

DRAFT Amsterdam/Churchill Community Plan (6/7/08)



Adopted ____ By the Gallatin County Commission

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Introduction

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The past 125 years have seen the Amsterdam/Churchill community grow into a tight-knit community, based on farming, which serves as a quiet reminder of rural Montana in an area that is seeing tremendous growth and change. The Settlement was formed in the latter part of the 19th century, as the newly-formed Manhattan Malting Company turned to Europe, and specifically the Netherlands, for farming families to supply the barley and operate the irrigation canals. As more Dutch families resettled to the community, the Dutch Reformed Church took on a central role in organizing community life that has continued to this day.

Many of the same families who originally formed the settlements of Amsterdam and Churchill remain in the community today. As Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley continue their own transformation from agricultural valley to internationally-connected small city, Amsterdam/Churchill has begun to see an increase in growth as well. In order to address the impacts that inevitably accompany change, the Settlement has chosen to come together to draft the following community plan.

1.1 What's Next?

This is the first community plan for Amsterdam/Churchill. Over the last several months, residents have expressed a desire to use the planning process to preserve the small town and rural nature of the area, direct growth into the core of downtown Amsterdam/Churchill, preserve both agricultural land and the agricultural lifestyle, explore the possible formation of a community water system, and adopt zoning to mitigate potentially incompatible uses.

This plan represents a new approach to growth in Amsterdam/Churchill. It attempts to plan for growth that doesn't infringe on the rights of existing neighbors or on the small town nature of the community, results in a more coordinated approach to emergency services, protects community values, and preserves the agricultural land and lifestyle so many people love. The fun begins below, with the community vision. First, however, the remainder of this chapter deals with compliance with state statute, the county growth policy, and describes the process leading to this plan's adoption.

1.2 Organization of the Plan

This plan contains three layers of guidance for residents and decision makers:

- The overall vision and guiding principles presented below, which set the stage for more specific direction that follows;
- Goal statements in each chapter, which are broad statements about how the community will address a particular issue or need;
- Policies, which are specific action statements about how the community will achieve each goal.

The plan calls for exploring three primary strategies for managing growth in the Amsterdam/Churchill area:

- **Partnerships.** Partnerships, or agreements, between two agencies are a primary strategy communities can use to implement their planning policies. A primary strategy to implement plan policies in the Amsterdam/Churchill area is a partnership between Gallatin County and the Montana Department of Transportation.
- **Investments.** A second strategy to implement the Amsterdam/Churchill Community Plan policies involve investments or commitments. Investments require the residents Amsterdam/Churchill, the County, or perhaps outside agencies (such as MDT or federal grant programs) to invest time, energy, money, or a combination thereof. Investments include exploring the option of constructing a sidewalk along Churchill Road.
- **Requirements.** Requirements can take several different forms. The most common type of requirement is a set of development standards which new development or changes in land use would have to meet (also known as zoning). These standards could include setbacks from canals or ditches, landscape buffers between commercial and residential uses to help compatibility, lighting standards for new commercial buildings, density requirements for new subdivisions, requirements for central sewer/water, etc. Other types of requirements could take the form of plan policy. Examples include planned road connections, trail connections, or sidewalk connections which new development would have to build as a condition of their approval.

The plan is broken into two geographic areas: the Amsterdam/Churchill core, and Rural Amsterdam/Churchill. Partnerships, investments, and strategies are all discussed as implementation strategies for achieving the goals and policies of each geographic area.

1.3 Authority

This plan will be adopted as the Amsterdam/Churchill Community Plan Chapter of the Gallatin County Growth Policy. Authority of this community plan is authorized by Montana State Statute and the Gallatin County Growth Policy. Section 76-1-106 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) requires local planning boards to prepare growth policies, and Section 76-1-601 offers general guidance for the contents of a growth policy and/or neighborhood plan. Sections 76-1-602 through 76-1-604 give the procedure for adoption of growth policy or growth policy amendment.

Additionally, Chapter 4.3 of the Gallatin County Growth Policy authorizes the development of Neighborhood, or Community, Plans throughout Gallatin County. Those community plans must be drafted in compliance with the County Growth Policy, and are designed to give greater specificity within a certain defined area..

1.4 Planning Process

The planning process resulting in adoption of this community plan has taken approximately __ months and has had the input of hundreds of individuals. Specifically, the following steps were taken:

Educational Meetings. Four educational meetings were held over the course of four months the summer of 2007. The following topics were discussed:

- Road and Transportation Issues
- Education
- Community Sewer and Water Issues
- Fire Department and Emergency Services

Kickoff Meeting, November 15, 2007. Over 80 community members attended the Amsterdam/Churchill Community Planning Kickoff Event. Participants were asked to respond to four questions. Responses to those questions have formed the foundation on which all goals and policies have been based:

- What makes Amsterdam/Churchill a great place to live?
- What concerns do you have for the future?
- What should change in the future in this community?
- What should stay the same?

From Dialogue to Action, January 22, 2008. Over 80 participants attended the second community planning event, called “From Dialogue to Action”, on January 22nd. Participants were asked to evaluate the guiding principles developed at the kickoff and list what actions and tools should be taken and used to implement those principles.

Initial Recommendations, March 22nd, 2008. The third community event was a

presentation and discussion of the initial recommendations from the steering committee. Those initial recommendations have been included throughout the plan.

Steering Committee Meetings. A steering committee of approximately 12 community members was formed after the Kickoff Event to guide the planning process. The steering committee met twice a month with staff from the Gallatin County Planning Department for the duration of the process; their work, combined with the community events described below, has resulted in the goals and policies presented throughout the plan.

Large Landowner Meetings. Three separate meetings were held to directly address concerns for large landowners. Those meetings have resulted in the goals and policies of Chapter 4, Rural Amsterdam/Churchill.

Amsterdam/Churchill's Guiding Principles

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Amsterdam/Churchill has seen slow but steady change over the past 100 years, from the settling of initial farms, to the development of numerous subdivisions in the core, to the operation of several local businesses and the development and use of property ongoing today. As residents of Amsterdam/Churchill discuss these changes, the questions that have arisen during this planning process are:

- How do we grow our core in a way that keeps the small town and rural nature of the area?
- What must be done to ensure that future development fits within the capacity of local public facilities and services?
- What must be done to sustain the agricultural landscapes and lifestyles on which the character of our area depends?
- What must be done to ensure that future rural residential development is compatible with the resources and lifestyle that attract people to live in our area?
- How can we continue to involve the community in the ongoing questions of growth and change?

The answers to these questions begin with the Guiding Principles presented below. These statements provide the foundation for all policies which follow, and any decisions made to amend or update this plan should be based on this foundation.

2.1 Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles have been used to guide specific policy direction in each of the geographic areas of the planning jurisdiction.

Values

- **Small Town Values, Rural Character, and Quality of Life.** Many residents referred to small town and church-oriented values. Many people have stated that the community is a great place to raise a family, and the strong presence of the church and quality schools added to the overall sense of good values. Quality people and their neighborliness, care and respect for others, low crime, and the quiet,

calm way of life have all been discussed as important values for the area which contribute to making Amsterdam/Churchill a great place to live.

- **Agriculture Heritage and Wide-Open Views.** Many community residents state the agricultural nature of the area adds significantly to the quality of life of the area. In addition to lending a strong sense of history to the area (note the reference to the founding of several family farms in the timeline), many residents appreciate the open spaces and views that active farms provide.

Goals

- **Infrastructure.** Numerous residents cite a need to address several infrastructure needs: an improved road system and road safety; a way to address pedestrian and bicycle needs, including sidewalks, throughout the community; and public/community water systems.
- **Increased Local Control.** Many residents express strong support for the promise of community involvement and grassroots democracy, and one of the top priorities discussed by participants was an interest in increasing local control through better planning. Additionally, tools such as zoning and incorporation were also brought up regularly, with many participants expressing a willingness and desire to explore options necessary to ensure that development occurred with the community's values in mind.
- **Agriculture and Rural Lifestyle.** Numerous residents expressed a strong desire to keep family farms in business and preserve the agricultural land, lifestyle, and heritage that helps define the Amsterdam/Churchill area.
- **Community Values.** Community values rose to the surface as a top priority for almost everyone. The church, the schools, the family oriented atmosphere, and the community pride shown by residents were all discussed as something the Amsterdam/Churchill community needs to consciously nurture as the area grows and changes.

Downtown Amsterdam/Churchill

3

Downtown Amsterdam/Churchill should continue to serve as the community center and be the residential, religious, service, social, and cultural center of the surrounding area. This goal will be implemented using the following policies:

- 3.1 Adopt a Land Use Map**
- 3.2 Residential Neighborhoods**
- 3.3 Commercial Neighborhoods**
- 3.4 Connections**
- 3.5 Agricultural Uses and Land**

Policy 3.1. Adopt a Land Use Map

Adopt a land use map designating a core growth area around the existing downtown. Generally, the boundaries of this area are shown on the Town Core map attached to this plan. New development in the Amsterdam/Churchill area will be focused within this core to allow for natural extension of the existing townsite. Additionally, the land use map will designate residential and commercial subdistricts within the core.

To preserve the rural character, the agricultural resources, and small town nature of the area, and to reduce conflict between new residential development and existing agricultural operations in the area, the majority of new growth will be focused into the core where existing growth is already located rather than throughout rural Amsterdam/Churchill.

As the core develops over time, the map amendment process will allow for annexations into the core.

Policy 3.2. Residential Neighborhoods

The Amsterdam/Churchill community and Gallatin County will use zoning standards to protect the character of its existing residential neighborhoods. Additionally, Amsterdam/Churchill and Gallatin County will promote safe, walkable neighborhoods by requiring sidewalks, curb and gutter, and street

lighting in new residential developments.

Most of the existing neighborhoods in the Amsterdam/Churchill core have existing covenants. Zoning standards will be adopted reflecting the protections of those existing covenants. Additionally, those zoning standards protect community values by prohibiting bars, strip clubs, and casinos.

3.2.1 Adopt zoning standards for hazards and nuisances.

3.2.2 Allow residential uses and limited home occupations and home-based businesses within delineated residential area.

Zoning standards will be adopted delineating residential areas. Within those areas, commercial uses will primarily be residential with limited home occupations and home-based businesses.

3.2.3 Encourage safe, walkable neighborhoods and improve neighborhood functionality and design by requiring sidewalks, curb and gutter, and street lighting in certain new residential developments.

In order to improve the pedestrian experience and improve neighborhood design in the residential neighborhoods of Amsterdam/Churchill, major subdivisions within the core with lots at a greater density than 1 unit per acre shall be required to provide a sidewalk in front of all lots, curb and gutter, and street lighting. New residential development may be required to join the existing lighting district currently in existence.

Policy 3.3 Commercial Areas

Designate commercial areas within the core.

Many Amsterdam/Churchill residents work in local businesses. The Amsterdam/Churchill community recognizes that compatible commercial businesses can add to the convenience of the community by providing jobs and services in close proximity to residential neighborhoods. The Amsterdam/Churchill community and Gallatin County will adopt a zoning map designating commercial districts within the community. Additionally, the following standards will be adopted:

3.3.1 Require lighting standards for new commercial uses.

Visibility of the night sky is an important element of rural Amsterdam/Churchill. The Amsterdam/Churchill community and Gallatin County will adopt zoning standards ensuring that

additional commercial development will meet lighting standards designed to preserve visibility of the night sky.

3.3.2 Require landscaping for new commercial development and construction.

Landscaping for commercial uses is an important element of retaining an attractive community. Zoning standards will be adopted requiring any new commercial construction (excepting agricultural construction) to plant new landscaping.

3.3.3 Require commercial solid waste areas to be screened.

Zoning standards will be adopted requiring commercial solid waste areas to be screened either by fencing, landscaping, or the commercial building itself.

3.3.4 Require road mitigation of high-traffic uses.

Many commercial uses generate as much or more traffic than new subdivision. The zoning standards adopted to implement this plan will require high-traffic uses to mitigate impact on access roads to the same standard as a comparable subdivision.

Policy 3.4 Connections

Multiple points of access will be required to most developments. Additionally, safe, functional connections between neighborhoods, and within residential and commercial areas and public places, will be required.

Benefits of safe, functional connections between neighborhoods between neighborhoods via roads and sidewalks, paths, and trails include the following:

- Having multiple points of access to a neighborhood can be important during emergencies;
- Facilitating movement from one part of the community to another via local roads, sidewalks, paths, and trails can reduce congestion on arterial roads and major connectors. It also encourages walking and cycling;
- Connecting neighborhoods promotes a sense of community throughout town;
- Providing multiple connections, including sidewalks and paths, can facilitate safe movement of school children to either of the two schools in the community.

3.4.1 Require Connectivity as a Condition of Development Approval.

Commercial and residential developments must have safe,

functional access for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists through the site. They should also have safe, functional connections with adjoining developments.

3.4.2 Commit to exploring ways to provide a new sidewalk along Churchill Road.

There are two schools and two churches within the heart of the Town Core. This policy commits the community of Amsterdam/Churchill and Gallatin County to exploring ways to provide a new sidewalk along Churchill Road to increase pedestrian safety between these public buildings and residential neighborhoods.

3.4.3 Require a connection between Godfrey Canyon Estates and the Sara Terrace subdivision to the north.

The Godfrey Canyon Estates subdivision is physically separated from the rest of the Churchill community to the north. New subdivision on the agricultural land between the two developments shall be required to provide a road and pedestrian connection.

3.4.4 Commit to exploring opportunities for a “rails to trails” project along the old railroad right-of-way west of Camp Creek Road.

Policy 3.5 Agricultural Uses and Land

The importance of agricultural land and lifestyle has been a clearly identified value by the residents of Amsterdam/Churchill. While the majority of agricultural lands will be located outside of the downtown core and will be protected by directing the majority of growth into the core, several aspects of agricultural use will still be protected within the core as the area grows.

3.5.1 Protect agricultural water user facilities by requiring new subdivision and commercial construction to contact applicable canal companies and mitigate any adverse impacts to canals and ditches.

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

- Require new development adjacent to a canal or ditch to contact the appropriate canal company prior to approval;
- Require acknowledgment by the canal company that contact has been made, along with any comments or conditions they require to mitigate impacts;
- Prohibit channeling of stormwater or snowmelt runoff into a canal or ditch without express consent of the company;

- Establish a setback from the centerline of any canal or ditch;
- Require agreement by canal company prior to alteration of a canal or ditch;
- Require new subdivision to locate canals or ditches in parkland or open space.

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

Preserving agricultural operations and lands is one of the Guiding Principles of this community plan. Increased residential 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.

Rural Amsterdam/Churchill

4

The landscape surrounding the downtown core 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 Transfer of Development Rights Program**
- 4.3 Agricultural Uses and Land**
- 4.4 Open Lands Board**
- 4.5 Allow Multiple Uses**

Policy 4.1. Land Use Map

Adopt a land use map designating a rural area outside the core growth area. Generally, the boundaries of this area are described in the draft land use map attached to this document. New development in the rural portions of the Amsterdam/Churchill area will be a lower density than the downtown core. Opportunities will be provided for increasing density through

- 4.1.1 Protect rural character and agricultural resources by requiring a density of ___ outside of the downtown core.**
- 4.1.2 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 zoning standards allowing higher-density development in return for a clustered development pattern which protects existing agricultural lands.

Policy 4.2. Transfer of Development Credits Program

Participate in Gallatin County’s Transfer of Development Credits program.

Gallatin County is currently developing a voluntary transfer of development credits program. This policy commits the rural portion of Amsterdam/Churchill to participating in that program. Participation in the program is voluntary and provides rural landowners with another option when making decisions about their land.

Policy 4.3. Agricultural Uses and Land

The importance of agricultural land and lifestyle has been a clearly identified value by the residents of Amsterdam/Churchill. Protection of agricultural lands and operations will mainly be protected by directing growth into the core of Amsterdam/Churchill. In addition, standards will be adopted protecting canals and ditches and requiring setbacks to existing operations.

4.3.1 Protect agricultural water user facilities by requiring new subdivision and commercial construction to contact applicable canal companies and mitigate any adverse impacts to canals and ditches.

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

- Require new development adjacent to a canal or ditch to contact the appropriate canal company prior to approval;
- Require acknowledgment by the canal company that contact has been made, along with any comments or conditions they require to mitigate impacts;
- Prohibit channeling of stormwater or snowmelt runoff into a canal or ditch without express consent of the company;
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4.3.2 Avoid conflicts between uses by requiring an open space buffer between existing agricultural operations and new residential subdivision.

Preserving agricultural operations and lands is one of the Guiding Principles of this community plan. Increased residential 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 Exempt agricultural practices and structures from future zoning regulations.

4.3.4 Exempt family transfer exemptions from any future zoning regulations.

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

Agricultural operations are abundant throughout rural Gallatin Gateway. This policy states that non-agricultural landowners 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 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 from development pressure.

Policy 4.5 Allow Multiple Uses

Historic use of land within the rural portion of the Amsterdam/Churchill planning jurisdiction has historically been agriculture, with a minor amount of rural residential and low-intensity commercial. Zoning standards adopted to implement the plan will ensure that the historic mix of uses continues.

Public Facilities

5

This chapter is based on an inventory and analysis of public facilities and services attached as Appendix ____.

5.1 Fire Protection -

5.2 Schools -

5.3 Community Sewer -

5.4 Community Water

5.5 Transportation -

This chapter is incomplete and will be added to as information is gathered.

Continuing the Conversation and Implementing the Plan

6

This chapter addresses the desire of many Amsterdam/Churchill residents to have increased say in the future of their community. It shall be the policy of the Amsterdam/Churchill community to actively engage citizens in the long-range planning process. The Amsterdam/Churchill community's commitment to active citizen participation is affirmed by the extensive program of involvement used to develop this plan. The strategies for continuing implementation of this policy are:

6.1 Zoning District

6.2 Non-Profit Formation

6.3 A Return to the Guiding Principals

Policy 6.1. Zoning District Formation

The Amsterdam/Churchill community and Gallatin County will adopt a zoning regulation to implement the goals and policies of the community plan.

Many of the goals and policies of the Amsterdam/Churchill community plan call for specific development standards to be adopted. The community and Gallatin County will draft a zoning regulation specifically designed to implement the community plan.

Policy 6.2. Non-Profit Formation

The Amsterdam/Churchill community will form a non-profit organization expressly dedicated to serving as a forum for exploring community growth and change issues. The non-profit will ensure that the investment strategies named throughout the plan are implemented, will address any substantial changes or updates to the community plan and/or development standards, and will advise the Gallatin County Commission on issues that would affect the AC community.

Policy 6.3. A Return to the Vision

This plan ends with a reminder that, while this is the first community plan for the Amsterdam/Churchill area, it was written on a foundation of Guiding Principals obtained through an inclusive process involving several hundred individuals. As the community continues to grow and change, decisions that

affect the area should be weighed with those Guiding Principals and the planning policies in mind. Likewise, as the discussion about Amsterdam/Churchill continues and the plan evolves over time, that vision should continue to serve as the foundation for future community conversation.