

# Columbus

## MONTANA



**COLUMBUS AREA GROWTH POLICY  
2024**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION:

A Master Plan was approved for the Columbus Area in 1993 and later updated in 1997. The 1999 Montana Legislature changed state law authorizing growth policies rather than master plans or comprehensive plans. The 2003 Montana Legislature amended the law again to recognize existing master plans as valid growth policies until October 2006. Columbus adopted the Columbus Area Growth Policy in 2005, and updated the Growth Policy in 2012. This document is intended to replace the 2012 Columbus Area Growth Policy. Baseline information from the previous documents were utilized and updated where more current information was available during the planning process.

The City-County Planning Board was established in 1967 by the Columbus Town Council and Stillwater County Commissioners and serves in an advisory capacity to these governing bodies. This Growth Policy has been prepared as part of the City-County Planning Board's responsibilities and on-going planning effort in the Columbus area.

A growth policy is not a regulatory document and does not confer any authority to regulate what is not otherwise specifically authorized by law or regulations adopted pursuant to the law. A governing body may not withhold, deny, or impose conditions on any land use approval or other authority to act based solely on compliance with an adopted growth policy.

After adoption of a growth policy, the governing bodies within the area covered by the growth policy are guided by, and must give consideration to, the general policy and pattern of development set out in the growth policy in the authorization, construction, alteration, or abandonment of public ways, public places, public structures, or public utilities; authorization, acceptance, or construction of water mains, sewers, connections, facilities, or utilities; and adoption of zoning ordinances or resolutions.

Citizen participation is encouraged throughout the development and implementation of the growth policy. Information regarding the planning process was provided through a variety of methods including news releases, community forums, and open public meetings. A public hearing on the proposed plan was held as required by statute, followed by a recommendation by the City-County Planning Board to the governing bodies. The plan will be presented to the Columbus City Council and Stillwater County Commissioners for formal adoption.

Community goals and objectives were reviewed in the process and revised to include additional guidance from the citizen participation process. Community goals and objectives are listed in Chapter 3. Implementation of this Growth Policy will be oriented to accomplish community development goals and objectives.

The City-County Planning Board recommended including the historical background of the area along with the required elements of a growth policy. The historical background information is in Chapter 4.

Existing characteristics and features of the jurisdictional area are described with maps and text within the document and are included in Chapter 5. This inventory includes land use, population data, an assessment of current housing needs, current economic conditions, available local services, Public facilities, and natural resources. Maps of the zoning districts, public lands, vacant lots, land values, water system, sewer system, transportation system, street light districts, and flood hazard areas, are also included.

Projected trends for the five to ten year life of the growth policy are provided for land use, population, housing needs, economic conditions, local services, and natural resources, as well as maps of future service areas are included in Chapter 6.

An implementation strategy for the Growth Policy, contained in Chapter 7, includes a description of policies, regulations, and implementation measures for public infrastructure. Additionally, there is a statement of cooperation and cooperation between the City and County; a statement on subdivision criteria; and a procedure for public hearings for subdivisions.

Designated areas where the governing bodies intend to authorize an exemption from any portion of the requirement of an environmental assessment in compliance with Montana Code Annotated 76-3-210 and review of the criteria in Montana Code Annotated 76-3-608 (3)(a) for subdivisions proposed to be annexed to the town of Columbus are identified in Chapter 8. A map of the recommended exempt areas is included.

This growth policy is intended to be reviewed every five years and updated to keep it current and flexible enough to meet changing community needs.

## CHAPTER 2: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

### 2.1 PURPOSE:

The purpose of citizen participation is to inform people of the planning process; solicit public input to identify issues, concerns, goals, objectives, and needs of the community; clarify and rank goals; evaluate alternative solutions; set priorities; and provide additional opportunities for public comment in the decision-making process and implementation of projects.

Public comments were solicited and accepted throughout the development of this document. A combination of techniques is suggested for citizen participation in the community planning process. Survey techniques include questionnaires, telephone surveys, interviews, and social media and traditional media-based input. Public information techniques included open informational meetings, community forums, and public hearings. The representative process techniques include input from advisory boards, elected and appointed officials.

### 2.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

- Information about the planning process was provided through a variety of methods including news releases, published reports and presentations to citizen groups.
- Public information meetings and open community forums were held in Columbus to gather input, clarify issues, hear concerns, goals or objectives, and rank goals and objectives.
- Sections of the draft growth policy were presented at City-County Planning Board meetings as they were developed. These meetings are open to the public and citizen participation was encouraged.
- Draft copies of the growth policy were made available to all interested groups or individuals upon request for their review and comments.
- A public hearing on the plan was held as required (76-1-602 MCA). Public comments were evaluated and changes made as necessary.
- The growth policy was presented to the City Council and County Commissioners. Their meetings are open to the public and are another opportunity for public participation.
- Formal adoption of the growth policy is by resolution of the governing body. The governing body may submit the proposed plan to the qualified electors of the jurisdictional area. The qualified electors may also adopt, revise or repeal a growth policy by initiative or referendum.
- Citizens will be informed of plan implementation and related projects through news

releases, public notices, meetings and/or hearings as needed.

- Public comments are reviewed and considered as required by law prior to implementing recommended projects.
- Formal action will be taken by the governing body before any project or recommendation is implemented.

## 2.3 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

A series of community meetings were held at the Stillwater County West Annex in 2024. Meeting dates were Wednesday, January 31, Tuesday, February 27 (in conjunction with the City-County Planning Board Meeting), and Thursday, March 21. A press release announcing the meetings was published in the Stillwater County News on January 11, 2024, and potentially interested individuals and groups were notified by email. There was adequate notification of meeting, though participation was small.

Smaller crowds had the benefit of allowing for a more robust discussion of issues facing the Columbus community. At each meeting planning staff gave a presentation on the history of the growth policy for the Columbus area and noted the benefits of having an up to date growth policy. The presentation included population and housing trends in Columbus and a variety of discussion prompts about Columbus, including public safety, education, commerce and industry, and workforce issues.

A word cloud of comments and items discussed demonstrated the major issues that arose at these meetings. As expected, housing was a major discussion item. Housing affordability, infrastructure capacity, and growth trends were issues that tracked closely with the discussion of housing. Tourism was another main topic of discussion, primarily around ways to encourage tourism and the opportunity to take advantage of tourists that pass through the area on their way to other places, such as Yellowstone National Park. Diversification, both of housing stock and commercial/industrial opportunities, was a common theme in these meetings. Also, the desire to see area trails expanded and used was discussed.



## 2.4 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING:

The City-County Planning Board held a public hearing on the Growth Policy on August 27, 2024. The following is a summary of public comments received and Board discussion: Staff gave an overview of the proposed Growth Policy and went through the document while noting proposed changes to the document since the 2012 version.

Mr. Robinette asked if the Growth Policy would allow the County to enter private property for the purpose of obtaining a new City well, which is one of the issues discussed in the proposed document. Staff reiterated that a growth policy is not a regulatory document and does not provide a right to trespass.

Mr. Allsup asked about annexation and how the annexation process would be impacted by the adoption of the growth policy. Staff noted that annexation is subject to state law and that any annexation proposal would be subject to the provisions of statute and not superseded by a growth policy.

There were general questions and discussion about proposed subdivisions in the City-County jurisdiction and the subdivision process.

Mr. Robinette asked about irrigation ditches and associated easements and how the issue is addressed in subdivision review. Staff noted possible conditions that can be placed on a subdivision to address the concern.

Mr. Sidwell, Planning Board member, noted that though it is not regulatory itself, a growth policy does have weight, and he is glad the public is participating. He noted that the purpose is not to tell the public what to do.

The City-County Planning Board jurisdiction and City zoning jurisdiction was discussed. Staff noted that there are enabling statutes that allow municipalities to administer zoning regulations outside of city limits with a city-county planning board that has representation from both the city limits and the extra-jurisdictional area.

# CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## 3.1 OVERALL GOAL:

To improve the public health, safety and general welfare of the community by planning for future development so that adequate public facilities and services are provided; the needs of agriculture, business, and industry are recognized; residential subdivisions are developed in an orderly manner to coordinate roads, storm drainage, water and sewer systems, solid waste facilities, utilities, emergency services, and parkland; and to promote the efficient and economical use of public funds.

## OVERALL OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage and use citizen participation in the planning process.
- Implement the Columbus Area Growth Policy through achievable policies, regulations, implementation measures, and strategies.
- Implement the capital improvements program, subdivision regulations, zoning ordinance, and floodplain regulations to encourage rational growth.
- Collect and analyze population and economic statistics to monitor trends and growth rates as data becomes available.
- Review the Columbus Area Growth Policy within five years and update at least every ten years to maintain current data through use of information from the decennial US Census.

## 3.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO ADDRESS PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL:

Maintain an efficient transportation network in the Columbus area which includes highways, county roads, city streets, alleys, sidewalks and trails, airport, and railroad crossings.

### TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain the transportation element in the capital improvements program (CIP), which includes streets, roads, alleys, sidewalks and trails and the airport, to keep it consistent with current conditions.
- Maintain an annual maintenance program for street repair. Include within the budget, provisions for street improvements and maintenance.
- Actively seek and apply for grant funding to assist in funding the capital improvements within the CIP.

- Include an element within the CIP to address repair and replacement of deteriorating sidewalks and the development of new sidewalks to provide a connected network within the Columbus area.
- Replace sidewalks that are in poor condition.
- Seek and apply for funding to continue the development of area trails, with a priority to connecting the trail from the cemetery along the Rapelje Road and Centennial Road.
- Update the Columbus Area Trails Plan.
- Continue to implement the Airport Layout and Airspace Plans, including airport influence area regulations.
- Request priority consideration from Montana Department of Transportation for improvements to the Rapelje Road, including an interchange as the town expands west and north.
- Explore options for establishing an additional railroad crossing.
- Explore ways to work with the railroad to protect public safety.
- Update the CIP every three to five years as projects are completed or as new projects are identified necessary.

## **WATER, SEWER and STORM DRAINAGE GOAL:**

To provide sewer, water, and storm drainage services to the residents of the Columbus in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

## **WATER, SEWER and STORM DRAINAGE OBJECTIVES:**

- Update the sewer, water, storm drainage facilities, city buildings, and equipment elements in the capital improvements program (CIP).
- Include within the budget a routine program for yearly testing, maintenance, repair and replacement of sewer system, the water system, and the storm drainage system components.
- Actively seek and apply for grant funding to assist in funding the capital improvements within the CIP.
- Update and implement plans for storm drainage improvements.
- Evaluate water and sewer hook-up charges and fees to insure they reflect current costs.
- Adjust water and sewer hook-up charges and fees for inflation if necessary. This will be done on an annual basis. The Public Works Department will recommend to the City Council what the fee should be.
- Evaluate storm drainage fees to ensure they reflect current costs for maintenance and repair of storm system components.
- Establish a systematic program for the phased reconstruction of streets, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters in Columbus.

## **PARKS & RECREATION GOAL:**

To provide adequate sites for parks to serve each neighborhood and the entire community with a variety of recreational opportunities.

## **PARKS & RECREATION OBJECTIVES:**

- Separate the budget for parks and the cemetery and consider the development of a cemetery district.
- Prepare and implement a plan for the development and maintenance of parks within the City of Columbus which includes a site plan for each park.
- Update the parks and recreation element in the capital improvements program (CIP).
- Keep Itch-Kep-Pe Park clean and maintained. This would be accomplished through possible user fees, the use of local civic groups, or other alternatives to assist the Public Works Department.
- Continue to pursue funds and opportunities to maintain and update Granite Peak Park, including establishment of a walking trail in the park. This would require coordination between the City, the Granite Peak Park Steering Committee, the Columbus School District, user groups, and other civic groups.
- Utilize the park dedication requirement of the subdivision review process to maintain, acquire, and improve, parks, to the extent allowed by statute (76-3-621, MCA).
- Seek and apply for funding to continue the development of area trails, with a priority to connecting the trail from the cemetery along the Rapelje Road and Centennial Road.
- Update the Columbus Area Trails Plan as necessary.
- Explore options for specialized parks management, including creating a parks department or a park district.

## **3.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO ADDRESS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES:**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL:**

Continue efforts on the retention and expansion of existing businesses, tourism promotion and diversification of the local economy.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES:**

- Participate in updates of the Beartooth RC D Economic Development District and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Give highest priority to retention and expansion of existing businesses and continue ongoing efforts on tourism promotion.

- Keep a current inventory of properties owned by the City with potential for commercial or industrial uses. These properties should be actively marketed for sale or lease.
- Continue to promote the development of strong local businesses.
- Encourage use of high-speed digital technology in the Columbus area.
- Identify available alternatives for revitalizing the Columbus central business district, including reconstruction of parking, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.
- Develop a program to implement preferred alternatives.
- Consider industrial expansion east of Columbus.
- Cooperate with the Stillwater County Economic Development Department on projects and programs that affect the Columbus area.
- Cooperate with Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism and assist with business development, retention, and expansion in the Columbus area.
- Support the development of natural resources in a responsible manner.

### **3.4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO ADDRESS GROWTH MANAGEMENT ISSUES:**

#### **GROWTH MANAGEMENT GOAL:**

Emphasize long range planning and implementation measures to address growth management issues.

#### **GROWTH OBJECTIVES:**

- Continue monitoring impacts created by the Stillwater Mine, including in-migrating families and production tax receipts.
- Keep user fees and impact payments at levels sufficient to cover costs.
- Require appropriate street improvements and connectivity when reviewing proposed subdivisions.

### **3.5 GOALS and OBJECTIVES FOR LAND USE and SUBDIVISIONS ISSUES:**

#### **LAND USE and SUBDIVISIONS GOAL:**

Provide for the orderly, efficient, and economical development of land and subdivisions in the Columbus Area to coordinate roads, storm drainage, water and sewer systems, solid waste facilities, utilities, emergency services, and parkland.

## **LAND USE and SUBDIVISIONS OBJECTIVES:**

- Review Columbus zoning ordinance on a periodic basis and keep the ordinance and zoning map current with legislative changes and community needs.
- Encourage high density residential development near town.
- Revise the City of Columbus Subdivision Regulations on a periodic basis to keep them current with state laws and community needs.
- City and County governments should adopt a policy which includes a method for determining payment for extension of capital facilities by subdividers as authorized in 76-3-510 A.
- Guide the City on the use of and calculation of fees and exactions to minimize the cost of new development to existing residents.
- Develop policies and guidelines to process annexation requests.
- Encourage annexation of wholly surrounded properties when water and sewer service can be extended to serve this area.
- Target service extension into areas north, east and west of Columbus that is recommended for future development and annexation to the City.
- Extend the zoning jurisdiction of the City, to the east and west, to encourage complimentary land uses as the City expands.
- Promote connectivity of collector streets when reviewing proposed subdivisions.
- Ensure and promote safe pedestrian routes to schools through the provision of sidewalks and trails when reviewing proposed subdivisions.

## **3.6 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO ADDRESS HOUSING ISSUES:**

### **HOUSING GOAL:**

Provide a variety of quality housing which meets the demand for housing and is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

### **HOUSING OBJECTIVES:**

- Encourage developers to provide a variety of housing including multi-family.
- Encourage the developers of mobile home parks to provide landscaping, buffering and improve the appearance of the parks.
- Ensure the City of Columbus Zoning Ordinance includes residential single family, multiple family and manufactured home districts.
- Inform and educate public of programs to retrofit old houses for energy efficiency.

### **3.7 GOALS and OBJECTIVES FOR OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:**

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT GOAL:**

Provide quality public facilities and services to the citizens of Columbus in the most efficient and economical manner possible.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES:**

- Update the capital improvement plan and prioritize the capital improvement projects with projects that can be implemented within a three to five year period
- Encourage the creation of a tree committee, as enabled under the City's tree ordinance, to promote the planting and maintenance of trees within the City.
- Create something like adopt a highway to keep Columbus area roads and streets clean.
- Evaluate the adequacy of existing Public Works Department facilities to serve the City's future needs.
- Encourage cooperation between the City and County to identify unmet community needs.

# CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## 4.1 Early History:

The Columbus area has a colorful history, including several notable events prior to the turn of the century. Much of the early history of this area is presented in "They Gazed on the Beartooths" by Jim Annin. Key events include the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806, the presence of the Crow Indian Reservation from 1851-1892, Cattle Grazing in the area beginning around 1870, the Yellowstone Trail being active 1875-1927, the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot established in 1882, the Columbus Post Office 1893, the Homesteading era 1892-1913 and the Sandstone Quarry north of Town that was active 1896-1906.

## 4.2 Town Development:

Sheep Dip was the original name of the town site in this area. The Town name was changed to Stillwater in 1883 and later changed again to Columbus in 1893. The Town of Columbus was incorporated in 1907 and was in Yellowstone County at that time. Major additions to the town included Lavelle's Addition platted in 1889, Stillwater Townsite platted in 1891, Countryman's First Addition platted in 1893, Hunter's Addition (1893), Countryman Second Addition (1899), Stillwater Second Addition (1899), Annex Addition (1902), Myer's & Nice Addition (1906), Norton Addition (1907), East Side Addition (1907), Columbus Fair and Park Assn. Addition (1907), Park Addition (1909), Myers Addition (1910), Knause & Becker Addition (1911), Norton's Courthouse Addition (1913), Goode's Addition (1913), Mountainview Addition (1914), Norton's Second Addition (1916), McDonald's 3rd Eastside Addition (1916), Odd Fellow's Addition (1918), School Addition (1918), Amended Annex Addition (1940), Hamlet Addition (1951), Stuart Addition (1947), Mountain View Annex Addition (1952), Second School Addition (1953), Carr Addition (1953), Huff Addition (1956), Industrial Sites (1959), Second Carr Addition (1970), Progressive Addition (1972), Beartooth Heights (1977), Apple Village (1978), Beartooth Heights 2nd Filing (1979), Town Pump Annexation (1985), Lower Itch-Kep-Pe Park Annexation (1989), Beartooth Heights 3rd Filing (1995), Two Rivers Addition (1996), Stillwater Heights (2001), Sandstone Estates 2<sup>nd</sup> Filing (2003), Fairway North (2004), Sandstone Estates 3<sup>rd</sup> Filing (2007), SCH Subdivision (2011), Sandstone Estates 4<sup>th</sup> Filing (2014), and Sandstone Estates 5<sup>th</sup> Filing (2017).

## 4.3 Columbus Area Development:

Stillwater County was formed in 1913 from parts of Yellowstone, Carbon and Sweet Grass Counties. The County Courthouse was built in 1920 and is on the National Historic Registry. In addition to numerous individual surveys, subdivisions located outside the Town of Columbus but within the jurisdictional area include Jurovich-See Subdivision (1980), Keyser Creek Estates (1995), Sandstone Estates (2001), High Ground Subdivision (2002), Parkins Minor Subdivision (2014), Viig Minor Subdivision (2015), and Rafter H Subdivision (2016).

### **Irrigation Ditches:**

The development of irrigation ditches in the Columbus area coincided with the homesteading

of the area. These ditches were important to the development of ranching and agricultural operations. Two significant irrigation ditches and companies include the Columbus Irrigation Project developed from 1906-1938 and Columbus Water Users Association in 1938.

### **Water System:**

A private water system served Columbus in the early 1900's until a wooden pipeline failed. The Town constructed its first water system in 1914 and has developed, expanded and upgraded the water system throughout the Town's history. Major water system developments include Columbus Water System constructed in 1914; Water Works Department established in 1915, the installation of cast iron pipes and hydrants, water line extensions from 1916 to present, water meters installed in 1921, water works pumps converted to electrical in 1918, chlorination installed in 1928, land purchased from Stillwater County for water storage tanks in 1932, well for municipal water supply in 1932, roof built on water storage tank in 1932, water works improvements (spiral weld pipe) in 1934, new water storage reservoir in 1926, valves installed in water system in 1937, fire hydrants installed in 1940, new water supply wells in 1945, cast iron water mains purchased from 1952-1956, new hook-ups to furnish pipe and tapping fee in 1959, asbestos cement pipe used in the 1960's, new water well on island in 1964, water quality testing used from 1964 to present, major water supply and storage improvements in 1973 and 1974, water meters installed in 1921 and from 1974-present, water availability charges in 1947, 1959, 1977, 1983, and 1985, capital improvements program established for water in 1979, rip-rap at island pump house in 1976, the Beartooth Heights water well drilled in 1985, the main line to storage tank replaced in 2004, the Heritage Park Well drilled in 2009, and a water main line replacement in 2022.

### **Sewer System:**

The initial sewer system for the Town was developed in 1916 and has been expanded along with the Town's growth. The old Imhof tank is still visible near the entrance to Itch-Kep-Pe Park. The present sewer lagoons were built in the early 1960's. Significant sewer system developments include the sewer system constructed in 1916, sewer collection system expansion from 1916-present, sewage tank installed in 1953, sewage lagoons and outfall sewer lines constructed from 1961-1962, east side outfall line constructed in 1971, third and fourth cells for sewer lagoons built in 1975, capital improvement program established for sewer in 1979, sewer lagoon piping modifications in 1987, sewer availability charges in 1968, 1977, 1983, and 1985; sewage treatment facility reconstruction in 1999, and a major main line replacement under the railroad tracks in 2023.

### **Solid Waste:**

Garbage collection and disposal was an issue for the Town as early as 1916. A "dump ground" was established near the Yellowstone River Bridge around 1920. The dump location was changed to a site between the airport and sewer lagoons in the late 1950's and eventually closed out in 1984. The County Refuse Disposal District was created in 1974. Garbage collection and disposal began in 1916 and the dump ground retaining wall was built along the river in 1928. After problems with the dump were noted in 1955, the dump grounds were moved to pit south of

the airport in 1958. Other significant developments in the town's solid waste system include obtaining license to operate refuse disposal area in 1966, the town being required to cover landfill every day beginning in 1968, the landfill fenced and junk vehicle issue beginning in 1968, burning stopping at landfill in 1969, the town landfill being classified as Class III in 1975, a garbage agreement signed between the Town and County in 1975, capital improvement program established for solid waste in 1979, town landfill closed in 1984, Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI) being contracted to collect solid waste from 1994-2008, and MacKenzie Disposal being contracted to collect solid waste from 2008-present.

### **Town Streets:**

The Town began working on its streets as soon as it was incorporated. Street work has progressed throughout the Town's history and continues today. Notable street issues included stormwater drainage, railroad crossings and parking in the business area. The Town began grading streets in 1907, graveling streets in 1912, and paving streets in 1917. Pike Avenue drainage issues were noted in 1923 and continue today. Concerns over railroad crossings were expressed in 1911, 1916, 1926, 1934, and 1977. Business area parking issues were noted in 1911, 1914, 1929, 1935, 1947, and 1953. Traffic signs were installed in 1931 and speed limits established in 1935. A street superintendent was hired in 1944. Drainage problems were again noted in 1948 to present. Addressing was established in 1950-1951, and street signs were installed in 1952.

### **County Roads:**

The County began working on roads in the Columbus area immediately after the County was formed. Some of these roads predate the formation of Stillwater County. Work on the County roads has continued throughout the County's history. Dates when specific roads were declared a County Road are listed below along with significant developments. Centennial Road 1892, 1914, 1963, 1970; Keyser Creek Bridge originally built on Centennial Road in 1935 and rebuilt in 2005.

### **State Highways:**

Work on the state highways in the Columbus area was noted as early as 1915 and again in the 1930's. The interstate was built around 1970. Yellowstone Trail was paved by State in 1919, reconstruction of U.S. Highway 10 in 1931, Columbus-Absarokee Highway construction in 1915, 1935, and 2008; Yellowstone River Bridge built in 1915, replaced in 1956, and repaired in 1995; Rapelje Road construction in 1892, 1914, 1963, 1970; Keyser Creek Bridge on Highway 10 built in 1931 and replaced in 2004; I-90 Interchange issue 1965-1968; Interstate construction 1968-1972; and reconstruction of 9th/Pike/South Pratten in 1995.

### **Street Lights:**

The earliest street lights date back to around the time the Town was incorporated and continue today. Two light districts were established in the 1950's and two more in the 1970's as noted

below. Street lights were installed in Town in 1911. The street light system expanded from 1912-1970; Montana Power Company (MPC) supplied power in 1920; MPC replaced 100 W bulbs with 150W in 1943; Light Districts #38 and #39 1953; MPC changed street lights to Mercury Lights in 1963; Light District #40 formed in 1971, and Light District #41 formed in 1976.

### **Sidewalks, Curb and Gutters:**

Sidewalk, curb and gutter work also dates back to around the time the Town was incorporated in 1907. The most notable issue related to these improvements is that almost all of this work was paid for with special improvement districts (SIDs) or by private individuals. Sidewalk improvements began in 1910. Sidewalk improvements utilized SID's from 1911-1927; curbs and gutter improvements used SID's from 1916-1928; location and grade of sidewalks were required to be established by an engineer in 1949; sidewalk replacement on Pike Avenue was completed in 1956, sidewalk curb and gutter work in Town from 1961-1962; sidewalk, curb and gutter standards developed in 1972, and SID's were suggested for replacement of sidewalks in 1978. Sidewalk improvement projects continued using grant funds in 1996. Additional curb, gutter and drainage improvement projects were contracted in 2003 and finished in 2004.

### **Public Buildings:**

#### **Town Facilities:**

The Town Water Works Department was established in 1915. The original Town Hall was purchased in the 1930's after Stockman's Bank went out of business during the Great Depression. The old Town Hall was utilized from 1931-1999. Fire halls were later added onto the Town Hall as noted below. The fire hall was established in 1911, Water Works Department built in 1915, Town leased the old county jail in 1917, Fire Hall added to north side of old Town Hall in 1946 and 1957, old Town Hall remodeled in 1955, Town Hall heating and ventilation system improvements in 1968, and the original City Shops building was constructed in 1984. The new City Hall was constructed in 1999 and a new fire hall built in 2002. A new public works building was built in 2012.

#### **County Facilities:**

The County jail and shops were the initial County facilities, followed by the construction of the Courthouse in 1920. The original fairground buildings were built in 1963 and the current county shops were built in 1975. The old County jail was built in 1913; machine shed (shops) built in 1916; County Courthouse built in 1920; Library Association formed in 1923; Fairgrounds buildings built in 1963, remodeled from 1967-1968, Leuthold Building constructed in 2011; Courthouse roof repaired in 1973; Sheriff's office remodeled in 1979; Courthouse 2nd floor remodeled in 1980; Norton House listed on National Register of Historic Places in 1982; Fairgrounds parking lot built in 1984; Courthouse foundation underpinnings installed in 1984; Courthouse parking lot rebuilt in 1986; Courthouse 1st, 3rd, and 4th floor remodels from 1988-1991; Courthouse masonry repairs 1995-1996; and Courthouse roof replacement 1996. The County acquired and remodeled the West Annex (old hospital) using a brownfields grant and

also acquired and renovated the South Annex in 2013 through 2023. The County Civic Center and fairgrounds relocation occurred in 2023.

### **Hospital:**

The original Stillwater Hospital operated from 1915-1941. The County operated the hospital and nursing home from 1941 to 1961. A new Hospital was constructed in 1952 and a Hospital Association was formed in 1961. A twenty-year general obligation bond paid for Hospital improvements from 1968-1988. The Copulos Trust was established 1975. Major additions to Hospital were built in 1970. Long term care units were added in 1987 and ten more rooms converted in 1993. A radiology unit was added to the clinic in 1989. The Meadowlark assisted living facility was added in 2000. A 2004 community assessment was performed to determine future needs for the hospital. In 2010 the Hospital purchased land on the northeast part of Town for a new hospital, which was completed in 2012.

### **Schools:**

The first schools were established in the late 1800's. Both the High School and elementary school building were replaced in the mid 1900's, and have had recent additions. A log school house was built in 1890; the first school building was utilized from 1899-1970; old High School from 1918-1953; land purchased for athletic field in 1936; WPA repaired the auditorium in 1938; Columbus High School built in 1952; Columbus Elementary School built in 1960; five room Chapter 4: Historical Background 4-5 addition at elementary school in 1963 new bus barn in 1973; new roof, multipurpose room, and classrooms added to Elementary School in 1989; new science room and classroom additions at High School in 1989. Major additions to the high school building were added in 1999 through 2000, including a middle school, new gym, classrooms and bus barn. The Elementary School was renovated, and additions completed in 2021.

### **Industrial Development:**

The industrial development of the area is relatively recent, beginning in the 1950's. An important feature is the platting of the industrial sites in 1959. Timberweld Mfg. was established in 1957; Mouat Industries in 1957; Mouat site clean-up occurred from 1967-1968, and 1990-1995; Schessler Cement in 1971; Chrome stockpile from 1975-1980; Montana Silversmith's in 1976; Stillwater Mining Company Smelter in 1990 and Base Metals Refinery in 1996, and the expansion of these facilities from 1998 through present.

### **Utilities:**

Early records indicate electrical and telephone service was in the Columbus area by 1905. A gas distribution system was constructed in 1930. Improvements to these utilities have continued.

## **Telephone:**

The Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Company established a telephone exchange in Columbus in 1905. A magneto switchboard was installed to serve the community in 1907. The Mountain States Telephone Company was formed and served 148 telephones in Columbus in 1911. An improved magneto switchboard connected in 1915 to serve 100 telephones. Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph probably acquired about 1915 or 1916. A common battery switchboard was installed in 1938. Montana's largest single telephone communications project went into operation with the inauguration of the radio-relay microwave system from Denver to Great Falls. Columbus is located on the main "backbone" route with a tower situated about 15 miles northeast of the city in 1957. The Columbus exchange was converted to dial service and Direct Distance Dialing. The exchange served 764 telephones at the time of conversion in 1963. Numerous long distance options are available. The 911 Emergency Communication System was installed in 1991 and enhanced 911 services became operational in 2004. Electronic switching system was installed in 1992. Cellular phone service has been available in the Columbus area since 1994.

## **Gas distribution:**

The gas distribution system was installed in 1930, construction of new transmission line in 1936, and pumping station and gas lines upgraded in 1991.

## **Communication systems:**

Cable T.V. was installed in 1970. Digital satellite systems became available in 1995 followed by internet and broadband services. The area is still underserved with high speed internet and there have been discussions about expanding the service.

## **Airport:**

The history of the Columbus Airport dates back to the 1930's when land was acquired for this purpose. The runway was first oiled in the 1940's and later paved in 1960. Other major developments in the airport include: land for airport purposes acquired (1933), airport runway work done with County assistance (1945), Airport Manager appointed 1945, hangar space leased (1945), Army given permission to land at the airport (1946), Airport property graded and seeded (1946), runway oiled (1947-1948), sale of property not needed for Airport (1949), air show sponsored by Jaycees (1949), airport regulations established (1952), runway improvements proposed for Airport (1954), County participation in Airport project (1955), additional Airport property acquired (1956), airport property used for Industrial Sites (1958), Airport loan application (1959), Joint City-County Airport proposed (1960), land exchange on some Airport property (1960), Airport runway paving and Lighting Project (1961), flight pattern and basic airport rules adopted (1961), Airport runway resealing (1971-1977), Rickman Aircraft Building (1978), Airport Capitol Improvements Fund Established (1983), Joint City-County Airport Board created (1991), Airport Master Plan approved (1992 with updates as needed), Airport reconstruction (1997-2003), Pilot lounge constructed (2007), Animal Control Fence built (2008), and snow removal equipment acquired and storage building constructed (2010-2011). Hangar

development continues and pavement maintenance has been performed as needed. There are current plans to develop T-Hangers for lease to generate additional revenue for the airport.

## **Parks and Recreation:**

The Town of Columbus has a long history of involvement with Parks and Recreation. A park levy was assessed for almost 50 years to pay for the development and operation of a Parks and Recreation Program. A Parks Commission was established in 1917; Pike Avenue Park Plan and landscaping (1920); park levy (1922-1969); mower purchased and band stand constructed (1922); trees and fertilizer purchased for Parks in (1923); parkland purchased (at Itch-Kep-Pe location) (1925); park trees planted (1929); park improvements-Swimming Pool Grant (1935-1937); completion of swimming pool (1938); golf club allowed to use portion of Airport Property (1939); Swimming Pool Committee formed (1943); tables and benches installed in Pike Avenue Park (1952); playground equipment purchased for park (1954); baseball backstops built (1957); sprinkler system for City Park (1957); Kiwanis Ice Skating Rink (1959); swimming pool heating system (1964); swimming pool renovation (1966); boat ramp built on Yellowstone River in 1965; Itch-Kep-Pe Park improvement project (1965-1968); Golf Course improvement project proposed in 1966; basketball and tennis courts paved at City Park in 1967; additional land purchased for Itch-Kep-Pe Park in 1967; charge for overnight camping \$1 in 1969; playground equipment installed in City Park by Jaycees (1969); swimming pool repairs (1969-1970); tables, grills and brush clearing in Itch-Kep-Pe Park (1970); Stillwater Golf Association agreement for Land Purchase in 1970; grant payment for ball fields in 1972; baseball fields construction (1974-1978); Golf Association Clubhouse built in 1975; horse shoe courts at City Park (1978); Beartooth Park Plan (1979); capital improvements program for parks established (1979); Itch-Kep-Pe Park rip-rap project (1983); swimming pool filtration system improved (1983); Itch-Kep-Pe Park redevelopment by Kiwanis (1986-1994); Granite Peak Park project development (1991-1999); Sherwood Park dedicated in 1997; Granite Peak Park Master Plan developed (2000); Sherwood Park improved (2009); and soccer and softball fields added to Granite Peak Park (2011). A trail plan was developed in 2008 and multi-use trails have been developed through grant funds and local matching funds. Trails now connect the cemetery to downtown, south to Itch-Kep-Pe Park, and north to Granite Peak Park, with plans to extend the trail system as funds become available. Columbus Ice Rink, a volunteer organization, has operated an ice rink since 2021, initially at Granite Peak Park and since 2023 at the Stillwater County Civic Center.

## **Cemetery:**

The original cemetery was located along Sheep Dip Road north of Town. There was a Cemetery Association from 1921 through 1931 before the Town began to operate the cemetery. Tombstones date from 1895-present. Important events for the cemetery include, a Cemetery Association established (1921-1931), Columbus Cemetery Plat (1922), municipal cemetery fund and grave permits established in 1931, Cemetery Sexton hired in 1934, irrigation ditch for Cemetery (1941), Cemetery/Superintendent of parks hired in 1945, mower purchased for cemetery in 1950, Cemetery roads developed 1951, map of Cemetery prepared (1951), Cemetery mapped in 1966, Cemetery irrigation system developed in 1979, and Mountain View Cemetery registered as a historic place in 1983.

## **Law Enforcement:**

The history of law enforcement goes back to the beginning of the Town and County. The Town utilized a night watchman until the 1950's when a Police Department was established. City and County Law Enforcement was consolidated from 1975 through 1983. The old jail was established in 1911 and a Sheriff's Department was formed in 1913. The Town leased old jail in 1917; dog control issues were identified in 1913, 1926-1929, 1964, 1972, 1979, and 1984-86; Town Night Watchman hired (1932-1949); Town Marshal employed (1950); Police Commission appointed (1954); Police Policy Agreement in 1973; City-County police consolidation in 1975; deconsolidation of City-County Law Enforcement in 1983; Stillwater Alternatives program established in 1990; animal control building constructed in 1999; the police reserve was established in 2004; and the Search & Rescue building was completed in 2004.

## **Fire Protection:**

Fire Protection also dates back to the early days of Town's incorporation. Fire hydrants have been available since the construction of the Town's water system. Fire alarms were installed (1910, 1933, 1943); fire trucks purchased from 1911 to present, fire regulations initiated in 1915, fire hall construction took place in 1911, 1932, 1946, 1957 and 2002; fire hydrants (1915, 1940-present), and Columbus Rural Fire District Created in 1990. A New fire hall was constructed on East Pike Ave. in 2002.

## **Planning:**

A joint City-County Planning Board was established in 1967. The Board's initial concerns were dealing with water and sewer infrastructure and planning issues. During the 1970's the Planning Board began processing subdivisions. Throughout the 1980's the Board dealt with subdivisions, public facilities, economic development and mining impact issues. A Comprehensive Area Plan was approved in 1970; Needs Assessment completed in 1983, 1986 and 1989; City-County Planning Jurisdictional Area established in 1984; Hard Rock Mining Economic Impact Plans adopted in 1985, 1988 and 1998; Columbus Certified Communities (1987), and Overall Economic Development Plan adopted in 1989. Columbus Area Master Plans were adopted in 1993 and 1997. A Columbus Area Growth Policy was adopted in 2004 and last amended in 2012. The City-County Planning Jurisdictional Area was revised in 1996.

## **Zoning:**

A Zoning Ordinance has been in place in Columbus for over 50 years. The first Zoning Ordinance was developed from 1950-1953, Trailer Court Ordinance (1963), Revised Zoning Ordinance (1967), Zoning Committee Formed (1969), the Planning Board prepared a zoning map in 1970, zoning variances and hearing procedures established in 1973, mobile home court zoning (1976), Council approved zoning outside town limits in 1978, Zoning Ordinance rewritten (1997), and Zoning Ordinance updated in 2004 with occasional amendments since then.

## **Subdivision Regulations:**

Subdivision guidelines and regulations have been in place in the City and County for nearly 50 years. These regulations have been amended from time to time as changes in state law required. The Town and County had joint regulations until 2022, when the jurisdictions adopted separate regulations to better address unique needs. The first Subdivision Guidelines and Regulations (1970); Amended Guidelines and Regulations (1973); the Subdivision Regulations have been amended regularly to reflect statutory changes.

## **Flooding and Floodplain Regulations:**

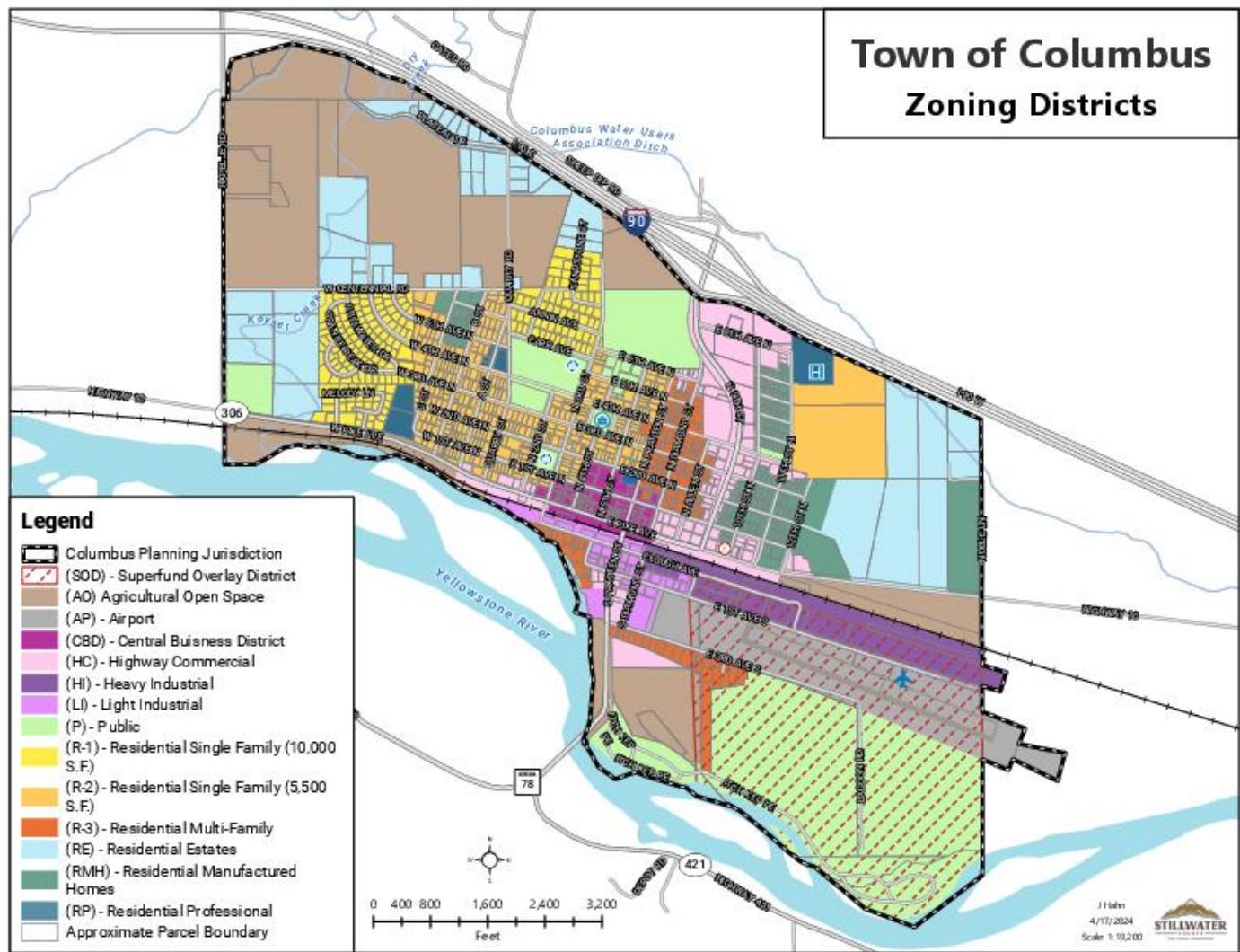
Occasional flooding has been documented in the Columbus area, most notably on Keyser Creek, the Stillwater River, the Yellowstone River and other tributaries since the 1930's. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) studied flood hazards in the early 1970's and Stillwater County has had floodplain regulations since 1975. The Town of Columbus adopted floodplain regulations in 1997. Major Floods occurred in 1937, 1943, 1944, 1948, 1967, 1970, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1997, 2011 and 2022; SCS flood hazard studies in 1973; Floodplain maps for the Yellowstone River were approved in 1984. Map amendments are processed as needed and there is currently a project in place to re-map the floodplain after the June 2022 flood. The re-mapping process is expected to take several years.

# CHAPTER 5: EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS & FEATURES

## 5.1 LAND USES:

### INTRODUCTION

There is a diversity of agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and public land uses in the Columbus area. The zoning districts map shows the geographic distribution of land uses in the Columbus area.



### AGRICULTURAL

Nearly 27% of the city-county planning jurisdictional area is zoned as agricultural open space. There is some irrigated cropland, hay land and rangeland in the planning jurisdictional area around Columbus. Primary crops in the Columbus area are hay, wheat and corn. Some cattle,

sheep, and horses are raised in the Columbus area on agricultural lands.

## **RESIDENTIAL**

### **Jurisdictional Area:**

Over 40% of the city-county planning jurisdictional area is zoned for residential use. There are several subdivision plats and over twenty individual tract developments outside the city limits and within the planning jurisdictional area. Most of these developments are located north of Centennial Road. Many of these tracts within the planning jurisdictional area were established through exemptions from the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, such as family transfer surveys.

### **SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

Over 12% of the city-county planning jurisdictional area is designated for single family residential use. Single family residential use areas are well delineated. However, other uses are interspersed in the residential area as a result of past variances, conditional use permits or zone changes.

Full development of existing subdivisions and additions to the townsite could provide land for the projected future growth. There are few vacant lots within the town that could be developed for single family homes. A lack of developable lots has been a long-term concern and may have contributed to the market for residential subdivision in the area.

The most logical areas for future growth of single family residential use within the City's current jurisdictional area are north of town, between Centennial Road and Interstate-90 and east of town. Both of these areas would need to be annexed into City limits when subdivided.

The Pioneer Landing Subdivision, north of Centennial Road, was conditionally approved by the City Council in 2022 and if completed would provide 83 single family lots, 62 townhouse lots, and three commercial lots, as well as open space and parkland areas. This subdivision is proposed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) which will act as a mixed-use overlay zone.

### **RESIDENTIAL MANUFACTURED HOMES**

The East Side Addition to Columbus has developed as manufactured and mobile home uses in addition to the five established mobile home courts in the Columbus area. The Valley Vista mobile home court is located at C Street and Centennial Road and has 14 units. Another six unit mobile home court is located on Fifth Avenue between B and C Streets. A seven unit mobile home court is located on Fourth Avenue and Diamond Street. A & M Trailer Court is on Twelfth Street east of town and currently has ten units.

The East Side Addition could also provide an area to absorb future development, but the lack of fully developed streets with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, as well as a known soils problem, could influence the immediate development of that area. Presently, this section of the city is developing into an area that will serve to meet the need for manufactured home spaces and lots. The Two Rivers Subdivision on the east side of town contains 63 residential lots.

## **MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

A limited amount of land is presently being used for multifamily residential purposes. Approximately 3% of the jurisdictional area is zoned specifically for multi-family use. Only six major multifamily sites were identified in the town.

The Edgewater Apartments are located at First Avenue South and Fifth Street and have 12 units. Columbus Apartments have eight units for senior citizens and are located at Fourth Avenue and Pratten Street. Pinecrest Apartments are located at Second Avenue and Second Street and have four units. Sage Apartments have 12 units and are located on Second Avenue and Allen Street. There are also fourplexes located on B Street between Second and Third Avenues and another one on Pike and Third Street. Additional multi-family units were built since 1997 on Pike Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets and in the east side of town on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Goode's Addition and Norton's Second Addition could also serve future multi-family residential development, but this area lacks the infrastructure and amenities that will be necessary to attract quality development at this time. The development of more fully developed streets, proper drainage, a traffic circulation plan and the annexation of islands that are not within the town limits could result in these areas becoming residential growth areas for the City of Columbus.

## **COMMERCIAL**

Commercial land uses comprise more than 6% of the land in the jurisdictional area. These uses are primarily located along Pike Avenue, First Avenue North, Sixth (Pratten) Street and Ninth Street. Since Pike Avenue was once the main highway (Old Highway 10) through town, most of the retail and traditional commercial uses, servicing both the local population and the traveling public are located along this route. There are some vacant areas along Pike Avenue and Ninth Street that could service future commercial growth.

The development of the Town Pump, Super 8 Motel, McDonalds and other commercial enterprises along Ninth Street and Eighth Avenue has established this route as a highway commercial zone. The area around the Town Pump is large enough to provide patron parking, and is convenient to the traveling public, being located just off of Interstate-90.

The Apple Village area has experienced additional commercial growth with a variety of shops built since 1997. The area around the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street has also seen commercial development.

Vacancy rates for commercial property are generally low, though there are vacant areas and storefront that could be utilized for additional commercial services.

## **INDUSTRIAL**

The Columbus industrial area is mostly located along First Avenue South. It is adjacent to the railroad tracks, a sewage trunk line, and the airport. The railroad tracks have served as a boundary to delineate use areas. Almost all of the heavy industrial uses are located south of the railroad tracks.

Industrial usage comprises approximately four percent (4%) of the total platted land in the City of Columbus. A differentiation has been made between light and heavy industrial uses in the current zoning regulations.

Each block in the heavy industrial zone encompasses approximately two (2) acres, which are large industrial sites for a town the size of Columbus. A portion of the industrial area was previously designated as an EPA Superfund Site (Mouat Industries site). This site was cleaned up in 1994, and is now partially delisted.

The largest occupant of the industrial site has been the Stillwater Mining Company precious metals smelter and base metals refinery. Seven blocks at the east end of the industrial sites were purchased for these facilities. The company also purchased a site east of the airport from the City for central warehouse purposes.

The City's new public works facility is located in the industrial area. Construction of this facility was completed in early 2012.

The City has studied potential future industrial expansion on the east side of the jurisdictional area, but this land is still currently privately held and not zoned for industrial purposes. There has been some minor re-zoning approved in the area to assist with expansion of commercial businesses including eateries.

## **PARKS and RECREATION**

A substantial amount of land within the City of Columbus is utilized for recreational purposes. It is estimated that approximately twenty percent (20%) of the total land within the City limits is used for recreation. Baseball fields, a golf course, a swimming pool and a general use parks account for most of the acreage.

The main sites for recreational use are the Stillwater Golf Course, Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Heritage Park, Columbus Railroad Park, Beartooth Park, Granite Peak Park and Sherwood Park. It is estimated that these sites encompass over 250 acres, with the golf course containing nearly 100 of those acres.

A master plan has been prepared for Granite Peak Park, which is administered by the Granite Peak Park Steering Committee.



### **Granite Peak Park**

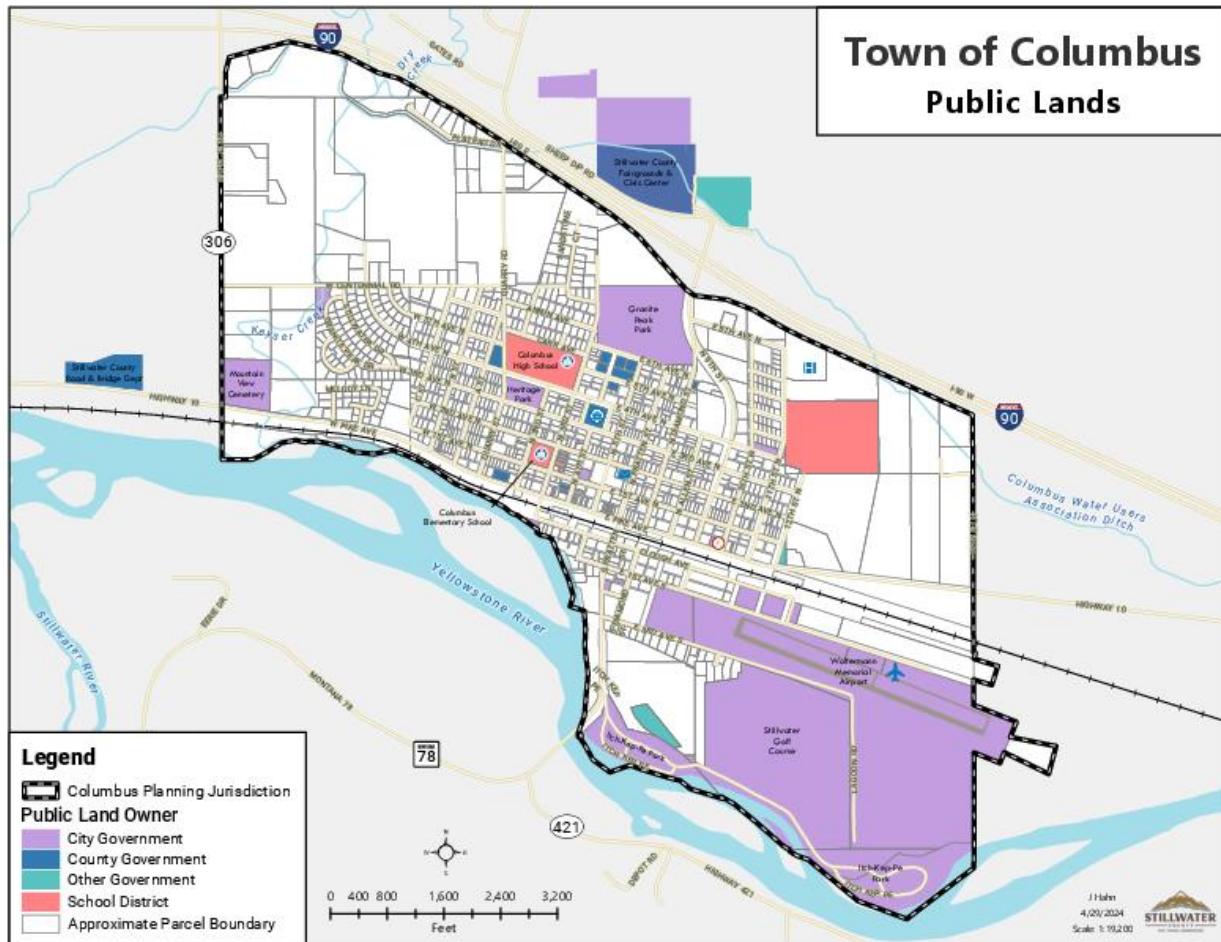
The following is a listing of recreational opportunities within the City of Columbus:

- A nine-hole golf course with a driving range, putting green and clubhouse.
- A track and football field at the high school.
- Two tennis courts at the city park.
- A municipal swimming pool.
- Children's playground equipment at Heritage Park and Sherwood Park.
- Two basketball courts at Heritage Park.
- Picnic tables and benches at Heritage Park and Sherwood Park
- Itch-Kep-Pe Park, which is used as a general recreational area along the river, contains a boat ramp, as well as 49 campsites with tables and camp fire grills.
- The grade school also provides one basketball courts and a variety of playground equipment.
- The high school provides facilities for a variety of athletic and civic events.
- Three baseball fields, a softball field, a soccer field and a walking/jogging path on the north side of town at Granite Peak Park.

- Multi-use trail with asphalt surfacing or improved sidewalk connects the cemetery, downtown, Itch-Kep-Pe Park, and Granite Peak Park. Expansion of the trail system is planned depending on funding.

## PUBLIC LANDS

Over 24% of the city-county planning jurisdictional area is publicly owned land, including ownership by State of Montana, Stillwater County, City of Columbus and Columbus Schools. The public land map shows the location of public land within the city-county planning jurisdiction in relation to private land.



## City Property:

The City of Columbus owns a substantial amount of public land use within the city limits. This can be attributed to the land east of the airport and tracts owned by the city, county and school district.

City owned land includes the following properties:

- New City Hall (Deed #295593). Block 1, Lots 19-24 Oddfellows Revised Addition.
- Old City shops (Deed Book 11 pg. 285). Block 11, Lot 2 Original Townsite.
- Industrial Sites (Deed Book 31 pg. 397). Blocks 3-4, part of Block 5.

- Park Addition, Block 9, lots 6-10, (Deed Book 31 pg. 396).
- Airport Property:
  - < SE1/4 NW1/4, NE1/4 SE1/4, Fraction of NE1/4 Section 27, T2S, R20E
  - < Block 6, lots 1-6, Block 7, lots 1-24, Block 12, lots 1-20
  - < Block 13, lots 1-24 Park Addition, Columbus
  - < Block 8, lots 1-24 Park Addition, Columbus
  - < Block 8, lots 1-24 and Block 11, Lots 1-24 Park Addition (Deed Book 31 pg. 397, Book 35 pg. 354 and Misc. Book 20 pg. 386).
- Itch-Kep-Pe Park (Deed Book 11 pg. 224, Book 75 pg. 277, Book 99 pg. 174)
  - < Lot 4 Section 27, T2S, R20E, COS 257466 (Upper Park)
  - < Lot 1 Section 34, T2S, R20E, COS 257465 (Lower Park)
- Cemetery: SW1/4 Section 21 T2S R20E Plats 55784 and 208905 (Deed Book 30 pg.530, Book 31 pg.395, Book 78 pg. 930 and Book 83 pg. 266).
- Heritage Park: Block 2, Knause & Becker Addition, Columbus Plat 30415 Kern's Acre and Norton's Fraction (Deed Book 27 pg. 165, Deed Book 32 Pg. 355 and Deed Book 35 pg. 360).
- Beartooth Park: NE1/4SW1/4 Section 21, T2S, R20E, Plat 225845 (Deed Book 87 pg. 784).
- Golf Course: Part of NW1/4SE1/4, Part of NE1/4SW1/4, part of Lot 2, part of Lot 3 Section 27, T2S, R20E Plat 180647 and 193507 (Deed Book 63 pg. 395 and Book 70 pg. 305).
- Sewer Lagoons: part of NW1/4 SE1/4, NE1/4 SE1/4, Lot 1 and part of Lot 2 Section 27, T2S, R20E as shown on plat 180647 (Deed Book 63 pg. 395).
- Granite Peak Park, 32.5 acres (Quit Claim Deed #302069). Fraction of NW1/4 NW1/4, Section 22, T2S, R20E.
- Fire Hall, Lots 1-6 Block 2 East Side addition, City of Columbus and Fire District #3,
- Columbus City Park is located on Railroad Property and used as a park with a lease.
- Sherwood Park: Two Rivers Subdivision, plat 287159.



**Columbus Cemetery**

### **County Property:**

County owned land within the Planning Jurisdictional area includes the following properties:

- New Search and Rescue Facility (Deed Book 14 pg. 530 and Book 15 pg. 489). Block 4, lots 5-12 Columbus First Addition and Block 4, Lots 13-18 Myers and Nice Addition to Town of Columbus.
- Stillwater Community West Annex and Meadowlark Assisted Living (O&D Book 1 pg. 178) Block 9, Lots 5-18 Mountain View Subdivision, Columbus.
- County Fairgrounds Parking Lot (Deed Book 91 pg. 240). Block 2, Lots 15-18 Norton's Second Addition, Columbus.
- County Fairgrounds and the Museum of the Beartooths: Block 4, lots 1-6 and 19-24 Norton's Second Addition, Block 5, all lots Norton's Second Addition, Columbus, Block 4, Lots 5 and 6 Carr Addition, Columbus (Deed Book 53 pg. 417 and Book 59 pg. 444).
- County Courthouse (Deed Book 1 pg. 62). Courthouse Square, Norton Addition, Columbus.
- County Library (Deed Book 106, page 182).

### **School District #6 Land:**

Columbus School District owned land within the Planning jurisdictional area includes the following properties:

- Elementary School: Block 16, First Addition, Columbus (Deed Book 3 pg. 266, Book 3 pg 276 and Book 4 pg. 185); Block 2, First Addition, Lots 13-21, and the east 60'4" of Lot 22
- High School: Block 1, School Addition and all of Second School Addition (Deed Book 13 pg. 638, Book 14 pg. 52 and Book 50 pg. 381).
- Parcel 1-B, COS 340727, Section 22, T 2 S, R 20 E (30 acres south of the hospital).

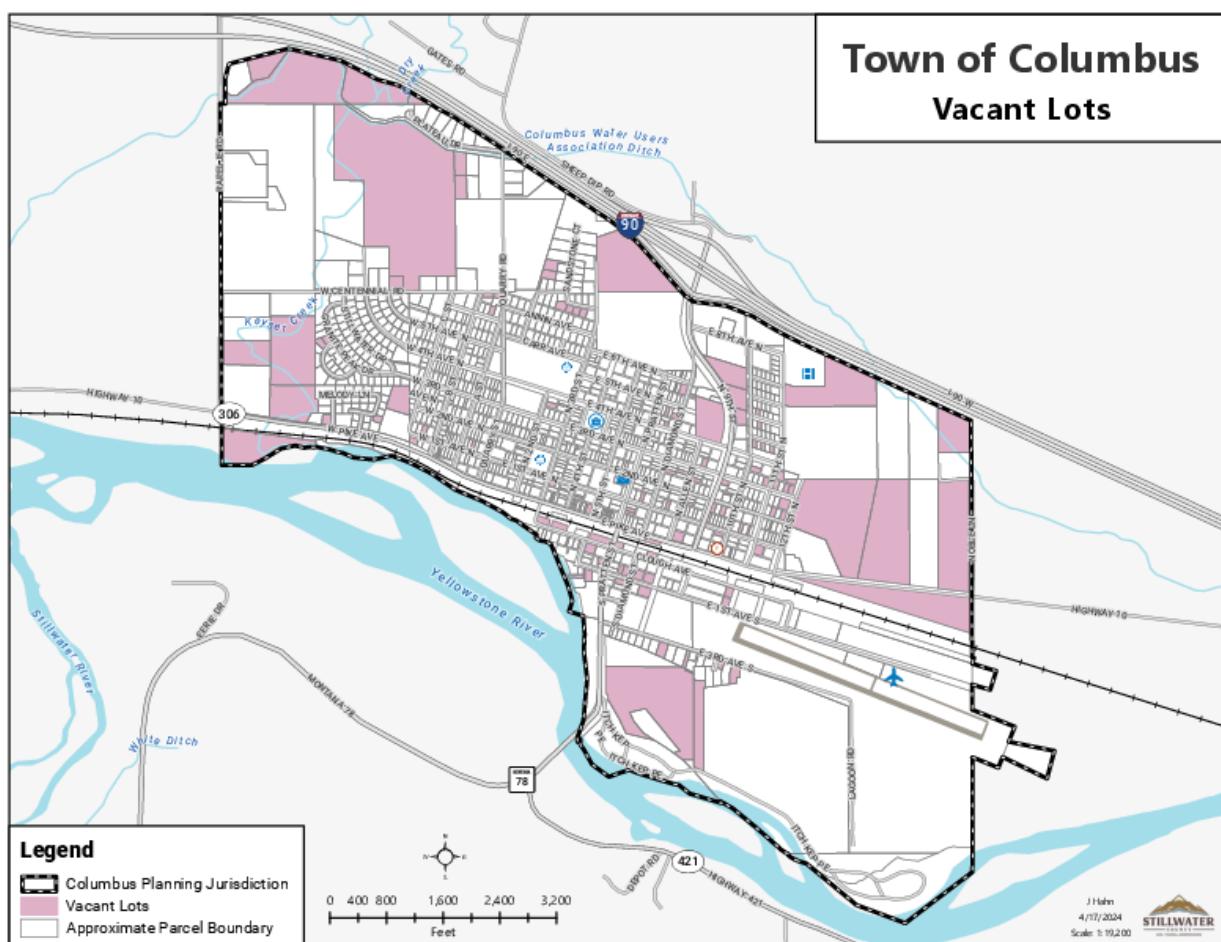
## State Land:

State owned land within the Planning Jurisdictional area includes the following properties:

- Fraction of Government Lot 4 Section 27, T2S, R20E Plat 170328 old gravel pit north of Itch-Kep-Pe Park.

## VACANT LAND

It is estimated that approximately 2% of the land in Columbus is vacant. There is very little vacant land that is available for development. Many “vacant” lots are owned by the same person who owns a neighboring lot and use the vacant lot as yard space. The lack of buildable vacant land has encouraged subdivision activity and redevelopment of lots. Within the areas of residential, commercial and industrial uses, land that is presently served by public water and sewer as well as paved street is vacant, and could be developed without the need for further expansion of the city limits.



## **ADJACENT LAND DEVELOPMENT**

The Yellowstone River is a barrier for growth to the south of town. The most logical directions for growth outside of the city limits would be to the north, between the northern boundary of

the town and the interstate and to the east, especially around the new hospital. There have already been some developments undertaken in these areas. Single family homes have been constructed north of Centennial Road on the northwest side of town. Future development in these areas could occur if the demand for growth were to justify additional developments to be annexed to town and water, sewer and streets were to be connected into existing systems.

## 5.2 POPULATION

The 2020 Census population in the City of Columbus was 1,857 people. This was a slight decrease since the 2010 census, though the US Census Bureau estimates that 1,913 people live in Columbus as of 2023. As the county seat of Stillwater County, Columbus provides services to a county population of about 9,000 (8,963 according to the 2020 census). This places demands on city services of significantly greater than the population of the City.

### **Population by Race**

The 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) indicates approximately 95.9% of the total population was white. The Hispanic population was 2.7%, Asian was .5%, and American Indians made up about .5% of the populations.

## 5.3 HOUSING NEEDS

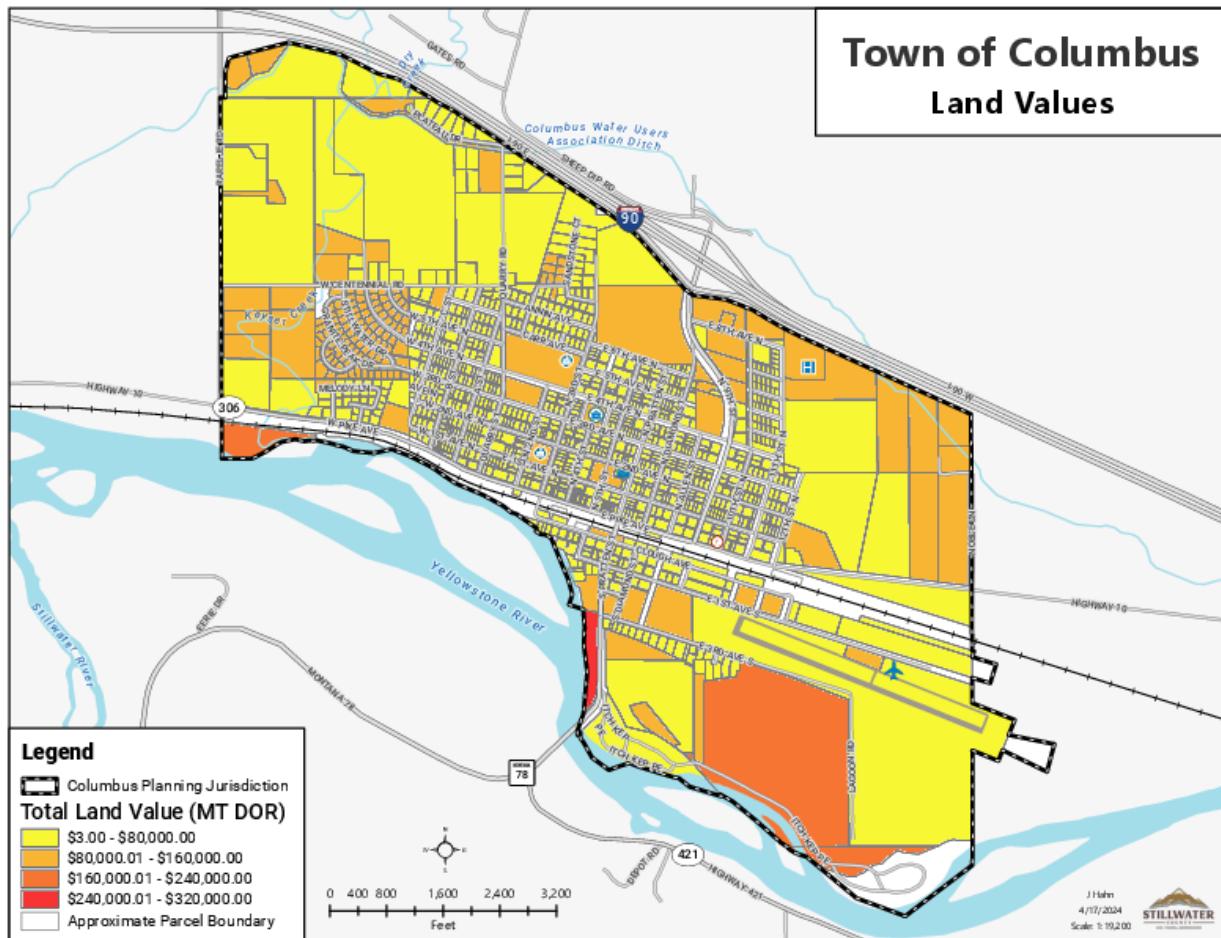
Total number of housing units reported for the City of Columbus in the 2020 Census was 811, an increase from the 2012 number of 762. According the 2021 ACS estimates, the average household size was 2.37 residents.

## 5.4 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

### **ECONOMIC BASE:**

Commercial trade, manufacturing, precious metals processing and tourism are the economic base of the Columbus area. Montana Silversmiths is the primary manufacturing firm in Columbus. Sibanye-Stillwater has a precious metals smelter and base metals refinery located in Columbus. Git's Big Sky Motel, Super 8 Motel, Riverside Cabins, the Town Pump facility, and business in the Apple Village area, are the primary tourism related businesses in the Columbus area. There are over 100 people employed in these service related businesses during peak season. There are also portions of a few farm/ranch operations within the planning jurisdictional area.

There are numerous commercial businesses in the Columbus area providing a variety of goods and services including cafes, groceries, motels, dry goods, gas, drug store, post office, hardware, farm supply, floral, solons, bars, machinery, auto and truck sales, auto repair, attorneys, accountants, insurance, real estate, doctors, dentists, gift stores, antiques, liquor, second hand goods, contractors, and other services.



## 5.5 LOCAL SERVICES:

### CITY OF COLUMBUS:

The City of Columbus is governed by an elected Mayor and a six-member council. The City provides basic services typical of small towns. City services and operating budgets include legislative, city/municipal court, administrative, elections, facilities, law enforcement, police reserves, fire protection, roads and streets, parks/cemetery, animal control, swimming pool, airport, light districts, water system, sewer system, and solid waste. Capital funds include streets and alleys, industrial park, parks, administrative/computers, police car replacement, swimming pool, fire, cemetery, and buildings. The city currently employs 11 full-time employees, five part-time employees, including three part-time police officers, and 11 seasonal employees.

### STILLWATER COUNTY:

The County is governed by a three member Board of Commissioners and has an elected Attorney, Clerk and Recorder, Clerk of District Court, Justice of the Peace, Superintendent of Schools, Sheriff, and Treasurer. Stillwater County provides and operates numerous services and facilities typical of a rural county government. Non-elected county departments and operating

budgets include disaster & emergency services, economic development, Montana State University extension service, facilities, fire control, floodplain, GIS, library, sanitarian, planning, road & bridge, solid waste, and weed control.

Some services such as city-county airport, health, planning, dispatching and solid waste are coordinated between Stillwater County and the City of Columbus to achieve efficiency and avoid duplication of services.

## **MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES:**

A full range of medical facilities are available in Columbus. Historically, the old Stillwater Community Hospital building was located on a parcel of land surrounded by 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Quarry Road, A Street, and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. This building was owned by the County and leased to the Stillwater Hospital Association, Inc. until the new hospital, named Stillwater Billings Clinic, was constructed and occupied in 2012. The Hospital Association still owns the old clinic building, located across the street from the old hospital, and the lot on which the Kids Club day care is located. In 2023, the Hospital Association purchased a property located at 715 N. 11th Street for on-call staff housing.

Most of the old hospital was demolished in 2020. Stillwater County is utilizing a portion of the building as office space, and Caslen Living Centers is operating the Meadowlark Assisted Living facility. Meadowlark Assisted Living provides assisted living services in a wing of the old hospital, through a lease from the County. The facility contains 19 units, with efficiency apartments and one bedroom apartments in various sizes and configurations. Recently, Meadowlark added four retirement home living apartments.

The new facility was constructed on land acquired in the northeast part of Columbus. Construction was financed utilizing funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The facility houses emergency, hospital, and clinic services, allowing for a more streamlined process of medical service delivery to the community. The Hospital Association owns two parcels of land in the area, one being a seven-acre parcel which contains the hospital building, and one being a 13-acre parcel which is currently unused. This land is accessed off of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and the east end of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This is considered a critical access hospital operated in association with Billings Clinic.

The hospital currently has over 85 full and part time employees including registered nurses, LPN's, lab technicians and a radiology technician. There are currently two local Family Medicine Physicians, a Physicians Assistant, and a Nurse Practitioner serving the community. The providers are fully employed Billings Clinic provider and all have staff privileges at the hospital. Additional specialists also visit the hospital as needed.

The sources of revenue for the organization consist of fees for the services provided, minimal maintenance and public health funds from the County, the Copulos Trust and other endowments. The Copulos Trust consists of \$1,000,000, the terms of which allow the hospital to use interest earned for capital expenses. The Copulos Trust has played a significant role in allowing the hospital to obtain new medical technologies.

In 1973, an 82 bed convalescent center was constructed in Columbus located on the southeast side of town along Pike Avenue. The facility closed in 2023, creating a possible reuse or redevelopment opportunity. As of this writing, mid-2024, the possibility of the site reopening as a nursing home facility is being considered.

There is also a dentist office and a chiropractor in Columbus.

## **COLUMBUS SCHOOLS**

The elementary school is located on Block 16 and the east half of Block 2 of the plat of the First Edition to the Town of Columbus, which consists of approximately 3 acres. Most of the grounds are occupied by buildings which include classrooms constructed and a gymnasium. The remaining grounds are used for recess and play.

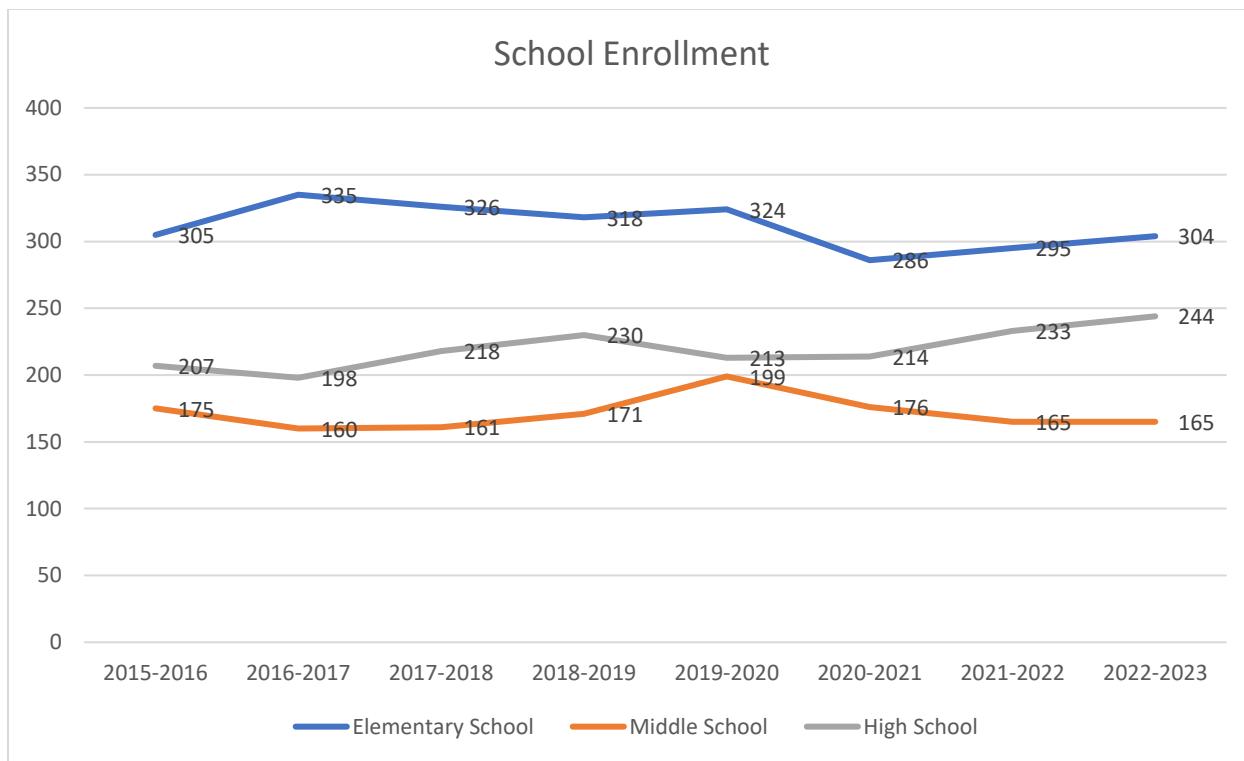
Columbus High School and Columbus Middle School is located on the School Addition and the Second School Addition and comprises approximately 12 acres. Approximately half of the grounds are occupied by buildings and parking area. Major renovations of the school in 1999 and 2000 added classrooms and a new gym. The high school and middle school are connected by a corridor that passes by the old high school gym, which now operates as the middle school gym. The rest of the high school grounds are occupied by a lighted football field, track, and football practice field.

The bus garage is located on the high school grounds with buses travelling over 300 miles and brings over 200 elementary and high school students to school each day. The schools also operate additional buses for extra curricular activities.

The curriculum for the elementary school includes math, reading, health, writing, language, spelling, social science, physical education, art, music, library, and computer classes. The high school is required to offer a minimum of 20 units consisting of 4 units English Language arts, 2 units of mathematics, 2 units of social studies, 2 units of science, 1 unit of health enhancement, 1 unit of fine arts, 1 unit of vocational/practical arts, and other elective classes.

Both schools are fully accredited and offer extra curricular activities. The high school competes on the class B level in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, softball, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling. Columbus also has strong programs for speech and drama, music, and cheerleading.

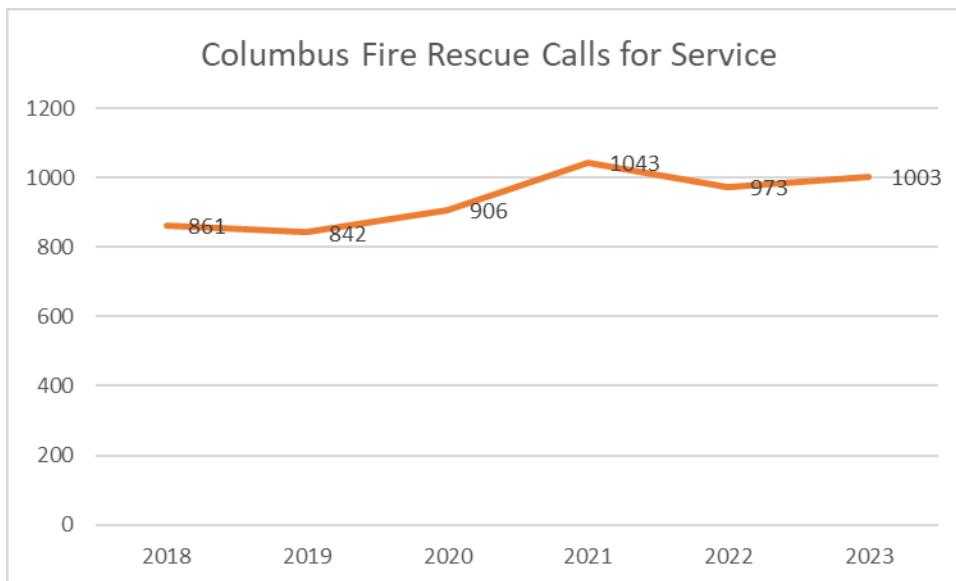
The City-County Planning Board jurisdictional area contains portions of the Columbus High School District and Columbus Elementary School District #6 within the jurisdictional area. The following graph shows enrollment at the Columbus.



## **COLUMBUS RURAL FIRE DISTRICT**

The City-County Planning Jurisdictional area is within the Columbus Rural Fire District which was formed in 1990. There are 5 elected trustees and a combination of paid and volunteer fire fighters and EMTs. The Fire District currently has equipment for structure and wildfires including tender/tank trucks and well as extrication services, water rescue and full service EMS at the Advanced Life Support level.

The Columbus Rural Fire District was formed in August 1990 and operates out of two fire stations one in Columbus and one in Reed Point. Columbus Fire Rescue provide Fire and EMS services and responds to between 970 and 1000 calls for service each year, a number which has been rising in recent years.



## 5.6 PUBLIC FACILITIES

### **COLUMBUS WATER SYSTEM:**

#### **Water Supply:**

The existing water supply for the City of Columbus is obtained from two sources, an infiltration gallery and production wells. The infiltration gallery supply is located on an island area in the Yellowstone River south of the old city shop. The production wells are located on the west edge of Columbus in the Beartooth Heights Subdivision, and in Heritage Park in central Columbus. The City has been searching for a suitable site for a new well.

The gallery lines for the infiltration system are constructed radially from the pump house wetwell. Water is pumped from the gallery with two vertical turbine pumps. The maximum sustained yield of the infiltration gallery water supply is directly affected by the water level in the Yellowstone River. The infiltration gallery facility and equipment is maintained and in satisfactory condition.

The production well in the Beartooth Heights Subdivision was constructed in 1986 and has a capacity of 610 gpm. (0.878 mgd). The well and pump house facility is in good condition and satisfactorily maintained. The Heritage Park Well came online in 2010 and has a capacity of approximately 350 gpm. Although disinfection of both water supplies is not required, gas chlorination is provided for both sources in order to maintain a chlorine residual throughout the distribution and storage facilities.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Water Quality Bureau (WQB) permit these public water sources and require ongoing monitoring.

## **Water Requirements:**

The overall average daily use for the period was 0.346 mgd, or 216 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) based on a population of 1600 people. The water supply has been meeting demand.

The combined maximum capacity of the two existing water supplies based on a 24 hour continuous operation is estimated to be:

Island infiltration Gallery = 1.17 mgd

Beartooth Heights Well = 0.79 mgd

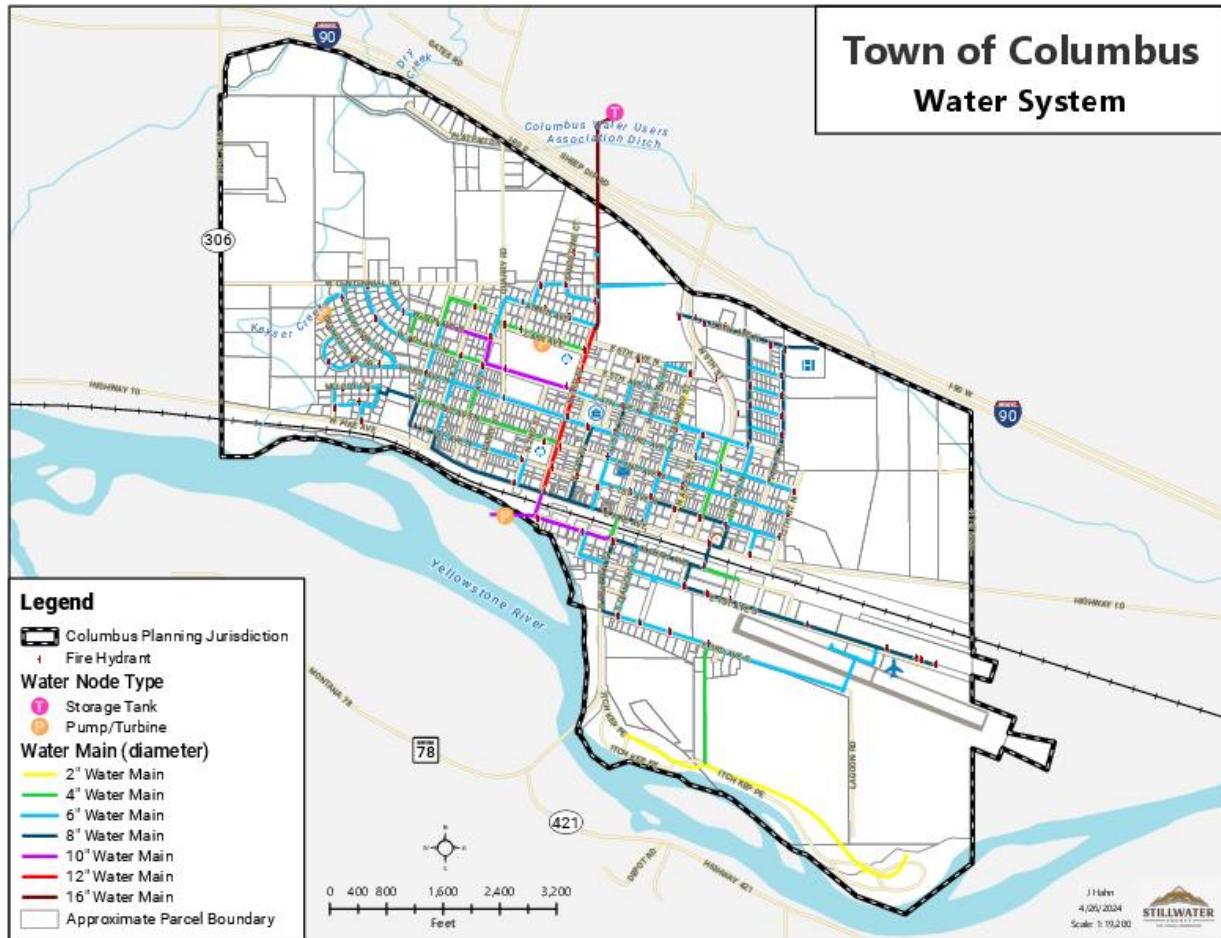
Heritage Park Well = 0.50 mgd

Total = 2.46 mgd

## **Water Distribution:**

The existing water distribution system consists of lines ranging from two inches to sixteen inches in diameter. Pipe materials include cast iron (CI), asbestos cement (AC), and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). The oldest lines are cast iron, and the newer lines constructed in the 1960's and early 1970's are asbestos cement. Welded steel pipe from the Annin Avenue to the storage tank was recently replaced with sixteen inch PVC pipe. The existing water system is shown on the water system map. Old water pipes were replaced with HDPE pipes in 2022 and 2023 in a major water line replacement project.

Maximum fire flow capabilities range from 1600 gpm to 3400 gpm throughout town. Desired fire flow levels for Columbus range from a minimum of 750 gpm to 1000 gpm to a maximum of 3500 gpm for commercial areas. Recommended fire flow levels are dependent on building space, type of use, and type of building construction. The Capital Improvements Plan should address any deficient lines and installation of new fire hydrants consistent with state WQB regulations.



### Transmission Line to Tank:

A sixteen-inch diameter water transmission line extends from the north edge of the city to the water storage tanks north of I-90. The fire department conducted fire flow tests in 2007 and they appeared to be adequate. The new Heritage Park well has provided an additional water source since that time.

### Island Supply Line:

An eight inch cast iron line carries water from the island infiltration gallery across the north channel of the Yellowstone River to the distribution system. Further review suggests that the line is adequately sized. This line has a low maintenance history, but suffered a break in 1982, that was subsequently repaired. Measurement of the friction losses will indicate the interior condition of the line and thus is a reflection of the condition of the pipe.

### Water Line Looping:

In general, all water lines should be looped within the water distribution system and dead end lines should be avoided. Where dead end lines are present, a fire hydrant or other means of

flushing is desirable. The majority of the Columbus distribution system is looped with the exception of several areas. Dead end locations with small diameter lines and deficient fire flow capabilities are a high priority to improve.

### **Small Diameter Lines:**

There are currently several reaches of small diameter four-inch lines in the distribution system. Replacement of these lines is desirable from a fire protection standpoint. Dead end, four inch lines are the most serious cases. Although total replacement of all four inch lines is desirable, it is costly and may not be necessary in locations where four inch lines may provide adequate service. Fire hydrant flow test are conducted throughout town to identify severely deficient areas for high priority replacement.

### **Water Storage:**

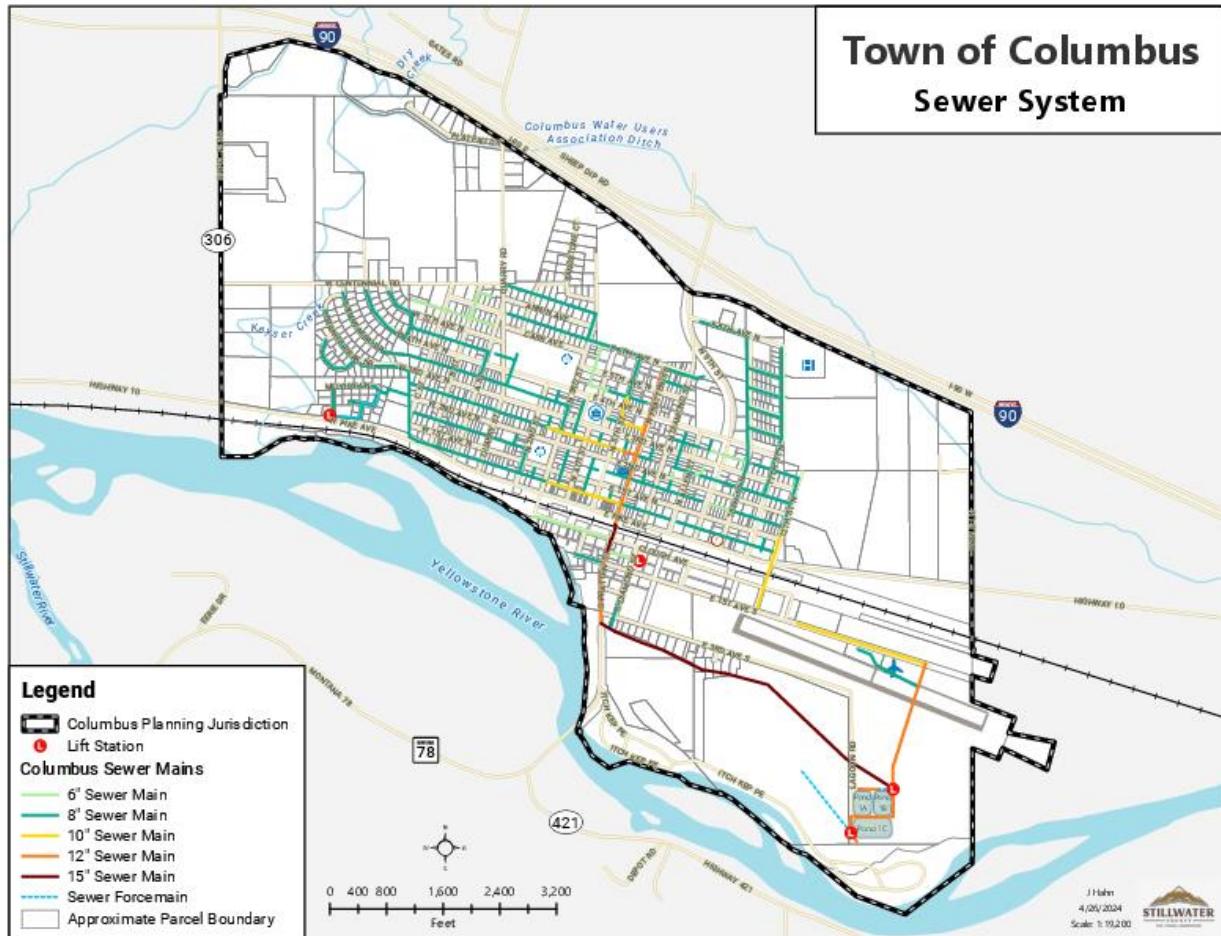
Existing storage for the City of Columbus consists of one storage tank located on the hills north of I-90. The reservoir has a total storage volume of 1 million gallons. The present level of storage is adequate for Columbus for the current condition and for the projected future development.

The reservoir is a 1,000,000 gallon welded steel tank constructed in 1973. The tank is 90 feet in diameter and 22 feet high. In 2010 this tank was recoated and work was done around the tank to improve the drainage in the area.

## **COLUMBUS SEWER SYSTEM**

### **Collection System:**

The existing wastewater collection system is a conventional gravity system with discharge to the treatment facility near the southeast corner of Town. The collection system consists of 6, 8, 10, 12, and 15 inch diameter conduits. The main trunk system consisting of 10, 12, and 15 inch lines are clay tile pipe constructed in 1961. The majority of the system between "C" Street and Ninth Street, south of Third Avenue is clay tile pipe. Remaining portions of the system are newer and generally consist of PVC pipe. The line under the railroad along Pratten Street from Like Avenue to Clough Ave S was replaced in 2023 to prevent water infiltration. The Columbus sewer system is shown on the sewer system map.



## Treatment Facility:

The existing treatment facility consists of a three cell aerated lagoon with land application on the golf course. The facility is comprised of two primary cells of approximately two acres in size each, and one secondary cell of about four acres. The lagoon operates as either a continuous or intermittent discharge system.

An updated Facility Plan was completed in 1996 with alternatives for spray irrigation and aerators. The new facility constructed in 1999 has a design capacity for a population of 2,500 people. Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Water Quality Bureau (WQB) permit these public water sources and require ongoing monitoring.

## STORM DRAINAGE

The Columbus area drains to the southeast at slopes ranging from 0.5% to 1.5%. Interstate 90 on the north and Keyser Creek on the west provide drainage cutoff, preventing drainage from outlying areas from entering the Town. An exception exists on the northeast edge of Columbus where drainage crosses Interstate 90 and flows to the existing drainage ditch east of Columbus.

The Yellowstone River lies to the south and agricultural land to the east, both down gradient of Columbus.

The Columbus Water Users Association ditch is situated at the north of Town. This ditch crosses Keyser Creek via a conduit siphon with upstream spillway capabilities into Keyser Creek. The spillway acts as a cutoff to prevent upstream storm flows that reach the ditch from being propagated into Columbus.

The portion of Columbus lying north of the railroad tracks is drained primarily through surface gutters and roadside swale system. Intermittent curb and gutter and roadside ditches with culvert crossings at intersections exist throughout the Town. Generally, all areas observed have positive drainage to remove storm runoff from the area following storm events. However, several culverts were observed to be partially blocked requiring cleaning and maintenance.

A major underground drainage system was installed in 2007 along First Avenue North from Fourth Street to Ninth Street. This system has the capacity to be expanded north to collect water south of Fourth Avenue, between Fourth Street and Ninth Street.

Storm drainage conduit facilities are present in Ninth Street and were constructed in conjunction with State Highway 78. The north portion of Ninth Street is served by fifteen and eighteen-inch conduit, discharging to the existing drain ditch at Fourth Avenue North. The south portion of Ninth Street is served by fifteen, eighteen, and twenty-four inch conduit to Second Avenue North where a thirty-six inch conduit conveys storm water to the east.

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) storm drain facilities are generally designed to handle runoff related to the highway but not to accept other drainage sources. However, the existing conduit facilities south of Fourth Avenue North have inlets to drain the area west of Ninth Street. Several pipe inlet taps have been made in the thirty-six inch line east of Ninth Street to provide drainage of the surrounding area.

A new underground drainage system was installed in 2008 to address drainage concerns on Second Street and Third Street as well as the undersized pipe under the railroad tracks. A 36-inch pipe was bored under the railroad tracks and tied to an underground drainage system that has inlets at Second Street and Pike Avenue, Third Street and Pike Avenue, and Third Street and First Avenue North. The piping under Second Street and Third Street has the capacity to be expanded north to collect additional runoff.

Drainage on the south side of Pike Avenue on the railroad right-of-way, east of Sixth Street is conveyed across the railroad tracks through a 28x24 inch reinforced concrete pipe (RCP). South of the railroad tracks, drainage is conveyed through open ditches along Clough Avenue between South 10<sup>th</sup> Street and South 13<sup>th</sup> Street where it is collected by a 36-inch culvert that empties into the large drainage ditch south of First Avenue South.

An open irrigation drain ditch begins just east of the intersection of Fourth Avenue North and Ninth Street. The ditch flows in an easterly direction on the north side of Fourth Avenue and then turns south, discharging to a swampy area prior to making its way to the Yellowstone River.

The drainage ditch is a significant drainage feature, and will become the desired outlet for future projected development on the north side of Columbus. Presently, the drain ditch has an estimated capacity ranging from 100 to 200 cfs throughout its reaches. Conduit crossings have an estimated capacity ranging from 50 to 100 cfs. The culvert crossing of the Old Highway 10 just east of town is the greatest flow restriction with an estimated capacity of less than 50 cfs prior to overtopping the roadway.

The drain ditch is governed by an irrigation district with authority to ensure that the existence of the ditch is perpetuated. It is recommended that future planning of storm drainage improvements include exploring the status and authority of the drainage district to assure that storm water can be diverted through the existing corridor. The planning effort should encompass the swamp area, extending from the point where the defined drainage channel terminates, and extending to the Yellowstone River.

The west side of Columbus drains to Keyser Creek. With future development in the area, it is desirable to divert runoff to Keyser Creek whenever possible. This will minimize future impacts to existing storm drain systems flowing east through Columbus. Beartooth Heights Subdivision drains via curb and gutter to the southeastern portion of the subdivision, then back to Keyser Creek via a storm drainage system constructed in 1995.

Drainage of the area south of the railroad tracks occurs primarily by overland flow. There are limited areas where roadway borrow ditches and swales divert and concentrate storm flows. A Storm Drainage Plan was adopted in March of 2002.

## **SOLID WASTE SERVICES AND FACILITIES CITY OF COLUMBUS**

### **Collection:**

The City of Columbus provides a transfer station as part of the integrated waste management system. Solid waste collection services are provided by contract with Mackenzie Disposal, Inc. Household waste is collected once each week within the corporate limits. Commercial and industrial firms receive more frequent collection where required. Columbus averages 16 tons of solid waste per week.

### **Disposal:**

Reuse and recycling is encouraged in Columbus prior to disposal. Solid waste from the City of Columbus is hauled to the Billings landfill for disposal.

## **STILLWATER COUNTY SOLID WASTE**

Stillwater County formed a refuse disposal district in 1975. The district is governed by an appointed board of directors. The membership of this board is county-wide with members being appointed to three-year terms by the Board of County Commissioners.

The Stillwater County Solid Waste District is a countywide district established in 1975 to eliminate the need for county landfills, as well as to facilitate the prohibition of private trash

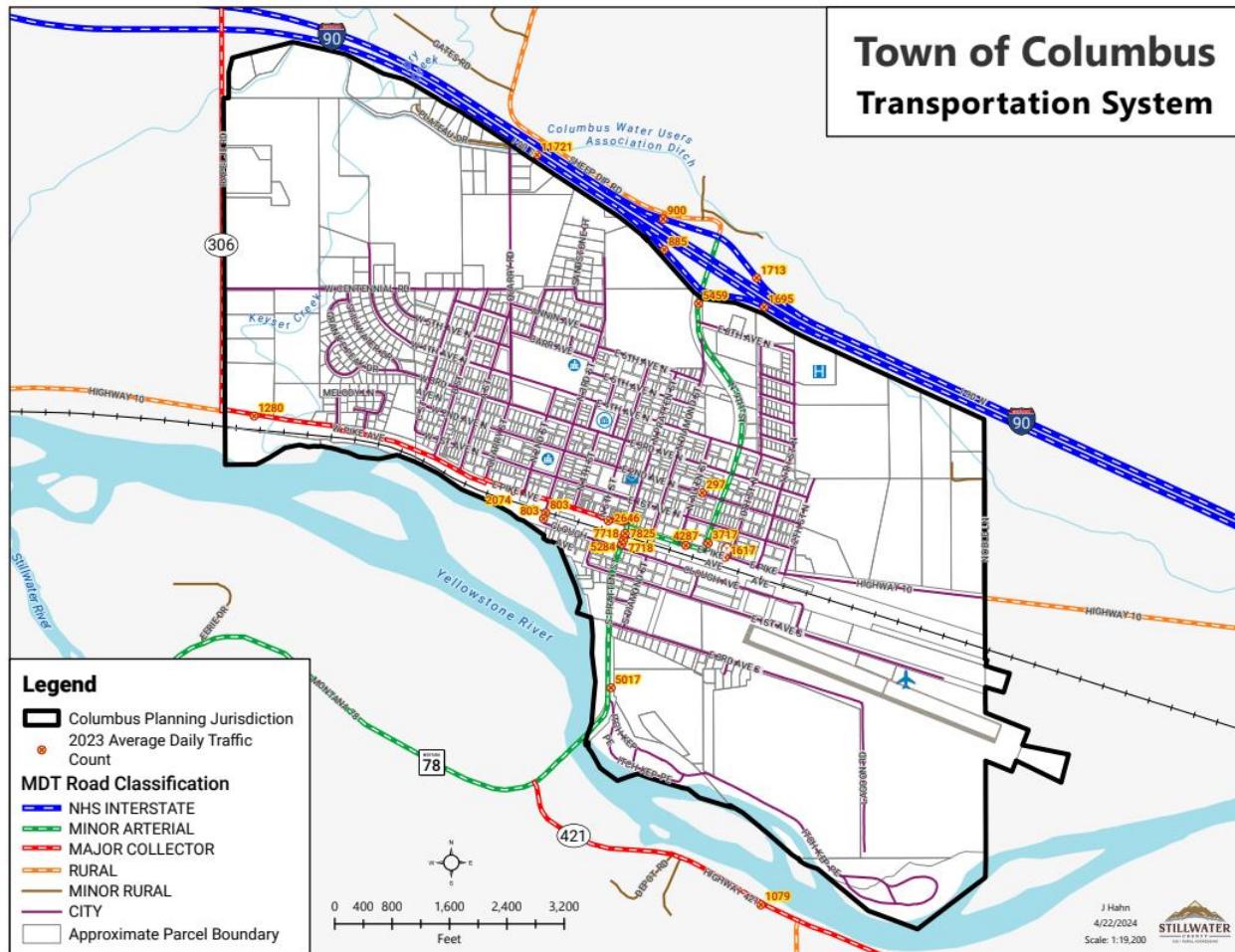
burning in the county. A solid waste assessment charged per year per household funds the Solid Waste District. There is no charge to county residents that live outside the City of Columbus, for disposing of household trash at the collection points or transfer station.

## TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

### INTRODUCTION:

The transportation system in the Columbus area includes Interstate 90, two state highways, county roads, and all City of Columbus streets and sidewalks. The transportation system map shows the highways, roads and streets. There are also railroad lines and the Columbus airport within the city-county planning jurisdictional area.

The County is, as of 2024, investigating the option of providing a county wide transit service that would serve the City as well as County residents in need of transportation for services including doctor visits, grocery shopping, and other needs.



## **STATE HIGHWAYS:**

Interstate 90 is the main east-west route through the Columbus area. The Interstate is not within the planning jurisdictional area but forms the north boundary. This four-lane divided highway was completed in 1973. The City of Columbus is served by an interchange. The average daily traffic on Interstate 90 was 10,939 vehicles per day according to the 2022 traffic County.

Highway No. 10 is also an east-west road through the Columbus area. The highway now serves as a frontage road to I-90 and a minor collector for the Columbus area. This is a two lane asphalt road. Approximately two miles of this route is within the planning jurisdictional area. Highway 10 is the main street (Pike Ave.) for the Columbus Business District. The average daily traffic was as high as 4,261 in the City of Columbus. This route parallels the Yellowstone River and replaced the original Yellowstone Trail. Old Highway 10 is a two lane paved road maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation.

Highway 78 between Columbus and Red Lodge is a primary route maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation. Approximately 1.6 miles of this route is within the planning jurisdictional area. This is a paved two lane road which serves as the arterial north-south route in southern Stillwater County. The average daily traffic on this route ranged between 3,695 and 5,426. Major reconstruction occurred on this route between Columbus and Absarokee from 2006 to 2010.

Highway 306 (Rapelje road) between Columbus and Rapelje, is a secondary route and is a paved two lane road. The Rapelje road serves as a major north-south collector for northern Stillwater County. Approximately one mile of this route is in the planning jurisdictional area. The average width is 26 feet. Average daily traffic on this route is 1,272.

## **COUNTY ROADS:**

Centennial road is about .8 mile long and the entire length is paved two lane road. Stillwater County currently maintains the portions of this road that lie outside of city limits. Approximately .4 miles of Quarry Road lies outside of City limits. Annexation of these roads have been discussed as subdivision and development of adjacent land takes place.

## **BRIDGES:**

In addition, there are two bridge structures in the planning jurisdictional area. One structure is on state controlled right-of-way and the other one is a County structure. The State controlled structure is the bridge over Keyser Creek Bridge on old Highway 10.

The County bridge structure is the Keyser Creek Bridge on Centennial Road, which is 32 feet long and 24 feet wide with concrete end walls, steel stringers and a concrete deck.

## **CITY STREETS:**

The City of Columbus has over 19 miles of streets mostly with asphalt surfaces. There are also over six miles of alleys in Columbus and approximately six miles of concrete sidewalks. Two streets in Columbus have been classified as arterials. These are Ninth Street and Pike Avenue. Four streets are classified as collectors. These are Centennial Road, Fourth Avenue, Pratten Street and A Street. All other streets in Columbus are classified as local streets. Most platted right-of-way in Town is 80 feet wide. However, there are some 60-foot wide rights-of-way. These are mostly in the Beartooth Heights addition on the northwest end of Town, the north half of Quarry Street, the streets on both sides of the Courthouse block, the streets south of Apple Village and Eighth Avenue into Town Pump. All new subdivision are required to provided 60-foot wide rights-of way.

## **AIRPORT FACILITIES:**

A joint city-county airport facility is located in Columbus. The Columbus airport consists of one active runway, a connecting taxiway, a beacon tower with light, remote radio controlled runway lighting system, tie down and hangars located on or adjacent to the airport. The existing runway is 3,800 foot long by 75 feet wide and is paved. The airport has a full time fixed base operator and certified flight instructors are available. The airport undertook a major renovation in 1998, and completed a taxiway extension in 2002. In 2010 the airport was renamed Columbus Airport – Woltermann Memorial. An Airport Board, jointly appointed by the City of Columbus and Stillwater County, oversees airport improvements and makes recommendations to the governing bodies on airport matters.

## **RAILROAD:**

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad serves Stillwater County. The main rail line parallels the Yellowstone River east-west through the Columbus area. There is approximately ten miles of track in the planning jurisdictional area, additional track railroad sidings through Columbus and a loading facility in Columbus. There is currently an average of 13 to 14 freight trains passing through the Columbus area daily. Passenger service was discontinued on this route in 1980.

On the morning of June 24, 2023, a train derailed while crossing the twin bridges railroad bridge over the Yellowstone River, twelve miles upstream of Columbus. The cars contained molten sulfur and asphalt. An intensive cleanup process was undertaken for about two months, and the bridge was rebuilt.

## **MOTOR FREIGHT CARRIERS:**

United Parcel Service and FedEx serve the Columbus area. Freight traffic service is also available in Billings. Freight traffic services can make arrangements with numerous commercial motor freight operators serving this area.

## **CITY SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS:**

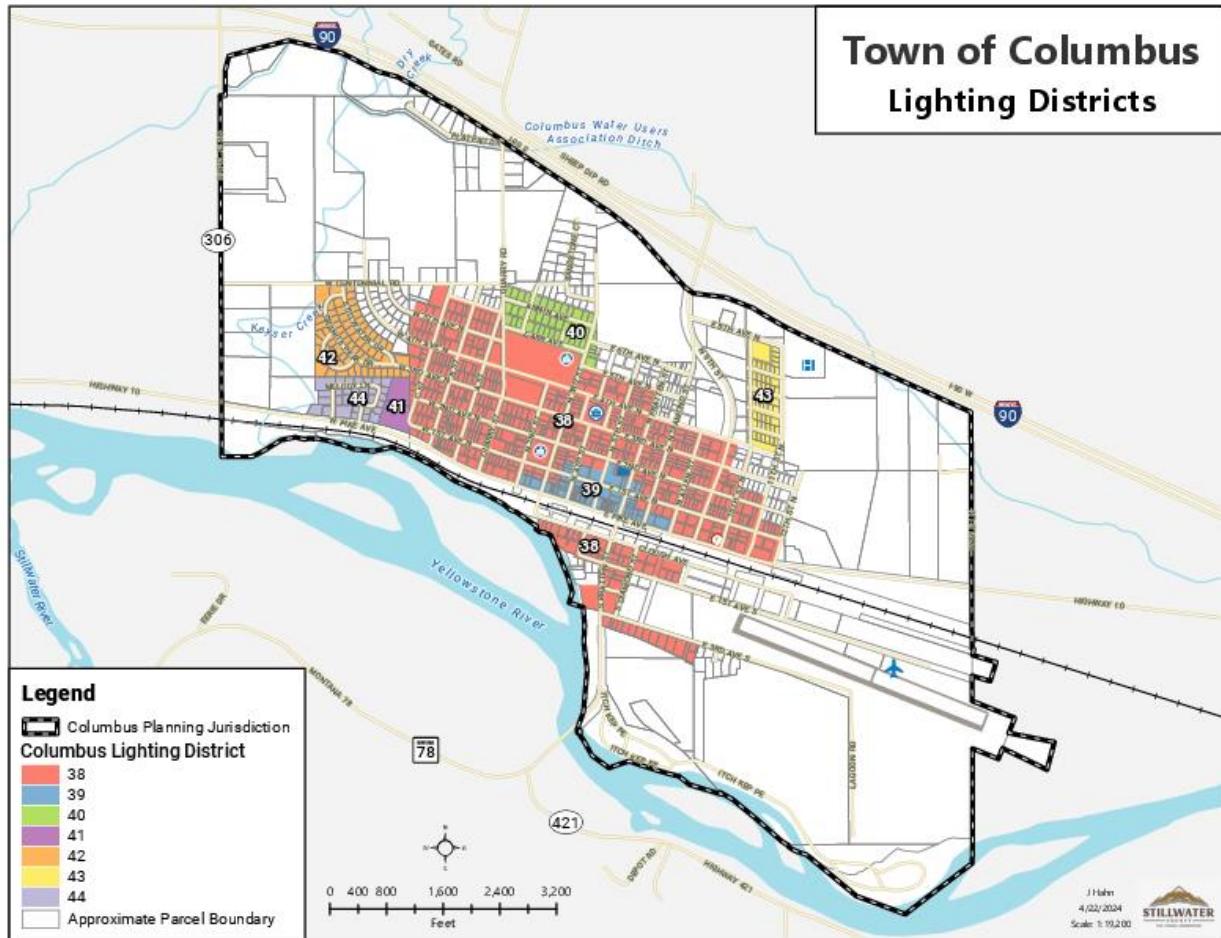
There are sidewalks in the central business district and in the older residential areas of the City of Columbus. Most sidewalks were initially financed by special improvement districts (SID's) and some extensions or replacements have been made by individual land owners. As a result, there is a somewhat irregular pattern of sidewalks in Town. The majority of the sidewalks are in a good serviceable condition. Other sections of sidewalk are in fair condition or have deteriorated to a poor condition in need of replacement.

Sidewalks have not been constructed in Beartooth Heights, Huff Addition, Hamlett Addition, Norton Second Addition, Goodes Subdivision, Industrial Sites, Mountain View Subdivision, Progressive Addition, Apple Village Addition, most of the East Side Addition, Stillwater Heights, Two Rivers Subdivision, High Ground and Fairway North. The hospital was required to construct a sidewalk as part of subdivision approval. Sidewalks are now required in all new subdivisions.

A Trail Plan was adopted in 2010, which has facilitated the development of several trails in town using grant funds and matching funds provided by the City. The first phase was completed in 2017 stretching from the cemetery to Quarry Street along the north side of Pike Avenue, creating pedestrian access to the Stillwater Heights Subdivision. In 2022 the trail system was greatly expanded, from Quarry Street to the Central Business District, and from Granite Peak Park to Itch-Kep-Pe Park along Highway 78. Several sidewalks were also improved as part of this project to provide pedestrian connectivity in areas where trail construction was challenging due to right of way acquisition. More expansion of the trail system is planned, with a future goal being to extend the trail through the cemetery, along Rapelje Road to Centennial Road, and along Centennial Road to connect into the city's sidewalk system near the High School and to Granite Peak Park.

## **LIGHTING DISTRICTS:**

The City of Columbus has seven light districts numbered 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44. The map showing street light districts identifies the district boundaries. District 38 is the largest and serves most of the residential area in town. District 39 serves the central business district. District 40 serves the Carr addition on the north side of town. District 41 serves the convalescent center. District 42 serves the third phase of Beartooth Heights. District 43 serves the Two Rivers Subdivision, and light district 44 serves the Stillwater Heights Subdivision. Apple Village area, portions of the east side of town and the airport/industrial area are not served by light districts. Assessments for the cost of the light districts are paid twice a year along with the property taxes.



## PRIVATE UTILITIES

### Electricity:

Northwestern Energy provides the electricity for the Columbus area which has the capability to provide 3 phase power. A new substation was constructed in Columbus in 1990 on its 50 kv line in conjunction with providing electricity to the Stillwater Mining Company (SMC) smelter. A 100 kv line running north/south through the jurisdictional area from the 161 kv line north of Columbus was completed in 1993 and is intended to provide greater capacity to serve the area. Northwestern Energy operates one substation in Columbus, known as the Columbus East substation and is located immediately east of the Super 8 Motel. Beartooth Electric also operates a substation near the Northwestern Energy Columbus East substation.

Peak demand can exceed capacity for short periods which has been the case with the Columbus substation. A transmission substation is located west of the city-county planning jurisdictional area and intersects a 100 kv line with a 50 kv line.

### **Natural Gas:**

The jurisdictional area is traversed by a 4" high pressure natural gas transmission line owned by Northwestern Energy Company. The City of Columbus is served with natural gas from the 4" transmission line from the Lake Basin Fields and is tied into their main gas transmission system, giving the Columbus area and elsewhere along the line virtually an unlimited supply for expansion. The gas provides 1000 BTU/cubic foot.

Propane is also used by many rural customers. There are several locally owned propane suppliers.

### **Telephone:**

CenturyLink and Spectrum provide local telephone service for the jurisdictional area. In 1992 the Columbus switch was upgraded and new fiber optic lines were installed in the area. The improvements mean faster and clearer long distance connections, and the availability of enhanced services such as call waiting.

Long distance phone service is available from a number of companies. US Sprint constructed a fiber optic cable in 1987-1988 which is buried in the railroad right of way, through the jurisdictional area. The 911 emergency communication system was installed in 1991. Cellular phone service is available in the jurisdictional area from AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon.

### **Television and Radio:**

Cable television is provided by Spectrum. Multiple channels are available with additional pay per view movie channels. Three television stations are broadcast from Billings and can be received in the jurisdictional area. Television service is also available from digital satellite systems utilizing a small satellite dish and converter. Numerous radio stations broadcast in the region.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **HERITAGE PARK**

Heritage Park is centrally located in Town just south of the High School. The size of this park is about 3.5 acres. Heritage Park contains a swimming pool facility, tennis courts, one basketball court, playground equipment, a picnic area and additional open space.

The 130,000 gallon swimming pool is 39 ft. wide x 81 ft. long and 3 ft. to 8 ft. deep. There is a 14 ft concrete deck around the pool. The wading pool is 16 ft. x 16 ft. and one foot deep with a 6 ft. concrete deck around it. The pool facility is fenced with a 6 ft. high chain link fence. A new bathhouse was completed in 2011 and provides men and women's changing rooms. The filtration system consists of one large capacity sand filter with a chlorinator.

The tennis court area is 100 ft. x 130 ft. 6 ft. high side fences and 10 ft. high end fences. The

tennis courts were resurfaced in 1994 and were reconstructed in 2004 and resurfaced in 2024 with pickleball court lines added to the east tennis court. The basketball court area was reconstructed in 2005 and is 45 ft. wide x 72 ft. long asphalt surface with two fan-shaped backboards/structures complete with hoops and nets and all required markings.

A variety of playground equipment was provided with assistance from local civic groups. Portable picnic tables, trash cans and volleyball net are provided by the city in the summer for public use in the open area. The restroom building was built in 1997.

### **ITCH-KEP-PE PARK**

Itch-Kep-Pe Park is located along the Yellowstone River. The upper park contains about 22 acres, has a road network with three loops and a parking area with access to the Yellowstone River. There are thirty (30) developed campsites with a gravel parking area, picnic tables and campfire grills. There is a restroom facility with men's and women's bathrooms, water and electrical service. The bathroom facility was developed with federal grant funds in the late 1960's. The restroom facilities are being upgraded as of this writing. There is a solid waste collection container near the entrance to the upper park.

The lower park contains about 39 acres, has a road network with two loops and a boat ramp for access to the Yellowstone River. There are nineteen (19) developed campsites in the lower park. These campsites include a gravel parking area, an anchored picnic table and a campfire grill. A solid waste collection container is located near the boat ramp. There is a concrete, sealed pit privy located near the boat ramp. This park is a former State fishing access site which was deeded to the Town in the mid 1980's.

### **PIKE AVENUE PARK**

Pike Avenue Park, also called Railroad Park, is located north of the railroad tracks and south of Pike Avenue between Highway 78 and Fourth Street. This park is on railroad right-of-way but is leased to the City of Columbus. This is a lineal park containing about three fourths of an acre. There are picnic tables, park benches, trash cans, flower beds and a sign display area. The park also contains a veteran memorial wall, which was developed by Columbus Elementary School students over several years and built in 2020. Pike Avenue Park is decorated every Christmas by volunteers as the major Christmas display in the Central Business District.

### **BEARTOOTH PARK**

This park is located south of Centennial Road along Keyser Creek and contains about 1.6 acres. This land was dedicated to the City when Beartooth Heights was platted along with cash in lieu of land for park development. Beartooth Park is currently undeveloped, but provides a sledding area in the winter.

### **GRANITE PEAK PARK**

The City of Columbus acquired 34 acres of land north of Sixth Avenue and west of Interstate

90 access road (9th Street). Three baseball fields, a softball field, and a soccer field have been developed on this site. The Columbus Community Garden is also located in the park. A playground was developed near the parking lot in 2019. The Granite Peak Park Steering Committee coordinates activities in the park. This committee has expressed interest in rebuilding an old jogging path around the park. The fields have an underground sprinkling system connected to a well on site. Underground electrical serves the pump for the well. The fields are fenced with chain-link fencing along with chain-link backstops for the baseball and softball fields. A master plan has been prepared for the development of this park.

## **SHERWOOD PARK**

Sherwood Park is located along East 4<sup>th</sup> Street North between 9<sup>th</sup> Street and North 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The park is less than one acre in size and was dedicated to the City of Columbus with the platting of Two Rivers Subdivision. Picnic tables, playground equipment, playground area, and swing set have been installed.

## **GOLF COURSE**

The golf course is located in the southeastern section of Town between the Yellowstone River and the Airport property. The Stillwater Golf and Recreation Association leases approximately 100 acres from the City of Columbus on a long term lease. This is a nine-hole golf course which was re-built in 1986 to U.S.G.A. specifications. The golf course includes a driving range, practice green, clubhouse and two comfort stations.

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND**

The elementary school playground contains a variety of playground equipment including a slide, jungle gym, small climbing wall, and basketball hoops.

## **HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC FIELD**

The High School Athletic Field contains a football field, track and field facilities and other athletic practice fields. All athletic facilities are in good condition.

## **5.7 NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **CLIMATE**

The jurisdictional area is located within a region described as semi-arid and characterized by colder temperatures. The weather of the area consists of cold dry winters; cool, moist springs; hot, dry summers; and cool, dry falls.

The climatic data summary gives mean monthly precipitation and temperature data. Average annual precipitation for Columbus is 15.53 inches. Average total snowfall is 47.6 inches. Temperatures ranged from average highs of 85.4 degrees F in July to 36.6 degrees F in December. Average lows were 10 degrees F for January and 50 degrees F for July.

Montana is noted for its great extremes in weather conditions. In the Columbus area, summer high temperatures can exceed 100 degrees F while an invasion of arctic air in winter can plummet temperatures to -30 degrees and lower. Temperature can also change very rapidly. "Chinook" winds can raise winter temperatures 40 - 50 degrees in a day. The number of frost free days averages 110 -120 days near Columbus.

The Columbus area is located in a belt of westerly winds. The mountains of the Pacific Northwest and the Rockies receive most of the moisture before it reaches here. This predominately westerly flow changes in the spring months. This allows for intrusions of moist air from the Gulf of Mexico brought in by an easterly flow. Relative humidity is low in the area. The air quality in Columbus is considered to be excellent, though smoke from wildfires can drift into the area in late summers resulting in air quality warnings.

## **GEOLOGY**

The surface geology of the Columbus area is Quaternary Alluvial deposits which are located in the Yellowstone River Valley. This valley fill consists of mainly silt, sand and gravel with some terrace deposits. Ground water yields of 10 to 300 gpm have been reported in the alluvium. There are no known active faults within the jurisdictional area. There are also no known oil, gas or mineral deposits within the Columbus jurisdictional area.

## **SOILS**

Two soil associations have been identified in the jurisdictional area. The Havre-Harlem-Glendive Association is found in the Yellowstone River Valley. This is a deep, nearly level or gently sloping, well drained loam, clay loam and sandy loam formed in alluvium of flood plains, alluvial fans and terraces. These soils are suitable mainly for dryland and irrigated crops and range. These soils often have severe limitations for building site development because of flooding, shrink-swell and low strength characteristics. They have slight to severe limitations for sanitary facilities because of floods and slow percolation. They have moderate limitations for recreational developments such as campgrounds, picnic areas, playgrounds, paths and trails. They support good to fair wildlife habitat.

The Yamac-Kobar-Attawan Association is found in the northern portion of the Columbus area between the railroad track and Interstate 90 as well as the Keyser Creek drainage. This is a deep, nearly level to moderately sloping, well-drained loam and clay loam formed in alluvial fans and terraces. These soils are used for irrigated and dryland crops and range. These soils have varied rating for wildlife habitat potential and slight to moderate limitations for recreational development. Moderate to severe limitations may exist for building site development primarily due to shrink swell and low strength problems. Some moderate to severe conditions may also be encountered for sanitary facilities due to high ground water and slow percolation.

More detailed information on specific soil series and capability classes are provided in the Soil Survey of Stillwater County. All land developers are encouraged to research specific soil characteristics as described in the Soil Survey. Additional soil testing may be required for more

detailed and reliable information for specific development projects.

## **HYDROLOGY**

Both surface and groundwater are very important features in the Columbus area due to the semiarid climate. The area's most productive farmland is because of irrigation water from the Yellowstone River and Keyser Creek. The City of Columbus municipal water supply is from alluvial aquifer which is recharged by the Yellowstone River. The quantity and quality of water available from the Yellowstone is good. The river water features neutral pH levels which are influenced by natural forces, low dissolved solids, and microbiologic conditions.

Groundwater in the jurisdictional area varies in its availability and quality. The alluvial deposits are the easiest to develop and are of good quality. Availability of groundwater is dependent on geologic factors which make it difficult to predict. Utilizing information from well logs is the best method of predicting water availability and quality.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

Columbus area topography consists of the relatively flat valley of the Yellowstone River and Keyser Creek drainage located in the western side of the jurisdictional area. Elevations range from a low of 3560 feet to a high point of 3700 feet. There are no slopes in excess of 25% within the Columbus planning jurisdictional area.

## **VEGETATION**

Four major vegetation types have been identified within the jurisdictional area. They are riparian, wetland, cultivated/pasture, and urban disturbed. Soil and climate are the primary factors that determine the kind and/or amount of natural vegetation. Man's activities affect this natural vegetation in varying degrees.

The planning jurisdictional area is in one geographic area as defined by the USDA. It is classified as part of the Western Sedimentary Plains. The climax (natural) vegetation of the region consists primarily of tall grasses, the most dominant species being blue bunch wheatgrass and rough fescue.

The riparian areas are characterized by nutrient rich soils which result from flooding. As a result vegetation here is diverse and plentiful. Cottonwoods are the dominant trees and common under story species include prairie cordgrass, hair grass, sedges and perennial forbs. The riparian zones are very important for a variety of wildlife.

The wetlands are found on the relatively level slopes adjacent the Yellowstone River and its tributaries. Cattails, sedges, and rushes along with a variety of grasses dominate. In areas of saline soils, alkali sacaton, Nuttall saltgrass, alkali cordgrass, basin wildrye and inland saltgrass dominate.

Cultivated lands in the jurisdictional area consist of irrigated river bottoms primarily of hay, with

a few smaller areas of small grains and corn. The dryland areas are cultivated primarily in winter wheat and barley, with a small amount of dryland hay. The urban area is most noteworthy for its urban forestry and the developed recreation facilities consisting of the golf course and the ballfield site north of Town.

## **WILDLIFE**

The Columbus area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Most significant is the riparian habitat of the Yellowstone River and Keyser Creek tributary. The planning jurisdictional area is located in the central flyway. The rivers and wetlands provide habitat for eagles, Canada geese, ducks, cormorants, Great Blue herons and numerous other species of birds. The diverse riparian vegetation also provides excellent habitat for deer as well as many other mammals such as fox, muskrat and beaver.

The fisheries in the Yellowstone River are described by wildlife managers as good: This is due principally to high water quality. The waters of the Yellowstone River continue to be relatively free of pollutants such as excess sedimentation, municipal effluent, or agricultural chemicals. In fact, the natural features of low winter water flows and ice jams have been described as the largest negative impacts on local fisheries. Brown trout, Rainbow Trout, and Whitefish are the primary game species of fish.

There are a number of predator species present which include fox, coyote, mountain lion, and black bear in the area. Wolves have had an increasing presence since their introduction into Yellowstone National Park, which has resulted in some conflicts with commercial ranching. The Columbus area is home to numerous other species of birds. Most noteworthy is the bald eagle, which has become a regular sight along the banks of the Yellowstone River. The Yellowstone River provides habitat for both resident and migrating eagles, and wildlife managers anticipate a breeding pair nest near in the jurisdictional area.

Other birds include hawks, grouse, pheasant and wild turkey. The peregrine falcon is also a rare winter migrant through the Columbus area.

## **CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

There are documented cultural and historic resource sites within the jurisdictional area. The statewide Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) sites are inventoried for a variety of reasons. The CRIS listing contains all of those sites eligible for the National Register. However not all sites listed in the CRIS are on the National Register.

In and around Columbus there are 3 sites on the National Register. These are the Columbus Cemetery, W.H. Norton House on the courthouse property and the Jacobs House located at 4 W First Ave. North. The Little Stone Church in Columbus is also a historically significant building.

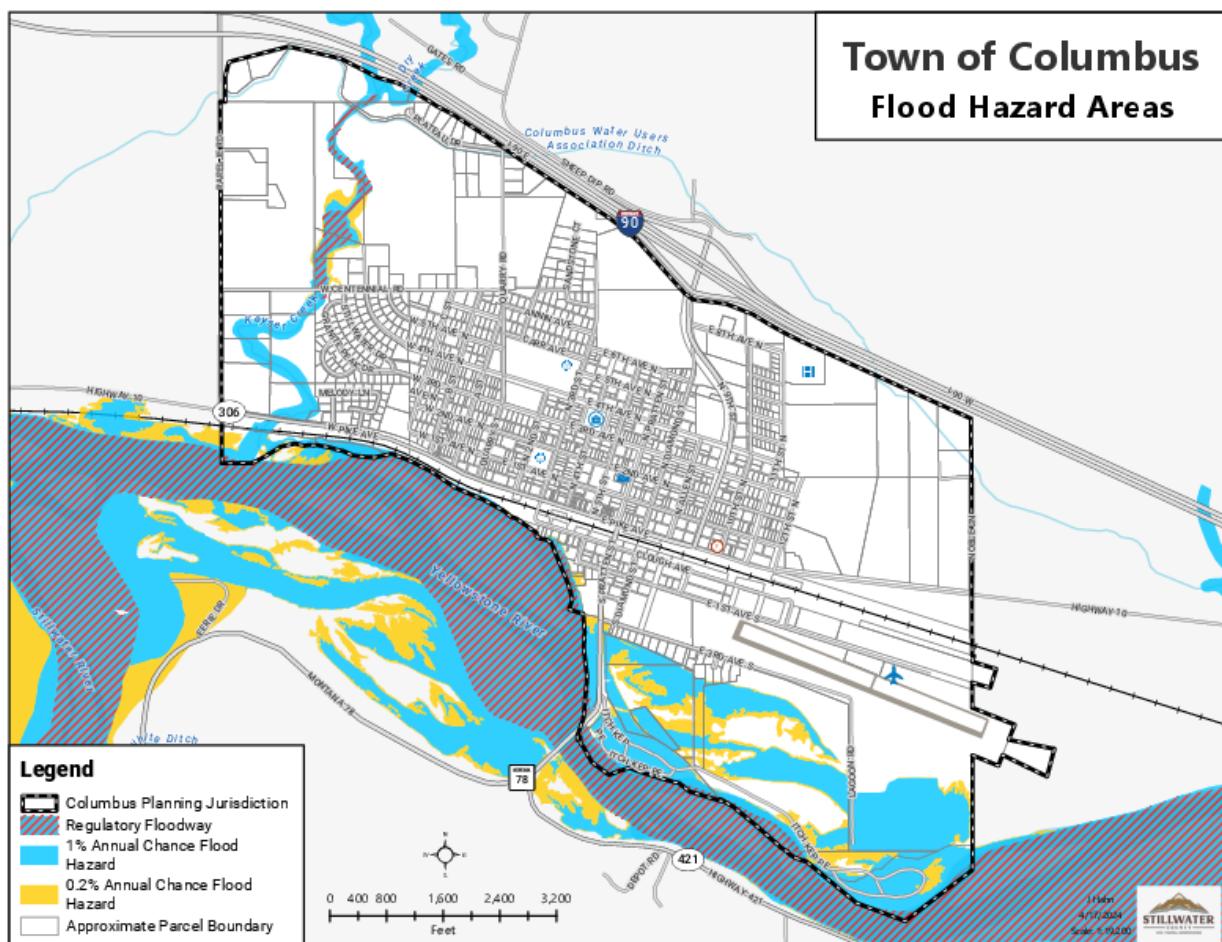
## **NATURAL HAZARDS**

Flood plains, areas with high ground water, fire hazard areas, steep slopes, unsuitable soils,

polluted or non-potable water, earthquakes and severe weather are considered unsuitable for subdivisions. Some areas may be unsuitable for building or residential purposes, unless the hazards can be mitigated by design. The following hazards were identified in the Columbus area.

## Flooding

The Yellowstone River and Keyser Creek have mapped 100-year flood plains. The City of Columbus participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, and has experienced flooding along the Yellowstone River. Flood plain maps for the city have been developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Stillwater County has adopted a complete set of regulations pertaining to construction within the limits of the 100-year flood plain. The hazards map shows the limit of the 100-year flood plain. Most construction within the 100-year flood plain or floodway requires a permit obtained through the office of the County Flood Plain Program Administrator. A map of flood hazard areas is provided.



## Fire Hazard Areas

Vegetation type and degree of slope are the main factors in determining natural fire hazards,

along with weather conditions. Riparian zones, wetlands, cultivated pastures and the urban area are considered low natural fire hazard areas.

## **Unsuitable Soils**

Soil characteristics such as high water table, chemical properties, shrink/swell etc. all have effects on land use. The Soil Survey of Stillwater County Area identifies all soil types. Each soil type is described and a map of the entire county locates the soils. Soil characteristics which affect building construction, roads and other land uses are identified in the survey.

Both soil associations located within the Columbus planning jurisdictional area have limitations for development. Refer to the natural environment section on soils and the Soil Survey of Stillwater County for general soil locations and limitations. Site specific soil samples may be advisable before development decisions are made.

## **Polluted or Non-potable water supply**

General information on water quality is contained in the natural environment section on hydrology. However, water quality can vary greatly from well to well. Groundwater from shales will tend to be of poorer quality than water obtained from sandstone or alluvial deposits. There are no known polluted or non-potable water sources in the planning jurisdictional area other than groundwater polluted by the former Mouat chrome industry located in the City of Columbus. The Mouat site is a designated EPA superfund site and was cleaned up in 1994.

## **Earthquakes**

The Columbus area is in the Intermountain Seismic Belt. Based on historic earthquake activity, earthquakes have not caused any considerable damage to structures in the Columbus area. A relatively small fault has been identified just north of the Columbus area, but it is not known to be active in recent times. There are no known landslide hazards identified for this area.

## **Severe Weather**

Severe storms are not common in the Columbus area. However, thunderstorms, hailstorms, high winds, heavy snow, freezing rain and sleet do occur. Snow load ratings for roofs is rated 30 for the Columbus area. Available wind information indicates wind gusts in excess of 60 mph are not uncommon.

## CHAPTER 6: PROJECTED TRENDS

### 6.1 LAND USE:

Lands classified and zoned as agricultural open space or residential estates have been converted to small tracts and residential property after being subdivided. Subdivision activity is expected to continue to meet the demand for residential properties. Development activity is occurring on the east and north side of Columbus. This trend is expected to continue into the future.

There has been a rising demand for and interest in multi-family housing. Recent subdivision proposals have incorporated this type of housing into their plans, and recent changes to the zoning ordinance have been made to clarify issues and requirements around this type of development. This trend is likely due to an increase in housing prices in the area and will likely continue as long as housing prices continue to climb and housing supply remains low.

Commercial development is expected to continue to diversify with essential services including groceries, hardware, clothing, vehicles, plus specialty stores and services including banking, real estate, insurance, and medical. The trend is in the north central business district and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Industrial development is expected to continue, especially on the southeast side of town as Stillwater Mine expands its smelter and refinery operations. The potential for additional industrial expansion on the east side on the city-county planning jurisdictional area will also continue to be evaluated.

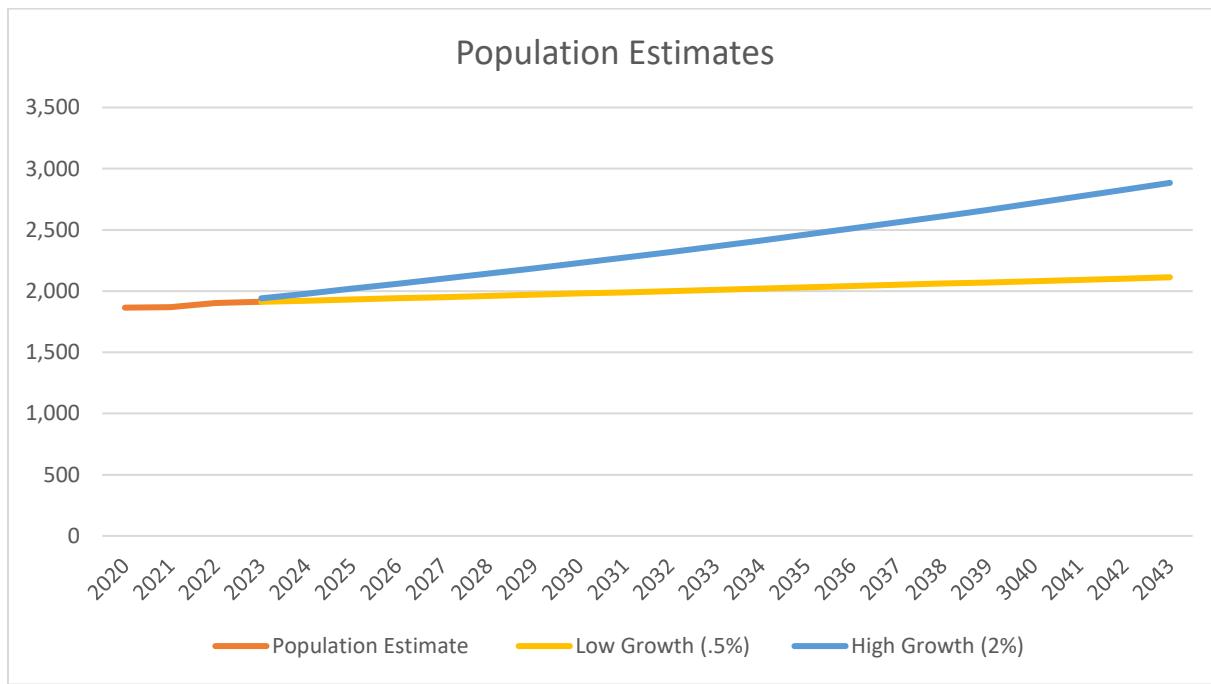
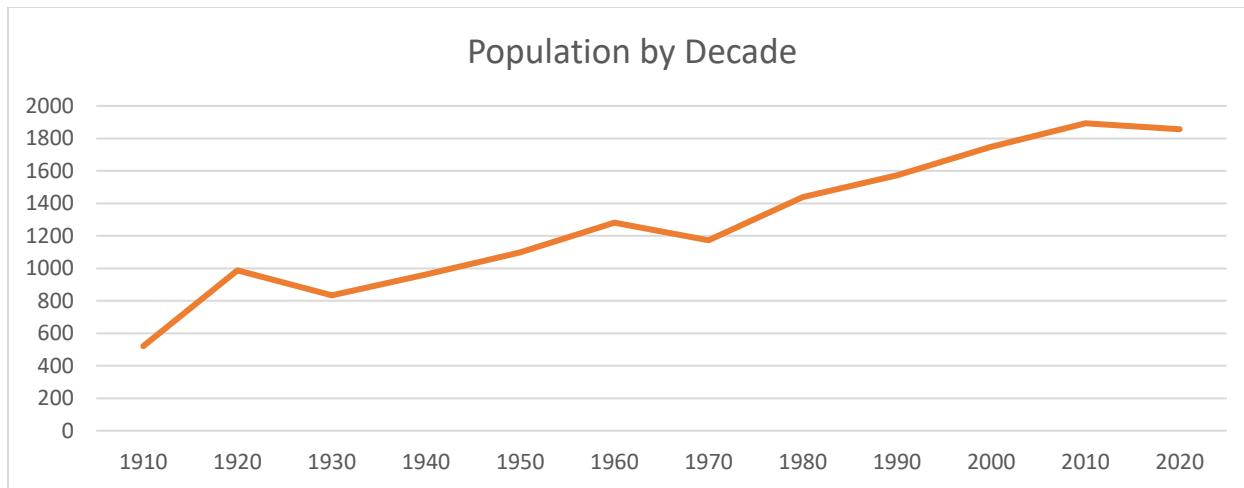
### 6.2 POPULATION:

The population of the City of Columbus has been steadily just under 2,000 for the past few decennial census figures. According to the 2010 census, there were 1,893 people in Columbus, which decreased slightly to 1,857 in the 2020 census.

There has been a natural increase in population of the area as a result of differences in birth and death rates. Migration has also been a factor in population growth. People began migrating into the area between 1970 and 2000 as a result of residential, commercial, industrial developments and increased mining activity.

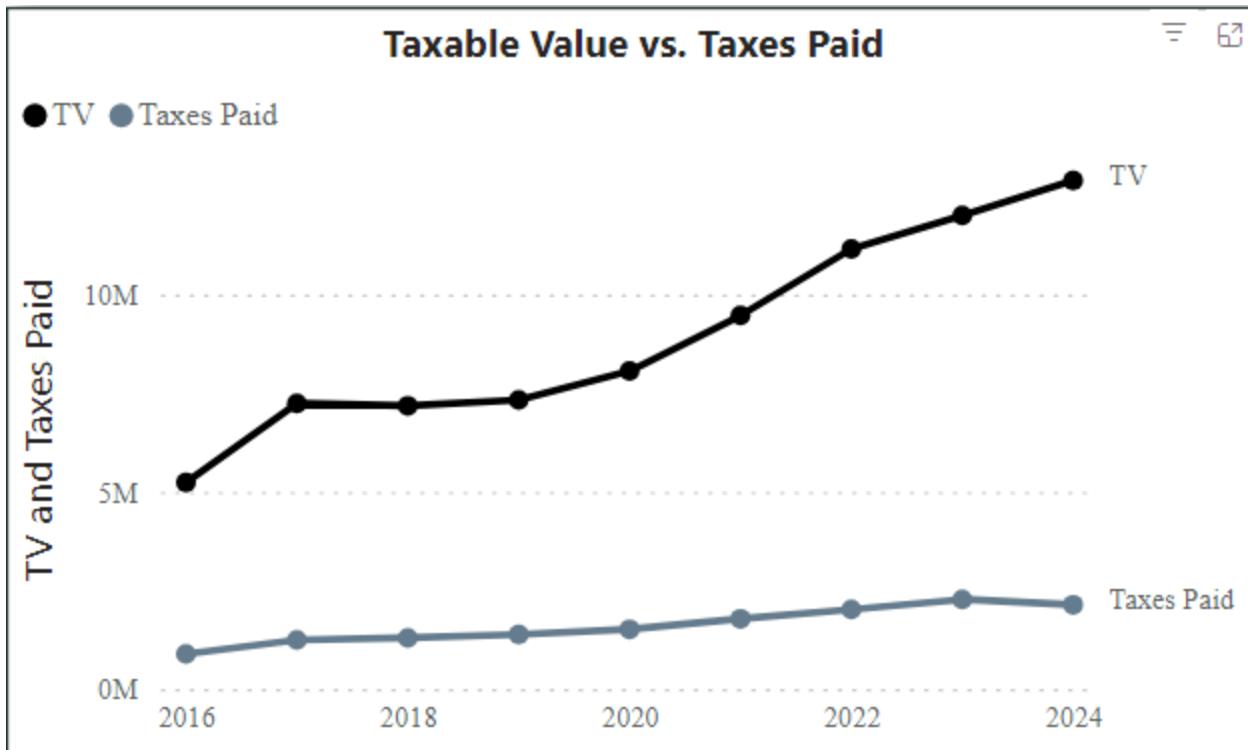
A general growth trend has continued since the first Census for Columbus in 1910 with some slight declines in 1930 and 1970. The graphs on the next page show the census population from 1910 through 2020, and population projections through 2043 based on low growth and high growth scenarios.

The overall population trend in the Columbus area indicates estimated continued growth of about 1% per year, based on recent census bureau estimates. Gender, age and racial composition of the population are projected to remain similar with relatively minor changes over time.



### 6.3 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

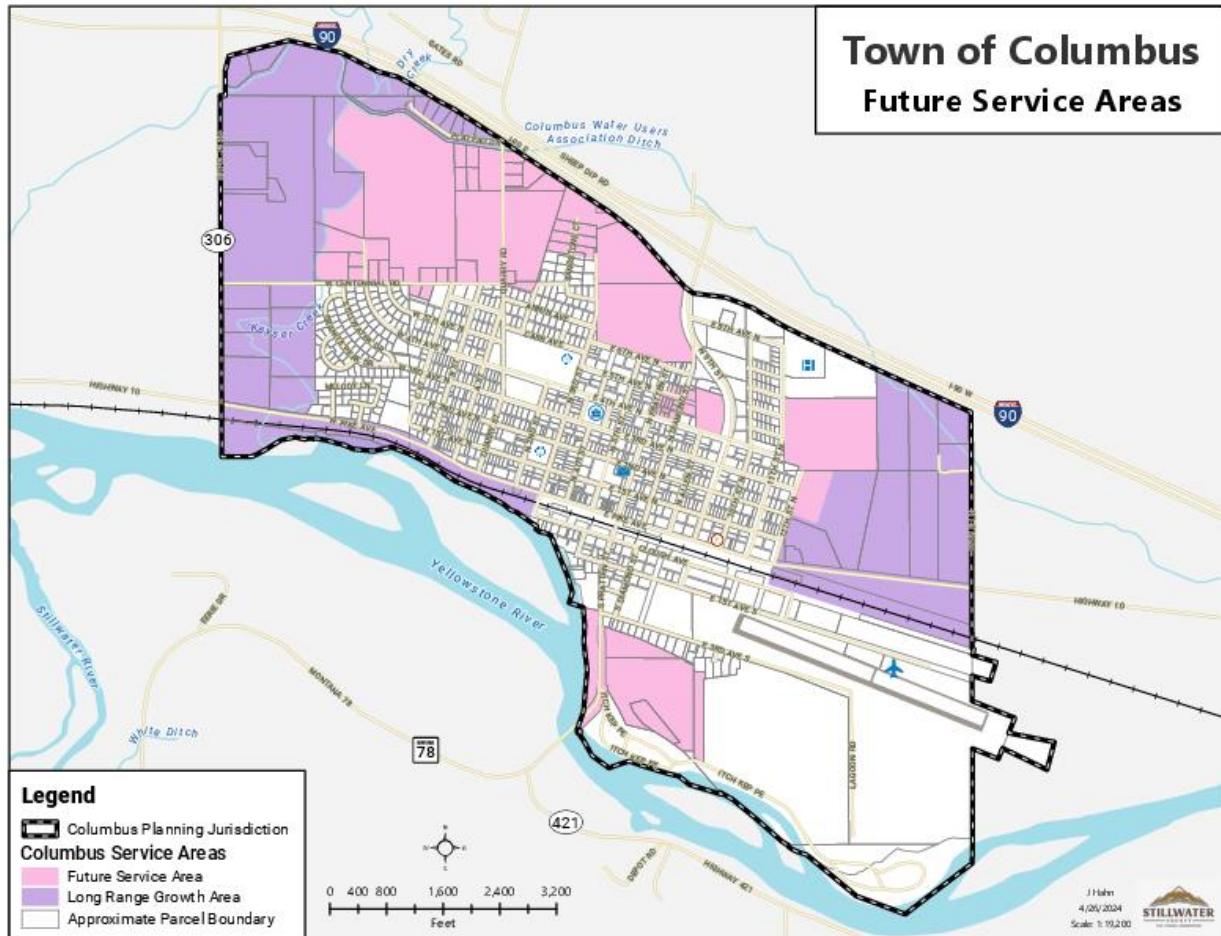
Economic trends in the Columbus area indicate exceptional growth in market and taxable value; household, family and per capita income; and labor force. The following graph from the Montana State Legislative Fiscal Division shows growth in taxable land value and property taxes paid in Columbus.



## 6.4 LOCAL SERVICES:

The trend in local services including legislative, city/municipal court, administrative, elections, facilities, law enforcement, police reserves, fire protection, roads and streets, parks/cemetery, animal control, swimming pool, airport, light districts, water system, sewer system, and solid waste is to improve and automate services where possible. Capital funds include streets and alleys, industrial park, parks, administrative/computers, police car replacement, swimming pool, fire, cemetery, and buildings. Capital funds and operating budgets have been increasing over time.

Future service and long-range growth areas for town services is shown in the map below. Lands north of Centennial Road have seen the most development pressure in recent decades, with several small subdivisions being platted and major subdivisions being proposed but not ultimately developed. The land south of the hospital, most of which is currently owned by the hospital and the school district, has also been the subject of possible development activity.



Keyser Creek presents a barrier to dense development to the west due to the challenge of bringing city services across the creek. However, demand may increase if a possible interchange with I-90 is constructed on the Rapelje Road.

There have been discussions about possible commercial/industrial development southeast of town on Highway 10. Beartooth RC&D in conjunction with Stillwater County recently conducted a Industrial/Business Park feasibility study which included discussions of possible locations for such development in the Columbus area.

Proposed capital projects are provided in the Capital Improvement Plan for the City of Columbus. This plan is updated as needed to reflect finished improvement and needed improvements as conditions change.

City-county airport, health, planning, dispatching and solid waste continue to be coordinated between Stillwater County and the City of Columbus to achieve efficiency and avoid duplication of services where possible.

## 6.5 NATURAL RESOURCES:

Natural resource development continues to be a reality in the Columbus area. The Sibanye Stillwater Mine continues to operate in the Nye area and associated smelter and refinery are located in Columbus. Population and economic trends can be closely tied to the mine due to the number of employees living in Columbus. Columbus is a participant in the mine's impact plan and is allocated 20% through tax-base sharing per the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan.

There are several sand and gravel operations in the area, most of which have been in operation for several years and are utilized by local excavators and contractors.

A recent trend in the area has been the development of wind energy development in the northern part of Stillwater County. Pattern Energy operates the Stillwater Wind farm, which was constructed in 2017. Puget Sound Energy is currently constructing another wind project, and the County continues to see interest in wind energy developments. These projects result in large truck loads through the area and additional traffic during construction. The wind farms are not visible from town but are visible from the hills around Columbus. Full-time employees of these companies have moved to the area as well.

The area has also seen interest in solar farm development, but other than the small solar development 20 miles west of Columbus, near Reed Point, no development have been constructed.

Agricultural land continues to be converted to residential development.

There were significant flood events in the area in 1997, 2011, and 2022.

## **CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION of GROWTH POLICY**

### **7.1 POLICIES, REGULATIONS, and IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:**

This section includes a description of policies, regulations and other measures to achieve the community goals and objectives stated in the Columbus Area Growth Policy as required by Montana Codes Annotated 76-1-601 (3)(d). MCA refers to Montana Codes Annotated, ARM refers to Administrative Rules of Montana and CFR refers to the Code of Federal Regulations.

#### **Annexations (MCA Title 7, Chapter 2, Parts 42 through 47)**

Montana Annexation Statutes provide six options for annexation, including addition to municipalities, annexation of contiguous land, annexation of contiguous government land, annexation of wholly surrounded land, annexation by petition, and annexation with the provision of services. The City of Columbus implements the annexation option relevant to the specific situation. In all cases of annexation, services are provided according to a plan provided by the municipality as specified in MCA 7-2-4732.

#### **City-County Planning (MCA Title 76, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 6)**

The governing bodies of the City of Columbus and Stillwater County have created a city-county planning board to promote orderly development. The jurisdictional area includes the incorporated limits of the City and adjoining areas of the county south of Interstate 90 right-of-way, north of the Yellowstone River, east of State Secondary Highway 306 (Rapelje Road), and west of the section line between sections 22 and 23, 26 and 27, T2S, R23E.

The planning board is advisory to the governing bodies in proposing a growth policy, policies for subdivision plats, layout and development of public infrastructure and utilities to platted and unplatted lands.

#### **Airport Regulations (MCA Title 67 and CFR 77)**

Airport approach, transitional, horizontal and conical zones have been established with specified height limitations. Permitted uses on airport property are specified along with nonconforming uses and structures. Permits for future uses are also specified in accordance with Federal Aviation Regulations.

An airport layout plan and airspace plan have been prepared and existing obstructions have been identified. An airport influence area will also be established to include the areas outside the city-county planning jurisdiction.

The Airport Board has established rules for operation and management of the airport. These rules include confinement of aircraft operations; traffic patterns; taxiing; aircraft

safety, reports and accidents; fueling and defueling of aircraft; vehicular traffic; commercial operations; snow removal and mowing plan; airport management; lease or use agreement; hangars; airport hazard areas; through the fence access; revision of the regulations; grievance procedures; and penalty for violations.

### **Floodplain Regulations (MCA Title 76, Chapter 5) Federal Floodplain Regulations (44 CFR, Chapter 1, Parts 63-73)**

Recurrent flooding of land resources causes loss of life, damage to property, disruption of commerce and governmental services, and unsanitary conditions; all of which are detrimental to the health, safety, welfare, and property of the occupants of flooded lands and the people of this state. It is in the public interest to manage regulation of flood-prone lands and waters in a manner consistent with sound land and water use management practices which will prevent and alleviate flooding threats to life and health and reduce private and public economic losses.

Stillwater County has adopted floodplain regulations by resolution and the City of Columbus has adopted floodplain regulations by ordinance. Floodplain regulations are amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, attorney general opinions or other relevant changes.

### **Municipal Zoning (MCA Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 3)**

The City of Columbus has adopted zoning regulations for the purpose of promoting health, safety, morals and general welfare of the community. Zoning districts have been established to specify location, use, height, size of yards, lot coverage and other aspects of land use for agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential, public or other purposes. There is also a superfund overlay district, floodplain and airport regulations. The city/county planning board serves as the zoning commission and airport zoning commission. A board of adjustments is established to review and make recommendations on variance requests.

The zoning regulations are published in Title 17 of the Columbus Municipal Code and are amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, attorney general opinions or other relevant changes.

### **Subdivision Regulations (MCA Title 76, Chapter 3, Parts 1 through 6)**

The governing bodies of the City of Columbus and Stillwater County have each adopted subdivision regulations to promote public health, safety, and general welfare by regulating the subdivision of land; prevent overcrowding; lessen congestion on streets and highways; provide for adequate light, air, water supply, sewage disposal, parks and recreation, ingress and egress, and other public requirements; require development in harmony with the natural environment; protect the rights of property owners; and require uniform monumentation of land subdivisions by reference to a plat or certificate of survey.

The Columbus Area Subdivision Regulations were last revised in 2023 and contain general

provisions; procedures for major and minor subdivisions; design and improvement standards; procedures and standards for subdivisions created by rent or lease, condominiums, planned unit developments, administrative provisions and other requirements. The subdivision regulations are amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, attorney general opinions or other relevant changes.

## **Sanitation in Subdivisions (MCA Title 76, Chapter 4, Part 1) Subdivision Regulations (ARM 17.36.101 through 17.36.805)**

Sanitation in subdivisions and associated rules and regulations have been adopted to control water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal to include individual wells affected by adjoining sewage disposal and individual sewage systems to protect the quality and potability of water for public water supplies and domestic uses and to protect the quality of water for other beneficial uses, including uses relating to agriculture, industry, recreation, and wildlife.

A Board of Health has been established in accordance with MCA 50-2-104 to oversee environmental health issues in the county. The Board of Health has adopted rules for onsite subsurface sewage treatment systems.

In addition, circulars published by Montana Department of Environmental Quality provide implementation guidance. These include DEQ 1 – Standards for Water Works, DEQ 2 – Design Standards for Wastewater Facilities, DEQ 3 – Standards for Non-Community Public Water Systems, DEQ 4 – Montana Standards for On-Site Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems, DEQ 8 – Montana Numeric Water Quality Standards, DEQ 8 – Montana Standards for Subdivision Storm Drainage, DEQ 10 – Standards for Development of Springs for Public Water Systems, DEQ 12A - Montana Base Numeric Nutrient Standards, DEQ 12B - Nutrient Standards Variances, DEQ 13 - Montana Policy for Nutrient Trading, DEQ 16 –Standards for Hauled Water Cisterns (Water Storage Tanks) for Non-Community Public Systems, DEQ 20 – Standards for Nonpublic Water Systems, PWS 5 – Groundwater under the Direct Influence of Surface Water, and PWS 6 – Source Water Protection Delineation.

## **Surveys and Coordinates Corner Recordation Requirements (MCA Title 70, Chapter 22, Parts 1 and 2) Survey Monumentation Standards (ARM 24.183.1101, 1104, and 1107)**

The purpose of these regulations is to protect and perpetuate public land survey corners and information concerning the location of these corners by requiring the systematic establishment of monuments and recording of information concerning the marking of the location of public land survey corners. Also, to allow for the location of other property corners and providing for property security and a coherent system of property location and identification of ownership and thereby eliminating the repeated necessity for reestablishment and relocations of corners once they are established and located. These records are maintained by the County Clerk and Recorder.

## **Local Government Budgeting (MCA Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 40)**

Local government budgets conform to the fund structure prescribed by the department of administration. Local governments submit a complete copy of the final budget together with a statement of tax levies to the department of administration by the later of October 1 or 60 days after receipt of taxable values from the department of revenue.

The City of Columbus, Stillwater County and other units of local government prepare an annual budget that includes funding for local services and public facilities necessary to achieve community goals and objectives.

## **Capital Improvements (MCA Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 6)**

Authorization to provide a capital improvement fund for the replacement, improvement, and acquisition of property, facilities, or equipment that costs in excess of \$5,000 and that has a life expectancy of 5 years or more. This capital improvement fund must be formally adopted by the governing body. Capital improvement funds are approved during the annual budget process. The City of Columbus has a formally adopted capital improvement and maintenance management program.

Montana Public Works Standard Specifications are used as a guideline on public works projects. The City of Columbus is in the process of establishing Standards for Public Works Improvements. Rules and regulations governing utility services and streets are also being developed and may be implemented to achieve community goals and objectives in Columbus.

## **Improvement Districts (MCA Title 7, Chapter 12, Parts 41-46)**

The City council may create special improvement districts, designating them by number; extend the time for payment of assessments levied upon the districts for district improvements for a period not exceeding 20 years or for a period not exceeding 30 years if refunding bonds are issued; make the assessments payable in installments; and pay all expenses of whatever character incurred in making the improvements with special improvement warrants or bonds.

The City council may create special improvement districts for acquiring by purchase, building, constructing, or maintaining facilities intended to protect the safety of the public from open ditches carrying water; constructing municipal swimming pools and other recreation facilities; streets, avenues, alleys, or public places of the town graded to the official grade; surfaced or resurfaced; sidewalks, crosswalks, culverts, bridges, gutters, curbs, steps, parking; sewers, ditches, drains, connecting sewers; waterworks, water mains, and extensions of water mains; pipes, hydrants, and hose connections for irrigating purposes or for fire protection; retaining walls, bulkheads, and walls of rock or other material and the planting of tree; make monetary advances or contributions to aid in the construction of additional natural gas and electric distribution lines and telecommunications facilities in order to extend those public utility services; and maintain, preserve, and care for any of the improvements authorized by state statute.

The City of Columbus has utilized improvement districts for various public improvements in the past. Active improvement districts at this time are for street lighting and storm water drainage. Improvement districts may be utilized in the future to achieve community goals and objectives and implement the growth policy.

### **Economic Development (MCA Title 32, Chapter 4, Parts 1 through 3)**

Counties and municipalities can participate in development corporations created for the purpose of promoting, developing and advancing the economic welfare of the state. The City of Columbus and Stillwater County participate in the Beartooth RC&D Economic Development District with representatives on the Board of Directors and the District Economic Development Committee. A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was last updated in 2021 and is updated periodically.

### **Hard Rock Mining Impact Plans (MCA Title 90, Chapter 6, Part 3) Hard Rock Mining Impact Rules (ARM 8.104.101 through 218)**

A Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan has been approved to assist local government units in meeting the initial financial impact of large-scale mineral development. Estimated number of persons coming into the impacted area; increased capital and operating cost to local government units for providing services expected as a result of the development; and the financial or other assistance the mineral developer will give to local government units to meet the need for services is included in the impact plan.

Stillwater County, City of Columbus, and Columbus Schools are identified as affected units of local government in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the Nye expansion project. Stillwater County, City of Columbus, and Columbus Schools are identified as potentially affected units of local government in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the East Boulder project.

Stillwater County, City of Columbus, and other affected units of local government follow the rules, policies, and guidelines established by the Hard Rock Mining Impact Board and approved impact plans.

### **Property Tax Base Sharing (MCA Title 90, Chapter 6, Part 4)**

The increase in property tax base resulting from the development and operation of large-scale mines is allocated so that property tax revenues are equitably distributed among affected local government units. Employee surveys provided in accordance with MCA 90-6-405 are utilized for the annual allocation of the increase in taxable valuation from a large-scale mineral development.

Stillwater County, City of Columbus, and other affected units of local government follow the procedures specified in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the Stillwater Mine.

## **Metal Mines License Tax (MCA Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 22; and Title 20, Chapter 9, Part 2)**

Stillwater County has established a hard-rock mine trust reserve account and a metal mines tax reserve account as authorized. The Columbus School District has also established a metal mines tax reserve fund. The allocation of metal mines license tax revenues received is allocated by the Board of County Commissioners annually in compliance with state statutes. The hard-rock mine trust reserve account can only be used following a mine closure or a 50% reduction in mine workforce. The County's metal mines tax reserve can be expended for planning and economic development activities. Schools can expend metal mines tax reserve for any purpose authorized by law.

## **Open Meetings (MCA Title 2, Chapter 3, Part 2)**

Public boards, commissions, councils, and other public agencies in the City of Columbus and Stillwater County conduct public business, actions and deliberations openly. All meetings of the governing bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, agencies, or any political subdivision or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds are open to the public.

All meetings that regulate the rights, duties, or privileges of any individual are open to the public. Provided, however, the presiding officer of any meeting may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then if and only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open.

A meeting may be closed to discuss a strategy to be followed with respect to litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public agency.

## **School Districts (MCA Title 20, Chapter 6, Parts 1 through 7)**

State statutes provide for school districts and public educational services provided under the jurisdiction of the district. An elementary district is a district organized for the purpose of providing public education for all grades up to and including grade 8 and for preschool programs and kindergartens. A high school district is a district organized for the purpose of providing those public educational services for all grades beyond grade 8, including postsecondary programs, except those programs administered by community college districts or the Montana university system. The trustees of elementary districts and high school districts have the same types of powers, duties, and responsibilities authorized and imposed by the laws of Montana. The Columbus city-county planning jurisdiction is within the Columbus elementary and high school districts. These school districts implement the goals and objectives identified for education and schools.

## **Rural Fire District (MCA Title 7, Chapter 33, Part 21)**

The board of county commissioners is authorized to establish fire districts in any unincorporated territory or town upon presentation of a petition in writing signed by the owners of 40% or more of the real property in the proposed district and owners of property representing 40% or more of the taxable value of property in the proposed district.

The Columbus Fire Department is responsible for the area within the town and the rural county portion of the city-county planning jurisdiction is within the Columbus Rural Fire District #3. The rural fire trustees establish policies and regulations for the district.

## **Conservation District (MCA Title 76, Chapter 15, Parts 1 through 9)**

State statutes provide for creation of conservation districts for the conservation of soil and soil resources, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare. The Columbus city-county planning jurisdiction is within the Stillwater Conservation District. The Conservation District implements their own policies, regulations, and other measures to achieve goals and objectives.

## **Right to Farm (MCA Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 9)**

Agricultural activities are protected from governmental zoning and nuisance ordinances. A city, county, taxing district or other political subdivision may not adopt an ordinance or resolution that prohibits any existing agricultural activities or forces the termination of any existing agricultural activities.

The City of Columbus and Stillwater County have not adopted and do not intend to adopt an ordinance or resolution that prohibits any existing agricultural activities or forces the termination of any existing agricultural activities.

## **Health Care Facilities (MCA Title 7, Chapter 34, Part 22)**

The Board of County Commissioners has jurisdiction and authority, under the limitations and restrictions prescribed by law, to construct, furnish, equip, expand, improve, maintain, and operate the buildings for health care purposes.

## **Cemetery Districts (MCA Title 7, Chapter 35, Part 21)**

The City of Columbus currently maintains the Columbus cemetery. Interest has been expressed in creating a cemetery district equivalent to other cemetery districts in the county.

## **Columbus Municipal Code (MCA Title 7, Chapter 5, Parts 41–44)**

The City of Columbus has adopted a Municipal Code that includes General Provisions in Title 1; Administration and Personnel in Title 2 includes the city council, mayor, clerk-treasurer, attorney, city judge, court clerk, chief of police, director of public works, health officer, employees generally, police department, volunteer fire department, city-county planning board, board of health and civil defense. The city council has established standing committees on finance, streets and alleys, water and sewer, parks and recreation, fire and police, sanitation, airport, zoning and cemetery. Revenue and Finance in Title 3 includes the capital improvement program. Business Licenses and Regulations are included in Title 5. Title 6 includes regulation of animals in town. Title 8 includes health and safety regulations for nuisances, fire protection, fireworks, garbage, and weeds. Title 9 includes rules for public peace, morals and welfare. Vehicles and Traffic rules are in Title 10. Rules covering Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places are in Title 12. Title 13 includes public services for the water department, sewers, and franchises. Buildings and Construction are addressed in Title 15. Subdivision regulations are referenced in Title 16 and zoning regulations are in Title 17. Titles 4, 7, 11, and 14 are reserved.

The Columbus Municipal Code is amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, attorney general opinions or other relevant changes.

The City of Columbus utilizes policies, regulations and other measures included in the Municipal Code to achieve community goals and objectives

## **Other Measures (Montana Constitution, Montana Codes Annotated and Administrative Rules of Montana)**

In addition to the implementation measures described above; Stillwater County, the City of Columbus, and other units of local government may utilize other implementation measures authorized by Montana Constitution, Montana Codes Annotated, and Administrative Rules of Montana as needed to achieve community goals and objectives established pursuant to MCA 76-1-601 (3)(a).

## **7.2 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY:**

The strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure for the City of Columbus and Stillwater County includes utilizing available planning, programming, budgeting and accounting options allowed by law for drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sewer systems, storm drainage systems, solid waste facilities, fire protection facilities, roads, bridges, and other public infrastructure.

### **7.2.1 City of Columbus:**

The City of Columbus has developed water, sewer, solid waste systems; streets, alleys and sidewalks; storm drain systems; parks and a cemetery; public buildings, facilities, and equipment over the history of the town. Additional development of public infrastructure is addressed

through annexation plans, capital improvement planning, and subdivision improvements agreements. Replacement of public infrastructure is accomplished through the capital improvement planning process. Maintenance of public infrastructure is addressed in the annual operating budgeting process including setting fees, the mill levy and utilizing non-tax revenue to fund ongoing maintenance costs.

The City adopted a Capital Improvement Plan in 1999 and has updated the plan as needed. Projects in excess of \$5,000 with a life expectancy of five years or more are considered in the capital improvement planning process. Requests for capital expenditures are submitted by council members or City staff during the annual budgeting process. The capital improvements program is reviewed and revised each year to change priorities or add new projects.

The Capital Improvement Plan includes the drinking water systems, sanitary sewer systems, solid waste systems, street and traffic systems, storm drain systems, park systems and the cemetery, public building facilities and equipment. Part of the capital improvement planning process is the equipment replacement program. This program covers all equipment with a value of more than \$5,000 and a useful life of three years or longer. The program is incorporated into the Capital Improvement Plan as a separate element.

The strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure for the City of Columbus is to provide for capital budgets in the annual budgeting process; identify and prioritize capital improvement needs; identify the financial requirements of each project; increase accountability through the annual budgeting process and identify individual projects to be funded; facilitate participation in the process and coordination among departments, other jurisdictions and the public; ensure the City's annual capital budget and five-year capital improvement program is affordable and finances necessary public infrastructure; enhance the linkage between capital and operating budgets; limit debt use to long term public infrastructure; decrease reliance on debt and utilize federal and state grants when possible.

## **7.2.2 Stillwater County:**

Stillwater County has developed roads and bridges; solid waste systems; public buildings, facilities and equipment within the city-county planning jurisdiction. Additional development of public infrastructure is addressed through capital improvement planning and subdivision improvements agreements. Replacement of public infrastructure is accomplished through the annual budgeting process. Maintenance of public infrastructure is also addressed in the annual operating budgeting process including setting fees, mill levies, and utilizing non-tax revenue to fund ongoing maintenance costs. The County's strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure is based on needs assessments, facility studies, economic development plans, growth policies, or other relevant information. The County Commissioners evaluate and prioritize requests for public infrastructure development, maintenance, and replacement received from county departments during their budgeting process in accordance with the Local Government Budget Act and other applicable laws. Public health and safety; federal, state, and local standards; costs and availability of funding are considered in the evaluation of each capital improvement project. Debt use is limited to long term public infrastructure.

The County utilizes federal and state grants when possible. The County currently has a Capital Improvements Plan.

### **7.2.3 State of Montana**

Montana Department of Transportation is responsible for the development, maintenance and replacement of Montana primary highway 78, secondary highway 306, Interstate 90 frontage road (old highway 10) and other property within the city-county planning jurisdiction.

The City and County strategy in relation to the development, maintenance and replacement of public infrastructure controlled by Montana Department of Transportation is to communicate local community needs, issues and concerns, participate in state planning and programming of state highway projects; coordinate and cooperate on state highway projects.

### **7.2.4 Other Districts and jurisdictions:**

The Columbus Elementary and High School Districts; Columbus and County Fire Districts; City-County Airport Board, County Library Board; County Solid Waste District; County Weed Board; Stillwater Community Hospital Board; and Stillwater Conservation District have public infrastructure development, maintenance and replacement responsibilities within the city-county planning jurisdiction.

The City and County strategy in relation to the development, maintenance and replacement of public infrastructure controlled by other districts or jurisdictions within the city-county planning jurisdiction is to coordinate, cooperate and assist with public infrastructure projects to the extent possible.

## **7.3 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:**

Section 76-1-601(3)(f) MCA requires an implementation strategy that includes a timetable for implementing a growth policy; lists conditions that will lead to the revision of the growth policy; and a timetable for reviewing the growth policy at least every five years.

### **7.3.1 Timetable for implementing the growth policy:**

Implementation of the growth policy will begin after adoption by the governing body and will continue until the growth policy is revised or repealed. The governing bodies within the jurisdictional area are guided by and give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the growth policy for public infrastructure, adoption of subdivision regulations and zoning ordinances or resolutions.

Implementation is an ongoing process and will be emphasized annually during the budget process for guidance on public infrastructure decisions and funding of public services. Implementation will also occur whenever the subdivision regulations, zoning ordinance or resolutions are adopted or revised.

### **7.3.2 Conditions that lead to a revision of the growth policy:**

Conditions that will lead to a revision of the growth policy are listed below:

- Public initiative or referendum to change the growth policy.
- Adopted neighborhood plans would be added as an addendum.
- Significant changes in community goals and objectives occur.
- Significant change to existing conditions or population that deviate more than ten percent from the projected trends in the growth policy.
- Significant change in the pattern of development within the jurisdictional area.
- Statutory changes that affect the growth policy, subdivision review criteria, public infrastructure or other elements of the growth policy.

The process of revising the Growth Policy would then begin after one or more of the conditions listed above have been identified. The planning staff, planning board and governing bodies will coordinate and cooperate in the effort to revise the growth policy.

### **7.3.3 Timetable for reviewing the growth policy:**

The growth policy will be reviewed at least once every five years by the planning staff and planning board as required. A recommendation will be made to the governing bodies on whether or not revisions to the growth policy are necessary. The growth policy will be revised at least once every ten years after the latest Census information becomes available.

## **7.4 Statement of Coordination and Cooperation:**

The City of Columbus and Stillwater County will coordinate and cooperate on matters relating to the Columbus Area Growth Policy through participation in the Joint City-County Planning Board. The Joint City-County Planning Board was created in 1967. The jurisdictional area now includes the incorporated limits of the City of Columbus and the unincorporated area outside the City limits as described in resolutions adopted by the City and County. The County Commissioners appoint two official and two citizen members, the City Council appoints two official members, the mayor appoints two citizen members and the ninth member is selected by the board of supervisors of the conservation district.

The City-County Planning Board is the agency designated to review subdivisions as specified in a County Resolution and City Ordinance. The City-County Planning Board also serves as the zoning commission for the jurisdictional area and as the airport zoning commission.

In relation to the Columbus Area Growth Policy and any subsequent revisions and updates, the City of Columbus and Stillwater County will cooperate and coordinate with each other as necessary by:

- Utilizing interlocal agreements provided for by state statutes to specify roles, responsibilities and funding of shared facilities and services.

- Coordinating and combining functions on the City-County Planning Board, the Zoning Commission, Airport Zoning Commission and by communications among elected officials and appointed staff, the City shall attempt to maintain consistency and integrity of planning efforts with those of the County.
- Collaborating and sharing certain staff and staff functions, such as with the planning staff, dispatching, environmental health, and volunteer fire departments, the City and County shall attempt to coordinate efforts to achieve best responsiveness and effectiveness for the citizens of this area.
- Providing county officials and staff opportunities to review and comment on proposed amendments to the Columbus Area Growth Policy including implementation tools. Implementation tools include annexation, subdivision and zoning regulations and may include others that have been identified as having a material affect on unincorporated areas within the planning jurisdiction.
- The City works with the county on identified public facilities and services of common interest, including airport, disaster and emergency services, fire protection, law enforcement, planning, and grant administration as allowed by state law.

This statement of coordination and cooperation strategies is intended to identify current strategies utilized at this time. Other opportunities for future cooperation and coordination may be pursued as they become available.

## **7.5 Statement on Subdivision Review Criteria:**

### **7.5.1 Subdivision Review Criteria:**

Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 76-3-601 (3)(h) requires a statement explaining how governing bodies will define, evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions. 76-3-620(2), MCA, requires that if a proposed subdivision is conditionally approved, each condition required for subdivision approval must identify a specific, documentable, and clearly defined purpose or objective related to the primary criteria set forth in 76-3-608(3), MCA. 76-3-608 (3), MCA, establishes six primary criteria for local government review of subdivisions. These primary criteria are: effects on agriculture; agricultural water user facilities; the natural environment; effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat; effects on local services; and effects on public health and safety.

Definitions of the criteria along with explanation of evaluation and decision making regarding proposed subdivisions follows:

#### **Effect on Agriculture:**

Agriculture is defined as all aspects of farming or ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals or poultry; and any practices including, forestry or lumbering operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.

Evaluation criteria to determine effects on agriculture include:

1. Subdivisions contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County Planning jurisdiction will likely have minimal effects on agriculture.
2. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service will have adverse effects on agriculture.
3. The first minor subdivision from a tract of record will likely have minimal effects on agriculture.
4. The second and subsequent minor subdivisions from a tract of record are considered to have potential adverse effects on agriculture when the proposed subdivision predominately (>50%) borders land classified as agricultural or timberland by Montana Department of Revenue or state trust lands.
5. Major subdivisions are considered to have potential adverse effects on agriculture when the proposed subdivision predominately (>50%) borders land classified as agricultural or timberland by Montana Department of Revenue or state trust lands.
6. Subdivisions proposed in areas adjacent agricultural lands classified by Montana Department of Revenue, state or federal lands in the county are considered to have potential weed problems and an adverse effect on agriculture. Weed management plans submitted with subdivision applications and that are evaluated for compliance with the Stillwater County Weed Management Plan.

Compatibility with adjacent agricultural use, right to farm, and herd district issues are evaluated in the subdivision review process. Adverse effects of subdivisions on agriculture may be mitigated by designs including, but not limited to cluster development, open space buffers, shelterbelts adjacent to neighboring agricultural lands or other site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider or determined in the review process.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on agriculture, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to fence the subject property to reduce possible conflicts with adjacent agricultural practices.
2. A subdivider may be required to establish easements for access to adjacent agricultural properties.
3. A subdivider may be required to post signage warning of agricultural practices, such as cattle crossing signs or implement traffic signs on roads within or accessing the subdivision.
4. A subdivider may be required to disclose potential conflicts with agricultural practices in subdivision covenants and to recognize the right to farm per 76-2-901, MCA.

### **Effect on Agricultural Water User Facilities:**

Agricultural water user facilities are defined as those facilities which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands for the production of agricultural products. These facilities include, but are not limited to, ditches, head gates, pipes, and other water conveying facilities.

Evaluation to determine effects on agriculture water user facilities includes:

1. Subdivisions proposed on land with agricultural water user facilities or adjoining an agricultural water user facility are considered to have potential adverse effects on the agricultural water user facilities.
2. Subdivision designs that include abandonment and removal of water rights and all agricultural water user facilities, when the facilities are no longer in use in compliance with MCA 76-3-504 and the Stillwater County and City of Columbus Subdivision Regulations, will have minimal effect on agricultural water user facilities on a county wide basis.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on agriculture water user facilities are evaluated for compliance with MCA 76-3-504 and the Stillwater County and City of Columbus Subdivision Regulations which require disclosure that adequately notifies potential buyers and providing a minimum of 20 feet wide easements for maintenance of the facilities, if the facilities are still in use for agricultural purposes.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on agricultural water user facilities may be mitigated by site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider; or determined in the review process as conditions of approval, which may include but are not limited to piping, fencing or alternative barriers; or mitigated by agreement with persons, irrigation districts, private or public entities or other parties entitled to the water from an affected agricultural water user facility with mutually acceptable mitigation measures.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on agricultural water user facilities, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to show easements for existing ditches on the final plat.
2. A subdivider may be required to establish easements for ditches conveying water across the subject property.
3. A subdivider may be required to provide a notation on the final plat granting the right of access for maintenance and repair to any water rights holders using a ditch crossing the subject property.
4. A subdivider may be required to place a notation on the final plat restricting construction of buildings or planting of certain types of vegetation within any ditch easements.
5. A subdivider may be required to demonstrate that proposed culverts or bridges over irrigation ditches will be of sufficient size to not interfere with historic water flow and water rights.
6. A subdivider may be required to take steps to ensure safety around the ditch, such as fencing or posting warning signs, especially when a subdivision will result in residential uses near a ditch.
7. A subdivider may be required to disclose the existence of and the right of water rights holders to access and maintain ditches on the subject property.
8. A subdivider may be required to transfer water rights to a single entity, such as a property owners' association, for administration and use within the subdivision, or sever surface water rights from the land.

## **Effect on Local Services:**

Local Services means any and all services that local governments, public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.

Evaluation to determine effects on local services include:

1. Subdivisions contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction are considered to potentially effect local services, including but not limited to water, sewer, storm drainage, street or solid waste facilities. Proposed mitigation of adverse effects through a subdivision improvements agreement and guarantees is evaluated based on state standards and cost estimates. Lack of public service and/or facility capacity to adequately serve a subdivision may be reason for denial of proposed subdivisions when adverse effects are not mitigated.
2. Major subdivisions located outside the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction or a Census Designated Place of Absarokee, Park City or Reed Point are generally considered to have adverse effects on local services.
3. The first minor subdivision from a tract of record will likely have a negligible effect on local services.
4. A second or subsequent minor subdivision from a tract of record is generally considered to have adverse effects on local services that require additional evaluation for cumulative effects.
5. Major subdivisions are likely to have effects on traffic and may require a traffic impact analysis to determine any adverse effects and mitigating measures.
6. A second or subsequent minor subdivision is likely to have effects on traffic and may require a traffic impact analysis to determine any adverse cumulative effects and mitigating measures.
7. Subdivisions with access across a bridge require an evaluation, report and certification from a structural engineer on the capacity of the bridge, any adverse effects of subdivision traffic (including construction traffic), and proposed mitigating measures.
8. Subdivisions proposed in locations contiguous to existing utilities are likely to have minimal effect on utility services.
9. Subdivisions proposed in locations that are not contiguous to existing utilities are considered to have an effect on utility services and must be evaluated for availability of the service or practical alternatives.

Effects of subdivisions on local services may be mitigated through a subdivision improvements agreement with financial guarantees. The improvements agreement must address and guarantee construction of all on site improvements. It must also provide for payment or other means of assistance to all effected units of local government, on a proportionate share basis, for all required off site improvements. The proportionate share will be determined on a per capita basis for minor subdivisions or by a case study method for major subdivisions using the most current information available.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on public facilities and services provided by fire districts, water and sewer districts, other affected units of local government or utilities may be mitigated site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider; mitigation may be determined in the

review process as conditions of approval, including but not limited to any mutual agreements between the subdivider and affected units of local government or utilities.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on local services, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to establish an area for a centralized box unit, if requested by the local post office.
2. A subdivider may be required to provide off-site road improvements, or to pay for a proportional share of off-site road improvements, if required by the City Public Works Department or the County Road and Bridge Department and as established through a Traffic Impact Analysis and/or Road Maintenance Agreement.
3. A subdivider may be required to place notations on the final plat notifying future lot owners of existing maintenance measures for local roads, such as availability, or lack thereof, of dust control, snow plowing, or other maintenance provisions.
4. A subdivider may be required to obtain approval from the owners of existing public water and/or sewer systems if connection to these systems are proposed or required as part of the subdivision.
5. A subdivider may be required to obtain annexation into the City of Columbus and complete any conditions of annexation.
6. A subdivider may be required to obtain a zone change or to otherwise comply with zoning regulations.
7. A subdivider may be required to extend water, sewer, and other City services to the subdivision which meet the requirements of the City Public Works Department.
8. A subdivider may be required to waive the right to protest the creation of one or more special improvement districts.
9. A subdivider may be required to complete any required public improvements prior to filing a final plat.
10. A subdivider may be required to establish or expand one or more special improvement districts to ensure maintenance of required improvements.
11. A subdivider may be required to establish private maintenance provisions to ensure maintenance of required improvements.
12. A subdivider may be required to enter into a Subdivision Improvements Agreement per the sample provided in the Subdivision Regulations
13. A subdivider may be required to secure and show on the final plat easements to each lot to accommodate gas, electricity, phone, cable, and other necessary utilities.
14. A subdivider may be required to provide a notation on the final plat granting utility easements, as shown on the final plat, to any entity providing utilities.
15. A subdivider may be required to place new utilities underground.
16. A subdivision may be required to site utilities and utility easements per the requirements of utility companies.

### **Effect on Natural Environment:**

The natural environment is defined as: The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, light and objects of historic and aesthetic significance.

Evaluation to determine effects on natural environment includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction and utilize available public water, sewer, streets, storm drainage, and solid waste facilities, and other public services or extension of existing facilities and services are likely to have a negligible effect on the natural environment.
2. Any portion of subdivisions or associated improvements proposed within a 100-year floodplain, as defined in the Stillwater County Floodplain Regulations and by Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Also, subdivisions containing riparian areas, or adjacent to rivers, streams, lakes, or other natural surface water are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.
3. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with a high water table (less than 4 feet from the surface), and/or on wetlands or groundwater recharge areas are considered to have an adverse effect on the natural environment.
4. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with evidence of soils with building or site development limitations as defined by the Soil Survey of Stillwater County, or on landslides or slopes greater than 25 percent are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.
5. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with historic, cultural, archaeological or paleontological features are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on the natural environment may be mitigated by designs that incorporate natural features into open space areas, site specific mitigation measures proposed by state or federal agencies or site specific mitigation measures based on detailed scientific studies and that provide no build areas with 100-foot setbacks from important natural environment features. These important natural environment features include rivers, streams, lakes, or other natural surface water; riparian areas; 25 percent slopes; areas with soils limitations including landslide areas; or include 100 year floodplain areas, wetlands, high groundwater areas, groundwater recharge areas, historic, cultural, archaeological, or paleontological features.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on the natural environment, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to obtain approval from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and/or the Environmental Health Department for existing or new water, wastewater, storm water drainage, and solid waste disposal provisions.
2. A subdivider may be required to show evidence of sufficient water rights to serve the subdivision, as determined by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.
3. A subdivider may be required to restrict or limit the use of private wells within the subdivision through private covenants or other acceptable means.
4. A subdivider may be required to identify any floodplain or flood way on the property on the final plat and place a notation on the final plat restricting building in the floodplain if floodplain exists on the property and subject to the opinion of the County Floodplain Development Coordinator.
5. A subdivider may be required to place a notation on the final plat identifying areas of steep slopes and/or unstable soils and restricting building in these areas.

6. A subdivider may be required to identify historic or cultural features, as determined by the State Historic Preservation Office and/or the County Historic Preservation Officer, on the final plat and/or ensure public access is available to such features.
7. A subdivider may be required to enter into a Weed Management Plan with the County Weed District.

### **Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat:**

Wildlife means animals that are not domesticated or tamed, and wildlife habitat means the place or area where wildlife naturally lives.

Evaluation to determine effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction are generally considered to have a minimal effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat.
2. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed in riparian areas or on land with wetlands are considered to have an adverse effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat.
3. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed in areas with rare or endangered wildlife species, migration routes, or critical wildlife habitat identified by state or federal agencies, either on the land to be subdivided or adjoining lands, are considered to have adverse effects on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on wildlife and wildlife habitat may be mitigated by designs, including but not limited to cluster development with open space buffers that protect the wildlife and wildlife habitat or by agreement with state and/or federal wildlife management agencies on mutually acceptable mitigation measures for rare or endangered wildlife species or critical wildlife habitat.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to utilize wildlife friendly fencing, such as smooth wire, when fencing is required in the subdivision.
2. A subdivider may be required to meet any requirements of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Departments, Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or other similar agency.
3. A subdivider may be required to provide corridors for wildlife movement if such corridors are identified within the subdivision.

### **Effect on Public Health and Safety:**

Public health and safety is defined as the prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of wellbeing for the community at large. Conditions that relate to public health and safety include but are not limited to disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding, fire, or wildfire hazards, rock falls or landslides, unstable soils, steep slopes, and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high pressure gas lines; and air or vehicular traffic safety hazards.

Evaluation to determine effects on public health and safety includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction and utilize available public water, sewer, streets, storm drainage, solid waste facilities, other public services and utilities are considered to have a negligible effect on public health and safety.
2. Subdivisions proposed in areas identified as a high fire hazard area by a fire district, or state or federal agency are considered to have adverse effects on public health and safety.
3. Portions of subdivisions or associated improvements proposed within a 100-year floodplain as defined in the Stillwater County Floodplain Regulations and by Flood Insurance Rate Maps are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.
4. Subdivisions proposed for mobile home parks or recreational vehicle parks in areas subject to high winds greater than 60 miles per hour are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.
5. Subdivisions proposed in areas identified as an airport influence area or that could result in an obstruction in the areas identified on an airspace plan approved by the Federal Aviation Administration are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.
6. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with high pressure gas lines or high voltage lines present are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.
7. Proposed subdivision plans for water supply systems, sewage treatment systems, storm drainage and solid waste collection and disposal submitted with the subdivision application will be evaluated during preliminary plat or summary review for adverse effects on public health and safety. Evaluation criteria used are the rules, regulations, standards and guidelines of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Stillwater County Board of Health.
8. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with or adjacent to Superfund or hazardous waste sites are considered to result in an adverse effect on public health and safety.
9. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with abandoned landfills, mines, wells, or waste sites are considered to result in an adverse effect on public health and safety.
10. Subdivisions proposed on land adjacent solid waste sites, sewage treatment plants, feed lots, other facilities with offensive odors, or uses with high noise levels are considered to result in potential adverse effects on public health and safety.
11. Subdivisions proposed on land containing soils with the potential for high levels of radon, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides; buried tanks; or other pollutants are considered to result in potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

Adverse effects of subdivisions on public health and safety may be mitigated by designs that mitigate potential public health and safety issues in compliance with local, state, and federal requirements. Proposed mitigation measures based on detailed studies by qualified professionals are used to evaluate proposed subdivisions.

In order to mitigate potential impacts on public health and safety, the following conditions may be required for subdivisions in the Columbus area:

1. A subdivider may be required to meet any design standards as discussed in the Subdivision Regulations, such as but not limited to, road width and surfacing, street lighting, and the provision of water supply for firefighting purposes.
2. A subdivider may be required to provide as-built documents demonstrating that required improvements have been installed per the design standards in the Subdivision Regulations.
3. A subdivider may be required to place notations on the final plat warning of high fire hazards and restricting building locations.
4. A subdivider may be required to provide multiple access points, wider roads, turnaround areas, and similar provisions as required by the local fire or police departments.
5. A subdivider may be required to name roads within a subdivision, per the requirements of the City or the County GIS Department.
6. A subdivider may be required to limit access onto collector roads through no-access strips on the final plat, identified approach location on the final plat, or other means as required by the City Public Works Department or the County Road and Bridge Department.
7. A subdivider may be required to provide evidence that existing infrastructure which will be utilized by the subdivision, such as roads, drainage features, water supply for firefighting, etc., is working properly and will be sufficient for the additional development.
8. A subdivider may be required to place a notation on the final plat stating that each lot is provided legal and physical access.
9. A subdivider may be required to provide access easements and construct roads to any and all lots within the subdivision, regardless of the anticipated schedule for development.
10. A subdivider may be required to provide buffers, such as fencing or landscaping, between incompatible land uses or near sensitive uses (schools, agricultural property, industrial uses, etc.).

### **7.5.2 Subdivision Evaluation and Decision Making:**

The governing bodies evaluate and make decisions on proposed subdivisions utilizing primary review criteria defined above and the following statutory requirements.

- Compliance with the survey requirements required by state law;
- Compliance with local subdivision regulations, and the review procedures of the subdivision regulations;
- Provision of easements for the location and installation of any planned utilities;
- Legal and physical access to each parcel within the subdivision and the notation of that access on the applicable plat and any instrument transferring the parcel;
- Assurance that all required public improvements will be installed before final plat approval, or that their installation after final plat approval will be guaranteed as provided by the Columbus Area Subdivision Regulations. A local government may require a subdivider to pay or guarantee payment for part or all of the costs of extending capital facilities related to public health and safety, including but not limited to public

roads, sewer lines, water supply lines, and storm drains to a subdivision. The costs must reasonably reflect the expected impacts directly attributable to the subdivision;

- Compliance with the requirements of section 76-3-504 and the Stillwater County and City of Columbus Subdivision Regulations, MCA, regarding the disclosure and disposition of water rights; as provided in section 76-3-510, MCA.
- Any annexation and zoning issues should be considered concurrently with subdivision review to the extent possible.

The basis for the governing body's decision to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove a subdivision is whether the preliminary plat applications, applicable environmental assessment, public hearing, planning board recommendations, or additional information demonstrates the development of the subdivision will meet regulatory requirements and reasonably minimize potentially significant adverse impacts. When requiring mitigation the governing body consults with the subdivider and gives due weight and consideration to the expressed preference of the subdivider. Unmitigated impacts of a proposed development may be unacceptable and may preclude approval of the subdivision plat. In reaching a decision, the governing body issues written findings of fact that weigh the criteria in Section 76-3-608 (3)(a), MCA; which includes the effects of a proposed subdivision on agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, the natural environment, wildlife and wildlife habitat, local services, and effects on public health and safety.

## **7.6 Statement on Public Hearings for Subdivisions:**

This section 76-3-605 MCA require the governing body or its designated agency to hold a public hearing on the preliminary plat when required. The governing bodies have authorized the planning boards to hold public hearings to consider all relevant evidence relating to public health, safety, and welfare, including the environmental assessment to determine whether the preliminary plat should be approved, conditionally approved, or disapproved by the governing body. The planning boards act in an advisory capacity and submit written recommendations to the governing body.

The required public hearing for a subdivision proposal will be held before the Planning Board as stated in the subdivision regulations. The format for a subdivision public hearing is as follows:

- The public hearing notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county as required by state law and the Columbus Area Subdivision Regulations.
- The subdivider and property owners immediately adjoining the exterior boundaries of the proposed subdivision are notified of the public hearing by certified mail.
- The public hearing will be conducted at the time, date and place advertised.
- Public hearings are held in a location near the proposed subdivision whenever possible.
- People attending the public hearing are requested to sign an attendance sheet.
- Public hearings may be recorded or documented with minutes for the hearing.
- The planning board chair usually conducts public hearings and gives an introduction on the purpose of the public hearing.
- A presentation of the proposed subdivision is made at the public hearing by the subdivider or an authorized representative(s).

- A staff report and findings on the primary review criteria are presented by planning staff on the preliminary plat and environmental assessment if required by the Columbus Area Subdivision Regulations.
- Questions and comments on the proposed subdivision are received after the presentations. Participants are encouraged to state their name, place of residence and whether they are in favor or opposed to the proposed subdivision and give the reasons for their position. Those who are neither in favor of nor opposed to the proposed subdivision, but have comments, may state that position and provide comments as well. Both verbal and written comments are accepted.
- The public hearing is adjourned when there is no further public comment.
- When a proposed subdivision is also proposed to be annexed to the City of Columbus, the City Council shall hold joint hearings on the preliminary plat and annexation whenever possible.

Public hearings and associated notice requirements are included in the Montana Code Annotated. The Subdivision Regulations are revised periodically to remain current with statutory changes or other legal requirements.