

Presented by:



Growth Policy Update

CITY OF FORSYTH

Working Draft



November 2021



Client Commitment



Empowered Employees



Quality Solutions

CITY OF FORSYTH

Growth Policy Update

Working Draft
November 2021

Prepared for the:
City of Forsyth Planning Board

Prepared by:

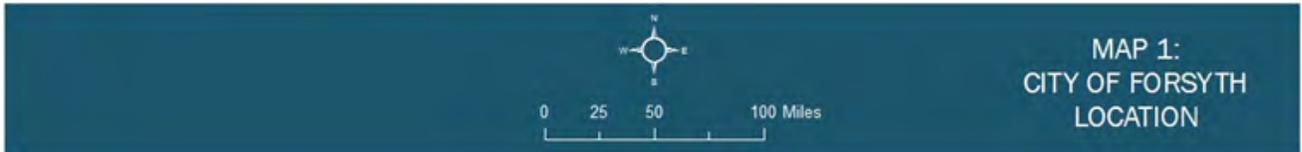
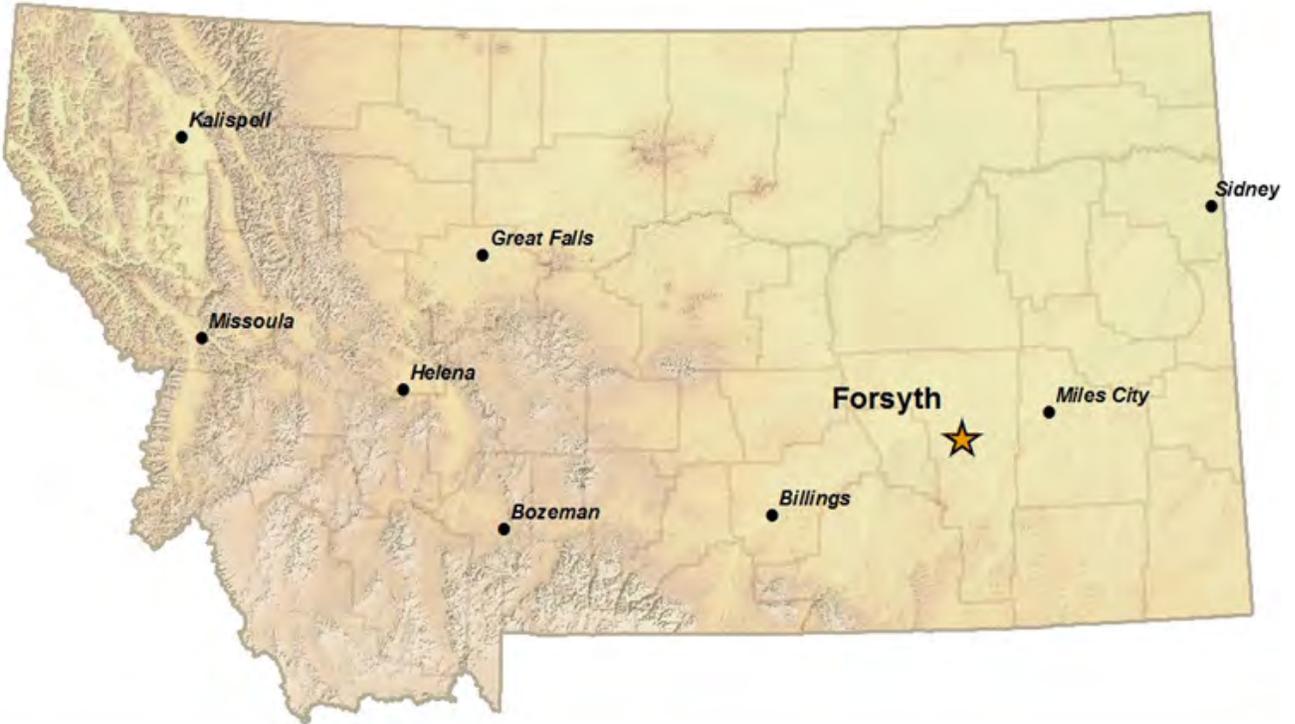


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

▼ Map 1 - Location of Forsyth



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The City of Forsyth is a community of approximately 1,841 people. It was established in 1876 as a transportation hub for Yellowstone River steamboats and later it became a stop for the Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Railroads. Forsyth boasts a high quality of life and excellent services such as education and healthcare services. City residents have access to recreational opportunities like the Yellowstone River, hunting and fishing and numerous cultural events such as the renown Matthew Quigley rifle match. Forsyth is also known as the “City of Trees” due to the large number of shade trees found throughout the City.

Forsyth is the county seat of Rosebud County and currently some of its major employers include Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF), Range Telephone, Prince Construction, Rosebud Health Care Center, Talen Energy, Rosebud County, and the Forsyth School District.

Like many communities in eastern Montana and the rural West, Forsyth faces challenges including an aging population and the economic uncertainty of natural resource extraction and commodity markets. Recent events such as the loss of a number of BNSF jobs in Forsyth and the closure of the Colstrip electrical generating plants 1 and 2 have highlighted the need for the City and Rosebud County to look for ways to diversify their economy. Nonetheless, the community is looking to leverage its historic strengths while also pursuing new opportunities in order to maintain itself economically and culturally. Forsyth’s assets include an efficient transportation network, excellent services, many recreational amenities and dedicated residents who want to improve their community.

This document is meant to help the residents of the City to anticipate potential changes and to help them be prepared to take the steps necessary to ensure that those changes result in long-term benefits for the City.

This Growth Policy contains nine sections that provide the rationale for the goals mentioned above and the foundation for achieving those goals through specific actions. Those sections include:

- **Goals and Objectives:** Taking advantage of opportunities and addressing issues does not happen by chance. It requires that people be willing to set practical and achievable Goals. This section identifies the Goals and Objectives set by the City’s residents.
- **Introduction:** A description of the City, its location, features and history.
- **Population Characteristics:** A description of the City’s residents.
- **Economy:** A description of the City’s current and desired future economic situation and a vision for capitalizing on new economic opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Local Services and Facilities:** A description of the infrastructure and services found in the City.
- **Housing:** A description of the current housing stock and the City's housing needs.
- **Land Use:** A description of current and potential future land use in the City and a vision for how and where new development should occur.
- **Public Engagement:** This section describes the process used to engage City residents in order to obtain their opinions on issues they would like to see addressed in the Growth Policy.
- **Implementation Steps:** A description of the actual steps the City may take to achieve the Goals and Objectives.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives have been created by the City to address the opportunities and needs identified in the Growth Policy. The steps the City will take to achieve them are found in the Implementation Section.

ECONOMY

To be successful, Forsyth must create a stronger, more diversified economic base including retail, services, and primary industries.

| Goals | Objectives |
|--|---|
| 1. Stable business climate for existing businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist existing businesses to expand market competitiveness. ▪ Maintain communications with SEMDC. ▪ Support efforts to retain existing businesses/employment opportunities. |
| 2. Attractive environment for new businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage community beautification through public and private efforts. ▪ Maintain adequate governmental services at economical costs. ▪ Encourage communication with SEMDC. ▪ There is a need for a Chamber brochure ▪ Website continues to be updated as needed and sees good usage ▪ Is there a need for a “business tax incentive?” ▪ Is there a need for TBID |
| 3. Desirable community aesthetics for the employee base. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue community cleanup/beautification programs on both public and private spaces. ▪ Maintain strong communications with other partners federal, state, county, schools. ▪ Investigate and expand recreational opportunities. ▪ Work with local realtors to understand the available housing stock in the city and the demand for housing for all age groups. ▪ Develop strong communication channels with the medical services community. |
| 4. A desirable quality of life character of the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage a “family friendly” atmosphere for all age groups. ▪ Maintain a desirable mix and cost of governmental services. ▪ Investigate methods to address and reduce the impact of the illegal drug culture. ▪ Maintain strong communication channels between the public and private sectors. |

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The City’s high quality of life is dependent upon many things, including the provision of efficient and effective community services. Providing a safe and healthy environment to live in and raise a family requires good services such as education, healthcare, recreation and social services. Therefore, the City will work to provide excellent community services.

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|--|
| 1. Cost-effective governmental services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue regular updates to the capital improvements plan. Emphasize use of the capital improvements plan to guide decisions regarding infrastructure expenditures. |
| 2. Acceptable emergency services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communication with the Rosebud County Sheriff’s office. |
| 3. Broad-based recreational opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake longer range park and recreation planning. |
| 4. Adequate senior citizen programs and services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the County to maintain and improve its senior services. |

INFRASTRUCTURE

The City shall provide public infrastructure and facilities that are identified as good to excellent by residents, businesses, and guests of Forsyth.

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|---|
| 1. Adequate safe and effective public infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital improvements plan needs to be improved. Emphasize use of the capital improvements plan to guide decisions regarding infrastructure expenditures. |
| 2. Adequate system redundancy for water and wastewater infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue grant funding to help construct redundancy into systems, including ARPA funds. Capital improvements plan needs to be improved. Emphasize use of the capital improvements plan to guide decisions regarding infrastructure expenditures.. |
| 3. Maintain water and wastewater permitting requirements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the system is regularly inspected and maintained. Capital improvements plan needs to be improved. Emphasize use of the capital improvements plan to guide decisions regarding infrastructure expenditures. |
| 4. Satisfactory transportation facilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue using the street maintenance district to fund maintenance. Examine other options for funding street maintenance. |
| 5. Maximize the use of grants and low interest loans to fund infrastructure improvements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to search for Federal, State and other sources of funding. |

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

LAND USE

The City will ensure that adequate space, infrastructure and housing is available for the needs of future residential, commercial, industrial and community facilities. The City will also improve residents' quality of life by improving living conditions and providing aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods.

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|--|
| 1. Adequate housing opportunities. | ▪ Assess the City's housing stock and needs. |
| 2. Appropriate land development requirements. | ▪ Ensure City development standards are met. |
| 3. Appropriate commercial/industrial locations. | ▪ Ensure City development standards are met. |
| 4. Family oriented neighborhoods. | ▪ Enforce community decay ordinance. |
| 5. Manage State and Federal regulations that affect the City. | ▪ Continue to work with the Army Corp of Engineers to recertify the flood levee. |

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

▼ Map 2 - Points of Interest



INTRODUCTION

LOCATION

The City of Forsyth is located in southeastern Montana along the Yellowstone River and at the intersection of Interstate 94 and US Highway 12.

GEOGRAPHY AND VEGETATION

Forsyth is located in the Yellowstone River valley and is surrounded by rolling low lands and sloping terrain. The City is at an elevation of 2523 feet above sea level and with slopes in the City ranging between 0 to 2 percent and generally sloping towards the Yellowstone River.

The areas east of Forsyth rise abruptly in elevation between 200 to 300 feet with slopes ranging between 15 to 20 percent. The slopes consist mainly of rock outcrops and are sparsely vegetated with range grasses and shrubs and scattered stands of ponderosa pines. West of Forsyth the slopes range between 2 to 15 percent and also consist of rock outcrops and are vegetated with range grasses, shrubs and scattered stands of ponderosa pines. Immediately south of Interstate 94 the area rises abruptly with rock outcrops with slopes between 20 to 30 percent. This topography is also vegetated with range grasses and shrubs and scattered stands of ponderosa pines.



CLIMATE

The City has an average maximum winter temperature of 36.1 degrees F, spring average temperatures of 61.0 degrees F, summer average temperatures of 85.5 degrees F, and fall average temperatures of 61.4 degrees F. Winters temperatures can dip below zero and summer days can see temps that exceed 100 degrees F. The coldest temperatures are during the month of January, with an average temperature of 33.3 degrees F and the hottest month of the year is July with an average temperature of 88.9 degrees F.



▲ Looking south from Main Street

Forsyth has an average snowfall accumulation of 29.7 inches per year with the heaviest snowfall occurring between December and January. Rainfall generally occurs from the middle of spring through the summer months and tapers off in the fall. Average rainfall is 14.39 inches with the most precipitation occurring in May and June.

INTRODUCTION



▲ Downtown Forsyth in 1921

HISTORY

Forsyth was named for United States Army General James W. Forsyth, who landed at the site of the City from a river steamer in the mid-1800s. Forsyth served as an officer in the Union Army during the Civil War and as a regimental cavalry commander during the Indian Wars on the northern Great Plains.

Forsyth is located along one of the routes of the Lewis and Clark expedition. On his journey back to the Missouri River to meet Meriwether Lewis, William Clark traveled down the Yellowstone River and passed through what would become Rosebud County on July 28, 1806.

With an abundant growth of cottonwood in the area, river steamers often stopped in the area to refuel their engines. Forsyth itself was established in 1880 and received a post office in 1882 when the Northern Pacific Railroad arrived. In 1910 the Milwaukee Railroad extended a line north into the Judith Basin, and thus opening a new territory for settlement. This helped establish Forsyth as a trading hub for the area. The historic buildings located along Main Street reflect the wealth of Forsyth's early railroad and agricultural years.



▲ Carriage on Main Street in the late 1800's

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

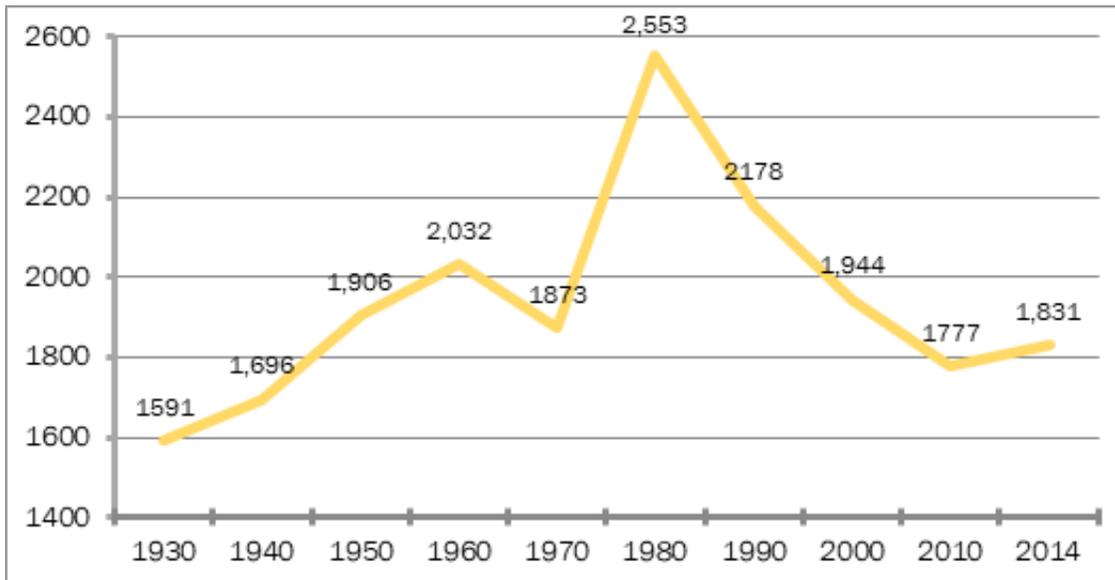
In 2014, Forsyth had an estimated population of 1,831 people.

Partly due to its topographical constraints the City, its population has been relatively stable throughout its existence. The peak of population of the City was 2,553 in 1980 and the low was 1,591 in 1930. The peak was caused to the influx of people working on the Colstrip power plants in the 1970's and 1980's. With the completion of the power plants and the subsequent departure of the construction crews, Forsyth's population returned to historically stable levels.

Despite the relative stability of the City's population, significant changes could occur in the next 5 to 7 years. The recent relocation of 45 jobs by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad from Forsyth to Laurel and the announced future closure of Colstrip electrical generating plants, #1 and #2 could both trigger population declines. This is particularly true since many people who work at generation plants in Colstrip reside in Forsyth.



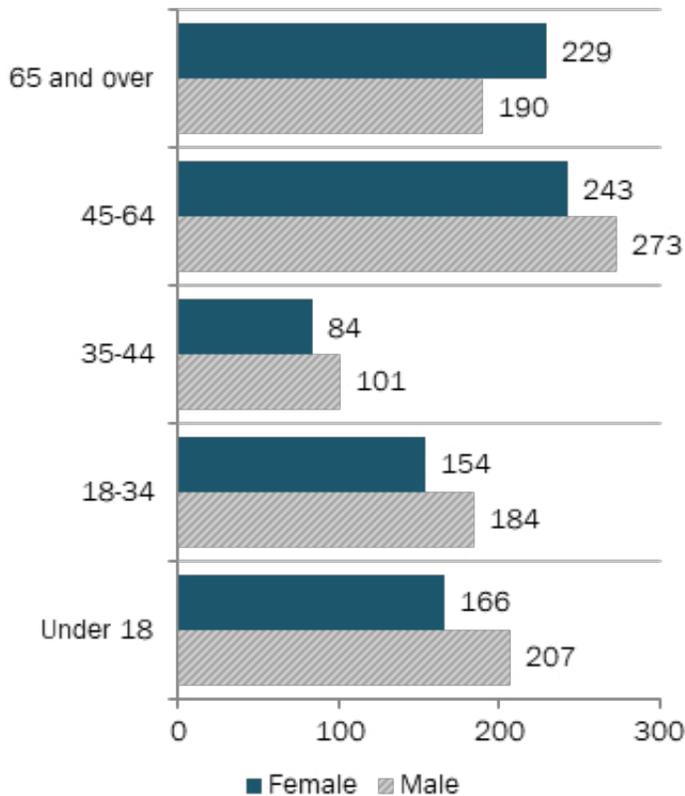
▲ Main Street



▲ Figure 1 - Population Trends, City of Forsyth-1930-2014
(Census Bureau, 2013 Washington, D.C.)

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Forsyth is also experiencing a change in the median age of its population; a trend shared by many other central and eastern Montana communities. According to Census data the median age of people in the City in 2014 was 45.5 years versus 42.1 in 2000. In addition, in 2014 22.9 percent of the population was estimated to be 65 or older, while in 2000 only 17.4 percent were in that bracket. Over the same time period, the City experienced a loss of younger people. In 2014, Census estimates showed that the population under 18 was 20.4 percent of the City's population compared to 25.1 percent in 2000.



◀ Figure 2 - Age Breakout by Gender for Forsyth, 2014
(Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps))

The aging of the City's population is something that should be monitored closely as this trend could have multiple effects upon the City and the County including:

- Increasing the need to provide healthcare, housing and services to seniors
- Limiting the available workforce to fill job openings, and
- Reducing the number of school age children and thereby decreasing State funding for the Forsyth School District

ECONOMY

Economically Forsyth faces both opportunities and challenges. The City has strengths that provide it with a solid foundation including a high quality of life, an excellent transportation network, access to inexpensive utilities, very affordable housing, a diversified small business community and strong community banks.

There are also challenges, including a heavy reliance upon transportation and natural resource related industries. As mentioned earlier, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) relocated jobs from Forsyth to Laurel and residents are concerned that the railroad may relocate more jobs in the future. Also, the closure of Colstrip electrical generating plants, #1 and #2 is a reality and is already impacting the community and surrounding area. The City also faces a limited workforce and the loss of retail services to larger communities such as Billings and Miles City.

Despite these challenges, Forsyth has the ability to take advantage of its strengths and can pursue various steps to stabilize and grow its economy.

PERSONAL INCOME

Based upon 2014 Census data, there were 821 households in Forsyth that had a per capita income of \$25,463 and a median household income of \$41,172. Per capita income is a measure of income per person. It is total personal income (from labor and non-labor sources) divided by total population.



▲ Burlington Northern - Santa Fe Railroad in Forsyth

In the 2009-2014 period, the income category in Forsyth with the most households was the \$50,000 to \$74,999 making up 19.5% of households. The income category with the fewest households was \$150,000 to \$199,999 or just 2.6% of households.

ECONOMY

DIVERSIFICATION

Forsyth's economy has historically been relatively diversified with transportation, natural resource extraction/utilities and agriculture being important sectors. The diversification of Forsyth's economy is due to many factors including its location along the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad line and Interstate 94, proximity to the electrical generation plants and coal mining at Colstrip and the agricultural operations in the surrounding area. Also as the county seat of Rosebud County the City is home to various county offices, as well as a regional hospital and schools.

Despite the relocation of 45 railroad jobs from Forsyth in 2015, BNSF remains a major employer for City residents as do the electrical generation and mining operations in Colstrip. In addition, Range Telephone Cooperative maintains its headquarters in Forsyth as does Prince Construction. The importance of transportation, mining, utilities and construction jobs to Forsyth is reflected in 2014 Census data which estimated that City residents held 234 jobs directly related to these industries.

The Forsyth business community still provides most essential services to its residents, including banks, hardware, a bowling alley, an agricultural feed and supply store, a grocery store, a pharmacy, a liquor store, a floral shop, an auto body shop, meat processing shop, insurance agencies, a land and title office, an accounting office, a hair and beauty salons, auto supply stores, welding shops, and a Ford auto dealership.

From this strong base of service, the City would like to further diversify its economic base by focusing on sectors such as tourism, senior services, telecommunications and transportation.

TOURISM

A wide variety of recreational/cultural opportunities exist in and around Forsyth. The City abuts the Yellowstone River which is a mecca for hunters, anglers, agate hunters and other recreationists. The City and the County also have a rich cultural history which is exemplified by the Rosebud County Museum located



▲ Shuttle bus to Colstrip



▲ Main Street Sidewalk

ECONOMY

in Forsyth. There are also nationally known events such as the Matthew Quigley Shoot located just north of Forsyth and regional events such as the Rosebud/Treasure County Fair.

SENIOR LIVING “HUB”

Knowing that the population of the City and Rosebud County are aging and that many of its current and future seniors would like to continue to live “in place” as long as they can, it may be worth an examination of the potential of making Forsyth a “senior living hub.” This would mean that the City along with other partners would actively work with the private sector to create an environment that caters specifically to seniors and ensures that they can continue to live independently in Forsyth as long as possible. This could involve facilitating the development of modern and efficient housing and ensuring that the necessary services including healthcare, transportation and day to day services continue to be available.



▲ Riverview Villa Retirement Community

MARKETING FORSYTH AS A HOME

Like many places in Montana, Forsyth provides its residents with a high-quality lifestyle. Forsyth boasts a wealth of natural amenities and activities such as access to public waters and outdoor recreation, as well as affordable housing, excellent telecommunications infrastructure and services like healthcare and public schools. Thus the potential exists for the City to attract new residents and businesses by marketing Forsyth as a wonderful place to live, work and play. Today telecommuting professionals who desire a rural lifestyle can choose to relocate and bring their job with them. Because of this, the City, the County, the Chamber of Commerce and Southeast Montana Development Corporation should work together to explore ways to effectively market the City’s assets to professionals and businesses that are looking for a rural home like Forsyth.

TRANSPORTATION

Forsyth is strategically located at the cross roads of three major transportation corridors: Interstate 94, US Highway 12 and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. This location may allow the City to further develop itself as a hub for transportation related businesses such as trucking firms. In addition, Forsyth has very accessible nationwide air travel from the Billings International Airport, which is located only an hour and half west of Forsyth.

YOUTH MENTORING

The loss of younger people is a demographic change that has been occurring for years, but it is also one that residents would like to actively reverse. Several issues play into this. First there are a lack of opportunities for youth to enhance their employment skills and contribute to the community. Also, there are a lack of employment opportunities for young adults who are natives of the City and would like to return to live and work.

ECONOMY

Addressing these issues will require a thoughtful and incremental approach. One step that people in the City have mentioned is the creation of a job awareness and mentoring program in order to help high school age youth to improve their skills and give back to Forsyth.

This will require the organization of youth, the business community and high school educators, and young adults, to assess needs and develop effective programs. Some steps could include taking interested youth to local professional conferences, creating an employer mentorship/intern programs and after-school/summer programs to provide youth with the opportunity to learn skills in order prepare for college or the workforce.

People in Forsyth do not have to undertake this project alone. The State of Montana currently has a program under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that provides a variety of services to in-school youth ages 14-21 and out-of-school youth ages 16-24. Some of the services include training and education, internships and mentoring. More information can be found at: <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/wioa/youth-program>

SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SEMDC)

SEMDC is the certified regional development corporation that works to help stabilize existing businesses and to encourage the growth of business in Southeastern Montana.

SEMDC offers the following services:

- Free and confidential one-on-one counseling to small businesses
- Grant administration
- Business loans
- Classroom business training
- General business advocate, and
- Grant writing assistance and potential funding identification

SEMDC primarily serves the four county area of Treasure, Custer, Powder River and Rosebud, including the City of Forsyth.

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Providing services and maintaining infrastructure in a safe and economical manner are a primary function of the City's government. Services in Forsyth include but are not limited to maintaining streets, providing emergency services, solid waste disposal and parks and recreation. The infrastructure that the City is responsible for runs the gambit from drinking water systems and wastewater water treatment to streets and parks.

The City does not currently have a capital improvements plan (CIP) but is in the process of developing one. Capital items are currently addressed by the City Council as line items in the City's annual budget. Nonetheless, the following narrative serves as the City's strategy for the development, maintenance and replacement of public infrastructure, until the community adopts a CIP.

Services and infrastructure are also provided to residents by Rosebud County and local non-profit organizations such as the hospital and school district. A comprehensive list of the services and infrastructure found in Forsyth follows.

AIRPORT

Tillit Field located east of Forsyth is a County owned airport. The runway is a hard surface with the longest runway being 4800 feet long by 75 feet wide. The runway is lighted and aircraft storage is available. The airport is managed by a five-member board appointed by the County Commissioners. In order to meet Federal Aviation Administration requirements, the airport recently underwent substantial upgrades to the runways and the surrounding road network.

CITY HALL

The offices of City government are located at 247 North 9th Avenue. The building contains the offices of the City Clerk/Treasurer, a shared office for the Mayor and City Judge, a shared Deputy/Clerk Treasurer and Water Clerk's office, a documents vault, and Council Meeting Chambers that is also available for public use.

CITY SHOP

The City shop, which houses the equipment used by the City Public Works Department to maintain infrastructure is located on the east end of the City at 283 Front Street.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHERN ROSEBUD COUNTY

The Community Foundation of Northern Rosebud County was founded in 2006 with the goal of creating a permanent source of funding to support initiatives that would improve the community. The Foundation works to build its endowment and administers the granting of earnings from over \$390,000 in permanently endowed funds.

Earnings from the endowment fund programs such as:



▲ City Hall



▲ City Shop

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES



▲ City Fire Department



▲ Rosebud Community Hospital

- Youth Programs & Education
- Recreation
- Arts & Culture
- Community & Econ. Development
- Natural Resources
- Conservation & Environment
- Emergency Services
- Health Care Services
- Historic Preservation

The Foundation has granted over \$90,000 to projects in the Forsyth area and will continue to become a significant funding source as the endowment grows.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Rosebud County Ambulance has 3 different service districts, including the Forsyth Ambulance, Colstrip Ambulance and the Ashland Quick Response Unit. The three districts are managed independently due to the large geographical area each covers. All three services are volunteer organizations with the members being paid a small stipend for their time away from their daily jobs. The service relies primarily on Rosebud County for funding and also by billing the patients they serve. The system has a total of 8 ambulances, three in Forsyth, three in Colstrip and two in Ashland.

FIRE PROTECTION

Fire protection is provided by the Forsyth Volunteer Fire Department. The primary station is located next to City Hall at 257 S. 9th Ave. and a secondary station is located at 1310 Front St. The department has approximately 20 volunteer fire fighters and 4 fire engines. Three of the engines have 500 gallon capacities and are able to pump 1000 gallons per minute (gpm). They were built in 1973, 1982, and 1996 respectively. A fourth engine dates to 1984 and has a 750-gallon capacity and can pump 1500 gpm. The City purchased a new, smaller fire truck in 2014. The City is currently budgeting for another new truck that may cost in the neighborhood of \$400,000.

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

The City has mutual aid agreements for fire protection with Rosebud County and other surrounding communities. Rosebud County maintains a County Fire Hall at 242 E. Front St. that provides wildland and structural protection outside of the City. The facility contains three type 6 fire engines and one water tender. The County also has a motor vehicle accident rescue unit.

MEDICAL CARE

The Rosebud Health Care Center (RHCC) is the City's only hospital. The facility provides a 24/7 emergency room, skilled long-term care and rural health clinic. The closest other medical facilities are in Miles City (45 miles from Forsyth) and Billings, (100 miles from Forsyth). In 2012, RHCC employed 120 individuals and had an annual budget of \$7.5 million.

The hospital's certification as a Critical Access Hospital means it receives cost-based reimbursement from the Medicare Program, instead of standard fixed reimbursement rates that typical hospitals receive. This type of reimbursement can enhance the financial performance of small rural hospitals and thus reduce hospital closures.

Hospital Services

- Emergency Services
- Long-Term Care
- Dietary Services
- Outpatient Services
- Laboratory
- Radiology: X-Ray, CT Scan
- Clinic
- Physical Therapy
- Immunizations
- Telemedicine (EMTN)
- Skilled Care Occupational Therapy

The effective operation of the facility is essential to the health and well-being of City residents and to maintaining Forsyth's quality of life.



▲ Rosebud County Library

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The City of Forsyth contracts with the Rosebud County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement. The Sheriff's Department maintains a facility in Forsyth at 180 South 13th Avenue. The building includes offices for deputies, dispatchers, and detention facilities.

LIBRARY

Rosebud County Library serves Forsyth, Rosebud County and Treasure County. This is a modern facility, which offers a range of services including a large collection of both non-fiction and fiction books, audio-books, DVD's and music CD's. Computers are available to the public, in both desktop and laptop options. Patrons can borrow iPads and tablets for in-library use, and internet and WiFi are free. The facility is also a testing site for a variety of educational institutions.

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Library staff is available, by appointment, to assist patrons with their devices and downloading e-books and audio books or for more time consuming computer assistance. The library also regularly offers classes on a variety of technology based topics. A strategic plan is being developed to guide the future operations of the library and will be completed in the fall of 2016.

MUSEUMS

The Rosebud County Museum at 1300 Main Street is staffed by predominately senior volunteers. The museum serves as a center for the storage and display of artifacts relating to the history of Rosebud County. The facility also has various temporary exhibits of items such as military uniforms and wedding dresses of local residents. The museum is open to the public all day during the summer months.



▲ Rosebud County Museum

PARKS & RECREATION

Parks are an important source of summer recreation in Forsyth and are used by a variety of people including youth, seniors and out of town visitors. The following are the park facilities located within or adjacent to the City:

- Riverside Park located in the northern central part of the City is the main recreational facility in the City and is where the football field, baseball fields, and the indoor swimming pool are located. Riverside Park also serves as a storage area for stormwater during severe storm events.
- Marcyes's Park, which is located in the southern central part of Forsyth is a general use recreational facility that contains green space, a picnic shelter, basketball court and playground equipment.
- The playground equipment at the park is very dated and needs to be replaced.
- Pioneer Park is located behind the Rosebud County Museum and contains green space, a gazebo and a fenced area containing historic farming equipment.
- VFW Park is located in the northwest corner of the City and is privately owned. It is relatively undeveloped and has the potential for additional recreational facilities.
- Gray's Park is located next to Forsyth water treatment facility and functions as an ice skating rink in the winter.



▲ Riverside Park

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

- MacConnel Park is located in the heart of downtown and features two large trees, several flowering spirea bushes and a Bob Watts mural. The park is named in memory of community member June MacConnel. This park is also privately owned.
- Municipal Swimming Pool – This facility is an indoor Olympic sized pool that is open year round, offering a variety of activities: open swim times plus lap swimming, exercise classes, including Aqua Zuma, hot tub, swim lessons, and life guard training.
- The Forsyth Country Club offers a well maintained 9-hole course that can challenge even the best golfers. The Country Club is the center for many of the social events and activities held throughout the year.
- Adjacent to the northern border of Forsyth and next to the Yellowstone River are two State fishing accesses that provide fishing, boating, and camping and are maintained by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The West Rosebud access is located at the northwest corner of the City and the East Rosebud access is located north of the City near the northwest corner of the Fairgrounds.
- The Montana Department of Transportation has recently completed a walking path on the Yellowstone Bridge. This provides bike and pedestrian access to the north side of the river.

Other potential recreation needs in the City as identified by residents include:

- Dog park
- Splash park
- Having the City pool open on weekends
- Paintball course
- Youth center
- Skate/bike park

In order to maintain and enhance Forsyth’s recreational amenities, the City will consider developing a parks and recreation plan with a focus on improving existing facilities.

SCHOOLS

The Forsyth Public School District is among the top ten employers in Forsyth with approximately 70 staff. The District operates two schools providing K – 12 education for children in the Forsyth area. The K – 6th grade program offers a sound, fundamental background for each student in the content areas. During the 2015 – 2016 school year, there were 197 elementary students and the student to teacher ratio was 11 to 1.

The 7th – 12th grade programs help prepare students for the present and the future whether they are college bound or planning vocational careers. Among academic offerings are distance learning opportunities from several sources that enable students to participate in advanced or dual credit courses. The academic offerings are supplemented by a comprehensive activities program that stresses personal development, good citizenship and good sportsmanship. These programs have been successful at most levels for the past several years. These programs had a total of 171 students during the 2015 – 2016 school year resulting in a student to teacher ratio of 13 to 1.

The K – 12th grade programs are complemented by a support staff consisting of administrators, clerical staff, bus drivers, custodians, maintenance and food service workers.



LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

SENIOR SERVICES

Rosebud County is the primary provider of senior services in Forsyth and the County. Senior programs that the County administrates include:

- Congregate meals at the Senior Center
- Home delivered meals in Forsyth
- Skilled Nurse Home visits to seniors
- Health Screening
- Transportation to Billings & Miles City for medical needs on a monthly basis
- Light housekeeping by referral from Public Health Nurse
- Respite care to provide respite to main caregiver or personal care to individual
- Monthly commodity food for low income seniors
- Senior companions volunteering their time to help adults maintain their independence
- Insurance counseling & assistance for Medicare

With regards to housing for seniors, Forsyth has one assisted living facility and a 50-unit retirement community (Riverview Villa).

Serving seniors continues to be an important economic factor for the City and with the aging of the population this will likely only increase.



▲ 9th Avenue Looking North From Main Street

STREETS AND ALLEYS

Forsyth has approximately 28.4 miles of streets and alleys, which are maintained by the Public Works Department. Over the years, the condition of many streets has deteriorated and are now in need of repair. To address this situation, the City created a street maintenance district to fund repairs. The funding available through this district helps the City incrementally rehabilitate the streets most in need of maintenance and repair.

Forsyth does not have an underground storm drainage system and the street system is designed to allow water to flow into Riverside Park during any storm events. Over the years, some of the streets have been modified in such a way that it has created drainage issues that are continually being addressed.

The funds from the former Community Transportation Enhancement Program managed by the Montana Department of Transportation were used by the City to complete a \$316,000 sidewalk construction project in 2016.

SOLID WASTE

The City of Forsyth provides weekly garbage disposal to residents using two garbage trucks. The waste is delivered to a County owned transfer station located on the west end of the City. At the transfer station the waste is compacted and delivered to the Rosebud County Landfill for disposal through a co-operative agreement with Rosebud County. The transfer station is also used to recycle metal (such as appliances), to dispose of construction materials, clean wood (tree branches), and used concrete.

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

The City currently recycles cement, metal, tree/compost materials and aluminum. The City examined the potential for an enhanced recycling program for glass, plastic, cardboard and paper. It was determined that there was no economically feasible way to create such an enhanced program.

UTILITIES

Electrical and natural gas services are provided by Montana-Dakota Utilities.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The City's wastewater collection system consists of approximately 72,000 feet of pipe ranging in size from 6-inches to 12-inches. Major sewer replacement projects were completed in 1984, 2000, and 2014 to replace the collection system in areas experiencing high infiltration. High groundwater is prevalent during the spring and summer and consequently any faults in the collection system results in high flows at the treatment plant. The sewer replacement projects have upgraded the City's system, but leaks in service lines and homes with sump pumps will remain a problem for the City.

Three lift stations are integral components of the collection system. The two main lift stations (east and west) were constructed in the 1976 and 1977 with upgrades being made to the west lift station around 2010. Both lift stations are in good physical conditions but due to the age of the pumps, valves, and controls it is expected that upgrades will be required in the upcoming years.

The wastewater treatment plant was constructed in 1979 and has adequate capacity for the community but will need to be updated in the future to address maintenance needs and the potential that future discharge regulations may require additional treatment. The City is currently installing a new disinfection system to meet the requirement of their discharge permit.

WATER

The City's water system consists of a raw water intake in the Yellowstone River, a conventional surface water treatment plant, the distribution system, a 1 million gallon welded steel water tank. The City has completed substantial improvements to its water system since 2006 including:

- Upgraded a water pump and motor that provides more than 200 gallons a minute more than the original pump. The City also now has a backup pump and motor so that it can individually conduct maintenance on each pump and still provide service to the City.
- Replaced and maintained all of the water valves in the distribution system.
- Created a new capital account in order to provide funds for new water storage tower in the future.

Based upon these improvements, the Insurance Services Office conducted a Public Protection Classification survey for the City. The rating provided by ISO was as high as would be possible for a City the size of Forsyth. Also, the City's current hydrant flow data shows that the City meets or exceeds the flow and pressure per square inch (psi) required for ISO purposes.

YOUTH PROGRAMS AND CAMPS

During the update of the City's latest Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and over the course of several public meetings some residents of the City expressed a need to provide more youth recreational opportunities.

LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

There are currently many opportunities for youth to engage in extracurricular activities examples include:

High School Activities: Football, volleyball, boys' basketball, girls' basketball, wrestling, boy's/girl's golf, boy's/girl's track, girl's tennis, speech, drama, band, choir, drama productions, BPA, FCCLA, FFA.

Middle School Activities: Football, volleyball, boys' basketball, girls' basketball, wrestling, boys/girls track, band, choir.

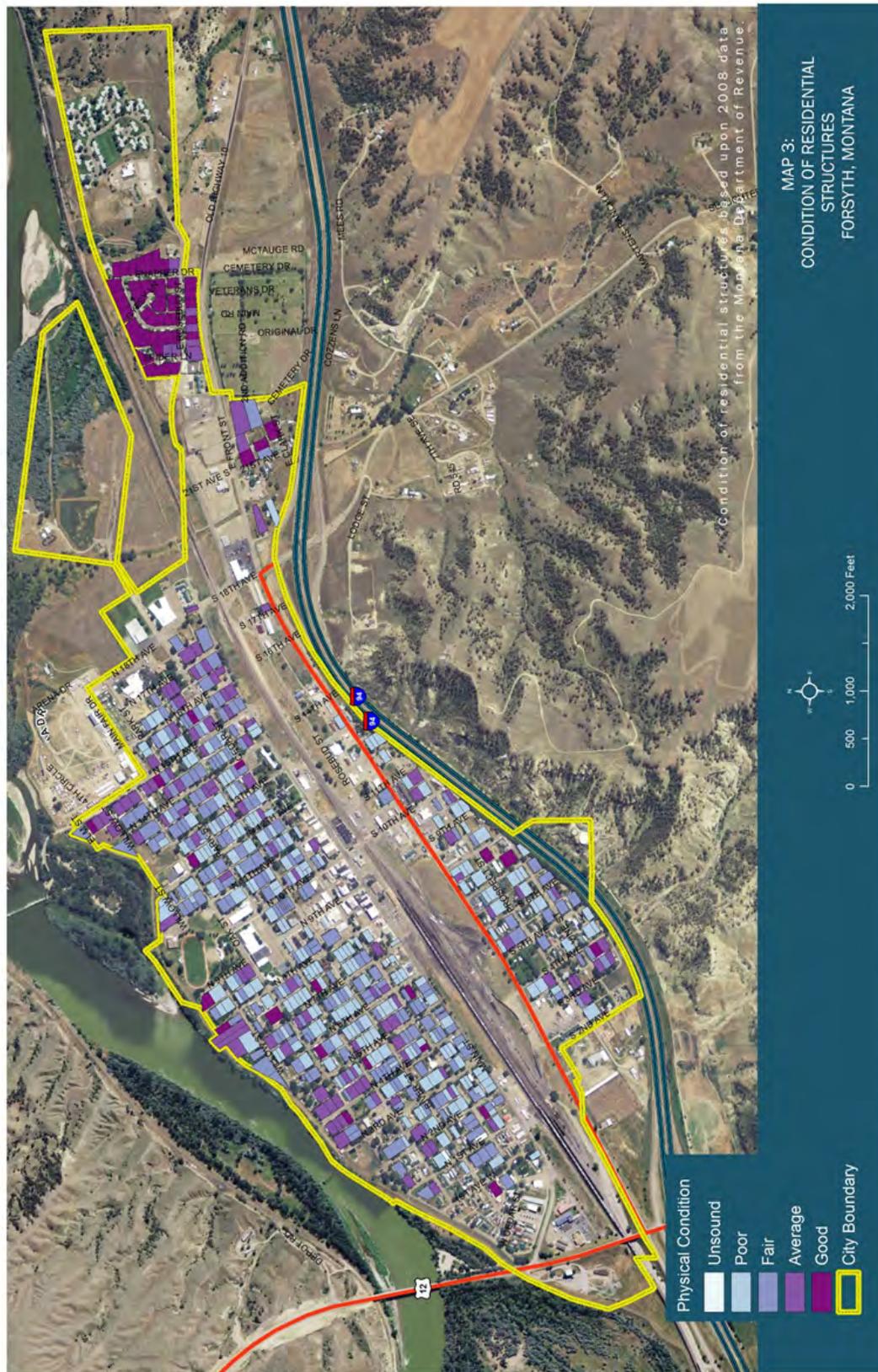
Amateur Athletic Union type programs: soccer, football, boys' basketball, girls' basketball, wrestling, baseball.

Other activities: swimming, hunting, fishing, use Yellowstone River, hiking, walking, bowling, golf, library programs, 4H, scouting.

There is also a need to start a youth program such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters in the City to provide one-to-one mentoring relationships between adults and youth.

HOUSING

▼ Map 3 – Condition of Housing



HOUSING

Lack of housing options were identified as a major issue during the participation of City residents in the Horizon's Program. The program was facilitated by staff from Montana State University's Local Government Center and Extension Office. Limited housing options were also identified by City residents during the update of the City's latest Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Traditionally, housing discussions in Forsyth center on the rehabilitation of sub-standard homes and demolition of uninhabitable ones.

AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING

As of August of 2016, the following housing options existed in the City: Riverview Villa, Village Apartments 1 and 2; Antelope Creek Apartments, Royal Oaks Apartments, Restwel Apartments, Westwind Apartments, Bendewald Apartments, Carriage Inn Apartments, Hong Kong Apartments. In addition, there were 23 housing units, for sale, as listed in the Forsyth Independent Press.

| Age of Housing Unit in Forsyth (2014) | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Year Built | Number of Units | Percentage |
| 2010 or later | 4 | 0.1 |
| 2000 to 2009 | 3 | 0.1 |
| 1990 to 1999 | 42 | 6.6 |
| 1980 to 1989 | 38 | 6 |
| 1970 to 1979 | 108 | 16.9 |
| 1960 to 1969 | 15 | 2.4 |
| 1950 to 1959 | 220 | 34.3 |
| 1940 to 1949 | 32 | 5.1 |
| 1939 or later | 182 | 28.5 |

AGE OF HOUSING

According to the Census, in 2014 there were 943 total housing units within Forsyth. Of those 821 were occupied and 122 were vacant. The age of housing in the City is generally old, with almost 70 percent of housing having been constructed prior to 1960.

CONDITION OF HOUSING

The age of housing is reflected in the overall condition of residential structures. In 2008, the Montana Department of Revenue compiled data as part of its appraisal process that classified the physical condition of housing throughout the State. The data from the Department provided physical assessments for 563 residential structures in the City. Of those structures, 84 or 15 percent were classified as being in either unsound or in poor physical condition.

The reality is that with a large number of the houses in Forsyth being built over 60 years ago many are in need updates to electrical, plumbing and heating systems and also need additional insulation and exterior repairs. Many structures have simply fallen into such disrepair as to be barely habitable and have become a public health and safety issue as well as an eyesore.

In an effort to improve the attractiveness of the community and to protect the public health and safety of its residents, the City will actively work to either remove or renovate dilapidated buildings and remove associated debris by enforcing

HOUSING

the Community Decay Ordinance. To assist in this effort, the City will also examine the potential of developing incentives to help property owners clean up properties and remove unsound structures and junk. Incentives may involve City assistance with hauling debris to the transfer station and a waiver of dumping fees.

| Condition of Residential Structures in Forsyth – 2008 (Montana Department of Revenue) | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Condition | Number of Structures | Percentage |
| Unsound | 10 | 2% |
| Poor | 74 | 13% |
| Fair | 200 | 35.5% |
| Average | 155 | 27.5% |
| Good | 86 | 15% |
| Excellent | 38 | 7% |

SENIOR HOUSING

Any new senior housing should be higher density, lower in cost and in close proximity to community services, businesses and parks and recreation facilities.

Riverview Villa is a 50-unit retirement community owned by the City which currently provides housing for seniors. The potential exists to develop additional housing on the site, but due to questions about the actual ownership of the property, this may be difficult in the near future.

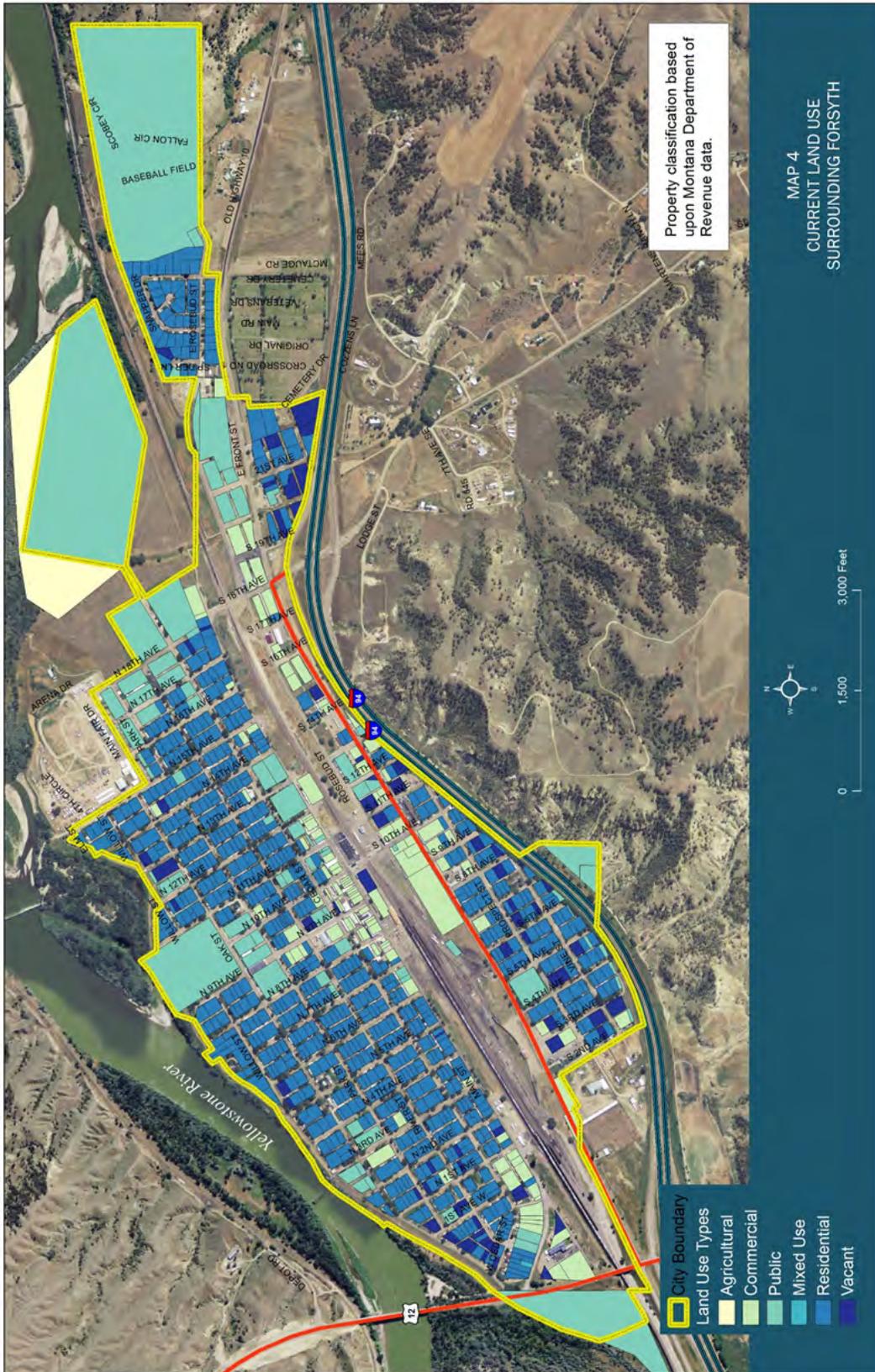
FUTURE HOUSING

Anecdotally, it appears there is a need for single-family housing for first-time home buyers. There is also a demand for single-person rental units for people such as beginning school teachers, visiting medical professionals, mother-in-law's, and single young employees. There may also be an interest in cottage housing (dwellings much smaller than an average single-family home) that require no yard maintenance and generally have only one off-street parking space. In order to build cottage style houses, Forsyth's zoning code would need to be modified to permit such housing.

While the City, non-profit organizations and State and Federal agencies can all play a role in facilitating the development of new housing, particularly for seniors, the private sector will be the primary agent for creating new housing in the City. Options for the private sector could range from redeveloping existing lots, renovating existing homes and buildings or creating small new subdivisions within the corporate limits of the City.

LAND USE

▼ Map 4 - Existing Land Use



LAND USE

EXISTING LAND USE

Through the years the City has grown through the addition of subdivisions and other developments. The most recent were the Quincer subdivision in 1974 and the Riverview Villa in 2001. The original town site was developed with a traditional grid system of streets and avenues. The Quincer subdivision and Riverview Villa were designed using curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad bisects the City from East to West and has played a major role in the development of the City's business districts. North of the railroad is the central business district along Main Street and south of the railroad is highway commercial district along Front Street. The railroad and parts of the adjacent lands are industrial in use. The remainder of Forsyth is primarily residential in nature.

BUSINESS DISTRICTS

The central business district of the City is a T-shaped area consisting of central Main Street and parts of N 8th Ave through N 12th Ave. The remainder of Main Street and all of Front Street between the Interstate 94 exits make up the general commercial district of Forsyth.

BROWNFIELD LOCATIONS

DOWL HKM Engineering with help from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants has identified sites along Main Street in Forsyth that are potential "Brownfield" sites. Brownfields are properties that were previously used for industrial or commercial uses and that may have been contaminated with hazardous waste or pollution or are thought to be so. Once cleaned up, such an area can be used for business development.

Most of these sites were underground storage tanks for gasoline and diesel stations long ago closed. With the help of DOWL HKM, the EPA, and Southeastern Montana Development Corporation (SEMDC), Forsyth will actively pursue the development of an overall plan to assist with the cleanup and redevelopment of these properties. Below is an inventoried list of potential Brownfield projects located within the City. All of the buildings are currently being used with the exception of the F&G Dry Cleaners.

- Welding Shop (83 Main Street)
- Pit Stop (117 W. Main Street)
- F&G Dry Cleaners (161 Main Street)
- Home Oil Company (200 Main Street)
- Shade Tree Inn (311 Main Street)
- Pats Motel (609 W. Main Street)
- Commercial Property (687 Main Street)
- M&W Service (705 Main Street)
- Commercial Building (845 Main Street)
- Nova Construction (793 Main Street)
- Coast to Coast (980 Main Street)
- Roxy Theatre (981 Main Street)
- Rosebud County Public Health (121 N. 11th)



▲ Main Street looking to the West

LAND USE

ANNEXATION AND EXTENSION OF SERVICES

The City's surrounding physical characteristics limit its growth outside its current boundaries. The Yellowstone River is located immediately to the north and a steep hill is to the east. To the south is Interstate 94 and a steep hill and off to the west are rolling hills and commercial and industrial businesses. Forsyth is also divided east to west by railroad right of way owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

These topographic challenges make new annexations and subdivisions outside the current City limits very difficult if not unlikely. The investment necessary to extend water and sewer systems outside the current City boundary would likely be cost prohibitive.

If an annexation is proposed the City will assess the property to determine if it is viable and in the best interest of the City. The installation/construction of infrastructure necessary to serve any new annexations will be paid for by the developer and will meet all City standards. The City will work on developing formal annexation policies and procedures in the near future.

Despite the constraints outside the City there are substantial opportunities for residential, commercial and industrial development within Forsyth's corporate limits. This includes vacant lots and the redevelopment of lands previously developed for other purposes. Because of these factors, the City would prefer to develop existing vacant lands or redevelop lots that currently have defunct businesses or dilapidated housing.

YELLOWSTONE RIVER FLOODING AND THE FLOOD LEVEE

The community of Forsyth is safeguarded from Yellowstone River flooding by a levee completed in 1948. The levee is approximately 2.4 miles long, extending from west of the solid waste station to east of the Rosebud County Fairgrounds. The levee was constructed to Army Corp of Engineer's (ACE) standards. Since the construction of the levee, Forsyth has not experienced overland flooding events attributed to river flooding.

Over time, river migration damaged about 350 feet of the levee near the Rosebud County Fair Grounds. ACE repaired the damage during the winter of 2010 and returned the levee to ACE standards.

Due to changing federal regulations, ACE determined in 2012 that the levee was deficient in meeting new federal standards and would be decertified. Decertification by ACE, in essence, means that the levee does not legally exist and that ACE has no responsibility or liability in the event of a levee failure. However, the City of Forsyth has entered into an agreement with ACE to address the deficiencies and reestablish full ACE certification of the levee.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in 2016, informed the City that a flood study must be completed, at the city's expense, within the next ten years for the areas inside the corporate city limits. This flood study must comply with FEMA standards. FEMA standards are different from ACE levee standards, meaning that the flood study would not consider protection of the flood levee, ACE certified or not. An adopted flood study would establish a Flood Zone A (100-year floodplain) in the community and all property owners with mortgages will be required to purchase flood insurance compliant with the National Flood Insurance Program.



▲ Flood levee adjacent to Forsyth

LAND USE

Historically, flood damage in Forsyth results from ground water, not overland flooding. The National Flood Insurance Program does not insure for ground water damage.

The City will continue to cooperate with ACE in accordance with the agreement for levee recertification, while considering the cost-benefit of a flood study under FEMA requirements.

In addition, the Montana DNRC floodplain program, Rosebud County and the City of Forsyth have been working to undertake a new flood hazard study for Rosebud County which will include the City of Forsyth. The study will update the existing FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps and City representatives have been meeting monthly with DNRC staff to complete this process.



▲ 1918 flood surrounding the Courthouse

ZONING ORDINANCE

The City's zoning ordinance is an essential tool for addressing issues related to land use building and lot functionality, building design and orientation, height, scale, parking, landscaping, signs, lighting, and overall building design.

The City is using a Euclidian form of zoning which is common in Montana. The regulations focus on specific land uses (residential, commercial, industrial etc.) and are designed to ensure the compatibility or separation of uses. The City updated its entire code book and the zoning ordinance(s).

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The City's current subdivision regulations were originally developed in 2004

In combination with the City's zoning code, subdivision regulations can be used to address issues related to new residential and commercial development such ensuring accurate surveying and monumentation, providing legal and physical access, provision of utilities, parkland requirements, right-of-way location, mitigating hazards and ensuring the overall development fits the character of the City. Subdivision review can also help ensure that the installation of infrastructure (water, sewer, streets) is completed in accordance with City standards to promote health and safety, reduce environmental impacts, and to support the cost effective operation and maintenance of services and infrastructure.

The City has already updated its entire code book and the subdivision regulations.

SAND & GRAVEL RESOURCES

Sand and gravel are important resources for the construction and maintenance of streets as well as the construction of new homes and businesses. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Program there are 3 gravel pits within 3 miles of the City.

The Soil Survey completed for Rosebud County by the Soil Conservation Service indicates that due to the location of the City in the Yellowstone River Valley, there are substantial gravel resources surrounding the City. See Map 6.



▲ Old Yellowstone River Bridge north of Forsyth

WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE AND VEGETATION

Most native vegetation within the City has been replaced with residential lawns, plants, and trees. Some native stands of cottonwood trees remain throughout Forsyth. Vegetation north of Forsyth is mainly riparian in nature and associated with the Yellowstone River. Areas east of Forsyth consist mainly of crop/pasture land and mixed rangeland. The lands west are primarily brush rangelands with spots of deciduous forest in the river bottom. The lands south of Forsyth are dominated by scattered coniferous forest and brush rangeland vegetation.

According to wildland urban interface mapping done in 2011 for Rosebud County by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the properties surrounding the City are at a high risk for wildfire, particularly to the south. The City has addressed the potential for fire through its existing codes and infrastructure. The City zoning code requires building setbacks for new structures from one another and it has standards for the development and construction of streets that facilitate adequate ingress and egress. It also has a water system that includes fire hydrants located throughout the City. The City does not currently require defensible space standards for structures.

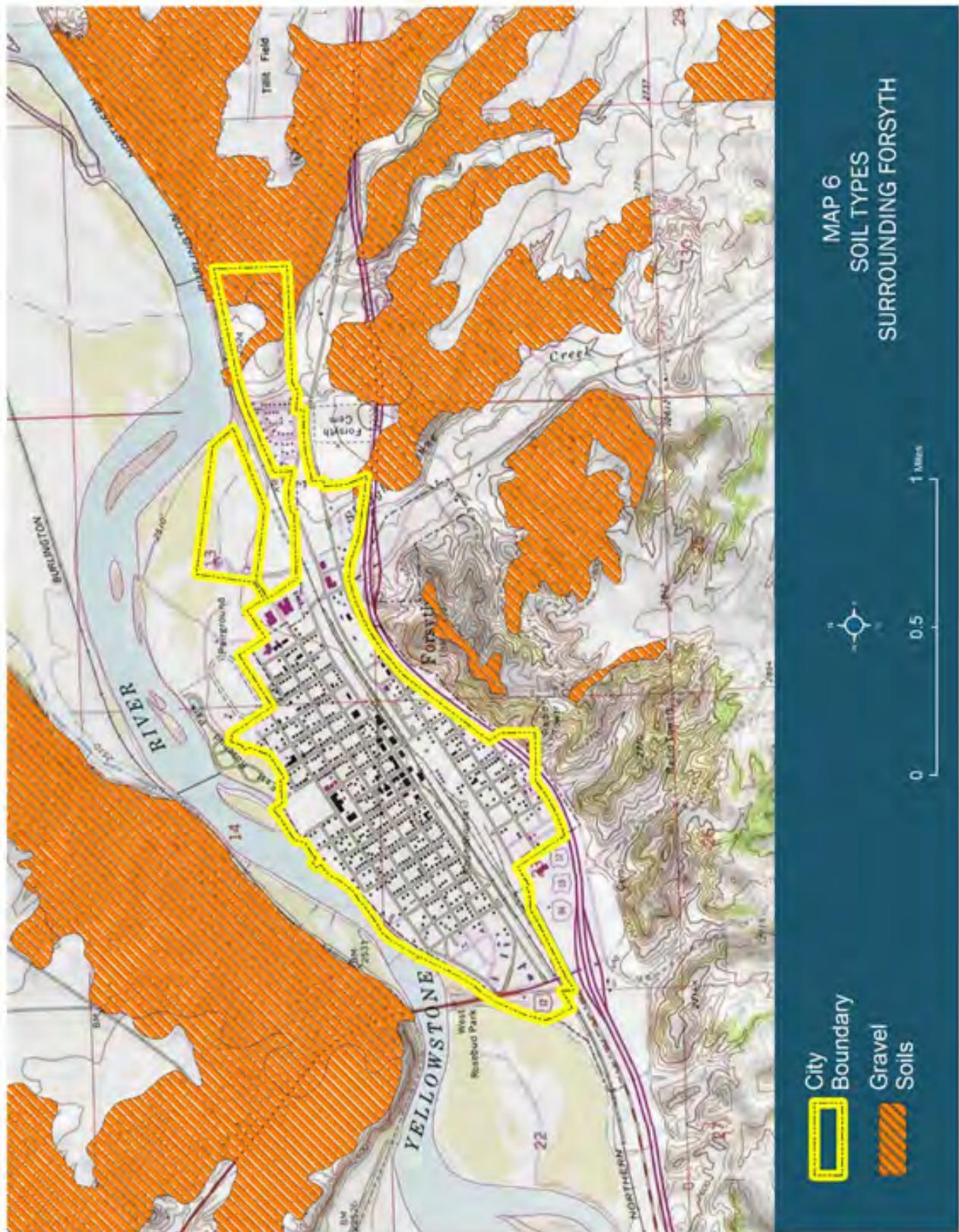
LAND USE

Map 5 - Zoning



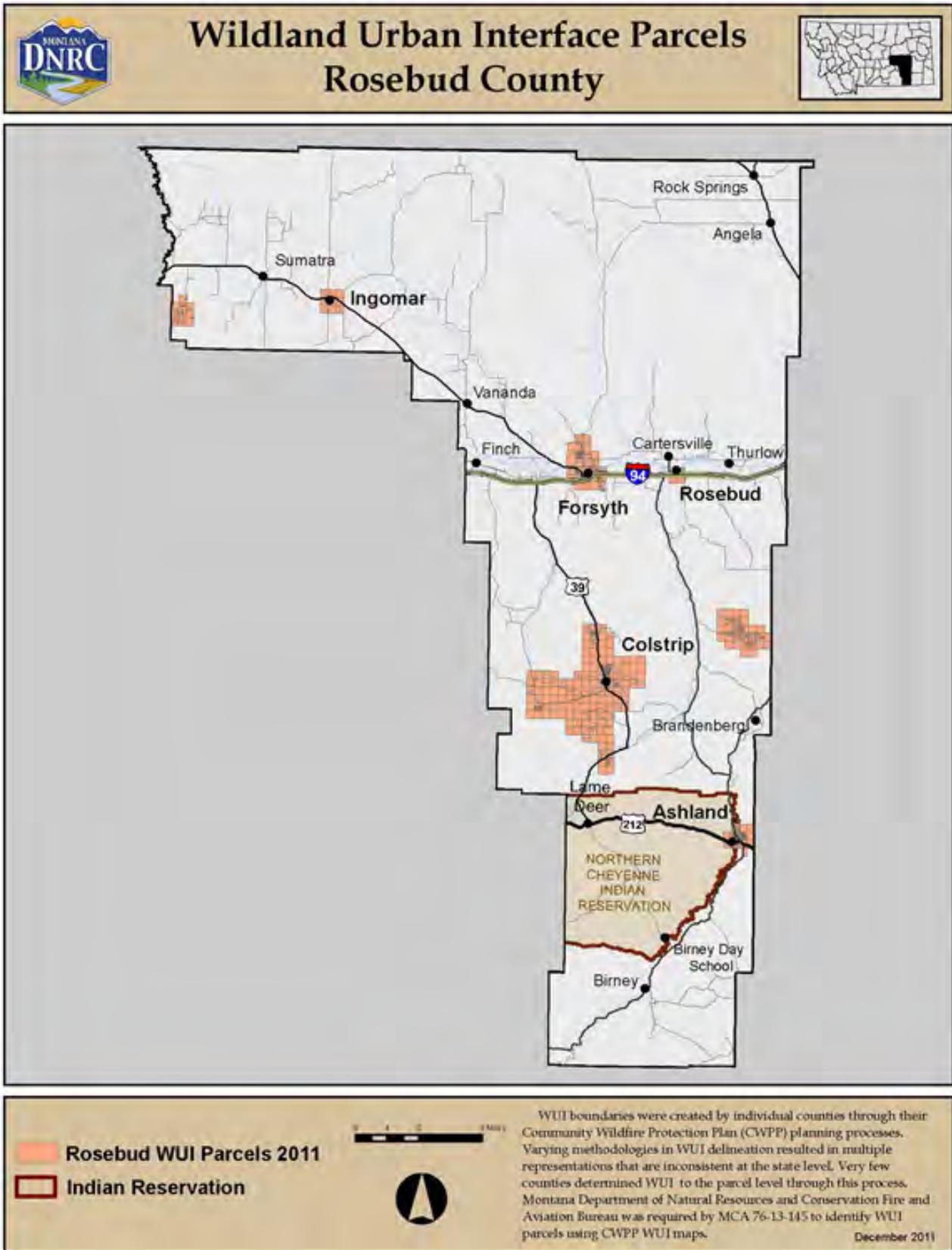
LAND USE

▼ Map 6 - Gravel Soils



LAND USE

▼ Map 7 - Wildland Urban Interface



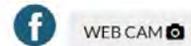
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public involvement was essential to updating the 2016 City Growth Policy. Because the update of the Growth Policy wasn't extensive the City decided to take a limited approach to gathering resident advice and guidance. To date two meetings were held to discuss the Growth Policy update. The first was a hearing held on [insert date] by the City Planning Board and consulting staff from Great West Engineering. The hearing was held for the Planning Board to discuss the proposed updates to the Growth Policy, to provide City residents with a formal opportunity to comment on the updates and to meet the statutory requirement for a hearing by the Board. ?? residents of the City attended the hearing. The Planning Board recommended that the City Council approve the update.

A second meeting was held on [insert date] by the City Council. This meeting was meant to provide for additional input by City residents on the update and for the Council to consider adoption of the Growth Policy update.

In addition to the two public meetings, the City developed a community survey meant to gather input and guidance from the public regarding the future of Forsyth. This was a web-based and hardcopy survey. Response to the community survey was limited with 39 people participating. The survey was open for over a month during September and October of 2021.

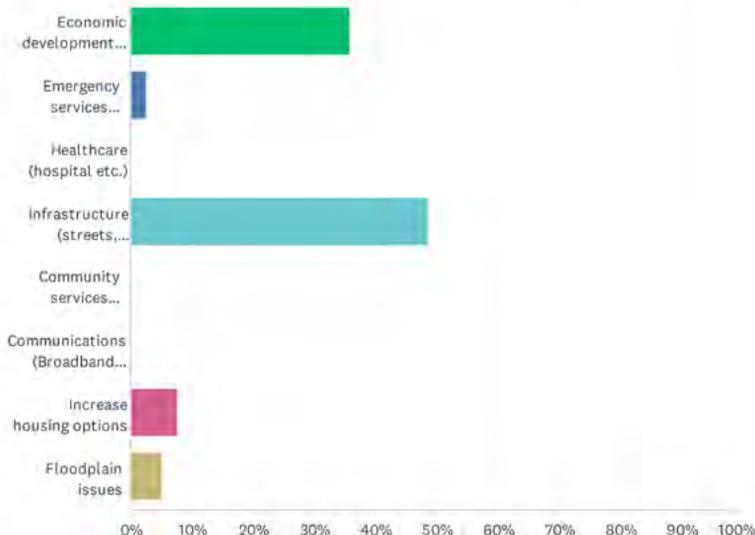
The survey results received show that respondents value the City's quality of life, safety and that it is a close-knit community. That being said, people do have concerns about the future of the City and identified several issues that need to be addressed particularly the City's infrastructure, economic base, recreational opportunities, and visual appearance.



- HOME
- RESOURCES -
- DIRECTORY -
- CALENDAR
- EXPLORE -
- CONTACT

Q8 If Forsyth had to focus on just one topic, what should it be?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 0



Forsyth Growth Plan Survey

October 31, 2021 05:46 PM

Forsyth is updating our Growth Plan. Community input is needed.

Download the form below or go to the following link to complete your survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CityofForsyth>

[Download final-community-survey-092021.pdf](#)

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementing the goals identified by the Planning Board and the City Council will take time and resources. It will also require a variety of methods ranging from incentives and regulations to other planning processes such as capital improvement plans and marketing plans. Most important of all implementation will require a commitment by the residents, the City Council and its partners to follow through on the guidance provided by the document.

Implementation of this plan also includes meeting the statutory requirements for subdivision review, cooperation between the City and Rosebud County and the review and update of the document in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

| Economy | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| Action | Responsibility | Schedule |
| Develop a community marketing plan to attract new businesses. | City of Forsyth, Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, SEMDC | 2-3 years |
| Examine the potential for creating a senior living hub. | City of Forsyth, Rosebud County, Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, SEMDC | 1-2 years |
| Examine the potential for creating transportation center in Forsyth. | City of Forsyth, Rosebud County, Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, SEMDC | 3-5 years |

| Infrastructure | | |
|--|--|-----------|
| Action | Responsibility | Schedule |
| Complete the development of a capital improvements plan. | City Public Works Department, City Council | Completed |
| Continue the maintenance and improvement of streets. | City Public Works Department, City Council | Ongoing |
| Continue to pursue grant funds. | City Public Works Department, City Council | Ongoing |

| Community Services | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| Action | Responsibility | Schedule |
| Develop a long range parks and recreation plan. | City Public Works Department, City Council, School District, residents | 2-3 years |

| Land Use | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| Action | Responsibility | Schedule |
| Periodically review and update City Zoning Regulations. | City Planning Board, City Council, City Attorney | 1 year |
| Complete the development of annexation policies and procedures. | City Planning Board, City Council, City Attorney | 2-3 years |
| Improve enforcement of the community decay ordinance, through a part time code officer. | Zoning Administrator, City Council, City Attorney | Ongoing |

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FUNDING AND ASSISTANCE OPTIONS

There are many potential funding sources and technical assistance resources available to the City that can help to achieve the goals and objectives of the growth policy. Many of these are Federal programs including those offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Housing and Urban Development Administration. Tools offered by the state of Montana are through the Montana Department of Commerce, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Natural Resources. Following is a list of some of these programs that might be used to implement the growth policy. These include:

- **Southeastern Montana Development Corporation:** SEMDC is a non-profit organization formed by the local governments in a four county area for the purpose of strengthening diversified industries, supporting thriving commercial centers, while maintaining a traditional, rural, high quality lifestyle. SEMDC brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the City and serves as an invaluable resource.
- **Coal Board:** The Coal Board is able to award grants from funds collected through the coal severance tax. These grants are to be awarded towards coal impacts. Forsyth has successfully attained past grants to assist in wastewater upgrades, construction of City Hall, garbage truck purchases, and other projects.
- **Brownfield RLF:** Federal funds are available to assist in the clean-up of brownfields and turn these areas into useable pieces of property. SEMDC is interested in pursuing these funds or working with another regional economic development organization in utilizing these funds.
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):** SEMDC continually updates a CEDS for the region it serves which includes Forsyth. Community listening sessions and input is received during the development of the CEDS. The CEDS document serves as a roadmap for economic development efforts and identifies strategies to expand and diversify the economy.
- **Community Development Block Grants:** These grants are primarily focused towards the low to moderate income households in a community. Forsyth has extreme diversity in household incomes and some members could benefit by the programs offered under these funding sources.
- **Transportation Alternatives Program:** provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- **Montana Coal Endowment Program:** MCEP is state funded program primarily intended for infrastructure projects. Forsyth has both a major wastewater upgrade and a water storage tank project that will seek funding under this program.

SUBDIVISION REVIEW

The Montana Code Annotated requires that the City Council provide a statement in the Growth Policy explaining how they will:

- define the criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.;
- evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.



▲ Looking toward Main Street from the southwest

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

DEFINITION OF 76-3-608 CRITERIA-SUBDIVISION

The City of Forsyth will use the following definitions as found in the Subdivision Regulations for each of the criteria listed below.

- **Agriculture:** Montana Code contains definitions for the words “agriculture” and “agricultural” as follows: Agriculture: All aspects of farming and 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 for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market. “Agricultural and food product” includes a horticultural, viticulture, dairy, livestock, poultry, bee, other farm or garden product, fish or fishery product, and other foods.
- **Agricultural Water User Facilities:** Those facilities, which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural land as defined in 15-7-202, MCA, or which provide water for the production of agricultural products as defined in 15-1-101, MCA, including, but are not limited to ditches, head gates, pipes and other water conveying facilities.
- **Local Services:** Any and all services that local governments entities are authorized to provide.
- **Natural Environment:** The physical conditions, which exist within a given area including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.
- **Public Health and Safety:** A condition of optimal well-being, free from danger, risk or injury for a community at large, or for all people, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.
- **Wildlife:** Living animals, which are neither human nor domesticated.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** A place frequented by wildlife or site where wildlife naturally lives.

EVALUATION OF SUBDIVISIONS BASED UPON 76-3-608 CRITERIA

The City of Forsyth defines the subdivision review criteria specified in 76- 3-608(3) (a), MCA, by posing the following questions that must be addressed in the required Findings of Fact for each proposed subdivision.

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURE

- a. How many, if any, acres of land will be removed from livestock or crop production? Is any portion of the land taken out of production irrigated?

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURAL WATER USER FACILITIES

- a. Location and proximity to a ditch, canal, headgate, sprinkler system, watering tank or developed spring shall be considered.
- b. Potential subdivision nuisance complaints or problems due to agricultural water user facilities such as safety hazards to residents or water problems from irrigation ditches, headgates, siphons, sprinkler systems or other facilities shall be considered.
- c. Ownership of water rights and the historic and current use of facility on the proposed subdivision shall be examined. Easements to protect the use of water user facilities on or accessed through a subdivision shall be considered.
- d. Allocation of water rights within a subdivision shall be considered.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS UPON LOCAL SERVICES

- a. Will the subdivision connect to the municipal water and wastewater systems? Will the cost of connecting be paid by the subdivider or lot buyers or by the municipality? Will the municipality experience an appreciable increase in maintenance and operating costs, and what approximately will be those costs? Will the lot buyers pay regular water and wastewater charges?
- b. If the subdivision will use on-site water supply and wastewater disposal, has the City water and wastewater superintendent and the Department of Environmental Quality approved the sanitation facilities?
- c. Which agencies will provide law enforcement, fire protection, and ambulance services? Will providing these services to the subdivision likely create increased costs to any of these agencies or the City of Forsyth or Rosebud County? Approximately how much will the subdivision increase agency costs? Will the subdivider or subsequent lot buyers bear those increased costs, or will the taxpayers and/or rate payers bear the costs?
- d. At an average of 8 vehicle trips per day per lot, how many average vehicle trips per day will the subdivision generate? Will extension of public streets or roads be needed, and if so, who will bear the costs? Will the subdivision increase the costs of road maintenance, and if so, by approximately how much? Will the subdivider/lot buyers or the public bear those increased costs?
- e. At an average of 1.5 school-age children per lot, how many elementary and high school students will be added to Forsyth schools? What net financial effect would these additional students have for Forsyth public schools?
- f. How much does the land affected by the proposed subdivision currently pay in local property taxes? After the subdivision is fully developed, how much will the land and improvements be expected to pay in local property taxes, at current mill levies?

CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- a. Will the subdivision increase water run-off, interfere with natural drainage ways or cause or increase erosion? Has the Public Works Director approved the size, location, and planned installation of any culverts? Will the terrain create significant surface run-off problems? Will the grading and drainage plan minimize run-off and adverse impacts?
- b. Is the subdivision expected to adversely affect native vegetation, soils or the water quality or quantity of surface or ground waters? Will areas disturbed by cutting and filling and grading be reseeded in the same season to minimize erosion?
- c. Are weed control measures proposed to prevent the proliferation of weed growth with the subdivision and on areas disturbed by construction?

CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. Is the subdivision subject to potential natural hazards such as flooding, snow or rock slides, high winds, wildfire or excessive slopes? Is it subject to potential man-made hazards such as high pressure gas lines, petroleum delivery pipelines, nearby industrial or mining activity, or high traffic volumes? If so, what measures has the subdivider proposed to minimize those hazards?

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- a. Will the subdivision be located in an area of significant wildlife habitat, or in any critical wildlife areas? Will the expected effects of pets and human activity generated by the subdivision significantly affect wildlife?

PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURE

Under the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, a local government must give notice and hold a public hearing on any subdivision proposal that involves six or more lots. The following outlines the procedures the City of Forsyth will use in conducting the public hearings on proposed subdivisions.

1. The hearing officer opens the hearing and summarizes the proposal. The planning staff, consultant or an assigned planning board member will present a report that provides background information and describes the key technical points of the application and the proposal's relationship to the growth policy plans, any land use regulations, and the draft Findings of Fact.
2. The subdivider or his representative may present information and testimony relating to the proposed subdivision. City of Forsyth representatives are permitted to direct any relevant questions to staff or the applicant.
3. Any written comments submitted prior to the hearing will be read. If the hearing officer deems that the written comments are numerous or voluminous, he may request that the written comments be summarized.
4. Members of the audience will be given an opportunity to comment on the application or proposal. Comments should be factual and relevant to the proposal. A reasonable time will be allowed each speaker. Each person speaking must give name, address, and nature of interest in matter.
5. After the public comment is complete, the subdivider or representative may respond briefly.
6. City of Forsyth hearing board members may voice other significant consideration, and may pose any relevant questions through the hearing officer.
7. The hearing officer closes the hearing on the subdivision proposal.

COORDINATION WITH THE ROSEBUD COUNTY AND OTHER ENTITIES

The City will continue to work with Rosebud County on providing the following services to City residents:

- law enforcement,
- ambulance services,
- library operation,
- senior programs,
- public health,
- probation and juvenile services, and
- solid waste management.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The City Water Department will continue its cooperative agreement with Colstrip, Hysham, and the Rosebud Wastewater District for shared ownership and operation of a security video camera system for their drinking water system.

CONDITIONS AND TIMING FOR REVIEW AND REVISION

This growth policy will be reviewed at least once every five years and revised as necessary. Revisions may be made more often if the City council determines that conditions with the community warrant revisions of the growth policy. Conditions that may trigger the need for a revision include:

- Rapid growth resulting in significant subdivision or construction activity,
- Influx or decrease of population greater than 10% in any period of time less than twelve months
- Significant positive or negative changes in the economy or private sector businesses, or
- Consensus of the City council that conditions have changed and that a revision of the growth policy is needed to adequately represent the existing conditions with the community and to address those conditions.

The Planning Board will be the primary body to review the Growth Policy for any necessary changes. During its review, the Board will seek guidance from the public and City staff. After considering suggested changes, the Planning Board will prepare an updated draft Growth Policy and provide a cover memo describing the recommended changes. The Planning Board will inform the public of the recommended changes, make the draft document available to the public, publish notices and hold at least one public meeting to discuss changes to the Policy prior to making a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council also has the ability to review the Policy for possible revisions



▲ Rosebud County Courthouse

SOURCES

Introduction

1. Climate data: National Weather Service
2. Forsyth Chamber of Commerce
3. Population data: United State Census Bureau, 2021

Population Characteristics

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2021
2. United States Census Bureau

Economy

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2021
2. Billings Gazette

Local Services & Public Facilities

1. Rosebud County
2. Rosebud Healthcare Care Center
3. Forsyth Chamber of Commerce
4. Forsyth School District

Housing

1. American Community Survey, Census Bureau, 2021
2. Montana Department of Revenue

Land Use

1. Montana Department of Revenue