are listed below with sources:

- Floodway/Floodplain (Source: Clark Fork & Bitterroot Rivers from new DNRC mapping; Rattlesnake Creek, Grant Creek, and Pattee Creek from FEMA floodplain mapping)
- Street Connectivity (Source: Street pattern analysis from Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan)
- Street Width (Source: Missoula Maps and City of Missoula Fire Department)
- Neighborhood Gentrification Typologies (Source: Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan Appendix B: Our Missoula Equity in Land Use Report)
- Avalanche Prone Slopes (Source: Slope Maps and [2014 Mt Jumbo Avalanche Report](#))

## Chapter 3: Residential Districts

The Residential Place Types in the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan form the foundation of mapping the residential zoning districts throughout the City Limits. The following are Place Types and the proposed comparable zoning districts that are allowed in each:

- Urban Residential High
  - U-R4
  - U-R3
  - U-R2
- Urban Residential Low
  - U-R2
  - U-R1
- Limited Urban Residential
  - LU-R2
  - LU-R1

- Rural Residential
  - R-R1

To start the process of applying zoning districts each parcel in the city is *assigned* to their respective Place Type. Then each parcel is assigned the proximity to amenity/services score using the buffers described in the Amenity Mapping section of this memo. After the data is inside of each parcel the following steps are applied:

If parcels are Urban Residential High:

1. Assign all parcels to U-R3 zoning district.
2. If parcel is within walking distance to High Frequency Transit and 2 or more amenities assign to U-R4.
3. If parcel is along a Community Mixed-Use, Regional Mixed-Use, or Neighborhood Mixed-Use assign the adjacent block to U-R4.
4. If parcel is within floodplain, has built constraints such as a low connectivity block pattern, small street width, or within a zone identified by the Equity in Land Use Report ‘step-down’ the zoning district at least one intensity level.

If parcels are Urban Residential Low:

1. Assign all parcels to U-R1 zoning district.
2. If parcel is along a street designated as Regional Connector, Community Residential, Neighborhood Mixed-Use or Regional Mixed-Use assign to U-R2.

If parcels are Limited Urban Residential:

1. Assign all parcels to LU-R1 zoning district.
2. If parcel has current zoning that is within the Title 20 RM district assign to LU-R2 zoning district.
3. If parcel is within walking distance at least 3 amenities (including any transit regardless of timing) assign to LU-R2 zoning district.

If parcels are Rural Residential:

1. Assign all parcels to R-R1 zoning district.

The final step in mapping zoning districts throughout the city was to “smooth out” the edges of the districts. To improve neighborhood compatibility and provide greater predictability for residents, staff aimed to align zoning boundaries with full city blocks whenever possible. This step required a manual, block-by-block review in which staff examined the edges of each zoning district to determine which district should apply to the entire block.

As a general rule, if more than half of a block was assigned to a particular zoning district, that district was extended to cover the full block. An exception was made when applying that district across the entire block would conflict with the character or zoning pattern of surrounding blocks.

Because this step required staff to hand-draw zoning boundaries rather than rely solely on parcel-level data and attributes, it was the most involved stage of the Place Type-to-zoning mapping process. This step in the process required decisions to be based on intuition, experience, and judgement by the Project Team and planning staff.

## Chapter 4: Mixed Use Districts

Mixed Use Place Types in the Land Use Plan also typically have a 1:2 Place Type to Zoning district relationship. The only caveat to this is the Urban Mixed-Use Low and Limited Urban Mixed-Use Place Types. These relationships are highlighted below:

- Downtown
  - D-C
  - D-T
- Urban Mixed-Use High
  - U-MU4
  - U-MU3
  - T-MU
- Urban Mixed-Use Low
  - U-MU2
  - U-MU1
  - T-MU
- Limited Urban Mixed-Use
  - LU-MU

Following guidance received during community engagement during the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan project staff did not use proximity to amenities when mapping the highest intensity Zoning districts in the Mixed-Use Place Types. Rather, it was determined that using the Design Excellence Overlays as a proxy for determining where areas are suitable for higher intensity zoning districts should be. These areas have previously been studied during that planning project and determined to be suitable based on their corridor status and proximity to services/amenities. The following steps were applied to the Mixed-Use Place Types:

If parcels are assigned the Downtown Place Type:

1. Assign all parcels to the D-T zoning district.

2. If parcels are inside Design Excellence Sub-districts labeled Inner Core, Outer Core, and Hip Strip assign parcels to the D-C zoning district.

If parcels are assigned the Urban Mixed-Use High Place Type:

1. Assign all parcels to the U-MU3 zoning district.
2. If parcels are inside Design Excellence Corridors labeled Typology 1, Typology 2, or any Design Excellence ‘Node’, assign parcels to the U-MU4 zoning district.
3. If parcels’ block pattern is identified as Cul-de-Sac, Curvilinear, or Rural-Super Block assign to T-MU zoning district.

If parcels are assigned the Urban Mixed-Use Low Place Type:

1. Assign all parcels to the U-MU1 zoning district.
2. If parcels are inside Design Excellence Corridors labeled Typology 2, Sub-district Downtown North, or Downtown – Gateway, assign parcels to U-MU2 zoning district.
3. If parcels’ block pattern is identified as Cul-de-Sac, Curvilinear, or Rural-Super Block assign to T-MU zoning district.

If parcels are assigned the Limited Urban Mixed-Use Place Type:

1. Assign all parcels to the LU-MU zoning district.

Much like the residential zoning districts, the final step in mapping the mixed-use districts is to ‘smooth-out’ the boundaries of the districts. See above Residential Districts section to see staff methodology on finalizing mixed-use district mapping.

## Chapter 5: Special Use Districts

The various Special Use zoning districts do not share a typical zoning methodology between the different Place Types. However, there still is the relationship of comparable zoning districts in each Place Type. This section will outline the ways that the zoning districts are determined within each of the Special Use Place Types. The relationships between Place Types and zoning districts are listed below:

- Industrial and Employment
  - I-1
  - I-2
- Civic
  - A
  - CD-1
  - CD-2
- Open and Resource Lands

- OP-2
- Parks and Conservation Lands
  - OP-1

Depending on the Place Type designation different methodologies were undertaken to assign the comparable zoning district. These methods are listed below each Place Type below:

If parcels are assigned Industrial and Employment Place Type:

1. Assign all parcels to the I-1 zoning district.
2. Staff has determined that there are no places within City limits that necessitate an I-2 zoning district. This zoning district is reserved for future annexation and/or when it becomes necessary for specific heavier industrial uses.

If parcels are assigned Civic Place Type:

1. Assign all lands owned by the Airport Authority to the A zoning district.
2. Assign all other parcels to the CD-1 zoning district.
3. If parcel has current land uses that are supportive of residential development such as higher education facilities or walking distance to multiple amenities, including frequent transit, assign to CD-2 zoning district.
4. Walk through parcels with Historic Preservation office to determine if additional development may occur or is context sensitive to surrounding area.

If parcels are assigned the Open and Resource Lands Place Type:

1. Assign parcels OP-2 zoning district.

If parcels are assigned Parks and Conservation Land's place type:

1. Assign parcels to the OP-1 zoning district.
2. Assign all floodway as OP-1 zoning district, even if it splits the parcel into multiple zoning districts.

OP-1 zoning district special consideration (due to large number of public comments):

1. If PROST planning document designates a park as a Neighborhood Park, Neighborhood Natural Area, or Special Use and the land is owned by the City, assign parcel to OP-1, regardless of Place Type designation.



## Chapter 8: Examples of Zoning District Mapping

This chapter provides some examples of parcels/ blocks within each Place Type and reasoning for why the parcel and/or block was assigned to that zoning district. This section was completed before Planning Board recommendations were taken into consideration so the zoning districts may differ after these decisions.

### Urban Residential High Place Type

#### 1435 Defoe Street: U-R4 zoning district

- Within walking distance to: Frequent Transit Service, Public School, and a Developed Park
- No environmental constraints present

#### 1732 Defoe Street: U-R3 zoning district

- Within walking distance to: Frequent Transit Service
- Equity in Land Use identified western third of the block as an area that is “Affordable and vulnerable to gentrification and displacement.”

#### 1428 Harrison Street: U-R2 zoning district

- Within walking distance to a Developed Park and a Commuter Trail
- Parcel is below steep slope that has the potential to cause residents harm due to avalanche risks.

### Urban Residential Low Place Type

#### 631 Pattee Creek Drive: U-R2 zoning district

- Parcel is located along a Community Residential Street Type.
- No environmental constraints present.

#### 533 Pattee Creek Drive: U-R1 zoning district

- Parcel is located along a Neighborhood Greenway Street Type.
- No environmental constraints present.

### Limited Urban Residential Place Type

#### 2706 Gilbert Avenue: LU-R2 zoning district

- Within walking distance to a Public School, Local Food Option, and Developed Park.
- No environmental constraints present.

2606 Gilbert Avenue: LU-R1 zoning district

- Within walking distance to a Public School and a Developed Park.
- No environmental constraints present.