

CITY OF BILLINGS

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL WORK SESSION SUMMARY

March 27, 2026 – 12:00 NOON

Council Chambers – City Hall, 316 N. 26th St., Billings, Montana

Council Present:

Councilmember Shaw
Councilmember Nicholson
Councilmember Neese
Councilmember Pitman
Councilmember Aguirre
Councilmember Aspenlieder
Councilmember Lindley
Councilmember Boyett
Mayor Nelson

Absent/Excused:

Councilmember Kennedy
Councilmember O'Donnell

Staff Present:

Chris Kukulski, City Administrator; Denise Bohlman, City Clerk; Gina Dahl, City Attorney; Jessica McKee, Deputy City Attorney; Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director; and Anna Vickers, Planning Manager

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda and Non-Agenda Items)

David Redman, Billings, MT, spoke in support of a streamlined permitting process and the Montana Land Use Planning Act.

Kimberly Welzenbach, Interim Planning Commission, indicated she was available if Council had questions.

AGENDA ITEM #1 – Montana Land Use Planning Act / Billings 2045 Update (Session 3)

Presenters: Wyeth Friday, Planning and Community Services Director; Anna Vickers, Planning Manager

Staff provided an informational update regarding implementation of the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MLUPA) and continued development of the Billings 2045 Plan. No formal action was requested.

DISCUSSION

Duplex Allowance Clarification

Staff requested clarification regarding prior Council direction on whether to include duplexes as a permitted use in single-family zones. Discussion reflected prior votes with mixed attendance.

Consensus:

Council generally affirmed prior direction to not include the duplex incentive at this time. Council requested the item be revisited at a future meeting when full Council is present.

Jessica McKee, Deputy City Attorney reviewed:

Administrative Approval and Appeals Process

Staff presented the proposed administrative zoning approval process under MLUPA, including the appeals structure.

Staff continued discussion on:

Key elements:

- Administrative approval of zoning requests consistent with the future land use map.
- Public comment period following administrative decisions.
- Appeals process: Planning Commission → City Council → District Court.
- Definition and role of an “aggrieved party.”

Council expressed concerns regarding:

- Potential project delays due to appeals.
- Overall timeline compared to the current process.
- Need for clarity in procedures and timelines.

Direction to Staff:

- Provide a comparison of timelines between current and proposed processes.
- Develop a clearer outline/flowchart of the appeals process.
- Consider methods to minimize delays, including meeting flexibility for the Planning Commission.

Future Land Use Designations and Map

Staff presented draft future land use categories and their relationship to zoning districts.

Discussion emphasized:

- The map as a guiding tool for administrative decisions.
- Continued applicability of existing zoning regulations.
- Importance of aligning land use designations with infrastructure and growth patterns.

Interactive Map and Public Engagement

Staff demonstrated the Billings 2045 interactive map and comment system.

Key points:

- Public comment period open through April 19, 2026.
- Map will remain unchanged during the comment period.
- Comments may be submitted electronically by parcel or area.

Council discussed:

- Need for improved public understanding of land use categories.
- Preference for submitting individual comments outside of meetings.

Direction to Staff:

- Continue collecting input through the interactive map.
- Evaluate enhancements to improve clarity and usability.

Growth, Infrastructure, and Planning Considerations

Council discussed:

- West End growth and infrastructure limitations.
- Annexation considerations.
- Balance between infill development and outward expansion.

COUNCIL DIRECTION SUMMARY

- Revisit duplex allowance with full Council present.
- Develop timeline comparison for administrative and appeals processes.
- Provide additional clarity on appeals procedures.
- Continue public engagement through April 19, 2026.
- Allow Councilmembers to submit independent map comments.
- Maintain coordination with the Interim Planning Commission.

HIGHLIGHT UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS OF COUNCIL INTEREST

PUBLIC COMMENT – “NON-AGENDA ITEMS”

Jack Hanson, Billings, MT, spoke of concerns with proposed zoning changes and the importance of duplex housing in the City.

ADJOURN: 1:38 PM