

ONE-PAGE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bonner County Comprehensive Plan: Land Use Chapter Recommendations

On behalf of Project 7B, Kimley-Horn conducted a focused planning review of the Draft Land Use Chapter and Future Land Use Map for the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan update. Although funded by Project 7B, the review was completed as an independent, third-party assessment, providing objective land use analysis and best-practice recommendations for County consideration.

The report is intended to serve as a practical guide to support Bonner County's land use planning efforts—both in finalizing the comprehensive plan and in implementing it through code development, zoning decisions, mapping, infrastructure planning, and related actions.

Key Focus Areas

The recommendations center on the following priorities from our analysis:

- Improving policy clarity to better guide decision-making
- Refining land use designations and re-establishing associated density ranges
- Planning for long-term growth, particularly in Areas of Impact (AOI)
- Integrating environmental and hazard considerations into policy and future code updates
- Establishing clear preservation policies for scenic, natural, and cultural resources
- Addressing nonconforming development patterns through targeted planning tools rather than land use redesignation

Summary of Key Recommended Actions

- **Align Plan and Code:** Ensure Title 12 is updated to reflect the Land Use Chapter so adopted policies are consistently carried through to implementation. This creates a clearer connection between policy direction and how development is reviewed and approved.
- **Address Nonconformities Intentionally:** Consider tools such as a nonconforming overlay to acknowledge existing structures, uses, and lots without increasing underlying land use designation or zoning intensity. This approach maintains the intent of the land use designation while avoiding incremental upzoning or area redesignations that can permanently alter development patterns.
- **Coordinate Growth in AOIs:** While recent legislation emphasizes a five-year annexation window, there is value in coordinating with cities on longer-term growth patterns. Identifying where growth and suburban development should occur can help avoid constraining future city expansion and support more efficient, coordinated development over time.
- **Integrate Environment and Hazard Planning:** Build on existing plan direction by strengthening how environmental protections and hazard mitigation—particularly wildfire risk—are reflected in code and development standards. This supports resilient growth while preserving the natural features that define Bonner County.