

Environmental - From the stakeholder perspective you were selected to represent (or others), what Environmental factors, concerns or criteria do you think should be included in or accounted for in any zoning proposal that the ZAP develops?

Setback/ Floodplain

Of all environmental concerns, it clearly appears water quality in the valley is the one element of utmost importance due to imminent contamination from thousands of new and aging septic systems on a relatively shallow aquifer. Therefore, wastewater infrastructure should be prioritized between the cities and the county local governing bodies.

Nobody should be OK with the level of treatment from the City of Helena Wastewater treatment plant. Go look at the point discharge from that plant and honestly try to justify to yourself that you think that's OK to be going directly into the Missouri River. We need a new plant, in the low point of the valley.

The flooding in 2018 compromised the septic system for the mobile home/RV park on North Montana across from the Gun Club. I am not against MHPs per se but that one should not be in that location. We can't do anything about it now, even though there was talk of moving it to a new location after 2018. However, there should be steeper rules for an MHP that wants to have a septic system in the Helena valley, not just because of the impact on ground water from a MHP, but the surface flooding risk and the risk from rising ground water due to flooding in the area.

The City of Helena waste waters as treated are discharged into Prickley Pear Creek through property we own. The allegation that the treatment plant has poor treatment is based on what? is it observation/hearsay or scientific fact. A new plant at the bottom would be more costly than a lift/transfer station to existing plant. That assumes treatment is good.

groundwater that rises significantly in flooding years is a problem in a large swath of the valley. Zoning should restrict the use of basements in those areas.

We should define which rivers/streams we need a setback from (i.e. Tenmile/Prickley Pear/Crystal Springs etc.). The setback requirements should be clarified very specifically rather than using ambiguous terms to define which drainages need setbacks.

Famed research hydrologist, Gordon Grant, remarked, "The story of flood-plain development is characterized by 'decades of boredom punctuated by hours of chaos.'" All 100 year floodplains must be respected and left undisturbed to protect the hydrologic integrity of these alluvial networks and protect existing and future homeowners against exacerbating impacts from flood events.

Ignoring or defying science-based setback regulations violates both the natural hydrologic functions of stream systems and common sense. Buildings, utilities and infrastructure are all subject to flood risk hazards without properly locating development beyond the flood hazard zone.

Current regulations offer protection to mapped 100-yr floodplains under current Flood Insurance Rate maps. However, these protections fall short for ephemeral channels not mapped on existing FEMA flood maps. Latest advances in LIDAR imagery depict a stunning revelation of these flood overflow channels. Zoning provides an excellent opportunity to tackle this deficiency for more effective, comprehensive flood protection strategy.

Man has always built dikes and water ways to deal with the extreme situations from water overflow. We need to create water ways to channel flooding around housing developments, not be held hostage to the 100 year flood threats

Additionally, there are numerous structures that divert and channel the water including streets and roads, some county and some private, and fences, embankments and other structures that impact water flow.

Consideration of zoning that does not allow for new development in the designated floodplain should be a priority

Wastewater

The county needs to have a big picture plan that includes the infrastructure for a valley wide sewage treatment facility or method of transporting the sewage to the existing facility.

It is extremely clear a regional treatment plant or lift station would help. There is clearly a "dislike" for the development that has happened in the north valley. The majority of it was approved by the County?

If someone wants to add something like a mobile home park (MHP) or an RV park, I am concerned about the impact on the ground water.

Our county sanitarian disclosed some 7000 septic systems are in the Helena Valley, and many are aging (over 25 yrs.) Coupled with the fact the alluvial aquifer is relatively shallow and the primary source of almost all residential and small businesses' supply of domestic water, this elevates the need for wastewater infrastructure to the urban and transitional growth areas.

Closer to town, wastewater seems the biggest threat, as it seems likely to affect the aquifer that is both abundant and shallow. Further out, it's the opposite: reliable water sources will be harder to come by as more load is put on the deeper available supply.

New subdivisions with lots too small for septic systems should be required to install the pipes to connect to the system

It would be good to identify (and evaluate?) all possible approaches to protecting ground water from septic contamination that could be included in new zoning regulations so that we can decide which to propose/endorse.

I was in Cheyenne Wyoming this week. They have multiple County projects on city services. I understand politically this is frowned upon but environmentally this seems like a decent option.

Perhaps the most precious, valuable resource in the Helena Valley is the tremendous supply of quality groundwater drawn from relatively shallow wells. Most residents would opt to rely on this groundwater to supply their domestic needs instead of from city water piped to their neighborhoods. Effluent from some 7000 septic drainfields and growing daily risks contamination to this valuable resource. Therefore, extending wastewater infrastructure to the valley vs. city water should essentially become first in order.

trying to protect the "alluvial plain" in the Helena valley is no longer realistic. The Helena Irrigation system gathers the water into a lake and then recharges several streams at high volume instead of allowing the water to spread out and dissipate.

The AARPA funds are for water, sewer, or broadband. It is not for bridges. Why doesn't the county apply for funds for a regional plan and/or public water/sewer?



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Wildland/ Urban Interface

WUI what and where it is or should be in the future. How to protect that designation.

Reducing encroachment into the wildland-urban interface should be a priority of this zoning ordinance. This would decrease costs for emergency services, insurance, and maintain open spaces and needed wildlife habitat to decrease conflicts.

Disincentives to locate in the WUI areas is a first step in any sound, responsible, growth policy. Capitalist marketing in our society has misdirected overgrowth to the hinterlands undermining the very values people seek here in the first place.

Highest and best use would dictate that the method to place value relates to money. Are esthetic values like a defined WUI and open space to be valued by society? We need to address valuation methods.

Transportation Infrastructure

The distance from the north valley to downtown is walkable (assuming we all agree Manhattan Island is walkable). A walk/bike community with complete streets is appropriate.

Density and Location of Development

The information we have been given seems to show that the further from the city and the more spread out developments are the more unfunded environmental impacts are created on roads, air pollution, water pollution, fire fighting etc.

There is very little reason for a building height restriction anywhere inside the bowl. The higher the density the better. We should be focusing on minimum density, not maximum density, inside the bowl. If we don't build up, we will build out. Our focus should be on encouraging tall, valuable buildings with as little infrastructure per person as possible.

If we don't fit as many people inside the "bowl" as possible, they will simply move outside the bowl. This will compound all of the issues we've discussed. Finding a solution for development anywhere inside the bowl seems like a good approach.

Due to the distances involved and the \$50/ft min cost of sewer and or water lines it seems impractical to centralize county developments. If a system were installed and development spread from close to it how would that all be governed or managed?

Parks and Open Space must be considered in the mix due to overwhelming evidence that demonstrates the public health, economic, and environmental benefits of parks and open space. And research shows neighborhoods with greenery in common are more likely to enjoy stronger social ties.

Financial/ Economic Impacts

Preventing shift of development costs to existing residents should be one of the considerations in evaluation of environmental concerns - eg road improvements needed to reach sparsely situated homes in emergency situations; septic failures and ground water contamination; new wells and existing wells going dry because of inadequate ground water.



Water Availability / Quality

Common sense solutions to both ground and surface water can be found. Making the rule that lots must be 10 acres or more is not realistic or practical, or efficient use of the land.

Water availability will become an issue in more parts of the county as development continues. Should zoning regulations consider lawn size limitations or other water conserving measures?