

GALLATIN COUNTY

Growing into the
21st Century

Growth in Gallatin County

Gallatin County is now the 32nd fastest growing county in America. The impacts of growth – both positive and negative – affect us all.

The Sonoran Institute has compiled this profile on the rate and character



SONORAN
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of growth in Gallatin County to provide citizens with information to understand these changes. Learn more about what you can do at www.sonoran.org or <http://gallatingrassrootsforum.googlepages.com>, or contact the Sonoran Institute at 587-7331.

LINCOLN INSTITUTE
OF LAND POLICY

Information included in this Gallatin County Growth Profile was developed as part of the Sonoran Institute and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy joint venture on growth and development in the West.



GALLATIN COUNTY'S FUTURE IT'S OUR LEGACY



Gallatin County has many examples of new neighborhoods that enhance our existing communities while not consuming rural open spaces.

The Choice is Ours

Because Gallatin County is such a special place, it's pretty clear that we'll continue to see lots of growth. And growth can be a good thing – it can provide us and our children and our children's children with the opportunity to live and work in a vibrant and natural place. But sprawling growth can spoil what we here in the Last Best Place cherish. In the last few decades, these are the facts: 1) we're growing fast; 2) we're building homes farther out in the countryside; 3) the average home lot is consuming more land than ever before. If we keep growing like this, let's face it – our legacy to future generations will be a cluttered landscape of sprawling development.

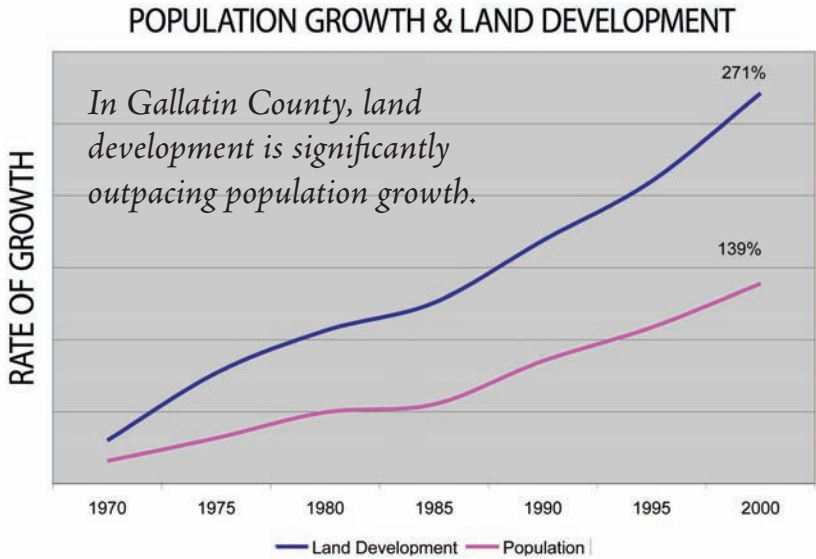
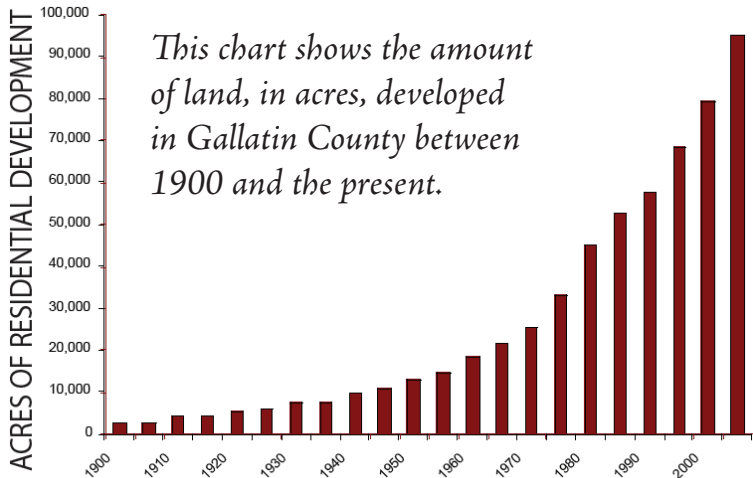
But here's the good news: we can take reasonable steps – steps that respect our inherent property rights and values – to shape the future, rather than the future shaping us. We can grow without losing what we hold most dear about this place: clean water, friendly neighborhoods, working farms and ranches, magnificent views, and plentiful wildlife. The challenge is to avoid the rural sprawl that erodes those things. Instead, we can grow by adding great new neighborhoods to our existing communities. Fortunately, there are examples of these neighborhoods right here in Gallatin County. Some of them are profiled in the Sonoran Institute's latest publication, "Building from the Best of the Northern Rockies".

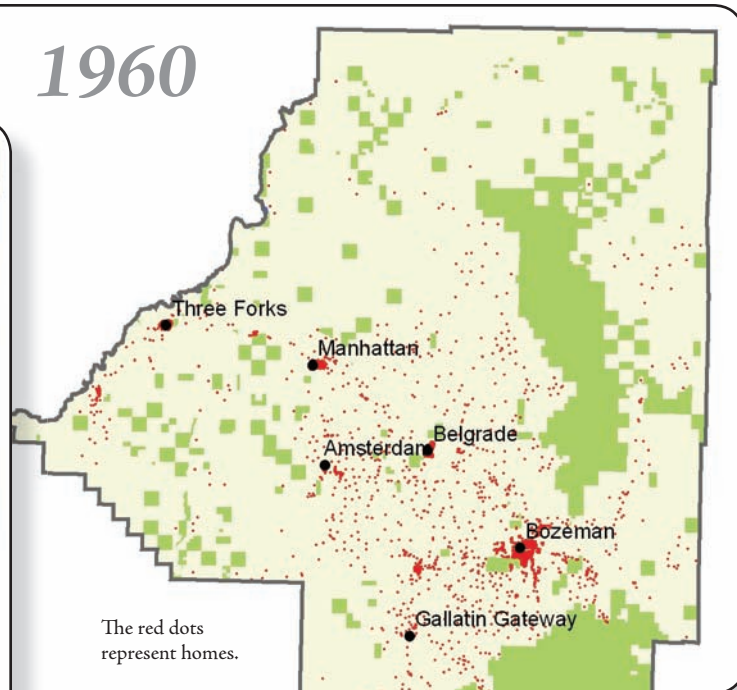
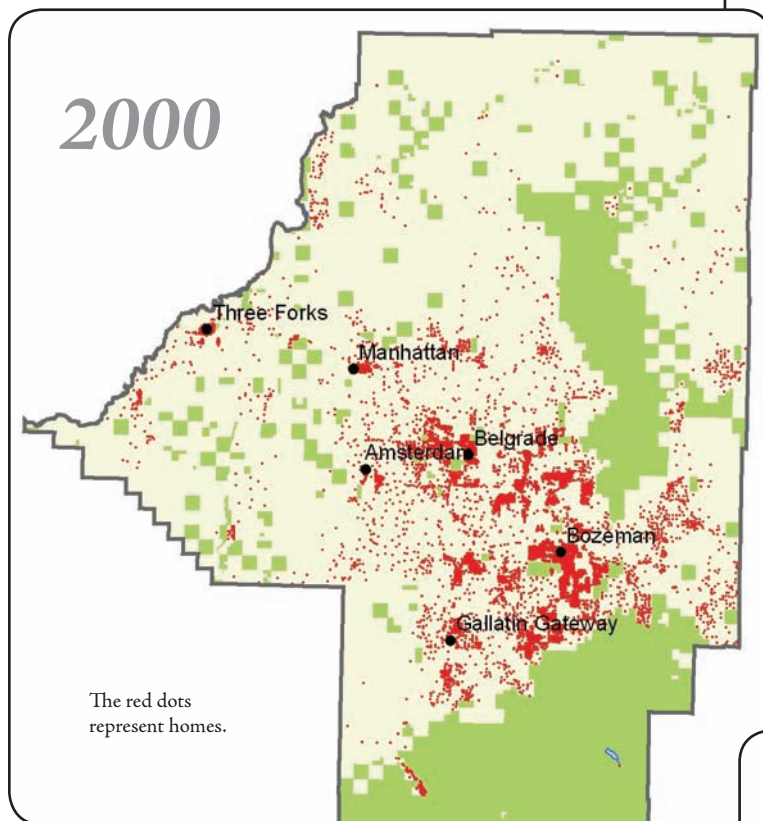


It's not just that we're seeing subdivision after subdivision: it's that these subdivisions are taking up more space. While population has grown by 139% since 1970, the amount of land developed has grown by 271%.

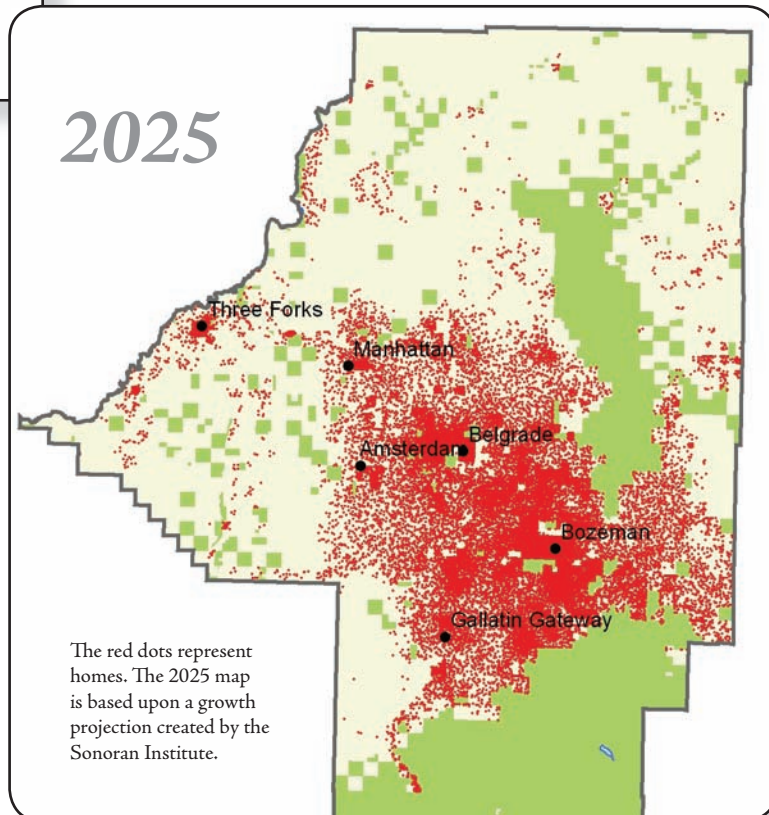
Gallatin County Growth Facts

since 1980	population has doubled
since 1997	138,000 acres of productive farmland lost
since 2000	5,000 additional homes
in 2006	6,600 new residential lots created
in 2006	Montana's fastest growing county
by 2026	26,000 additional homes at past growth rates
by 2036	100,000 additional people at past growth rates



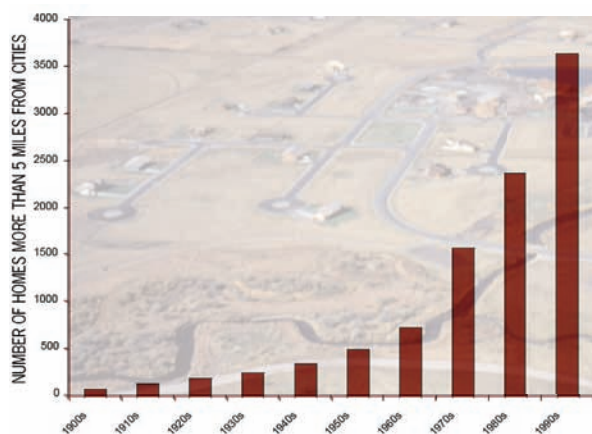


*Our Growth Is
Sprawling Over The Countryside*



Compared to traditional patterns of growth, in which most new homes were built in towns, recent growth has occurred farther out in the countryside, as illustrated in the maps above and the graph below.

Another indication of sprawl is shown in this chart. More and more homes are being built farther than 5 miles from our cities.



In contrast to rural sprawl, growth can take the form of pleasant, well-designed neighborhoods in our existing communities – with these benefits:

- Saving taxpayer dollars by avoiding the higher costs of far-flung infrastructure and services.
- Sustaining the Gallatin Valley's agricultural lands instead of paving over its most productive soils.
- Protecting open space, water quality, and wildlife by not cluttering and splintering the Valley with buildings, septic systems, and roads.



What Can YOU Do?

The Gallatin County Commissioners are now formulating a plan to control sprawl and direct growth to our existing communities through a combination of incentives and regulations. In the next few months they will be making the decisions that shape our future. They need to hear from you. NOW is your opportunity to help ensure that Gallatin County remains a wonderful place to live.

Here's how
to help
shape the
future of
Gallatin
County

Learn about the Commissioner's plan at: <http://gallatingrassrootsforum.googlepages.com> or www.sonoran.org

Let the County Commissioners know what sort of future you want to see for Gallatin County—call them at 582-3000.

Find out about upcoming community meetings and workshops regarding the plan at: www.gallatin.mt.gov

Growing the Next Montana

William Kittredge, Editor, *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*

As a boy, I remember my father returning to our home in Oregon from a trip to the Rockies and telling us that Montana was "The finest horse and cow country I ever saw." In 1968, on my first drive into western Montana, I shared my father's experience. I was floored by the big rivers, timbered distances and open meadowlands with ranch houses nestled back against the pines. What a place to live!

Then in the 1980s, on a flight out of Missoula, I sat next to an old rancher. "They're turning that Bitterroot into hobby farms," he said. He was moving to the sand hill country of Nebraska. "They won't get there during my life." I knew which "they" he was talking about. It was people like me, the newcomers.

Despite misgivings, Montana will keep evolving. People will keep coming. Their various priorities will often seem strange and alien to one another. How will we all get along together, as we must?

Let's hope these newcomers come dedicated to preserving and even restoring what they came seeking in Montana – calm communities existing

in connection to a natural world that is reasonably functional.

It's important to recall that good societies are usually centered on neighborliness that includes talking things out and grieving and celebrating together. We could begin by getting beyond the idea that relentless greed – whites against natives, cowmen against settlers, miners against the mine-owners – is right-minded. Economic, ethnic and class hostilities, while very real in a West that likes to imagine itself as egalitarian, are going to become increasingly less tolerable as people move in.

And move in they will. It's been my experience that many understand the need to fund education, health care and services for the disadvantaged, and that they are eager to care for rivers, forests and agricultural lands. It's been my experience that they value a chance to live in neighborhoods devoted to both diversity and fairness which leads me to believe that together we can reason our way to a future based on the ideals of cherishing one another and this magnificent part of the world, Montana.

