

Town of
Ennis
Montana



Growth Policy 2025

Adopted:
December 11, 2025

TOWN OF ENNIS

Growth Policy

December 2025

Prepared for:
Town Planning Board



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Executive Summary

Section 1. Executive Summary

Located in the Madison Valley, the small town of Ennis is a rural-western community situated along the Madison River. Flanked by the Madison and Gravelly Mountain Ranges, the Valley is home to a world-famous Blue-Ribbon trout stream as well as ranches and farms along both banks up and downstream from Town. Serving as the hub for agricultural/ranching and outdoor recreational activities, Ennis has a close-knit resident population with strong ties to both communities, who are committed to keeping its small town rural-western identity and preserving the surrounding natural and agricultural resources. As a tourist town, the large influx of summer visitors and seasonal residents is a key driver of the Town's economy. Preservation of the area's abundant natural and agricultural resources and maintenance of the character of a small town with a rural-western identity are essential to the well-being of the local community. As future growth occurs, it needs to be managed to ensure economic viability alongside qualities that keep and attract residents. Goals would be to: 1) Build upon the strengths and core identity of the community by balancing growth with the preservation of Ennis' unique resources and character, and 2) aim to enhance quality of life while fostering economic vitality and ensure sustainable development for generations to come.

Ennis residents take pride in their community, but like many other Montana communities the town faces a shortage of workforce housing, needed infrastructure improvements, and addressing impacts caused by significant changes in the national economy. Like any community, people come and go, but everyone who visits or lives in the community recognizes the unique value and character of Ennis. The goals expressed in this plan are intended to strengthen and support these shared values as residents of the Town look to the future.

This updated Plan is meant to help the Town Commission, Planning Board, residents, and potential new residents or prospective investors make decisions regarding the economy, infrastructure, local services, and land use. The update should help these stakeholders achieve specific goals instead of reacting to individual events and applying short-term fixes year after year. Issues of concern to the Town range from providing local services and improving infrastructure, particularly the water and wastewater systems, to deciding what amendments to land use regulations are appropriate for Ennis.

This document contains eleven sections that provide the rationale for understanding and achieving the goals listed in this document. These sections include:

1. **Executive Summary:** A brief description of the Town and its geographical location and economy.
2. **Community Vision:** Resident's shared understanding of what a community wants to be in the future, encompassing its goals, values, and aspirations.
3. **Introduction:** A description of the Town, its location, features, and history.
4. **Population:** A brief description of the Town population and demographics.
5. **Economy:** A description of the Town's current economic situation, including the Town's revenues and expenditures, and a vision for addressing issues and capitalizing on economic opportunities and challenges.

6. **Local Services and Public Facilities:** A description of the Town’s infrastructure and services, including those that the Town is responsible for operating and maintaining.
7. **Housing:** A description of the housing issues facing the community.
8. **Land Use and Natural Resources:** A description of land use and natural resources in and around the Town. This includes potential future growth, the impacts of flooding and wildland fire, protection of riparian and agricultural resources and the update of land use regulations such as the Town’s zoning and subdivision regulations.
9. **Resident Outreach:** This section describes the process used to gather input and guidance from Town residents on issues of importance to them.
10. **Growth Policy Review and Coordination:** This section provides the review timing of every 5 years, and how the Town should coordinate with Madison County on implementation of the document.
11. **Goals, Objectives, and Actions:** Taking advantage of opportunities and overcoming challenges does not happen by chance. Town residents must be willing to set practical and achievable goals to make things happen.



Community Vision

Section 2. Community Vision

The Town of Ennis seeks sustainable growth that preserves the area's abundant natural and agricultural resources and maintains the small town, rural-western identity, which is essential to a healthy local economy and well-being of the community.

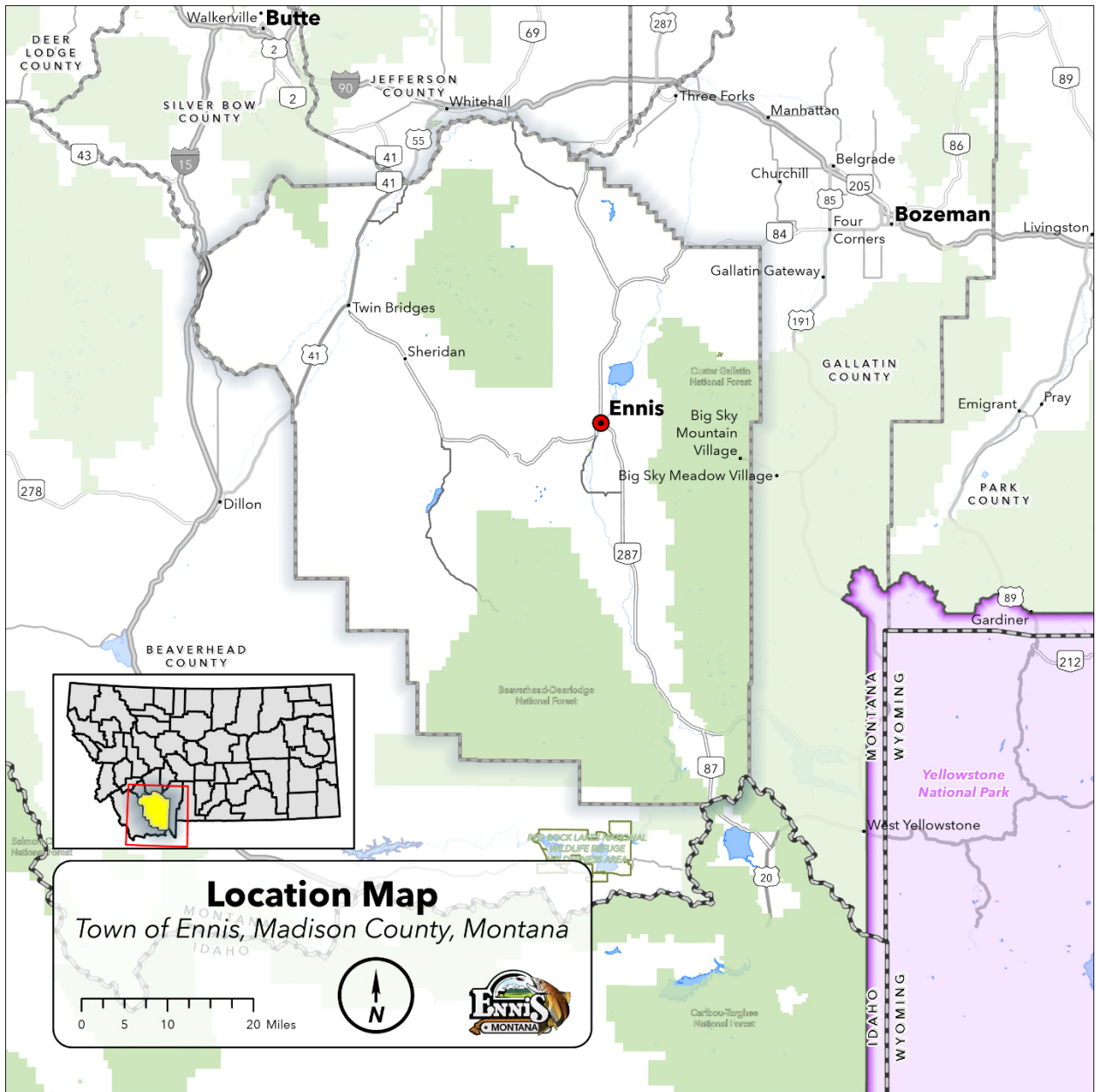


Introduction

Section 3. Introduction

Location

The Town of Ennis is located in southwestern Montana approximately 60 miles southwest of Bozeman and 70 miles northwest of West Yellowstone. Ennis lies on the eastern side of Madison County at the northern end of the Madison River Valley. It is a vibrant community of approximately 1,047 residents and features year-round outdoor recreation and an authentic, western atmosphere.



Map 1 – Location Map, Montana State Library

History

The following is an excerpt from the Town website: “Prior to the arrival of white men, Shoshone, Flathead and Bannock Indians hunted the Madison Valley. Due to fierce winters, they were unable to make permanent homes in the area but came back each spring to enjoy the lushness and generosity of the land.

Lewis and Clark crossed Madison Valley in 1805, but it would be several more years before settlers discovered the area. Gold was discovered in Alder Gulch in 1863 bringing on The Rush. Madison County was created in 1864 in the area that was then Idaho Territory. The area was designated Montana Territory that same year.

Two months after gold was discovered in Alder Gulch, William Ennis homesteaded the site along the Madison River which quickly became the Town of Ennis. Mr. Jeffers did likewise across the river. The two towns, their bridges, the tall grass, and favorable climate soon attracted ranchers, farmers, and businessmen. Three major stage lines freighted through Ennis by the late 1880’s. Livestock thrived, wild game was plentiful and White Cloud’s tribe of Bannock Indians were valued friends of the settlers. The town of Ennis was incorporated in 1956.”

Climate

Ennis’ climate is considered continental with cold and dry winters, cool and moist springs and falls, and hot and dry summers. The average daily high and low temperatures for Ennis from 1918 to 2016 are displayed below.

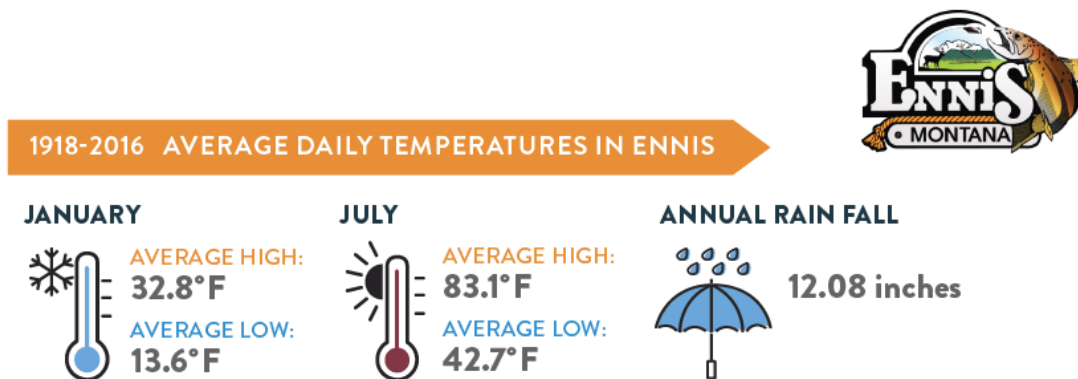
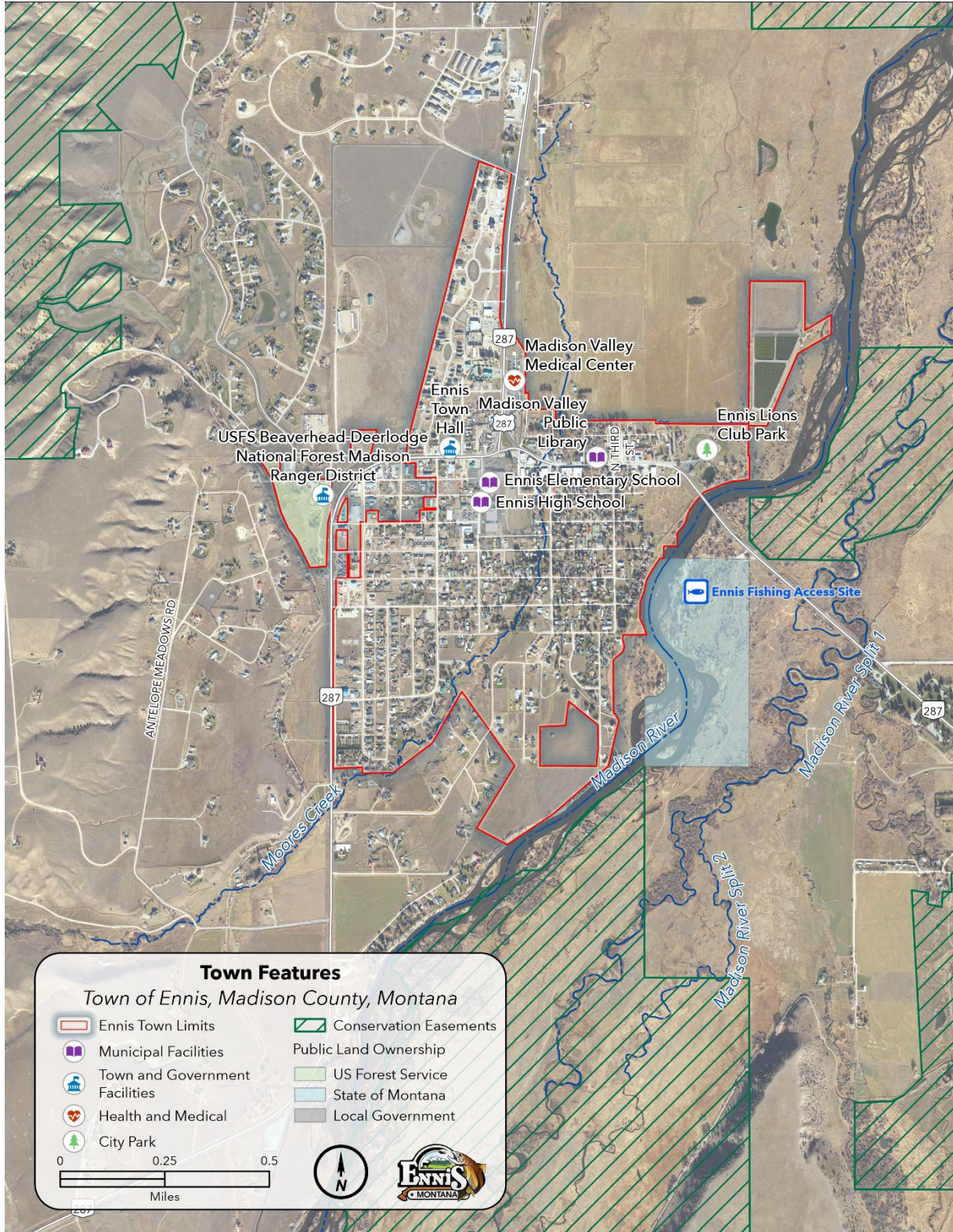


Figure 1- Average Daily Temperatures in Ennis

Western Regional Climate Center, 2024

Like most of Montana, the Town of Ennis' climate can be extreme but is generally mild and dry. Between 1918 and 2016, the average annual precipitation in the Town was 12.08 inches, with most of the precipitation falling between May and September and May and June being the wettest months of the year.



Map 2- Major Features of the Town, Montana State Library



Population-Demographics



Section 4. Population-Demographics

Since 2010, the Town has experienced a gradual increase in population. In 2010, the Town population was estimated at 836 people, and by 2023, it was estimated to have increased by almost 25 percent to 1,047 people.

In 2010, the median age in the Town was estimated at 42.8 years. By 2023, the median age was estimated at 52.6 years of age. This was an increase of almost 23 percent. The estimated median age for the entire state of Montana in 2023 was 40.6 years. According to American Community Survey data in 2023, almost 25 percent of the Town's population was 65 years of age or older. An aging population will likely require additional senior services and facilities in the near future.

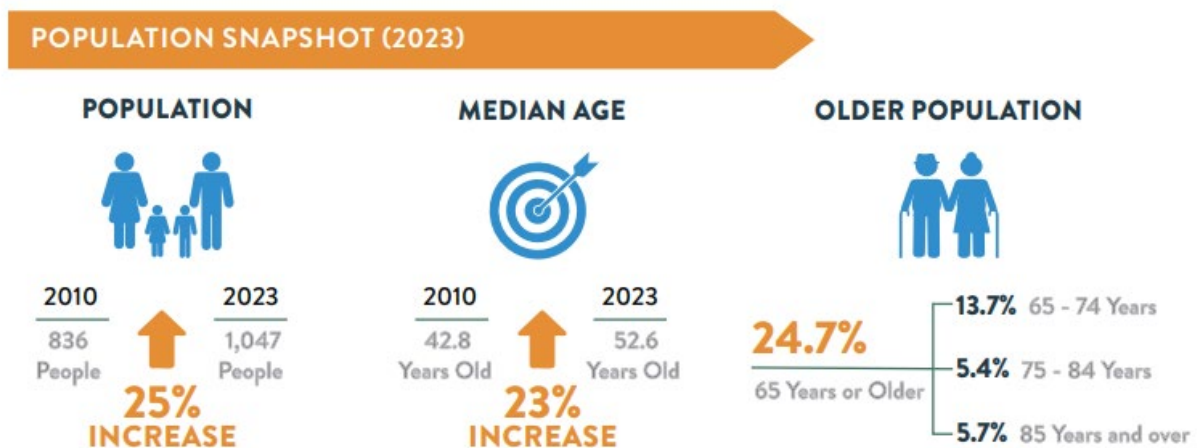


Figure 2 – Population snapshot of Ennis
American Community Survey (ACS)

There are several factors that may be leading to an aging population in Ennis. Some of these include:

- People of retirement age are finding the community an attractive place to live due to the quality of life, recreational amenities, and a rural, quieter lifestyle; and
- Younger people are finding it economically difficult to stay due to the lack of higher paying jobs and affordable workforce housing.

Like many other Montana communities, the Town needs to monitor the aging population and the continued decrease in the number of younger residents. This trend could affect the Town's ability to provide or facilitate services such as senior services, healthcare, housing, a stable workforce, and a healthy economy.



Economy

Section 5. Economy

Estimates from the Census Bureau’s Center for Economic Studies Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program show that from 2010 to 2022, the number of jobs in Ennis decreased from an estimated 455 jobs to 427. According to this data, the Town exhibits a fairly diverse economy in terms of job sectors. In 2022, some of the largest job sectors in Ennis by percentage were Educational Services (18.3 percent), Retail Trade (14.5 percent), Information Services (12.4percent) Finance and Insurance (9.8 percent), Construction (8.7 percent), Manufacturing (8.4percent) and Accommodation/Food Service (7.3percent).

It is important to note that while this is the most accurate jobs data easily available to the Town, the Planning Board did not have the highest confidence in its accuracy. Particularly with regards to the very low number of healthcare jobs located within the Town. The Board expressed interest in undertaking a more accurate assessment of socio-economic data for the Town.



Figure 3 – Jobs Snapshot for Ennis
American Community Survey 2023

Main Street is the economic, social, and cultural hub for the community. In order to maintain a strong and resilient Downtown Ennis, as much as possible, it is preferred that future commercial development be centered on or near Main Street, provided it is of appropriate scale, materials, and features to fit in with the desired rural western character. Maintaining compact commercial development centralizes services and reduces the need for sprawl into agricultural areas surrounding the community.

Median Household Income and Per Capita Income

According to five-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2023, the median income in Ennis was \$60,880. Ennis' median income comes in slightly behind the State of Montana, which has a median income of \$69,922, and significantly behind the United States median income of \$78,538. Median income refers to the middle income in a distribution of incomes, meaning half of the population earns more than this amount, and half earns less. Per capita income is the average income earned per person in a specific geographic area (like a town or city) within a given year. The per capita income in Ennis was estimated at \$37,623, which trails the State of Montana by \$2,219.

Personal Income

Personal income is a measure of the various earnings received by working individuals in a community. Personal income is the total amount of money derived from wages, salaries, investment enterprises, and other sources. Personal income data is collected at the county level and can be compared as farmland non-farm categories. Specific data for the Town of Ennis is difficult to obtain through Census data, but Madison County data is readily available and serves as a good proxy for the Town. Please note that this data is only for residents actually living in the County.

From 1970 to 2022, personal income in the entire County increased from over \$121 million to over \$718 million, or a 192 percent change. The 2022 figure was made up of labor earnings (47 percent) and non-labor income (53 percent). Non-labor income includes income dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments (i.e., government retirement and disability insurance benefits, medical payments).

In Montana, personal income saw an increase from \$21.0 Billion in 1970 to \$73.4 Billion in 2022. Labor earnings make up 54 percent of the personal income in Montana followed by 45.3 percent for non-labor income.

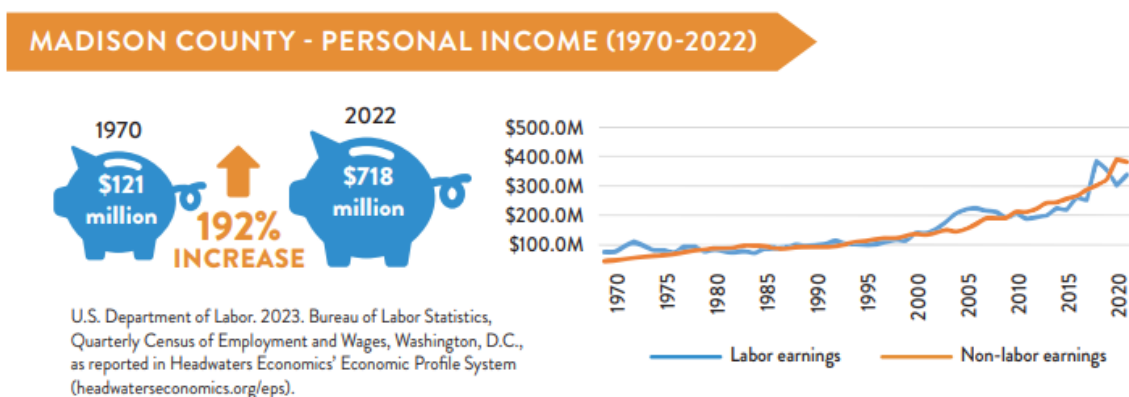


Figure 4- Components of Personal Income, Madison County, Montana 1970-2022

U.S. Department of Labor. 2023. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Property Taxes: Market Value and Taxable Value

Based on figures from the Montana Department of Revenue, the market value of real property in the Town has increased steadily, while the taxable value has remained stable.

In 2014, the total market value of all real property in the Town of Ennis was over \$73 million. By 2024, this figure had increased to over \$309 million, an approximately 323 percent increase. During the same period, taxable values in the Town increased from over \$2.2 million to over \$5.1 million.

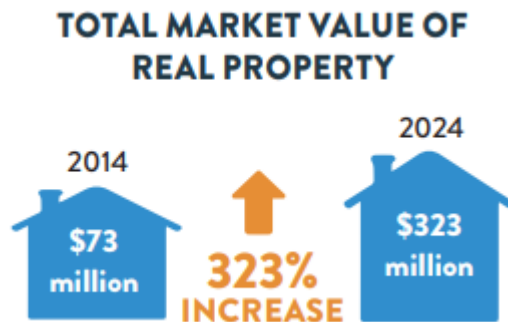


Figure 5 – Total Market Value of Real Property

Montana Department of Revenue 2024

Property taxes are the primary source of funding for the Town. Thus, the property taxes fund streets, water, sewer, police, fire protection and other services provided to residents of Ennis.

Revenues and Expenditures

Providing services and maintaining reliable, affordable infrastructure is a primary function of the Town of Ennis. Services provided by the Town include, but are not limited to, law enforcement and emergency services, street maintenance, and providing drinking water and sewage collection and treatment. Infrastructure that the Town is responsible for maintaining includes apartments, streets, parks, and equipment such as loaders, trucks, and computers. Providing these services, infrastructure and equipment requires the Town to collect enough revenue to cover its costs.

Based upon annual financial reporting data from the Local Government Services Bureau of the State of Montana, and the Town, in 2024 the Town generated over \$1.4 million in governmental revenues. The two largest sources of revenue in that year were from taxes and assessments, which were over \$727,000 and State and Federal intergovernmental payments, which were over \$583,000.

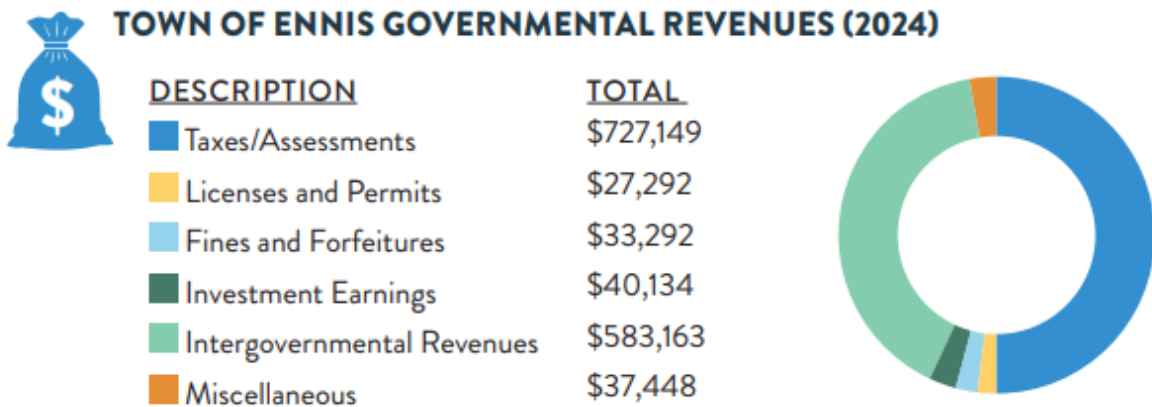


Figure 6– Town of Ennis Governmental Revenues in 2024
 Financial Statements-Town of Ennis, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2024.

Based upon data from the Local Government Services Bureau of the State of Montana, and the Town, in 2024 the Town had expenditures of over \$1.2 million. The Town’s largest expenditure was for general government operations.

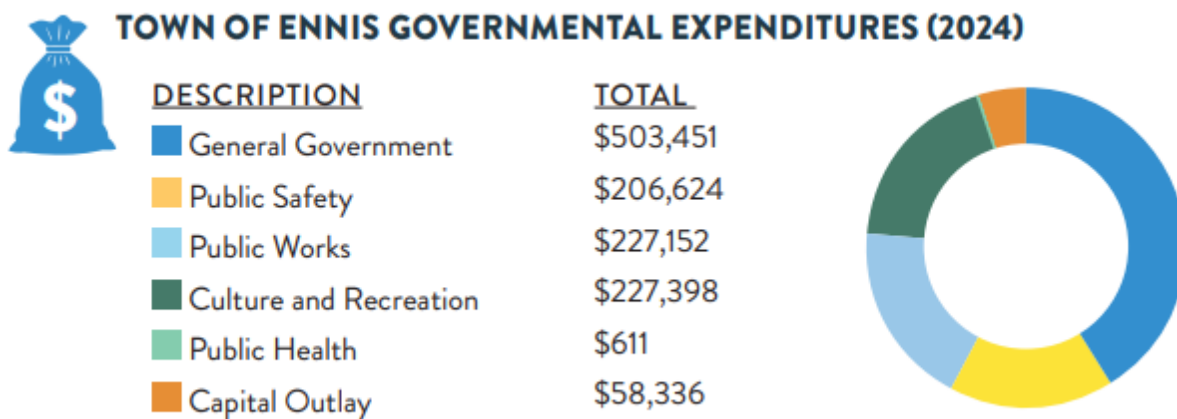


Figure 7 – Town of Ennis Governmental Expenditures in 2024 Financial Statements
 Town of Ennis, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2024.

Strategy for Infrastructure – 76-1-601 MCA

The Growth Policy statute requires that a community have a strategy for the operation and maintenance of its infrastructure. Typically, this requirement is met through a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). A CIP is essentially a prioritized list of investments in public infrastructure, a schedule for completing the projects or purchasing equipment, and options for funding the construction or acquisition. The previous CIP was developed in 2007 and is due for an update. Until the CIP is updated, this Growth Policy will serve as the Town’s strategy for the maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure.

The main focus of an updated CIP should include the identification of projects, evaluation and prioritization of projects, and the development of cost estimates and funding approaches. The

plan should help the Town be positioned to:

- improve its infrastructure through construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance;
- maximize the useful life of capital investments by scheduling major renovation, rehabilitation, or replacement at the appropriate time in the lifecycle of the facility or equipment;
- identify and examine current and future infrastructure needs and establish priorities among projects so that available resources are used to the community's best advantage;
- improve financial planning by balancing needs and resources and identifying funding options; and,
- develop an implementation schedule for prioritized projects.

Management of Town Services and Infrastructure

The management of the services and infrastructure provided by the Town is a critical part of the duties of the Town Commission. A Local Government Study Commission is currently studying the Town's existing form of government and how it delivers local services. The responsibilities of the Commission include:

- Review the Town of Ennis' current form of government.
- Solicit input from Town residents about current needs and interests regarding public services and functions.
- Use the information collected from residents to assess how well the current form of Town government functions and whether an alternative form would function more effectively or efficiently.
- Provide the Ennis community with information and education to help understand the Study Commission's recommendations.
- Write a comprehensive final report documenting findings, conclusions, and any changes to the Town's governance that the Study Commission recommends.

Present the final report to Ennis Town Commission for their vote to approve recommendations to be on ballot for Ennis voters



Local Services and Public Facilities

Section 6. Local Services and Public Facilities

Community Services and Infrastructure

Town Government

Ennis functions under the Commission-Executive form of local government structure, consisting of an elected commission (also referred to as the council), and one elected executive (also referred to as the mayor), who is elected at large. The Council, Mayor, and other Town employees provide services from their offices located in the Ennis Town Hall. Town departments include: 1) Public Works, which handles Streets, Stormwater, Water System, and Wastewater Collection and Treatment Systems; 2) Ennis Police Department/Law Enforcement; 3) City Court; 4) Zoning and Planning, and 5) Madison Valley Public Library.

City Court

The Town has a City Court with an appointed judge and is in session every Monday as needed.

Law enforcement

The Town of Ennis has positions for two law enforcement officers. Ennis has an interlocal agreement with Madison County so that the Madison County Sheriff's Office provides assistance as needed. The Ennis Police Department is a dedicated, community-oriented agency serving the Town of Ennis and surrounding areas. With a focus on public safety, the department provides law enforcement coverage, criminal investigations, traffic enforcement, and emergency response. Officers actively engage with the community through school visits, and public events, fostering strong relationships with residents and local businesses. The department also collaborates with county, state, and federal agencies to ensure effective policing throughout the region.

Ennis-Big Sky Airport

The Ennis-Big Sky Airport is owned by Madison County and located southeast of Ennis off U.S. Hwy 287 on the east side of the Madison Valley. This airport is a public-use General Aviation Airport located six nautical miles southeast of the central business district of Ennis. The airport has two runways, hangars, tie-downs, and fuel for sale at the facility. Its physical address is 37 Airport Road, Ennis, MT 59729. Further information can be found at <https://madisoncountymt.gov/601/Airports>

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Madison Valley Ambulance Service was launched in April 2021 with the mission of improving emergency response times, ensuring advanced life support, and providing high-quality care to both residents and visitors. They cover approximately 1,500 square miles across Madison County, serving a year-round population of roughly 4,500, in addition to a significant number of tourists and travelers.

They currently operate two fully equipped Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances, staffed 24/7 by a team of 12 full-time EMS professionals. Our team includes EMTs (many with advanced endorsements), AEMTs, two paramedics, and one critical care paramedic. Our staff not only respond to 911 emergencies, interfacility transfers, and Search and Rescue operations, but also support fire and law enforcement agencies and assist in the hospital ER during their shifts. Since its inception, EMS call volume has steadily increased, reflecting both growing community awareness and a clear upward trend in population:

- 2021 (Apr-Dec): 275 calls
- 2022: 396 calls
- 2023: 463 calls
- 2024: 530 calls
- 2025 (YTD): 26% increase over 2024 year-to-date

At this pace, they project a sustained 6% to 7% annual increase in call volume, potentially reaching over 1000 EMS calls per year by 2035. To meet this anticipated demand and align with the town's growth policy, they are planning the following considerations for future resource allocation:

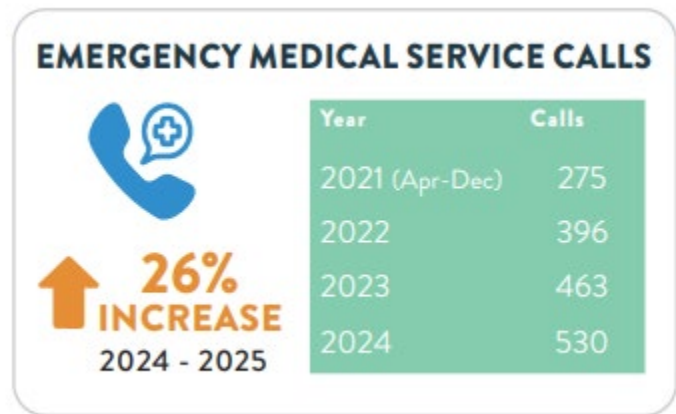


Figure 8 – Emergency Medical Service Calls, 2024-2025

- Vehicle Replacement Plan: Develop a schedule to replace ambulances every 4-5 years due to the high mileage (approx. 25,000 miles/year/vehicle).
- Expanded EMS Facility: Construct a new garage capable of housing four ambulances with attached crew quarters for up to six personnel to ensure coverage as demand grows.
- Decentralized EMS Stations: Explore the feasibility of establishing satellite stations throughout the county to improve response times in remote areas such as Reynolds Pass, where current travel time can exceed 35 minutes.

This region is growing, and the need for a scalable, responsive EMS infrastructure is critical to public safety.

Fire Protection

The mission of the Madison Valley Rural Fire-Rescue Department is to identify and respond to community needs in order to deliver a compassionate, effective, and efficient system of services that minimizes risk to life, health, and property from fire, trauma, and hazardous conditions.

The MVRFD serves the City of Ennis and the Madison Valley. The Department is an entirely volunteer department that operates out of three stations with 30 firefighters. The MVRFD District covers 1,287 square miles.

They respond to Structure and Wildland Fires, Hazardous Materials Incidents, Motor Vehicle Crashes, providing extrication, incident command, & traffic control operations as well as

assisting the MVMC Ambulance Service. As the MVRFD maintains a Rescue Boat, we also respond to Water Rescue Incidents, Swiftwater Rescue Incidents, and a host of other special rescue incidents. The department supports missions for the Madison County Search and Rescue, and Sheriff's Office when needed.

- Madison County Search and Rescue (SAR), Madison Valley Unit
- Madison County Search and Rescue is comprised of two units, one based in Sheridan, MT, and the other in Ennis, MT. Both units train regularly and serve all residents and visitors of Madison County. Missions occur in the vast array of terrain that the county offers in all four seasons. Team members are available 24/7/365 to respond to all types of emergencies looking for lost people and rescuing those in need from a variety of circumstances.

Medical

Madison Valley Medical Center is an independent, community-owned, 10-bed critical access hospital. The hospital was established in 1948, followed by the hospital district in 1953. It has a long, successful history of assessing the health and wellness needs of the Ennis and surrounding communities and providing safe, high-quality primary care and clinical walk-in services, along with emergency, hospital, ambulance, rehabilitation, diagnostics, retail pharmacy, and many other services essential to a thriving community. It is with the support of the community that it will remain independent and continue to grow and expand services while priorities and decision making are made locally and are not based on the broader needs of a large health system.



Madison Valley Manor

The Madison Valley Manor is a 32-bed, non-profit nursing facility owned and operated by Madison County. The Manor was built in 1977 and opened in 1978. The facility has a contract with the Veterans Administration in order to provide 24-hour skilled and long-term nursing care. The Manor also offers hospice and comfort care services if needed. While there are no specific Alzheimer's and dementia parts of the facility, the Manor can handle residents with those disorders in addition to those with more routine physical and cognitive disorders.

The facility includes an entry lobby with main nurses station, administrative offices, living room with fireplace off the entry lobby, resident rooms (28 double rooms, 2 single rooms, and 1 married room) with each room having a sink and bathrooms with a toilet shared between every two rooms, common spa rooms with bath and showers, satellite nurses stations, sun room/activities room (which was added to the building in 1999), large dining room that can be used for other activities, a commercial grade kitchen, physical therapy area, meeting room, an outdoor courtyard with garden, and an outdoor fenced yard with gazebo. The facility had an extensive interior renovation in 2016.



Ennis Senior Center

The Senior Center opened in October 2015, expanded in 2018, and is located at 315 West Main Street in Ennis. It was created to provide seniors of the community with healthy and affordable meals, and a comfortable place to congregate, enjoy casual card or board games, or simply sit and chat or read. It offers special organized activities, including a Senior Exercise program, Mahjong games, Card games, and evening Pinochle games, each held on scheduled days. Meals are served at the Senior Center from 11:45 – 12:30 Monday thru Friday to anyone regardless of age. The Meals on Wheels program for Ennis is serviced through the Senior Center and is open to anyone needing a meal delivered. Other services include providing a place for other organizations to offer assistance with Medicare open enrollment, free tax preparation for seniors and non-seniors who need assistance, diabetes education sessions, and Cardiac Rehab education. In the hours the facility is closed, it is available for rent to outside groups for activities such as quilting sessions, receptions/parties, music/dancing, dinners, and meetings with authorization through a Facility Use Agreement. The Center is operated by Ennis Senior Center, Inc., a not-for-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors.



Madison Valley Public Library

Madison Valley Public Library's (MVPL) mission is to connect people to information, ideas, and programming and to promote life-long learning, literacy development, and community involvement. MVPL currently has approximately 2,600 part-time and full-time Madison County resident cardholders and sees over 40,000 visitors per year. MVPL currently employs two full-time and two part-time positions. Cardholders can check out physical books, DVDs, audiobooks, laptops, and hotspots. MVPL has six public computers, has free Wi-Fi accessible 24-7, and

provides technical assistance to the public. Electronic services include electronic and audio books, lifelong learning courses and tv/movies/music streaming services. Business services such as fax, copy, scan, and printing are available to the public.

The facility was remodeled in 2009 and totals approximately 6,500 square feet. MVPL physical space has reached its capacity for both physical items and programming attendance. Currently, MVPL has divided early literacy programming sessions due to over- capacity attendance and instituted a wait list for meeting room reservations. Future physical needs of Madison Valley Public Library include building expansion and the evaluation of current sewer and water conditions for any potential expansion.



Schools

The Ennis School District consists of a grade school, middle school, and high school. The Ennis Grade School had a 2024-2025 enrollment of 244 students and a student/teacher ratio of 14:1. The Ennis middle school, which consists of grades 7 and 8, had an enrollment of 71 students and a student/teacher ratio of 13:1. The Ennis High School had an enrollment of 134 students with a student/teacher ratio of 11:1. According to the Montana Office of Public Instruction, the three schools within the Ennis School District had the following expenditures per pupils,

- Elementary School - \$12,776.35 per pupil
- Middle School - \$12,766.35 per pupil
- High School - \$16,246.33 per pupil

The school district is managed by a Board of Trustees. There are currently five members on the board. The School District's main core values are Community, Integrity, Respect, and Pride.

Ennis School District has experienced steady growth over the past decade, with an average enrollment increase of 2.75% per year. This trend reflects both the appeal of the community, and the trust families place in the schools. For the 2025-2026 school year, Ennis Schools had a total enrollment of 449 students; Ennis Elementary School serves 206 students, Ennis Middle School enrolls 109 students, and Ennis High School has 134 students. This growth has brought exciting opportunities for expanding programs and services while also highlighting the need for long-

range planning to ensure our facilities, staffing, and resources can continue to meet the needs of all learners.



Community Organizations and Volunteers

There are many organizations and volunteers in Ennis working to improve life in the community and support the economy by creating or supporting events to draw tourists to Town. Some of the organizations include the Lions Club, Madison Valley Woman's Club, Chamber of Commerce, Madison River Foundation, Madison Conservation District, and the Hospital Foundation.

Community Events and Entertainment

Ennis is a community with year-round events and entertainment for all ages and interests. The following is a list of just some of the activities that take place in the Town:

- Tap Into Ennis – Montana Beer and Spirits Festival
- Fourth of July Parade
- Fourth of July Picnic at Lions Club Park (following the parade)
- Ennis Rodeo (part of Fourth of July Events)
- Music in the Park Summer Series
- Ennis Arts Festival

- Ennis Fly Fishing and Outdoor Festival
- Hunter's Feed
- Shop Small Weekend
- Spirit of Christmas Stroll
- Madison Theatre
- Easter Egg Hunt at Lions Club Park
- Father's Day Fishing Rodeo at Lions Club Park

Stormwater

The Town had a Stormwater Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) conducted in 2007. The report showed that the Town of Ennis does not have a formal stormwater collection system. Stormwater throughout the Town flows to the low points and in and along the roadways before infiltrating into the ground. As the Town has developed since 2007, more impervious surfaces have been added without addressing the stormwater needs. The few stormwater inlets along Main Street had been identified as ineffective.

The development of a more robust stormwater infrastructure network would reduce the risk of flooding to public and private properties during a storm event and reduce water pollution to Moore Creek and the Madison River. Properly maintained and developed stormwater infrastructure can also support a more resilient community.

Like many communities, funding for stormwater management projects and maintenance can be a struggle. In the 2007 PER, it was identified that the Town should utilize funding from the street budget for stormwater management projects. The Town should consider updating the existing stormwater PER through grant funding, such as Community Development Block Grants, among others, to update the PER. This action would make the Town more competitive when applying for construction grants.

Streets

The Town of Ennis has two different road types throughout the municipality: paved asphalt and gravel roads. In 2021, the Town had a Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) conducted to assess the issues at the time of the assessment. The PASER was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and graded paved asphalt roads on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best. Subsequently, gravel roads are assessed using 1-5 scoring with, 1 being the worst and 5 being the best.

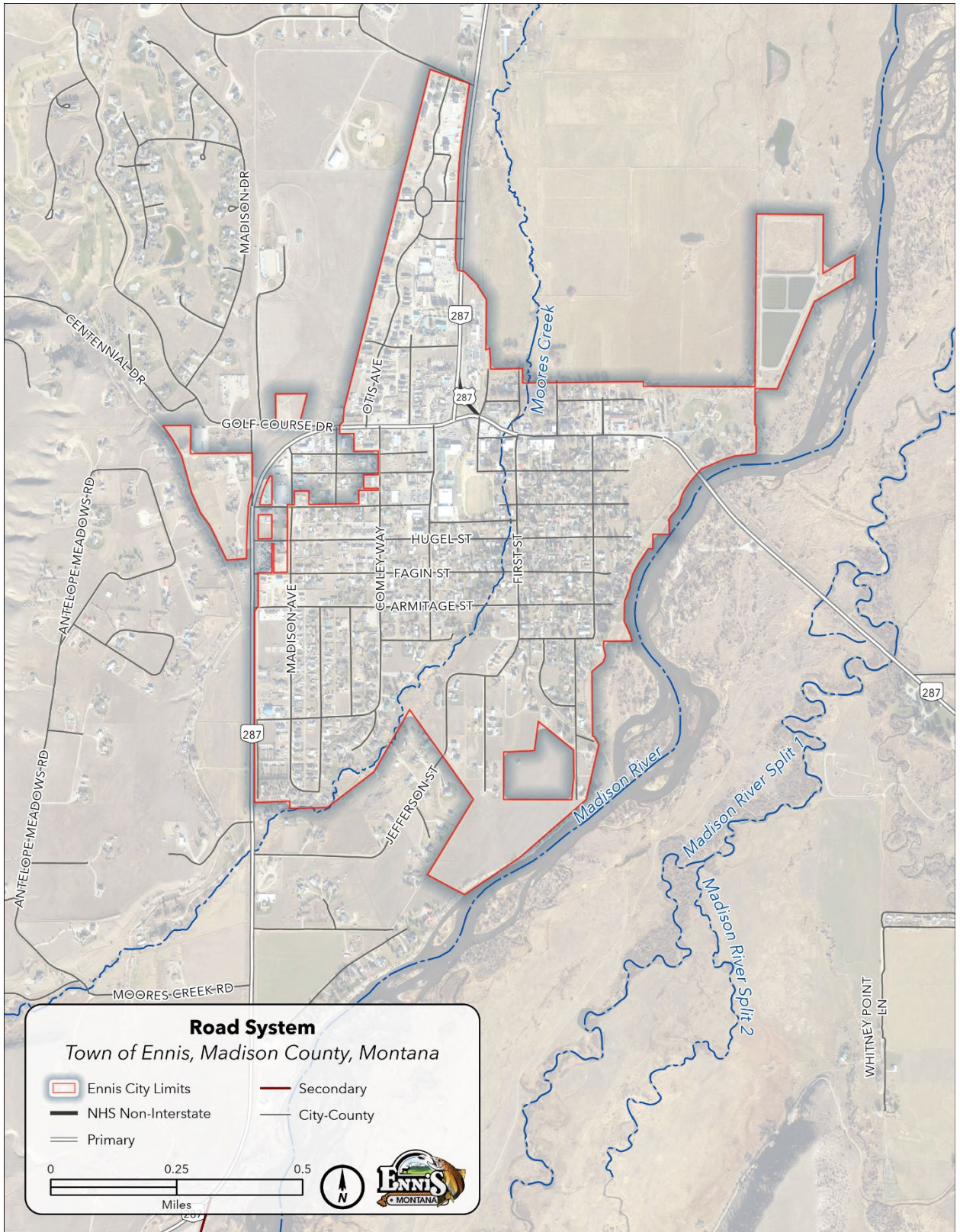
The PASER determined that improvements needed to be made to the street network. For paved roads, seal coating, crack sealing, patching/thin lift and reconstruction would be needed for a variety of roads. Typically, seal coating and crack sealing are ongoing maintenance practices that should be conducted every 5 years or so. These methods assist in extending the life of the pavement by improving skid resistance and preventing water from entering the subgrade and deteriorating the road.

Patching and thin lifts improve small areas with deterioration, such as potholes, by adding approximately 1 inch of asphalt to even the surface. Reconstruction would need to occur when

the road is beyond repair.

The town's gravel roads are much easier to maintain. Grading and adding gravel are the two most common maintenance techniques that the Town employs to blade out ruts and fix potholes.

Ennis should continue to utilize a maintenance schedule, Capital Improvements Plan, and PASER to prioritize road and street projects.



Map 3 – Street Network of Ennis, Montana State Library

Water System

The domestic water system serving the Town of Ennis includes several components. The existing source of water for the system is groundwater, obtained from two wells. The wells are located in the west-central and southeast portions of Town. Well #2 (Armitage and Comely) pumps 350 gpm, which is the maximum flow rate allowed by the water right. Well #3 (First and Grizzly) can produce 235 gpm but is limited to a flow rate of 200 gpm by the water right. These wells pump water directly into the distribution piping, which in turn feeds the user demands and fills the reservoir. The storage reservoir is a 530,000-gallon on-grade bolted steel tank located on a hill west of Town. Telemetry systems run between the wells and the tank, enabling control of the reservoir level and pumping cycles. The distribution system consists of 4-inch, 6-inch, 8-inch, 10-inch, 12-inch, and 14-inch mains with associated fittings, gate valves, and fire hydrants.

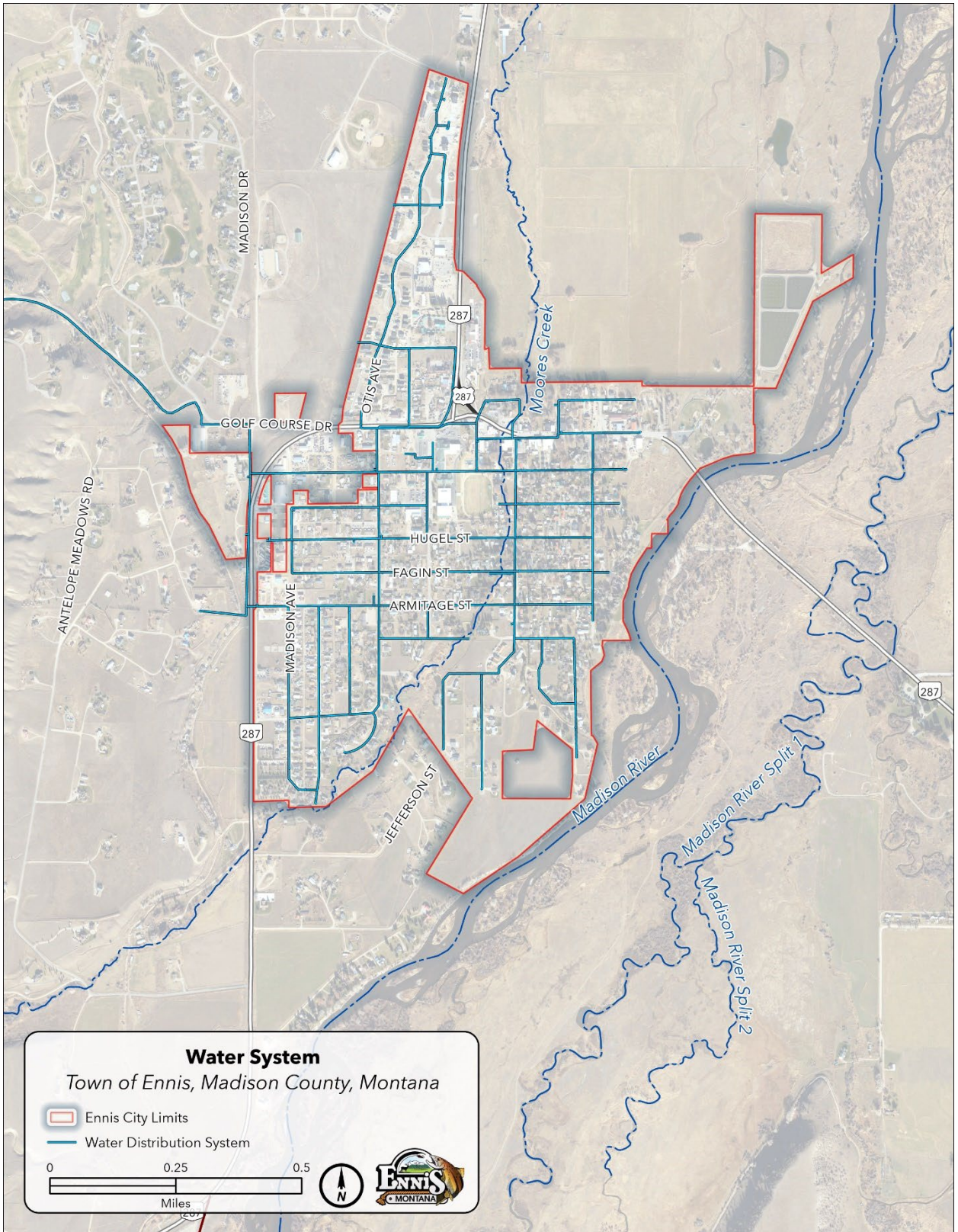
The current average daily water usage within the town is 306,000 gallons per day (gpd). This average day demand (ADD) over a 24-hour period is equivalent to a flow rate of 212 gallons per minute (gpm). A water system's maximum day demand (MDD) is defined as the highest volume of water used on any day of the year. The MDD for Ennis is 639,000 gpd or 444 gpm.

Total water supply capacity for the system is currently 550 gpm. Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) standards state that the total developed groundwater source capacity must equal or exceed the design maximum day demand with the largest producing well out of service. The 20-year projected maximum day demand for the Town's water system is 522 gpm. The Town's current production capacity is 200 gpm with the largest well out of service. Thus, the system cannot meet even the current MDD (444 gpm) with the largest well out of service.

In 2025, the Town will be constructing two new redundant water supply wells in order to supplement the water supply in the event the largest producing well is out of service. Unfortunately, the total pumping flow rate will still be limited to the maximum flow rate of 550 gpm. This limitation is due to the maximum amount of water Ennis can use under its current water rights. The maximum flow rate of the Town's current water rights will be the limiting factor for any new growth within the community. Should substantial residential growth be anticipated in the future, the Town will need to secure additional water rights.

The existing steel water storage tank for the system is 29 years old, is leaking and requires significant maintenance should it remain in service. The existing storage capacity of the tank is not sufficient to meet system demands and provide the fire protection needed. The current storage capacity is 530,000 gallons. To meet future projected demands and required fire protection capabilities, an additional 130,000 gallons of storage is needed. The Town will be replacing the existing storage tank with a new 700,000-gallon prestressed concrete tank, with the new tank anticipated to be constructed in 2026.

The distribution system is in decent shape and currently meets the system's needs. Approximately 30% of the piping is aging cast iron pipe. As this pipe continues to age, it will begin to fail. The Town will need to start the process to plan for water main replacements in the near future.



Map 4 – Municipal Water System, Great West Engineering

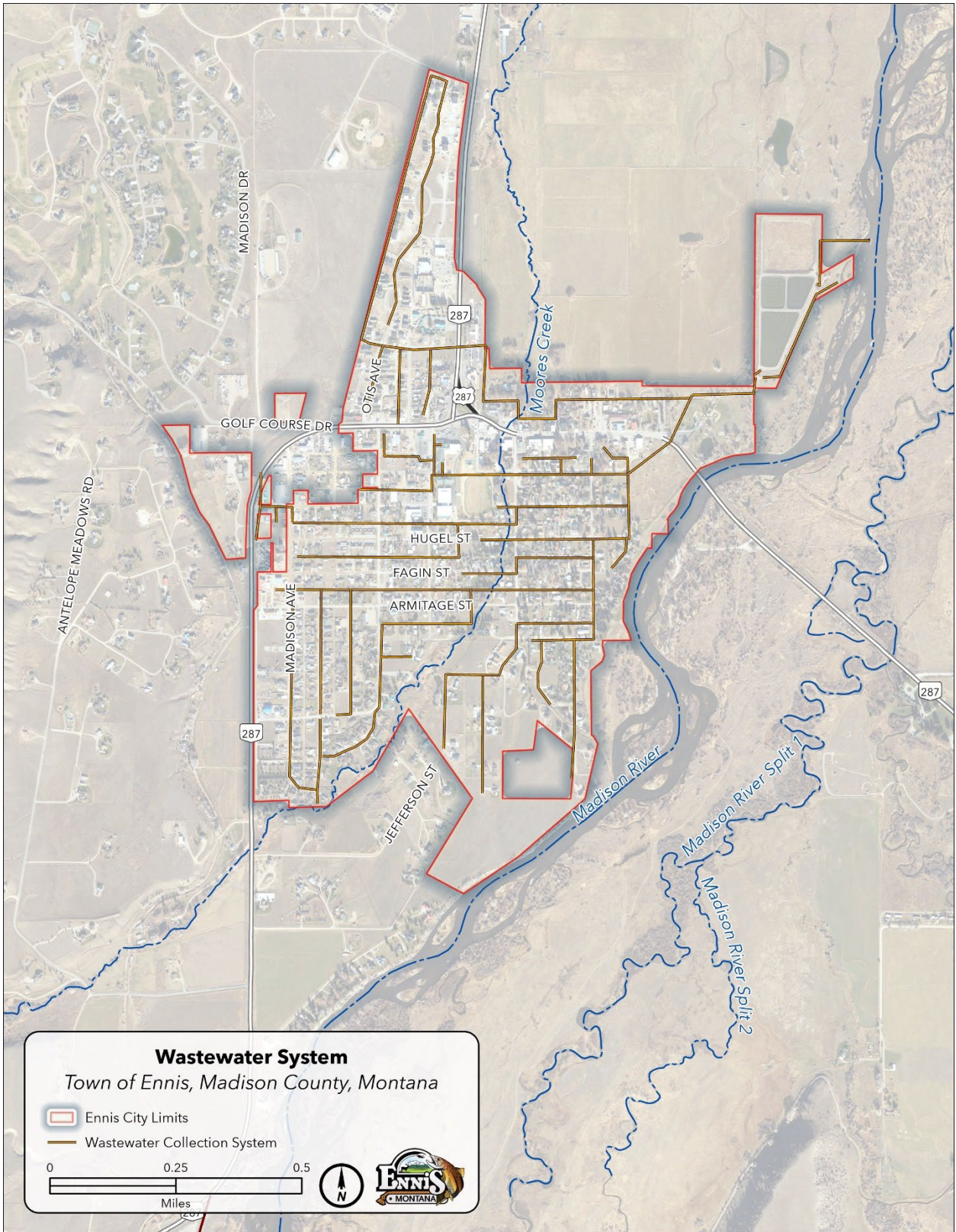
Wastewater Collection and Treatment System

Inflow and infiltration (I&I) is impacting the Town's sewer collection system. I&I is defined as groundwater and stormwater entering a sewer system. Most of the existing collection system is original clay tile pipe, and wastewater flows in the system increase to 295 gallons per person per day at various times during the year. Flows over 120 gallons per capita per day are indicative of I&I issues. The Town should begin to consider collection system improvements to reduce I&I.

The existing lift stations and treatment system (lagoons) for the system seem to be in good shape. Hydraulic loading into the system is less than the design hydraulic loading of the system (average 168,000 gpd influent flow, design 240,000 gpd). The Town has generally been able to meet permitted discharge limits of their existing permit with a few exceedances of total suspended solids (TSS) likely due to algae growth.

No new discharge permit has been issued by Montana DEQ. New requirements are likely, but until the new regulatory framework is finalized by the state, it's difficult to say what they will be.

Overall, capacity in the sewer system is sufficient for the existing population and some growth. Based on the (2024) preliminary engineering report (PER) numbers, the system has about 72,000 gpd of hydraulic capacity, which would allow for the potential of 288 new residential sewer connections.



Map 5 – Wastewater System, Great West Engineering

Parks, Trails and Recreational Facilities

Ennis provides its residents and visitors with a variety of park and recreational facilities. The following is a list of the most notable:

- Fishing Access Sites (FAS) – Ennis State Park (aka “Town”), Valley Garden, Burnt Tree, and Eight Mile Ford provide easy fishing access to the Madison River. There is also access from Lions Club Park in Town.
- Parks – Lions Club Park, Peter T’s Park, Grandma Ennis Park (confirm name – on Main St.)
- Playgrounds – Lions Club Park, small playground and play area at W. Armitage Street, and Comley Way
- Baseball/Softball Fields – Lions Club Park, Ennis Schools playing field complex by school bus barns north of Town
- Private Gyms – Madison Square Athletic Club Gym, Crossfit Stonefly Gym
- Walking Paths and Trails
 - In Town – walking paths at Lions Club Park; Near Ennis – trails at Ennis State Park FAS, Valley Garden FAS
 - Relatively close drive – trails at North Meadow Creek, North Willow Creek, Jack Creek, Bear Creek
- Bike Trails
- ATV/Motorcycle Trails – North Meadow Creek, North Willow Creek, roads on top of Gravelly Range in Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
- Campgrounds – Ennis State Park FAS and Valley Garden FAS
- RV Parks – Madison Valley Campground and Ennis RV Park/Starry Night Lodging



Figure 9 – Ennis Fishing Access Sites

PLAYGROUNDS

- Lions Club Park
- W. Armitage St. & Comley Way



Lions Club Park



W. Armitage St. & Comley Way

Figure 10 – Ennis Playgrounds

PARKS

- Lions Club Park
- Peter T's Park
- Grandma Ennis Park



Lions Club Park



Peter T's Park



Grandma Ennis Park

Figure 11 – Ennis Parks

Solid Waste

Residents dispose of garbage at the container site located just north of Ennis on the east side of US Highway 287. The site also allows for the recycling of cardboard, aluminum cans, and certain plastics. Further information can be found at <https://madisoncountymt.gov/362/Landfill-Container-Sites>

Ennis Rodeo Grounds

The Ennis Rodeo Inc. has been supporting, fundraising, and putting on a rodeo since the 1940's. Ennis Rodeo Inc. is a non-profit group that brings rodeo entertainment and other agricultural events to Ennis throughout the year. Over the years Ennis Rodeo Inc. has contributed in many ways to the local community by volunteering hours, donating space to local 4-H clubs and providing scholarships.

Madison Valley History Association Museum (MVHA)

The mission of the MVHA is to develop a museum to house and preserve collections of artifacts, tapes, photographs, and stories of historical importance to the Madison Valley and interpret

them through display and education. The MVHA Museum is located 4 miles west of Ennis on the road (Montana Highway 287) to Virginia City. Admission to the MVHA is free, although donations are appreciated. The MVHA Museum is open mid-June through September.

Madison Meadows Golf Course and Tennis Courts

This is a 9-hole golf course owned by Madison County and operated by the Madison County Golf Association.

Built in 1982, Madison Meadows Golf Course has become known as a hometown course that local individuals and families can enjoy. Madison Meadows also welcomes golfers from all over the state of Montana, and other tourists, who come to enjoy the many recreational opportunities found in Madison County. Madison Meadows is a challenging 9-hole par-36 golf course. It measures over 3,200 yards from the back tees and was designed by Frank Hummel. The course provides a rewarding and enjoyable experience for golfers of all skill levels, with well-maintained fairways, picturesque views, and a layout that keeps every round interesting. Madison Meadows Pro Shop has everything to meet golfers' needs from clothing and accessories to re-gripping services. Golfers can also refuel at the snack bar, stocked with a variety of food and beverages. Golf leagues and tournaments are regularly organized and scheduled at Madison Meadows.

The site also features tennis facilities during the summer months and offers frisbee golf during the winter.

Chamber of Commerce

The Ennis Chamber of Commerce was organized to assist the business community within the Town, to promote a viable economy, and to assist in sustaining the quality of life for all residents, while promoting the small-town western charm to visitors.

The Chamber is governed by nine members who are elected to the board and serve three-year terms. The executive board includes a president, vice-president, and secretary.

Northwestern Energy

Northwestern Energy is the electrical service provider to the community. A small electrical substation located southwest of the Ennis Rodeo Grounds serves town, and a larger electrical substation located north of town serves the overall area.

Madison County Sheriff

The Madison County Sheriff's Office provides a variety of services to the community. The department handles police protection, emergency response, and correctional and court security services. The department is staffed by the Sheriff, an undersheriff, 17 post-certified deputies (including the sheriff), two administrative staff members, one detention and court security deputy, nine full-time communication officers, and two part-time communications officers.

Other Community Services

There are several restaurants, bars, coffee shops (two with drive-thru) gift shops, art galleries, fly fishing shops, hotels/motels in and near town. There are a large grocery store (Madison Foods), a furnishings and appliances store (Ennis Home Furnishings), a Family Dollar store, an outdoors/sporting goods store (Shedhorn Sports), an ACE Hardware store (formerly True Value Hardware), a butcher shop (Deemo's Meats), a liquor store (Bottle Barn), a second pharmacy (Ennis Pharmacy), an oil change and car wash facility (Lick A Dee Lube), a laundromat, multiple auto parts and service stores, a tire supply store, two vehicle body repair shop, two vehicle towing services, a lumberyard/building supply center (Ennis Lumber Company), a bowling alley (Ennis Fish Bowl), a movie theater (Madison Theatre), multiple churches, a distillery (Willie's Distillery), a craft brewery (Burnt Tree Brewing), three gas stations (two with convenience stores). There are several real estate agencies in town, multiple satellite and cable internet/TV providers, two propane gas providers, and multiple self-storage facilities.



Housing

Section 7. Housing

Data from the Census Bureau, American Community Survey, estimated that there were 540 residential housing units in the Town in 2020. Of the total number of residential structures identified in 2020, 460 units were occupied while 80 units were identified as vacant or over 17 percent.

Based both on anecdotal evidence and statistical analysis, there is a large housing supply problem in Ennis and the surrounding area. This problem is an outgrowth of several factors, including limits to local land use, conservation easements, increased population, increased short-term rentals, and impacts from the Big Sky Ski Resort. There is consensus among local business owners that their biggest operational challenge is hiring due to the inability to find housing for prospective employees. This is also a major challenge for the local school, the Town administration, and the medical facility.

Some of the key takeaways identified by the Town regarding the housing market and affordability include:

- Adjusting for 2023 home prices, the House Purchase Price Affordability Index is 9.05
- When comparing median home prices to median income, the cost to finance a home exceeds the ability to pay by 2.3 times (3,530/1,537).
- Based on median household income, a household can afford a home of \$230,000. There is currently zero supply of homes in Ennis or the surrounding area at that price.

Based on the numerical analysis above, there are clear indicators of both a housing shortage and a distinct lack of housing available to the workforce. The housing shortage is best demonstrated by the fact that there are zero available units at a price that is affordable to a household earning the median household income. The median home price financing is 2.3 times what the median household can afford—this is a significant problem with no immediate solution in sight.

A key goal of this updated Growth Policy will be to implement practical actions that the Town can take to encourage the construction of affordable housing utilizing available land consistent with the community's values.



Land Use and Natural Resources



Section 8. Land Use and Natural Resources

Community Planning Efforts

Previous Town planning efforts include those related to land use, infrastructure, parks and trails and economic development. The following is a list of the major plans that the Town has developed since 2007:

- Capital Improvements Plan (2007)
- Growth Policy (2014)
- Community Master Plan (2022)
- Zoning Regulations
- Subdivision Regulations
- Floodplain Regulations

Western Character and Small-Town Feel

The 2014 Growth Policy noted that the Town of Ennis, especially Main Street, has a unique, small-town, western character that charms residents and tourists. The following figures, originally from the 2014 Growth Policy, include photographs and text that define Ennis' character. Note that some of the items listed are part of the vision for the future of Ennis, and some already exist.



WESTERN CHARACTER AND SMALL-TOWN FEEL



Common areas of green space are places for community members and visitors to gather (Lions Club Park, Grandma Ennis Park, Peter T's Park).



Most commercial buildings on Main Street are of similar scale (height and width) to protect the views and cozy, small town feel.



Buildings with western character are made of high quality, natural looking materials, such as stone or wood (or materials that look like stone or wood).



Signs are also made of natural looking materials. Ennis has unique 3-dimensional signs, such as the pack horses above the Ennis Cafe, fly above the Tackle Shop, and wheel in front of the Longbranch Saloon.



Second story apartments and overhanging structures on the sidewalks of Main Street give an old west feel.



Many small towns across the U.S. have angle parking. This parking configuration adds to the small town character in Ennis.



Family-friendly and family-owned businesses make Ennis a place where merchants know residents by name and visitors receive excellent service.



Besides overhead power lines and traffic signs, there is a general lack of clutter.

Figure 12 – Western Character and Small-Town Feel



Ennis has a strong arts community. A Walking Art Tour showcases the fisherman at the Y, fish at Lions Club Park, and statues in Peter T's Park in front of Madison Valley Bank", and fish/eagle at east end of Main Street.



Special features that make Ennis unique include the Veteran's Memorial Park, memorial rock for Mayor Clark at Grandma Ennis Park, and the mustang statues in front of the Ennis High School.

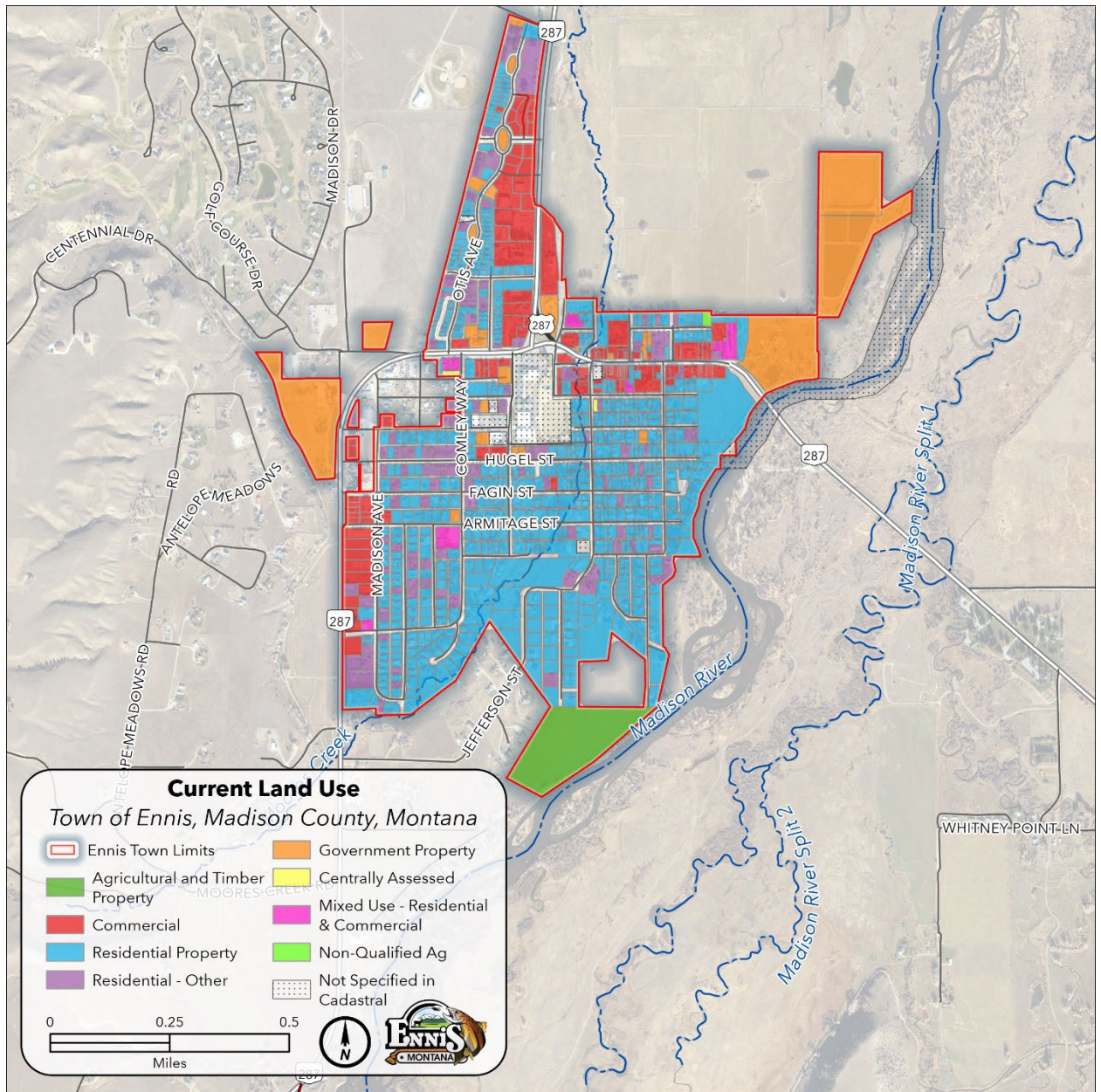


For the most part, shops along Main Street are set near the sidewalks. Ennis has maintained its small town character by avoiding big box store development on Main Street.

The Town's Zoning Code is a regulatory tool that can aid in the maintenance of Ennis' cultural values and character through development standards. For example, the Zoning Code could add a requirement for design review for any new building or renovation of a building on Main Street to include not only the portion (U.S. Hwy 287) from the eastern town limit at the Madison River to the "Y" intersection, but also the portion from the "Y" intersection (MT Hwy 287) to the southern Town limit. To further strengthen the desired character of the Town, the design review could also be implemented to cover the Highway Commercial portion of U.S. Hwy 287 north of the "Y" intersection to the northern Town limit. Design Review guidelines should clearly outline the standards to achieve desired outcomes.

Additionally, vacant buildings on Main Street downtown are undesirable, and property owners need to be encouraged or incentivized to find tenants or a use for the buildings, so they'll be occupied and add to the vibrancy of the street life.

The buildup of ice in the parking areas along Main Street downtown also poses a winter safety concern. Working with MDT, Ennis should develop potential strategies and implementation for maintaining ice-free parking areas.



Map 6 – Current Land Use Map, Montana Department of Revenue

Future Land Use

A future land use map was developed by the Town Planning Board (See Map 7). The map shows areas where future development has the potential to take place within and adjacent to the Town. It is not associated with the data displayed in Map 6, Current Land Use.

Providing sufficient water supplies is currently the primary constraint for any significant growth. Assuming adequate water supplies are available, future residential additions to the Town would be anticipated to occur mainly in the areas located to the north and west in relation to the Town boundary.

According to data from the Montana Department of Revenue, there are an estimated 199 vacant lots located in the Town. Again, this is an estimate based upon appraisal data from the Department. The only way to verify this information would be through onsite “ground-truthing.”

Annexation

While some new development will occur via the construction of homes and businesses on existing vacant land within the Town boundary, inevitably the annexation of new land into the Town may be necessary. This assumes there is adequate water capacity and there is support for such growth.

The Town of Ennis does not currently have a Plan for Annexation and the Extension of Service. An annexation plan is meant to provide a more predictable process for Town residents and for developers when the annexation of new properties into the Town is being considered. It is important to note that if the Town is proposing to annex property that will also be subdivided, the Town Council must officially annex the properties before deciding whether to approve a subdivision application.

Most, if not all, future annexations would take place following the statutory process called “Annexation by Petition” found under 7-2-4601 of the Montana Code Annotated. Annexation by Petition is initiated by a property owner and is a voluntary process.

A central element of any annexation policy is the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which identifies preferred land use designations for areas of potential development. These designations, shown in Table # and illustrated on Map 7, generally indicate anticipated development densities. However, the exact density of any given property is difficult to determine without a detailed development plan and site design. The FLUM should serve as a guiding tool for the Town and its residents when evaluating the desired type and intensity of development for newly annexed land.

Future Land Use Designation	Description
Agricultural/Ranch	<p>Ag designations allow large lots with single family residences and a variety of agricultural uses. These areas are located outside of city limits but inside the Area of City Impact.</p> <p>Property owners desiring urban uses (residential subdivision, commercial, industrial) should apply to the City for annexation through a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance amendment.</p>
Low Density Residential	<p>Low Density Residential designations allow for single-family dwellings on a variety of lot sizes. These areas generally include subdivisions and established neighborhoods and may include duplexes and townhomes on larger lots. Uses such as places of worship and parks and open space may be allowed by special permit.</p>
High Density Residential	<p>Multi-family Residential designations encourage a mix of housing types including townhomes and fourplexes, as well as apartments. These areas are often located adjacent to commercial or industrial uses and can buffer single-family residential areas. These land use areas may also have existing single family residential units on smaller lots, as well.</p>
Local Commercial and Residential	<p>Local Commercial designations may allow businesses such as retail, office, restaurants, public facilities, and other uses that can serve the surrounding neighborhood areas. These are areas located in or around the downtown that encourage a more walkable corridor. Residential and certain mixed uses may be allowed in the local Commercial designation by special permit.</p>
Core Commercial and Residential	<p>Core commercial land use refers to areas primarily designated for business and retail activities that serve as the economic and service hubs of a city or town. These zones typically include a concentration of shops, restaurants, offices, banks, and entertainment venues. Located in central business districts or major intersections, core commercial areas are characterized by high accessibility, pedestrian traffic, and public transit connections. Their purpose is to support commerce,</p>

Future Land Use Designation	Description
	<p>provide employment, and offer essential goods and services to residents and visitors. They can also include mixed uses with residential units through a special permit process.</p>
<p>Commercial/Industrial</p>	<p>Commercial/Industrial Land Use Designations refer to areas set aside for economic activities such as retail, services, manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution. Commercial zones typically include businesses like shops, offices, and restaurants, while industrial zones support heavier uses like factories, logistics centers, and production facilities. These designations help organize land use, manage growth, reduce land use conflicts, and support local economies by ensuring suitable infrastructure and location for business operations.</p>
<p>Highway Commercial</p>	<p>Highway Commercial Land Use Designations refer to areas intended for businesses that rely on high visibility and easy access from major roads or highways. Typical uses include gas stations, motels, fast food restaurants, car dealerships, and service centers. These areas are designed to serve both local residents and highway travelers, often featuring larger lots, ample parking, and signage visible from the road.</p>
<p>Open Space</p>	<p>Open Space Land Use Designations refer to areas preserved for environmental protection, recreation, and public enjoyment rather than development. These spaces may include parks, natural reserves, greenbelts, trails, wetlands, and buffer zones. The primary goals are to conserve natural landscapes, support biodiversity, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance the overall quality of life for the community.</p>

Future Land Use Designation	Description
Government	Government Land/Building Land Use Designations refer to properties owned, operated, or reserved for use by local, provincial/state, or federal government agencies. These areas may include city halls, courthouses, police and fire stations, public works yards, military facilities, schools, hospitals, and other administrative or civic buildings. They are designated to support essential public services, governance, and community infrastructure.

Table 1 – Future Land Use Designations

Zoning Regulations

The Town has a comprehensive zoning code that governs land use within the Town limits. There are currently twelve (12) different zoning districts which range from regulating residential and business uses to industrial, and agricultural uses.

The Town’s zoning code dates to 2002 and the current zoning map to 2011. There has been an expressed need by Town residents, and business owners to have the zoning code and zoning map updated. In addition, with the significant statutory changes that have occurred in the last few legislative sessions, the code needs to be updated to simply comply with state law.

Some of the specific issues that would be addressed in a code update include:

- Creating a more accurate web-based zoning map.
- Discuss how to promote additional housing through higher density.
- Add design guidelines and design review and approval process for any new building or renovation projects on East and West Main Street to maintain and strengthen desired rural Western small-town character.
- Improve enforcement of Zoning Code.
- Add Building Regulations to the Town Code that establish construction standards for new commercial or institutional building or renovation projects. The Town Code needs to require compliance with the State of Montana Building and Safety Codes and have project design review and enforcement during construction handled by State building officials.

Subdivision Regulations

The Town subdivision regulations shown on the Town website date to 1996 and were adopted using the Madison County Subdivision Regulations. The 2014 Growth Policy references regulations from 2002.

Subdivision regulations are meant to address issues related to the division of land for new residential and commercial development. These include ensuring accurate surveying, providing legal and physical access, provision of water, sewer and utilities, parkland requirements, right-of-way location and mitigating hazards such as flooding.

With the significant statutory changes over the last few legislative sessions, it will be important for the Town to review and update its subdivision regulations to ensure that they comply with state statutes and provide design and improvement standards that create safe and economical neighborhoods within the Town.

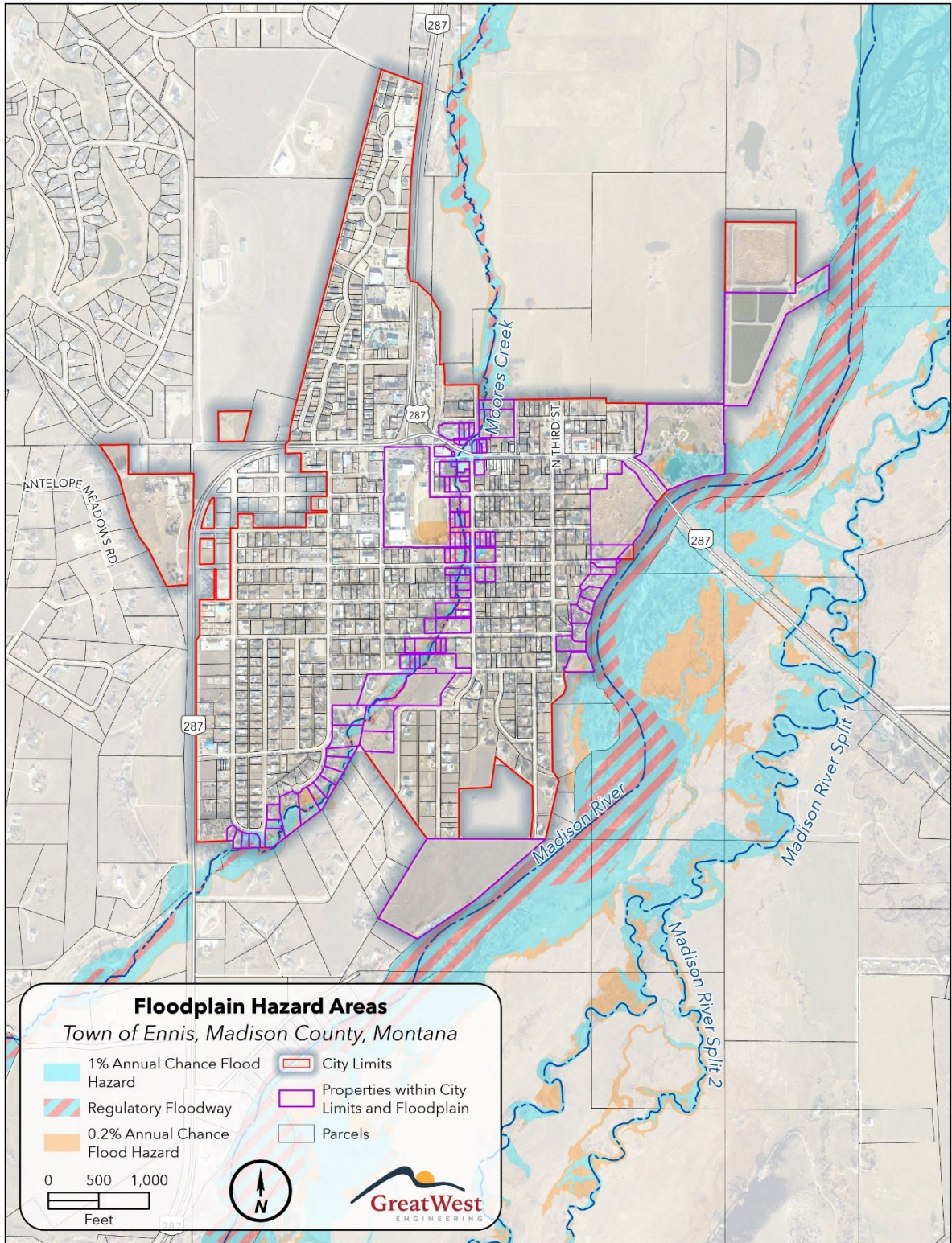
The Growth Policy statutes require that a growth policy address the following topics:

- Defining the review criteria found under 76-3-608 MCA.
- How subdivision will be evaluated based upon the 76-3-608 MCA review criteria
- The public hearing procedure for subdivision proposals requiring a hearing.

These topics are discussed in detail in Appendix A at the end of this document.

Flooding and Floodplain Regulations

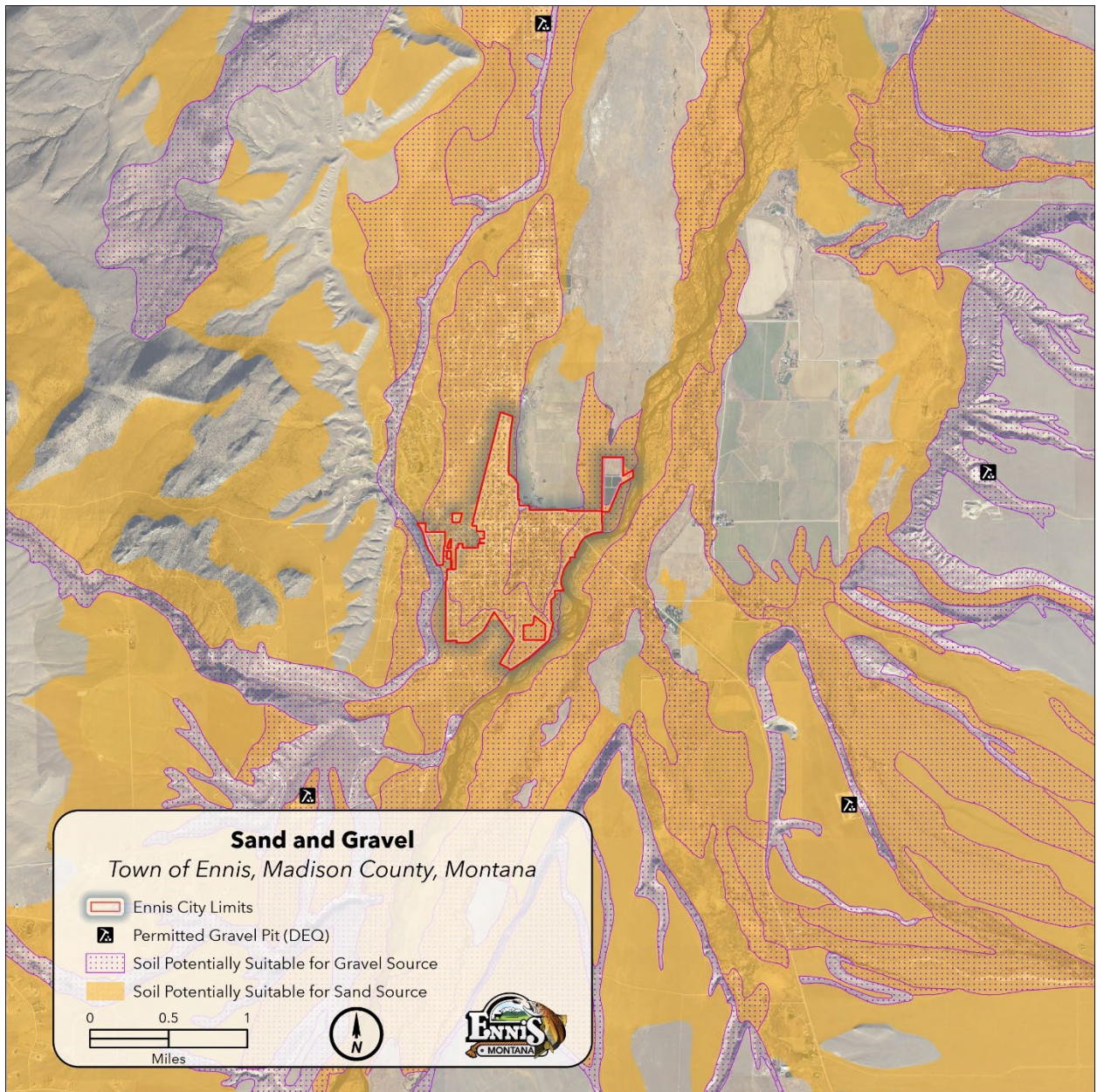
Floodplains for the portions of the Madison River and Moore Creek located within Ennis town limits have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Town updated its floodplain regulations in 2024 and administers permitting within the floodplain.



Map 8 - Floodplain Hazard Area, Town of Ennis, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Sand and Gravel Resources

Access to sand and gravel is important for the construction and maintenance of streets and roads, as well as the construction of new homes and businesses. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Program, there are no permitted gravel pits located within one mile of the Town of Ennis. The Town's Zoning Code would govern the development of sand and gravel operations within the Town. Outside of the town limits there are no zoning regulations governing sand and gravel operations.

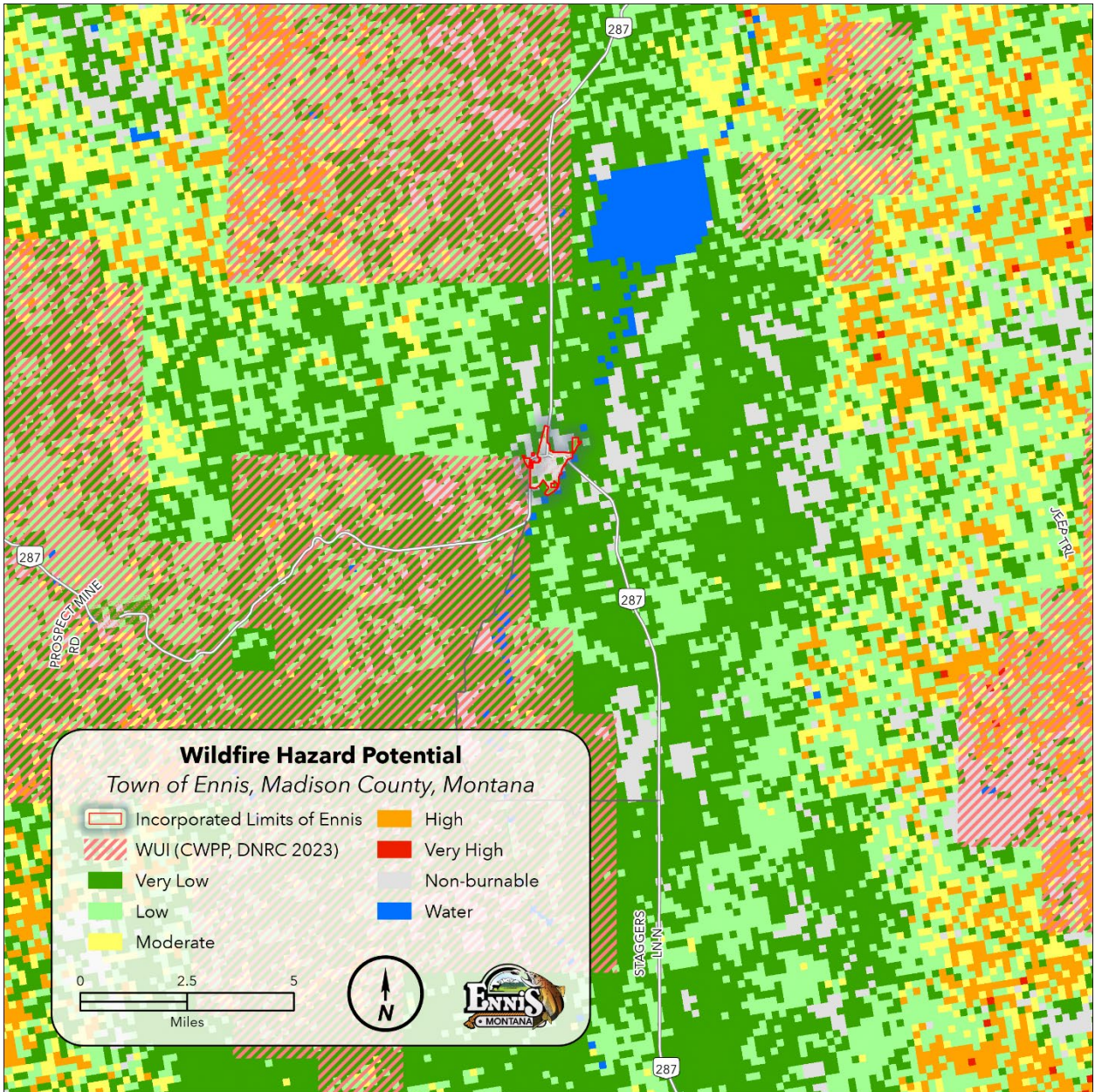


Map 9 - Sand and Gravel Resources, Madison County and the Town of Ennis, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey

Wildland-Urban Interface

The Town's Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is primarily composed of grassland and riparian areas within and surrounding town. With regard to regulations meant to mitigate potential impacts from wildfire, the Town has zoning and subdivision regulations that specifically address mitigation of potential wildfire impacts. In addition, the Town has a centralized water distribution system that includes fire hydrants located throughout town, which would help mitigate the impact of potential wildfires.

Map 10, the Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP) map, is a GIS map that has been produced by the United States Forest Service. The map is meant to provide a very high-level evaluation of wildfire hazard and the prioritization of fuels management needs across large landscapes such as Madison County. The objective of the WHP map is to show the relative potential for a wildfire that would be difficult for suppression resources to contain. Thus, the scale of difficulty of suppression on the map runs from a Very Low potential to a Very High potential.



Map 10 - Wildfire Hazard Potential Around Ennis, USDA Forest Service

Water Resources

Respondents to the community survey distributed in 2024 and 2025 overwhelmingly identified the protection of water resources as very important.

Water resources within the Ennis Planning Area include the Madison River, Moore Creek, O'Dell Creek, Bear Creek, floodplains, riparian areas, wetlands, and the groundwater system. There are also irrigation ditches that traverse the Ennis Planning Area. Official floodplain boundaries have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the portions of the Madison River and Moore Creek within Ennis Town Limits. While Ennis Lake is located five miles

north of Ennis and not within the Ennis Planning Area, the Lake provides many recreational opportunities to the residents of Ennis and is a draw for tourists.

Moore Creek is listed as a water quality-impaired stream by DEQ for the use of drinking water and primary contact recreation because of Arsenic and Escherichia coli. The probable sources of Arsenic are acid mine drainage impacts from abandoned mine lands and natural sources. The probable sources of Escherichia coli are agriculture and grazing in riparian zones.

O'Dell Creek is listed as a water quality-impaired stream for the use of drinking water. The probable cause is Arsenic with the source listed as unknown. It is also listed as impaired for the use of aquatic life caused by high flows and physical alterations.

Sources listed include agriculture, channelization, and habitat modification. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which is a tool to quantify water quality problems and propose solutions, has not been completed by the DEQ for the Madison TMDL Planning Area. Data has been collected, and a report is expected after 2014.

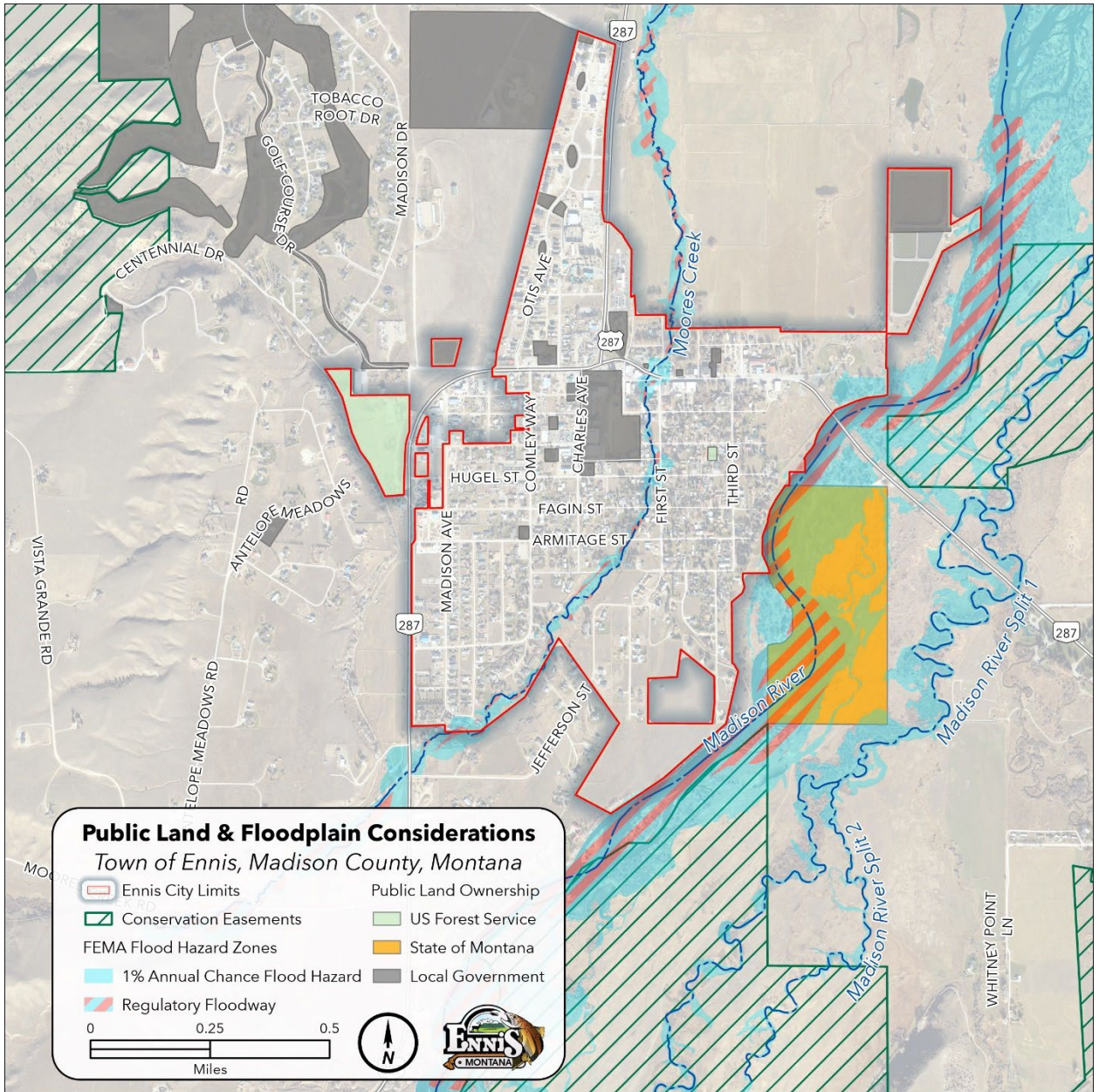
The Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology collected water quality and supply data from wells for a groundwater characterization study of the Madison County area. Data from the study shows that there is an abundance of groundwater in the Ennis area.

Water quality may be an issue in certain areas surrounding Ennis due to elevated temperatures of groundwater and naturally occurring minerals, such as Arsenic.

The Madison Watershed Partnership is working on water conservation, water quality, range and soil conservation, fisheries and wildlife management, land use planning, and conservation education and outreach. The partnership is made up of the Madison Conservation District, Madison River Foundation, and Madison Valley Ranchlands Group. Major projects include the Madison Stream Team, which is a group of volunteers trained to collect water quality data on local streams and weed mapping along the Madison River.

Hebgen Dam

According to Northwestern Energy, Hebgen Dam is designed to store water and create a reservoir that provides benefits, including recreation and fish habitat. It also supports irrigation and electric generation downstream. Hebgen Dam does not produce energy. The company uses Hebgen Dam to manage flows downstream for the Madison River fishery and Ennis Lake elevations. The location of the dam upstream of the Town of Ennis does pose a hazard if any significant failure of the dam were to occur. Northwestern Energy has developed an emergency action plan which includes an analysis of the impact upon the Town of Ennis.



Map 11 – Public Land & Floodplain Considerations, Federal Emergency Management Agency & Montana State Library

Agricultural and Open Lands

Respondents to the community survey distributed in 2024 and 2025 also overwhelmingly identified the protection of agricultural lands as very important.

Agriculture is important to Ennis because it is part of the area’s history, contributes to the local economy, provides open space and beautiful views that can be seen from Ennis. In addition, it adds to the western character of the community. Landowners, regional land trusts, community members, and planners have worked to protect an incredible amount of land within the Madison

Valley through conservation easements. This work is readily apparent in the open views and lack of sprawl that can be seen from MT Highway 287 when descending the hill from Virginia City to Ennis. The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group is also working to preserve the ranching way of life.

Conservation easements are an important component of life in the Madison Valley and the area surrounding Ennis. Much of the land to the north, northwest, and south of the community is protected by conservation easements. See Map 11 of the Conservation Easements near Town. According to a December 4, 2024, article in the *Yellowstonian*, by 2023 the Montana Land Reliance alone had protected over 120,000 acres of land throughout the Valley through conservation easements.

<https://yellowstonian.org/whats-facing-the-madison-valley-a-longtime-conservation-land-broker-weighs-in-2/>

Conservation easements are a mechanism by which a property owner voluntarily conveys partial legal interests in land. Such easements are typically used in Montana to protect agricultural operations, wildlife habitats, ecosystems, and open space, as well as recreational and historic features of the land.

Vegetation

Most of the land within Ennis town limits has been developed to some extent and includes vegetation planted for aesthetic purposes or erosion control. Along Moore Creek and the Madison River is riparian vegetation. The areas northeast and southwest of town are dominated by cultivated crops and/or grassy ranchlands. North and west of town limits, the foothills are covered with various types of sagebrush and other native grasses. Lower elevations in this area are scattered with development and native grasses.

Very little mapping of noxious weeds has been done within the Ennis Planning Area. The Madison Watershed Partnership mapped weeds along the Madison River and the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group Weed Committee works with the Madison County Weed Board to treat weeds along the Madison River. The Town of Ennis treats weeds along some roads, and landowners are required to control weeds on their properties and half of the adjacent street (Section 4-2-1, Ennis Town Code).



Community Outreach

Section 9. Community Outreach

Gathering the ideas and input of Ennis residents was a critical step in updating this Growth Policy. The creation, objectives, and action plan have been based on the residents' input and guidance.

The Planning Board developed and marketed a community survey in 2024 to ask residents to prioritize the opportunities and issues in the Town, identify what they like/dislike about living in Ennis, and what they think the community's future should look like.

As part of the 2025 update of the Growth Policy, the Planning Board made a significant effort to obtain additional guidance from residents. With that in mind, the Board distributed the original 2024 survey conducted in the Spring of 2025. The survey was done using an online survey and hardcopy survey. Ultimately, approximately 300 plus people participated in both survey efforts.

Some of the most notable results from both the 2024 and 2025 surveys showed that residents are concerned about the following issues:

- Upgrading the Town's water and sewer systems.
- Protecting agricultural lands and riparian areas.
- Promoting housing affordability.
- Preserving the character of the Town and ensuring new development fits into the existing character of the Town.

The Planning Board also held an open house in May of 2025 focused on gathering the input and ideas of the Town's business community. The intent was to obtain feedback from business owners about the various opportunities and issues that they see for Ennis. The conversations during that open house focused on:

- Improvements to the water system
- How to provide additional workforce housing
- Main Street maintenance, particularly ice buildup in parking areas during winter
- Pedestrian crossing of Main Street
- Importance of community events such as the 4th of July Parade
- Importance of enforcing Zoning Code

Growth Policy Adoption

The Town Planning Board held a public hearing on November 5th, 2025, to hear further input on the Growth Policy document and recommended adoption to the Town Commission. The Commission held a public hearing on December 11, 2025, to consider the Planning Board's recommendation. The Commission voted to formally adopt the Growth Policy document.



Growth Policy Review and Coordination Efforts

Section 10. Growth Policy Review and Coordination Efforts

Conditions and Timing for Review and Revision

This document will be reviewed every five years from the date of its adoption. The Town Planning Board will be responsible for reviewing the Growth Policy and making any recommendations regarding revisions or changes to the Town Commission. Future reviews will include an evaluation of every section. It is anticipated that a full update of the Growth Policy will be necessary within ten years of its original adoption. Additionally, wherever possible in keeping with State statute, the development and revision of future planning documents should adhere to the goals and objectives of the Growth Policy.

The Growth Policy may also be revised when a situation or issue that necessitates changes has been identified by the public or when changes are deemed to be in the public interest by either the Planning Board or the Town Commission. It is also possible that Legislative changes to policy statutes may require significant amendments or changes. Finally, amendments to the Growth Policy may also be necessary when litigation elsewhere in Montana sets a legal precedent that is contrary to the stated goals, objectives, or implementation strategies that have been detailed.

Coordination with Madison County

The Town will coordinate its efforts to implement this Growth Policy with Madison County in the following ways:

- Consult Madison County on annexation proposals.
- Provide Madison County with comments on proposed subdivisions that are within two miles of the Town limits.
- Continue to coordinate with Madison County on all existing memorandums of understanding and interlocal agreements.



Goals Objectives and Actions

Section 11. Goals-Objectives and Actions

To effectively implement the Growth Policy, a comprehensive set of goals, objectives, and actions was developed by Town residents, the Planning Board, with input from the Town residents, and Town business leaders. These elements are designed to reflect the community's shared vision and values, while aligning with both current conditions and the desired future of the Town.

The following tables outline the goals, objectives, and corresponding actions that residents seek to achieve in response to the opportunities and challenges identified in this plan. Each goal is organized by topic and is supported by specific objectives and actionable steps.

Key implementation actions include but are not limited to upgrading critical infrastructure such as the Town's water system; preserving the Town's character and sense of place; updating the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations; fostering collaboration with Madison County; and maintaining essential day-to-day services for residents.

2014 Growth Policy – Goals Achieved

While this updated Growth Policy contains some new goals for Town residents to focus on, it is important to note that a couple of the goals in the Town's 2014 Growth Policy were achieved, and others still need to be achieved. A number of projects identified in that Growth Policy have either been attempted, completed or are underway some of them include but are not limited to:

Goals Attempted and/or No Progress:

1. No progress on increasing affordable workforce housing or creating a Housing Task Force
2. No progress on updating the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations
3. No change in the "Y" intersection
4. Building an Aquatic Center was pursued, but the cost was too high, so the developers at the time did not move forward. There have been recent efforts to pursue building a Community Center with an indoor pool, but no significant progress has been made.

Goals Completed:

1. Adapted and expanded an existing building to create the Ennis Senior Center – 2015
2. Major interior renovation of Madison Valley Manor – 2016

Goals Underway:

1. Upgrades to water and wastewater systems

Goals with Unknown Outcome:

1. Attract new businesses to Ennis
2. Increase promotion/marketing/business development efforts for Ennis
3. Become a Tree City U.S.A.
4. Bring additional unique events to Ennis to attract more visitors

Economic Goals and Actions

The Town’s residents need economic opportunities and stability to prosper in a constantly changing global economy. The Town’s economy has traditionally been based upon outdoor recreational tourism and agriculture with a significant number of jobs associated with the school and hospital.

Economic Goals	Economic Objectives
E-1: Ensure the business community has a stable workforce by facilitating affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify any regulatory barriers that exist for creating additional housing. b. Identify buildable lands located within and adjacent to the Town. c. Ensure the Town has adequate infrastructure capacity to support the construction of additional housing. d. Support grant applications meant to provide additional housing.
E-2: Ensure that the Main Street corridor remains a vibrant economic hub year-round.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a close working relationship with the Montana Department of Transportation. b. Ensure adequate year-round maintenance on Main Street. c. Provide wintertime snow and ice removal from parking along Main Street. Determine whether MTDOT has jurisdiction over the parking and if so, will allow the Town to provide the service but help cover the cost. d. Improve visibility for vehicle parking and pedestrian crossing. e. Provide another crosswalk across Main Street at its intersection with Third Street. f. Preserve small-town rural Western character of Main Street
E-3: Ensure that the 4 th of July Parade along Main Street continues to be a successful, profitable, and safe event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Standardize the Town’s approach to facilitating the 4th of July parade.
E-4: Ensure the Town has adequate financial resources to pay for the costs of upgrading and maintaining infrastructure, to hire and retain top quality staff, and to pay for other costs of operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider non-traditional funding options for infrastructure. b. Continue to pursue traditional funding sources such as grant and loans.

Objective	Action	Responsibility
E-1.a:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Town’s Zoning, Building, and Subdivision regulations to identify any appropriate changes that could be made to encourage additional housing. 	Town, residents, business owners, developers
E-1.b:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a vacant land and redevelopment inventory for properties located within the Town 	Town of Ennis
E-1.c:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to pursue grants and loans to upgrade the Town’s infrastructure. 	Town of Ennis
E-1.d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support grant applications meant to increase additional housing. 	Town of Ennis, Madison Housing Advisory Board, applicable housing non-profits
E.2.a through E.2. e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact MDT to schedule regular meetings to discuss transportation and pedestrian issues within the Town and to identify potential solutions. Add design guidelines and review to the Zoning Code for Main Street. 	Town of Ennis, Montana Department of Transportation, residents
E-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan for the 4th of July Parade that includes a timeline for tasks to complete to ensure temporary closure is approved by the Montana Department of Transportation, including signage that can be re-used each year and that coordination with Sheriff’s department is finalized etc. Develop a communication plan to address parade parking on Main Street well in advance of the parade. 	Town of Ennis, Chamber of Commerce, Montana Department of Transportation
E-4.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research potential funding options such as a Resort Tax or Impact Fees and gauge public support and viability of the options. 	Town of Ennis
E-4.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain an effective grant application system. 	Town of Ennis

Infrastructure and Public Facilities Goals and Actions

Well-maintained infrastructure is necessary to ensure the health and safety of Town residents and help promote economic growth. Infrastructure managed by the Town can range from water

Infrastructure Goals	Infrastructure Objectives
IPF-1: Ensure that the Town has safe, reliable, and efficient water and wastewater infrastructure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to upgrade the Towns water capacity, storage and distribution system. Complete any necessary upgrades to the wastewater treatment system.
IPF-2: Ensure that the Town’s wastewater treatment system meets or exceeds all accepted treatment standards.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce or eliminate wastewater discharge into the Madison River.
IPF-3: Ensure that the Main Street corridor is safe for vehicles and pedestrians.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Work with MDT to evaluate pedestrian movements along main street and identify potential improvements.
IPF-4: Reduce erosion and dust from the gravel portions of the Town’s street system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> As resources permit and as water and sewer infrastructure is replaced pave gravel streets.

IPF-5: Provide residents with enjoyable, safe and efficient park and recreation facilities, aimed at reducing the Town's carbon footprint and increase non-motorized travel.	a. Inventory and understand the community's parks and recreation needs.
IPF-6: Create a year-round gathering place for Town residents	a. Pursue the development of a Community Center with an indoor pool.

Objective	Action	Responsibility
IPF-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue needed improvements to the water and wastewater systems. Pursue additional water rights for the Town 	Town of Ennis
IPF-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the economic feasibility of higher wastewater treatment standards through the update of the next preliminary engineering report (PER) 	Town of Ennis
IPF-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact MDT to schedule regular meetings to discuss transportation and pedestrian accessibility issues within the Town and to identify potential solutions. 	Town of Ennis, Montana Department of Transportation
IPF-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Main Street businesses to identify accessibility issues in Town. 	Town of Ennis
IPF-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan and schedule for paving the remaining gravel streets in Town. 	Town of Ennis
IPF-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a parks and recreation inventory and master plan with focus on adding hiking and bicycle trails, improving playground equipment, restoring/maintaining existing parks. 	Town of Ennis
IPF-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure land for developing a scalable, phased community center facility. Identify and secure source(s) of funding for the design, construction, and operation/staffing of the facility. 	Town of Ennis

Local Services Goals and Actions

Quality of life for Town residents depends upon many things, particularly the provision of services such as law enforcement, fire protection, parks and recreation, healthcare, education, emergency services, and senior services.

Local Services Goals	Local Services Objectives
LS-1: Ensure that the contributions of the community's non-profits and service providers are acknowledged.	a. Identify appropriate ways to acknowledge those people who make Ennis the vibrant community it is.
LS-2: Provide efficient and effective law enforcement services.	a. Understand how law enforcement is being provided to the Town and identify any needed improvements. b. Ensure 24 hour a day and seven days a week service.

Local Services Goals	Local Services Objectives
LS-3: Maintain efficient and effective healthcare and educational services in Town.	a. Understand and prepare for the potential removal of the Big Sky area from the Ennis School District and Hospital District.
LS-4: Ensure that all Town residents have transportation to necessary services (medical, educational etc.)	a. Examine the potential to provide a public transportation for Town residents (bus, park and ride etc.) to Bozeman, Helena, and Butte.

Objective	Action	Responsibility
LS-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize an annual “thank you” event for the community’s non-profits and service providers. 	Town of Ennis
LS-2.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate how law enforcement is being provided and identify any steps to improve the service. 	Town of Ennis
LS-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a fiscal impact analysis and plan. 	Town, School District and Hospital District

Land Use and Natural Resources Goals and Actions

The Town would like to ensure that its natural values are enhanced and maintained while also ensuring that the community welcomes new residents and businesses. The Town also wants to provide a predictable and fair regulatory environment. In addition, any new development should occur in areas with limited natural hazards, such as flooding, and where it is efficient for the Town to provide services.

Land Use and Natural Resources Goals	Land Use Objectives
LU-1: Ensure that the Town’s Zoning, Building and Subdivision Regulations are fair, predictable and comply with state statute, and are effectively enforced.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the Town’s Zoning Code and Zoning map with an emphasis on encouraging workforce housing. Review and update the Town’s Subdivision Regulations with an emphasis on encouraging workforce housing. Review and update the Town’s Building Regulations.
LU-2: Ensure that new residential development can efficiently and safely be provided with Town services while protecting those environmental and community assets cherished by residents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate areas for future growth and annexation and that can realistically be served by the Town Preserve the natural viewshed for all residents
LU-3: Protect the Madison River riparian zone and productive agricultural lands adjacent to the Town.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide protective buffer zone between new development and the Madison River riparian zone and productive agricultural lands.
LU-4: Maintain the character of Main Street’s identity and character.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure new or renovated buildings along Main Street help maintain the rural western character that is a key part of the Town’s identity/character.
LU-5: Protect residents and visitors from potential natural and man-made hazards.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that vehicle traffic traveling through Ennis is safe and any potential hazards are mitigated. Follow adopted land use regulations such as the Town’s floodplain regulations. Find a solution for ice removal from parking areas on Main Street in the winter.
LU-6: Protect views of natural assets cherished by residents through Zoning review process for any new development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure views are protected during project review of new development and that open areas that allow views are maintained.

<p>LU-7: Increase greenspace beautification and stormwater facilitation by providing landscaping buffers for new development along the highways and entrances to Town.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Provide landscape buffer requirements in a Zoning code update.b. Encourage connectivity to the County via non-motorized or multi-modal means of transportation (e.g.. bike paths, walking paths, etc.)
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Objective	Action	Responsibility
LU-1.a – b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incrementally Update the Town’s Zoning Code, Building Regulations and Subdivision Regulations as needed. 	Town of Ennis
LU-2.a.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an annexation policy and service plan based upon the Future Land Use Map. 	Town of Ennis
LU-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Zoning Code and Zoning Map to consider protection of riparian areas and agricultural uses. 	Town of Ennis
LU-4.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the zoning code to include building design guidelines (building height, setbacks, stories, etc.) and review process for the Town and include examples of the types of design the Town would like to see 	Town of Ennis
LU-5.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a hazard mitigation plan for the Town with a focus on the most realistic hazards. 	Town of Ennis, Madison County DES

Housing Goals and Actions

Safe and maintained housing is essential for the well-being of each Town resident. The Town will work to identify ways to provide housing options for all residents.

Housing Goals	Housing Objectives
H-1: Provide affordable workforce housing options for all residents that consider both fixed and low-income households, as well as the needs of members of the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify any regulatory barriers exist for creating additional housing. b. Identify vacant lot/buildable lands located within the Town. c. Ensure the Town has adequate infrastructure capacity to support growth (water, sewer etc.) d. Support grant applications meant to increase additional workforce housing.
H-2: Promote the financial and physical capability (builders) to construct additional housing including workforce housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify potential developers willing to build affordable workforce housing in or near Town.
H-3: Understand the Town’s housing market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify the community’s needs, opportunities, and hurdles in relation to housing.

Objective	Action	Responsibility
H-1.a:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Town’s land use regulations to identify any appropriate changes that could be made to encourage additional housing. 	Town of Ennis
H-1.b:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a vacant land and redevelopment inventory for properties located within the Town 	Town of Ennis
H-1.c:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to pursue grants and loans to upgrade the Town’s infrastructure. 	Town of Ennis, applicable non-profits
H-1.d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support grant applications meant to increase additional housing. 	Town of Ennis

H.2.a.-b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise in regional and national real estate publications that small rural town has need for affordable workforce housing and seeks interest from LIHTC (low-income housing tax credits) developers. • Contact local, regional, and national banks with a presence in the area about inviting their LIHTC Equity Investor partners and LIHTC developer customers to consider building affordable workforce housing projects in Ennis or nearby. 	Town of Ennis, applicable non-profits
H.3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a housing inventory and assessment for the Town, including the impact of short-term rentals on the market. 	Town of Ennis



Sources



Sources

Introduction

1. Town of Ennis
2. National Weather Service
3. United States Census Bureau

4. Population Characteristics, US Census Bureau
5. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System
6. United States Census Bureau

Economy

1. US Census Bureau
2. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System
3. Montana Department of Commerce, Housing Division
4. Montana Department of Transportation

Local Services & Public Facilities

1. Town of Ennis
2. Montana Department of Transportation
3. Representatives of the Services or Facilities

Housing

1. American Community Survey, Census Bureau
2. Montana Department of Commerce, Housing Division
3. Montana Department of Revenue

Land Use

1. Town of Ennis
2. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
3. Montana Department of Revenue



Appendix A

Appendix A Subdivision Review

Definition of 76-3-608 Criteria

The Town of Ennis will use the following definitions, as referenced in the Town of Ennis Subdivision Regulations, which were originally adopted in 1996. The 2014 Growth Policy references 2002 regulations but the online code references 1996. *Please note that these definitions may need to be updated, when the Town updates its current subdivision regulations.*

- Agriculture: The practice of cultivating the ground, raising crops, and/or rearing animals.
- Agricultural Water User Facility: Any part of an irrigation system used to produce an agricultural product on property used for agricultural purposes.
- Local Services: All services and facilities that local government entities are authorized to provide.
- Natural Environment: The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic considerations.
- Public Health and Safety: A condition of optimal well-being, free from danger, risk, or injury for a community at large, or for all people, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.
- Wildlife: Living things which are neither human, nor domesticated nor plant.
- Wildlife Habitat: Place or type of site where wildlife naturally lives and grows.

Evaluation of Subdivisions Based Upon 76-3-608 Review Criteria

Subdivision applications and subdivision review by Town staff will include documentation and an analysis as to whether and to what extent the proposed subdivision will impact agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety as defined in this Growth Policy.

The Town will evaluate each proposed subdivision with regards to the expected impacts upon each of the criteria, and the degree to which the subdivision applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse impacts. This evaluation will be based upon the subdivision application, staff review, and reports and information gathered from public hearings and other sources of information as deemed appropriate.

Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the Town will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the Town of Ennis Subdivision Regulations, the Town of Ennis Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

Additional Review Criteria

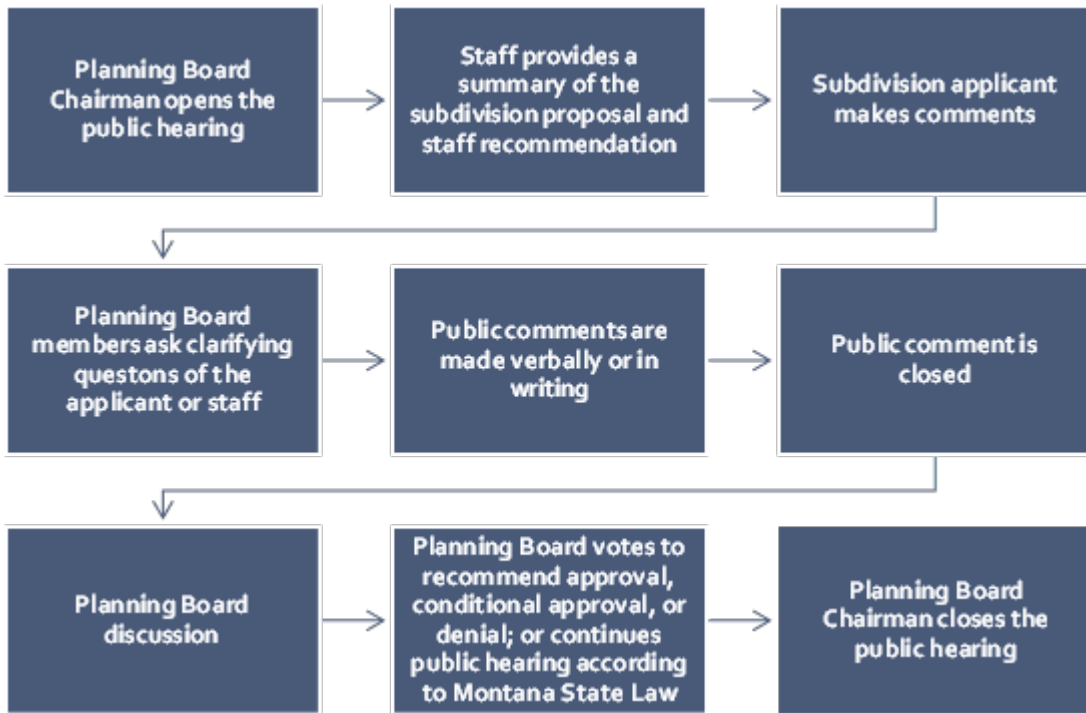
In addition to review for the primary review criteria discussed above, the Town also considers a subdivision's compliance with the survey requirements in MCA 76-3-401 through 76-3-406, the subdivision review procedure provided for in MCA 76-3-601, the provision of easements for the location and installation of any planned utilities to and within the subdivision, and the provision of legal and physical access to each parcel within the subdivision and required notation of that access on the applicable plat and any instrument of transfer concerning the parcel.

1. Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agriculture
 - a. The number of acres that would be removed from the production of crops or livestock. Acreage will be obtained from Department of Revenue tax records.
 - b. Removal of agricultural lands critical to the Madison County's and Ennis's agricultural base. Maps and land capability classifications developed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation shall be used to determine the agricultural significance of land.
 - c. It will be determined whether the un-subdivided parcel is part of a continuing farm or ranch unit by evaluating the use of the remainder and adjoining properties.
 - d. Potential conflicts between the proposed subdivision and adjacent agricultural operations shall be evaluated including:
 - Interference with the movement of livestock or farm machinery
 - Interference with agricultural production and activities
 - Maintenance of fences
 - Proliferation of weeds
 - Increased human activity
 - Harassment of livestock by pets
2.
 2. Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agricultural Water User Facilities
 - a. Location and proximity to a ditch, canal, headgate, sprinkler system, watering tank or developed spring shall be considered.
 - b. Potential subdivision nuisance complaints or problems due to agricultural water user facilities such as safety hazards to residents or water problems from irrigation ditches, headgates, siphons, sprinkler systems or other facilities shall be considered.
 - c. Ownership of water rights and the historic and current use of facility on the proposed subdivision shall be examined. Easements to protect the use of water user facilities on or accessed through a subdivision shall be considered.
 - d. Allocation of water rights within a subdivision shall be considered.
3. Evaluation Criteria for Effects Upon Local Services
 - a. Increased demand on services and need to expand services for a proposed subdivision:
 - Ambulance Service
 - Drinking water sources and distribution system
 - Fire Department
 - Parks and recreation
 - Police protection
 - Schools

- Solid waste management
 - Streets and stormwater management
 - Wastewater treatment and collection system
- b. Cost of services
 - Current and anticipated tax revenues
 - Cost of services for the subdivision
 - Evaluate the need for special improvement districts
4. Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Natural Environment
 - a. Expected alteration of any stream banks. Any draining, filling, or alteration of any wetland.
 - b. Needed cuts and fills on slopes as a result of road or building construction.
 - c. Significant removal of vegetation contributing to potential soil erosion or bank or slope instability.
 - d. Evaluate whether the subdivision design maintains significant open space.
 5. Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Public Health and Safety
 - a. Potential hazards to residents of subdivision from high voltage lines, high-pressure gas lines, highways, roads, railroads, or railroad crossings, nearby industrial or mining activity.
 - b. Evaluate existing activities taking place in the vicinity of the subdivision.
 - c. Evaluate traffic conditions.
 - d. Presence of natural hazards such as flooding, high winds, wildfire, or difficulties such as high-water table, expansive soils, or excessive slopes.
 6. Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
 - a. Location of subdivision streets with respect to critical wildlife areas such as big game wintering range, calving areas, migration routes, nesting areas, wetlands, or habitat for endangered or threatened species.
 - b. Expected effects of pets and human activity on wildlife.
 - c. Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the Town will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the Town of Ennis Subdivision Regulations, the Town of Ennis Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

Public Hearing Procedure for Subdivision Proposals

Public hearings on proposed subdivisions will be conducted by the Town Planning Board for subdivision proposals in the Town. Hearings shall be structured according to the following procedures:





Appendix B

Appendix B Community Survey Results

Town of Ennis Planning Board Analysis of 2024-2025 Ennis Growth Policy Survey Questionnaire Responses

In May 2024 and April 2025, the Ennis Town Planning Board sent out a survey questionnaire to the community for input to be used in updating the Ennis Growth Policy. The Board did so in order to gather information that would help the updated Growth Policy accurately reflect the community's vision, goals, and objectives. The questionnaire had 15 questions, 10 of which captured respondent feedback, and 5 of which captured respondent demographic information. There were 309 questionnaires completed and returned to the Board with community members' responses. Below is a summary of the community's responses followed by some general conclusions, all of which will be used to help guide the update to the Growth Policy.

Respondent Feedback

1a. In response to the importance of access to undeveloped land for recreation, 62% indicated Very Important, 28% indicated Somewhat Important, and 10% indicated Not Important. (297 respondents answered this question.)

1b. In response to having affordable workforce housing, 63% indicated Very Important, 30% indicated Somewhat Important, and 7% indicated Not Important. (297 respondents answered this question.)

1c. In response to having views of the land (mountains, rivers, lakes, ranchland), 82% indicated Very Important, 16% indicated Somewhat Important, and 2% indicated Not Important. (296 respondents answered this question.)

2. When asked to rank their top choices from among water system upgrades, sewage system upgrades, sidewalks/pedestrian infrastructure, road paving, and stormwater infrastructure, the following results were obtained from respondents (248 respondents answered this question.):

Choice of Improvement	Rank					Score
	1	2	3	4	5	
Water System Upgrades	55%	22%	15%	7%	1%	4.2
Sewage System Upgrades	10%	51%	18%	14%	7%	3.4
Sidewalks/Pedestrian Infrastructure	13%	16%	17%	36%	18%	2.7
Road Paving	17%	8%	27%	25%	23%	2.7
Stormwater Infrastructure	5%	3%	23%	17%	52%	1.9

3. When asked to rank their top eight biggest concerns about the future of Ennis from among housing

affordability, infrastructure capacity, water quality, schools, loss of town identity/character, law enforcement, health care services, and library/community center services, the following results were obtained from respondents (260 respondents answered this question.):

Area of Concern	Rank								Score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Housing Affordability	28%	12%	11%	12%	15%	11%	3%	8%	5.4
Infrastructure Capacity	17%	24%	20%	14%	10%	11%	3%	1%	5.7
Water Quality	15%	22%	14%	16%	11%	15%	6%	1%	5.4
Schools	8%	11%	13%	19%	14%	17%	14%	4%	4.5
Loss of Town Identity/Character	21%	9%	14%	6%	13%	15%	14%	8%	4.8
Law Enforcement	3%	5%	10%	8%	14%	15%	25%	20%	3.3
Health Care Services	7%	12%	11%	17%	13%	10%	21%	9%	4.2
Library/Community Center Services	1%	5%	6%	8%	10%	6%	14%	50%	2.6

4. In response to whether they are concerned that the town infrastructure such as water and sewer systems are currently at or near maximum capacity, 93% indicated Yes, and 7% indicated No. (303 respondents answered this question.)

5. In response to being willing to support developers being required to pay impact fees to support infrastructure improvements in Ennis, 97% indicated Yes, and 3% indicated No. (303 respondents answered this question.)

6. In response to whether protecting Agricultural and Ranching land around Ennis is important, 92% indicated Yes, and 8% indicated No. (299 respondents answered this question.)

7. When asked to rank the importance of the types of land use they would like to see in Ennis from among Commercial, Residential, Industrial, Agricultural, and Recreational, the following results were obtained from respondents (272 respondents answered this question.):

Type of Land Use	Rank					Score
	1	2	3	4	5	
Commercial	8%	14%	22%	51%	6%	2.7
Residential	31%	30%	33%	5%	1%	3.8
Industrial	0%	2%	8%	13%	77%	1.4
Agricultural	29%	23%	20%	20%	8%	3.4
Recreational	32%	31%	17%	12%	8%	3.7

8. When asked to indicate whether current local services are adequate from among Fire, Police, Ambulance, School, Healthcare, and Library, the following results were obtained from respondents (301

respondents answered this question.):

- a. Fire- 75% indicated Yes, and 25% indicated No.
- b. Police – 68% indicated Yes, and 32% indicated No.
- c. Ambulance – 88% indicated Yes, 12% indicated No.
- d. School – 67% indicated Yes, 33% indicated No.
- e. Healthcare – 74% indicated Yes, 26% indicated No.
- f. Library – 93% indicated Yes, 7% indicated No.

9. In response to how important it is to protect the waterways in and around Ennis, 92% indicated Very Important, 8% indicated Somewhat Important, and 0% indicated Not Important. (305 respondents answered this question.)

10. In response to how satisfied they are with the growth and changes in Ennis over the last 10 years, 1% indicated Very Satisfied, 29% indicated Satisfied, 50% indicated Not Satisfied, and 20% indicated Very Unsatisfied. (297 respondents answered this question.)

Respondent Demographic Information

11. 58% of respondents live within the Ennis town limits, and 42% live outside the town limits. (307 respondents answered this question.)

12. 91% of respondents own their home, and 9% rent their home. (306 respondents answered this question.)

13. 83% of respondents are year-round residents, 9% reside in the area between 6-12 months of the year, 5% reside in the area 3-6 months of the year, and 2% reside in the area less than 3 months of the year. (301 respondents answered this question.)

14. 57% of respondents are 61 years of age or older, 27% are 41-60 years old, and 16% are 26-40 years old. There were no respondents between the ages of 18-25. (298 respondents answered this question.)

15. 66% of respondents have lived in the Ennis area for more than 10 years, 22% for 5-10 years, and 12% for less than 5 years. (301 respondents answered this question.)

General Conclusions

Based on responses to questions 1a, 1c, 6, 7, and 9, there is a significant interest in having access to undeveloped land for recreation, having views/connection to natural scenery, protecting agricultural and

ranching land, allocating land use to agricultural and recreational purposes, and protecting waterways in and around Ennis. It is clear that the natural and agricultural/ranching features and resources of the Ennis area are very important to the community.

Based on responses to questions 1b, 3, and 7, there is significant interest in providing affordable workforce housing and making residential land use a priority.

Based on responses to questions 2, 3, and 4, there is significant concern about water and sewer systems being at or near capacity and needing water system upgrades as well as the importance of ensuring water quality.

Based on responses to question 3, it appears the greatest concerns about the future of Ennis from among housing affordability, infrastructure capacity, water quality, schools, loss of town identity/character, law enforcement, health care services, and library/community center services, are: infrastructure capacity, water quality, housing affordability, and loss of town identity/character. A number of the comments provided by respondents reiterate these as higher concerns. Schools and healthcare services are also meaningful concerns. Law enforcement and library/community center services appear to be of the least concern.

Based on responses to question 5, there is overwhelming support for requiring developers to pay impact fees to support infrastructure improvements.

Based on responses to question 7, there is the least interest in allocating land use to commercial and industrial purposes.

Based on responses to question 8, a significant majority consider current local services among Fire, Police, Ambulance, School, Healthcare, and Library to be adequate.

Based on responses to question 10, a significant majority are not satisfied or very unsatisfied with the growth and changes in Ennis over the last 10 years. Some of the comments provided by respondents cite specific reasons for the dissatisfaction.

Based on demographic information taken from the survey questionnaires submitted, 57% of respondents are over 61 years of age, 27% are 41-60 years of age, and 16% are 26-40 years of age. 91% are homeowners, 83% are year-round residents, and 66% have lived in the area over 10 years. In general, it therefore appears the respondents were well qualified to make meaningful choices, make important observations, and give valid opinions in response to the survey questionnaire, especially in relation to the 11-year period since the last Growth Policy report.