

THE GALLATIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS’ GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN and RURAL ZONING PROPOSAL

Gallatin County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country. Much of this growth has been low-density sprawl, which paves over much more rural land than is necessary. In response to these trends, the Gallatin County Commissioners have crafted a plan to manage growth in the county. This growth management package consists of three parts that will protect property values and sustain farms and ranches, water quality, open spaces, and wildlife habitat. *These three parts are:*

1) Steering growth to developed areas

2) Enhancing predictability for land owners

**3) Creating financial incentives
for rural land protection**



Steering growth to developed areas:

The Commissioners’ plan directs future growth to those places in the county with existing infrastructure and services. Future growth areas include the existing cities and areas such as Four Corners.

All other unzoned areas will be identified as rural, where the proposed AG 160 Rural Zoning District will set maximum densities at 1 home per 160 acres. For subdivisions designed to protect open space and natural resources, up to 4 homes per 160 acres will be allowed.



Enhancing predictability for land protection:

The Commissioner’s plan will zone currently unzoned areas. Those unzoned areas have no legal “entitlement” for development, which results in unpredictability for the landowner.

Countywide zoning will also create predictability for homesite buyers in rural areas. This predictability will result in more value for the rural landowner selling the site—buyers will pay more for a homesite if they know what sort of development will occur in the area.



Creating financial incentives for rural land owners:

The Commissioners’ plan will establish a “Transfer of Development Rights” program. This will allow the sale of development rights by landowners in rural areas (where development is discouraged) to developers in future growth areas (where development is preferred).

Like the County’s Open Space Program (which is a “Purchase of Development Rights Program”), this program will compensate landowners for preserving their land, while allowing them to continue to own it.

Unlike the County’s Open Space Program, it will do so not by using County funds, but by establishing a market in which developers in growth areas purchase development rights from rural landowners. The developer then uses these development rights to build more homes than otherwise allowed.