

Rural Amsterdam/Churchill

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The landscape of Rural Amsterdam/Churchill contributes to the rural and small town character of the area, and has been identified by residents as one of the most important features of the community. Preserving the rural and agricultural landscape that occupies the majority of rural Amsterdam/Churchill is a primary goal of this plan. Agricultural lands, operations, canals and ditches, riparian corridors and wetlands will be protected using the following policies:

- 4.1 Land Use Map**
- 4.2 Right to Farm**
- 4.3 Protection of Agricultural Land and Lifestyle**
- 4.4 Rural Residential Development**
- 4.5 Flexibility of Uses**
- 4.6 Connections**
- 4.7 Natural Assets**
- 4.8 Open Lands Board**

Policy 4.1 Land Use Map

Adopt a land use map designating a rural area outside the Town Core that extends to the boundaries of the planning jurisdiction. New development in the rural portions of the Amsterdam/Churchill area will have a lower density than the downtown core. Opportunities will be provided for increasing base density through clustering techniques provided by the development standards adopted to implement this plan.

Policy 4.2 Right to Farm

Rural Amsterdam/Churchill is primarily an agricultural area. One of the key purposes of the Community Plan is to encourage and protect the agricultural land and support its favorable lifestyle. Development in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill shall not interfere with existing agriculture operations, including the normal operation of dairies, feedlots, potato cellars, and other agricultural activities that may, at times, be perceived as a nuisance by inhabitants of nearby residences. This policy states that landowners and residents accept and are aware that standard agricultural and farming practices can result in smoke,

dust, animal odors, flies and machinery noise, and that standard agricultural practices feature the use of heavy equipment, burning, chemical sprays and the use of machinery sometimes 24 hours a day. Additionally, landowners will be required to file an “agricultural resource easement” with their property when new residential construction takes place, stating they recognize they are in an agricultural area and accept the right of agricultural operations to exist and continue.

Policy 4.3 Protection of Agricultural Land and Lifestyle

The importance of agricultural land and lifestyle has been a clearly identified value by the residents of Amsterdam/Churchill. Standards will be adopted protecting canals and ditches by requiring setbacks to existing water conveyance facilities and by adopting development standards promoting agriculture by setting clear standards on new development.

4.3.1 Protect water conveyance facilities by requiring new subdivision and construction to contact applicable water users and/or water conveyance facility’s authorized representatives and mitigate any adverse impacts to the water conveyance facility.

The Amsterdam/Churchill community and Gallatin County will adopt zoning standards to:

- Require new development adjacent to a water conveyance facility to contact the appropriate water users and/or water conveyance facility’s authorized representatives prior to approval;
- Require acknowledgment by the water users and/or water conveyance facility’s authorized representatives that contact has been made, along with any comments or conditions they require to mitigate impacts;
- Prohibit channeling of stormwater or snowmelt runoff, water from dewatering practices, or other water originating from within the boundaries of the development into a water conveyance facility without express consent of the applicable water users and/or water conveyance facility’s authorized representatives;
- Establish a water conveyance facility non-interference setback;
- Require agreement by applicable water users and/or water conveyance facility’s authorized representatives prior to alteration of a canal or ditch;
- Require new subdivision to design development to minimize impacts to agriculture and water conveyance facilities.

4.3.2 Avoid conflicts between uses by requiring an open space buffer between existing agricultural operations and new subdivision.

Preserving agricultural operations and lands is one of the Guiding Principles of this community plan. Increased development adjacent to existing agricultural operations can result in conflicts due to smells, noises, and hours of operation. To mitigate the immediate effects of potential land use incompatibility, zoning standards will be drafted requiring new residential development to provide an open space buffer

next to existing agricultural operations.

4.3.3 Recognize the right to farm and ranch in the Amsterdam/Churchill area.

Agricultural operations are abundant throughout rural Amsterdam/Churchill. This policy states that landowners and residents accept and are aware that standard agricultural and farming practices can result in smoke, dust, animal odors, flies and machinery noise, and that standard agricultural practices feature the use of heavy equipment, burning, chemical sprays and the use of machinery early in the morning and sometimes late into the evening.

Policy 4.4 Rural Residential Development

Agricultural lands and operations will mainly be protected by directing growth into the core of Amsterdam/Churchill and by adopting a residential density and development pattern in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill that matches the historical development pattern of the area.

4.4.1 Adopt a base density for new residential development in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill.

Agriculture in rural Amsterdam/Churchill needs room to operate. Spraying fields, raising dairy cows, growing potatoes, driving farm equipment on county roads, and running cattle all require a landscape that is primarily devoted to those uses. In community meetings kicking off the planning process, community members identified agricultural land and lifestyle as one of the values the planning process should protect, and that value has become one of the guiding principals of the plan. Given the agricultural nature of the area, the overall density of new residential development in rural Amsterdam/Churchill shall be one lot per 160 acres.

4.4.2 Allow greater density in return for clustering development in a historic development pattern.

Historically, rural Amsterdam/Churchill has seen limited residential development consisting of small lots clustered near existing roads and in existing farm clusters. This historic pattern will be protected by development standards allowing higher-density development in return for a clustered development pattern which protects existing agricultural lands. Those development standards will allow for new development of one lot per 80 acres if the additional residential lots are clustered.

4.4.3 Allow greater density in certain areas in Rural

Amsterdam/Churchill.

This plan recognizes that certain areas within Rural Amsterdam/Churchill have unique conditions and may warrant a higher residential density. In particular, the far southeast corner of the Planning Area is in close proximity to the Four Corners intersection, has direct access to Norris Road and major county and state transportation networks, and hosts a golf course. The regulations drafted to implement this community plan will contain mechanisms, such as a Planned Unit development provision, to allow developments generally meeting the circumstances described here to develop at a higher density in return for a design which protects and preserves the Guiding Principles of this Plan. Specifically, developments qualifying for a higher residential development density will be required to provide open space buffering adjacent to existing agricultural operations to offset the increased development potential.

4.4.4 Allow exceptions to the density requirements for commercial uses.

Many agriculture uses in rural Amsterdam/Churchill have commercial or industrial components. Opportunity exists for potato wholesaling operations, fertilizer operations, or even agri-tourism ventures that support agriculture in the area but are not strictly agriculture themselves. Given this blurred line, density for new commercial uses that enhance agriculture in rural Amsterdam/Churchill shall be exempt from the density requirements of the development standards designed to implement this community plan. This exception shall also apply to lots created for utility or emergency service use.

4.4.5 Allow exceptions to the density requirements for subdivision exemptions and employee housing for agricultural operations.

Many agricultural operations in rural Amsterdam/Churchill employ extended family or workers who live on the farm. In order to allow these types of operations to continue, uses such as family transfers and employee housing for agricultural operations shall be exempt from the development standards designed to implement this community plan.

4.4.6 Allow landowners to transfer development rights between properties in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill.

In order to allow landowners to maximize property value while also retaining the agricultural land of Rural Amsterdam/Churchill, the development standards designed to implement this community plan will allow landowners to transfer development rights between properties.

4.4.7 Allow participation in Gallatin County's Transfer of Development Opportunities Program.

In the event that a Transfer of Development Opportunities Program is

established by Gallatin County at some point in the future, the development standards designed to implement this community plan will allow the sale of development credits or rights to growth areas in other parts of the County.

Policy 4.5 Flexibility of Uses

Adopt Development Standards Allowing a Maximum of Flexibility for Uses While Exempting Agricultural Uses.

4.5.1 Exempt agricultural uses from all development standards.

Protection of agricultural uses is the primary objective of this chapter. Development standards will apply to all uses except agricultural uses.

4.5.2 Allow maximum flexibility for new non-agricultural uses.

The development standards adopted to implement this community plan will not list out permitted uses. Instead, all uses will be allowed with the exception of a minimum number of uses which will require a public hearing.

4.5.3 Require high-intensity uses to hold a public hearing.

Certain high-intensity uses, such as gravel pit operations and commercial uses generating a high volume of traffic, will be required to hold a public hearing and possibly meet specific conditions to mitigate their impact on neighboring properties.

4.5.4 Prohibit sexually-oriented businesses, bars, and gambling establishments.

Community members stressed the need to protect the small-town values of the Amsterdam/Churchill area. The development standards designed to implement this plan will prohibit sexually-oriented businesses, bars, and gambling establishments in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill.

Policy 4.6 Connections

Detailing connections between various places within the planning district is one of the primary components of the Community Plan. Additionally, all new road improvements shall consider the needs of agricultural, such as the need to move stock or equipment.

Amsterdam/Churchill is linked to the rest of Gallatin County by State and County roads. The primary arterial road in the area is Churchill Road, which begins near Interstate 90 in Manhattan, proceeds southeast approximately 6 miles, turns through Churchill, and ends at Highway 84 (Norris Road) approximately 10 miles south of Churchill (a total of approximately 16 miles long). Churchill Road serves as both the main street for the town of Churchill and as a state highway for through traffic.

There are two east/west routes connecting Churchill Road with Jackrabbit Lane and the rest of the Gallatin Valley: Cameron Bridge Road and Amsterdam Road. A primary concern has been increasing traffic on these roads that has led to concerns both for safety and for the impact on local agriculture.

4.6.1 Improve Amsterdam Road.

The safety of Amsterdam Road has been a primary concern of community residents since the beginning of the planning process. Information obtained from the County Road Office show traffic counts on Amsterdam Road immediately east of the intersection with Churchill Road to be 1,700 Average Daily Trips (ADT's). Five miles east, as Amsterdam Road nears Belgrade and traffic from the River Rock subdivision join the road, traffic counts rise to over 13,000 ADT's.

In order to handle increased traffic and improve safety along Amsterdam Road, basic improvements need to be made. Primarily, the road needs to be widened and a shoulder provided. Improving the road in this would not only improve the immediate safety of the road, but would also provide a clear route for traffic east to Belgrade that would provide relief from roads such as Cameron Bridge Road which provide direct service to agricultural operations.

Additionally, improvements need to be made to the intersection of Amsterdam Road and Jackrabbit Lane. Improving the Level of Service at the intersection would potentially encourage drivers to use Amsterdam Road, thus alleviating traffic pressures on other, more agricultural, roads.

4.6.2 Consider agricultural when improving and connecting roads.

Many of the roads in the planning district have very light traffic and are used primarily for agricultural uses, such as moving stock and equipment. While the Amsterdam/Churchill community has not seen the high growth experienced in other parts of the County, buildout of the historic developments in and around the community have led to increased traffic on many key roads within the planning area. Specifically, Amsterdam Road has seen increased traffic in the past several years, and the paving of Cameron Bridge Road caused a substantial increase in the number of vehicles along that east/west route.

Increased traffic on the roads causes an impact to agriculture in the area.

While the primary tools to protect rural roads and the agriculture using those roads in the Amsterdam/Churchill community are the policies directing the majority of development into the Town Core, it is important that any new development that does occur in the rural area consider the need of agriculture on adjacent roads. Specifically, signage calling attention to the agriculture in the area and road construction that ensures farm equipment has enough room to operate and maneuver should be considered in the design of new roads.

Additionally, any resources for road construction unrelated to new development should be directed towards improvement of Amsterdam Road. Upgrading that road to a safe status will encourage non-agricultural traffic heading east to Belgrade or the interstate to use Amsterdam Road rather than other routes, such as Cameron Bridge Road or River Road.

4.6.3 Consider trail improvements within the district after adoption of the Community Plan.

There are several trail connections that should be made within the planning district that will require an investment in resources on the part of area residents. That investment will be more fully discussed after adoption of the Community Plan. Specifically, those trail connections include a trail north out of Churchill towards Manhattan, and east out of Churchill towards the Gallatin River (preferably along Cameron Bridge Road).

4.6.4 Create a road connection north out of Amsterdam along the old railroad right-of-way to Coles Corner.

Coles Corner, along Churchill Road north of Town, is one of the most dangerous sections of road in the Planning District. A road connection should be constructed north out of Amsterdam along the old railroad right-of-way directly north to Coles Corner to provide safer access out of town north towards Manhattan.

4.6.5 Create a trail corridor east from the Town Core along Cameron Bridge Road.

Cameron Bridge Road is a narrow road with no shoulder, and providing a trail corridor would create a safe pedestrian- and bike-oriented way to move east from the Town Core. Several landowners have expressed interest in helping create a trail corridor, and this policy commits the Amsterdam/Churchill community to discussing the idea with landowners along both the north and south sides Cameron Bridge Road, as well as the County and the Gallatin Valley Land Trust.

Adopt standards protecting natural assets in the area. The natural environment is one of the primary values of residents of the Amsterdam/Churchill area. It shall be the policy of Rural Amsterdam/Churchill to protect and maintain the natural assets of the area, such as wetlands, groundwater, and wildlife habitat. This policy will be pursued using the following strategies:

4.7.1 Adopt standards requiring minimum setbacks to riparian areas, watercourses and wetlands.

The Gallatin County Subdivision Regulations currently require setbacks of 150 feet to all watercourses as a condition of subdivision approval. Adopting development standards would extend these setbacks to all existing lots in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill and would provide significant protection to riparian and wildlife resources, as well as avoid potential floodplain issues.

Policy 4.8 Open Lands Board

The Mission of the Gallatin County Open Lands Board is to work with the County Commissioners and the citizens of Gallatin County to preserve natural lands and encourage the economic viability of agriculturally productive lands. This is accomplished through voluntary programs, which ensure the protection open-space lands, either in perpetuity or for a term of years; and through the identification or establishment of funding sources, tax measures or other incentives.

The Amsterdam/Churchill community is committed to exploring options provided by the Open Lands Board and tools, such as conservation easements, that can be used to preserve agricultural land.