PRIEST RIVER

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2026

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the following individuals who contributed to the Comprehensive Plan Update:

City Council and Mayor

Jeff Connolly, Mayor
Candy Turner, Council President
Doug Wagner, Council Member
Sandy Brower, Council Member
Billy Mullaley, Council Member

City Administration

Jake Gabell, Planning and Zoning Administrator
Laurel Thomas, City Clerk & Treasurer
Katie Elsaesser, City Attorney
Paul Sifford, Director of Utility Operations
Drew McLain, Police Chief
Chad Coleman, Public Works Supervisor
Lynda Ayers, Planning & Building Assistant

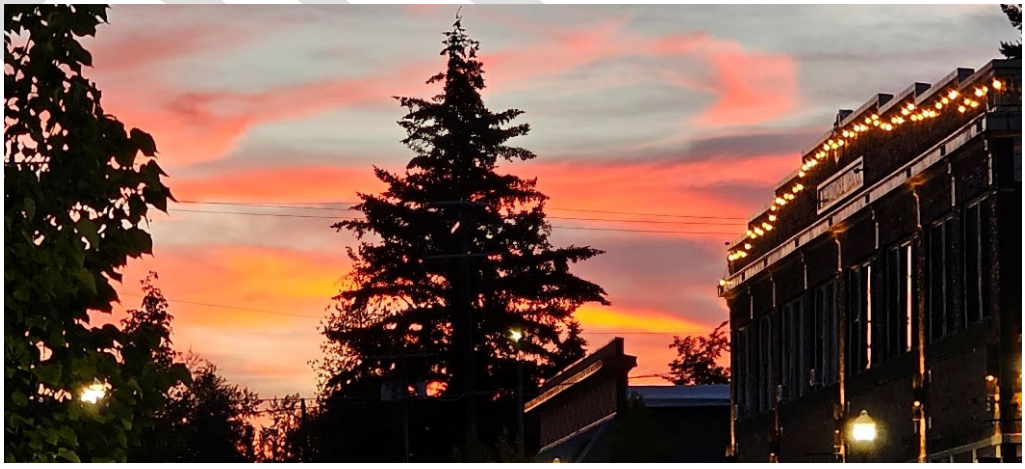
Priest River Community and Stakeholders

A special thanks to the citizens of Priest River, business owners, and public agencies who provided data, input, and feedback to help shape this plan and make it possible.

Vision Statement

Priest River was built by hardworking immigrants on the banks of two great rivers, where the lumber mills and the beauty of the land shaped a resilient community. Our vision is to keep that spirit alive by preserving our small-town charm while welcoming well-planned, responsible growth that reflects the pride, character, and hard work of the people who call Priest River home.

Table of Contents



Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

The City of Priest River began the comprehensive plan update process in the fall of 2025 to build upon the foundation established in previous comprehensive plans. The city has long been defined by its natural setting, small-town character, and resilience. Over the past decade, Priest River experienced steady growth, new investment, and increased regional visibility. As the city continued to evolve, local leaders recognized the need for a modern plan, one that reflects changing conditions while preserving the values that make Priest River a place people are proud to call home.

Purpose and Statutory Framework

The comprehensive plan serves as both a community vision and a policy guide for the city's residential, commercial, and industrial development. It expresses how residents, businesses, and public agencies envision Priest River's future and provides the framework for achieving that vision through coordinated decision-making. The plan establishes a foundation for zoning, subdivision, and infrastructure planning, ensuring that land use decisions remain consistent, transparent, and legally defensible.

The comprehensive plan contains future land use categories that serve as policy guides and set expectations for how land within the City of Priest River should be developed and used in the future. The terms *future land use* and *zoning* are often confused, but they are separate tools and processes. Future land use serves as a guide for how areas of the city may develop over time, while zoning regulates how a specific property can be developed and used today. The comprehensive plan does not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning boundaries; rather, it provides the policy foundation upon which land use ordinances are based.

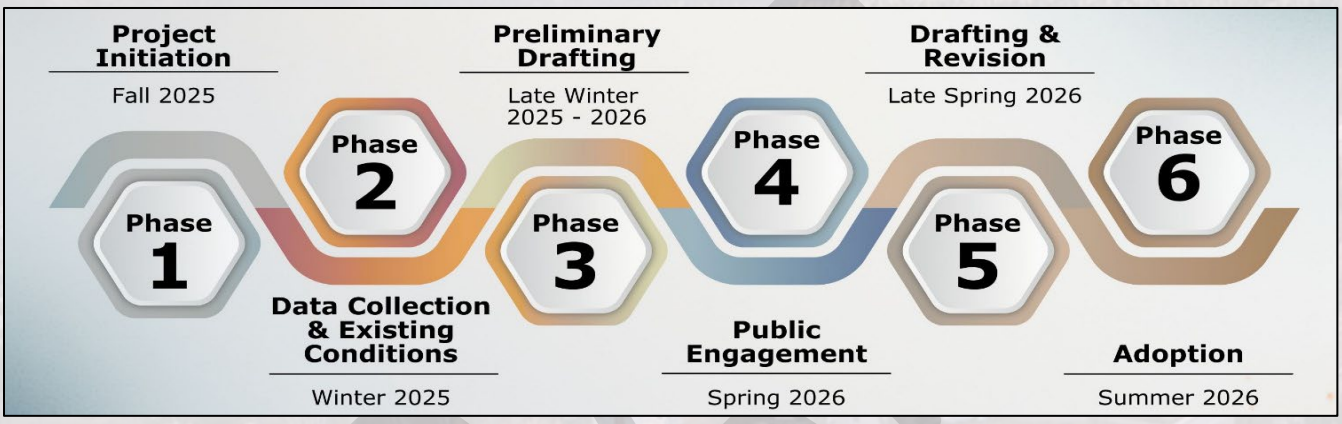
This update was completed in accordance with the Idaho Local Land Use Planning Act (Idaho Code §67-6508), which requires every city to maintain a current comprehensive plan addressing statutory required components. These components include property rights, population, housing, transportation, public services, natural resources, land use, and others that collectively guide growth and protect the public's health, safety, and welfare. The comprehensive plan therefore serves as both a vision document and a practical administrative tool, connecting community goals with policy, investment, and implementation.

The Comprehensive Plan Update Process

The City Council initiated the Comprehensive Plan Update in October 2025 to refresh Priest River's 2013 plan and ensure it reflects current conditions and future needs. Since that time, the City has completed foundational research and preliminary drafting, compiling updated data on housing, population, land use, infrastructure, and community services. Draft chapters and an updated Comprehensive Plan Map were developed and reviewed by the City Council to establish a clear framework before broader public input.

The City is now entering Phase 4: Public Engagement. This phase focuses on gathering community input through surveys, open houses, workshops, and stakeholder conversations. Residents, business owners, agencies, and youth are invited to share their perspectives on growth, housing, recreation, infrastructure, and community character. Feedback gathered during this phase will directly inform revisions to goals, policies, and the Future Land Use Map before the draft plan is finalized and presented for public hearing and adoption in 2026.

Throughout the process, City staff and partner agencies have provided technical expertise and data to ensure the plan reflects accurate information and operational realities. The Planning and Zoning Department continues to coordinate the update, facilitate public communication, and compile revisions as the document moves toward completion.



Phase 1 – Project Initiation: The update process began with City Council approval and a kickoff meeting that established project goals, roles, and a timeline for completion. This phase included creation of a project webpage and communication plan to keep the public informed throughout the process.

Phase 2 – Data Collection and Existing Conditions: City staff compiled and analyzed data on demographics, housing, land use, infrastructure, and community services. This phase also included mapping of land use and utilities and the preparation of a baseline data summary to identify trends influencing Priest River's growth and development.

Phase 3 – Preliminary Drafting: Working drafts of each comprehensive plan chapter were developed, along with a Comprehensive Plan Map. The City Council reviewed early findings and provided direction prior to the public engagement phase.

Phase 4 – Public Engagement: Community participation was central to the update process. The City conducted surveys, community open houses, and stakeholder interviews to gather input from residents, business owners, public agencies, and youth. This feedback helped shape the community vision and identified shared priorities for growth, housing, recreation, and infrastructure.

Phase 5 – Drafting and Revision: Public feedback and agency comments will be incorporated into the working draft. Goals and policies will be aligned across all components for

consistency, and the Future Land Use Map was finalized. A complete draft will then be presented to the City Council and made available for public review.

Phase 6 – Adoption: The process will conclude with a formal public hearing, City Council adoption of the updated plan by resolution, and publication of the final document. The adopted plan will establish a 20-year framework for guiding land use, infrastructure investment, and community priorities.

The various reports related to the comprehensive plan update provided to the City Council by the Planning Staff are found in Appendix E.

Looking Ahead

Completion of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan will signify a new chapter in Priest River's ongoing story. The plan will provide a unified direction for managing growth, investing in infrastructure, and protecting the city's small-town character over the next 20 years. It is intended to be a living document that is reviewed regularly, updated as conditions change, and used to guide zoning regulation changes and land use decisions.

By aligning policies, budgets, and development actions with the priorities expressed in this plan, the City of Priest River continues its commitment to responsible stewardship, transparency, and collaboration. The comprehensive plan is both a reflection of the city's heritage and a promise to its future generations to sustain the beauty, opportunity, and community spirit that define Priest River.

Notes on Photos and Images

Several photographs, landscapes, and cityscapes used throughout this document are images held in the City of Priest River's archives and were originally produced under contract by Clearwater Landscapes for City use.

Several historic photographs reproduced in this document are unattributed images displayed at Priest River City Hall or maintained as digital copies by the City. Photographer and dates are unknown unless otherwise noted.

This document also includes construction, project, and park photographs taken by City of Priest River staff in the course of routine public works, parks, and capital improvement activities and maintained in the City's records.

The remainder of the citations are found in the Bibliography in Appendix B of this plan.

Chapter 1: Property Rights

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (a) Property Rights: An analysis of provisions which may be necessary to ensure that land use policies, restrictions, conditions and fees do not violate private property rights, adversely impact property values or create unnecessary technical limitations on the use of property and analysis as prescribed under the declarations of purpose in chapter 80, title 67, Idaho Code.

Private property ownership is a foundational right and a key part of the community's identity. Protecting these rights while planning for responsible growth is central to the City's vision and required under Idaho's Local Land Use Planning Act (LLUPA), Idaho Code §67-6508 (a). Through consistent application of due process and fair procedures, Priest River seeks to ensure balanced and lawful land use decisions.

This chapter ensures that the City's policies, regulations, and actions do not violate private property rights, adversely affect property values, or create unnecessary technical limitations on the use of land. The City's goal is to uphold the rule of law, ensure due process, and maintain public confidence in the fairness of local decision-making.

Section 1 - Regulatory Framework

Idaho's Regulatory Takings Act (Idaho Code §67-8001–8004) establishes procedures for evaluating whether government actions may result in a taking of private property without due process or just compensation. The Act directs local governments to consider specific questions, commonly referred to as the Attorney General's Checklist, when evaluating new regulations or administrative actions.

The checklist provides a practical tool to ensure that regulatory or administrative actions do not result in a 'regulatory taking' or deprivation of private property, whether total or partial, permanent or temporary, in violation of state or federal constitutional protections.

Key evaluation criteria include:

- Physical Occupation – Does the regulation result in a permanent or temporary occupation of private property?
- Property Dedication – Does it require an owner to dedicate land, grant an easement, or expend funds unrelated to the project's impacts?
- Viable Use – Does it deprive the owner of all economically viable uses of the property?
- Economic Impact – Does it cause a significant reduction in property value or development potential?

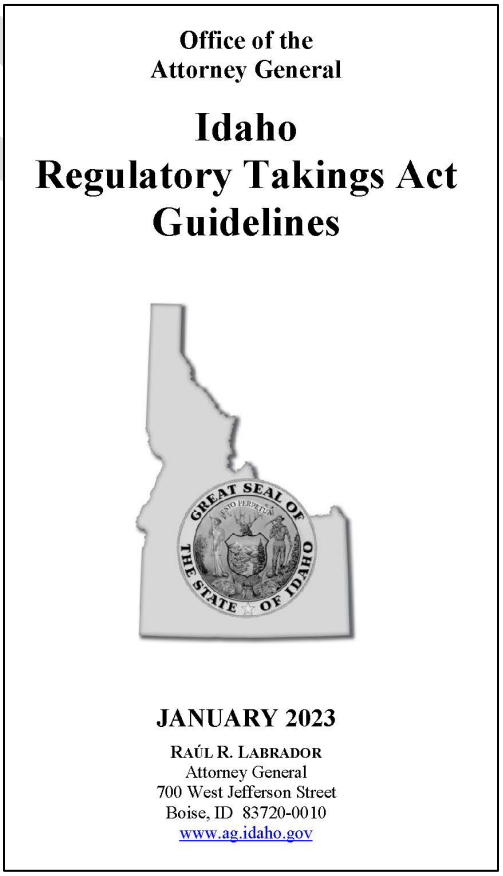


Figure 1: Labrador, R. R. (2023.). Idaho Regulatory Takings Act Guidelines. Office of the Attorney General.

- Fundamental Ownership Rights – Does it deny essential attributes of ownership, such as the right to exclude others or dispose of property?

The Idaho Legislature periodically amends these statutes to refine definitions and clarify due process procedures. The City of Priest River will continue to align its regulations and review practices with current state law.

Section 2 - Local Implementation

Priest River applies the principles of the Regulatory Takings Act through its adopted land use procedures in Priest River City Code Title 10 (Zoning Regulations). Each land use or regulatory decision includes a written reasoned statement explaining the facts, analysis, and findings that show how the decision complies with applicable state and local standards.

City staff and decision-makers use the Attorney General's checklist as a guide during code updates, comprehensive plan reviews, and quasi-judicial decisions to ensure that regulations and conditions of approval are proportional, defensible, and consistent with public health, safety, and welfare.

Idaho Code §67-6535 requires that each land use decision includes a written reasoned statement explaining the basis for the decision and demonstrating compliance with applicable provisions of the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. This requirement, reinforced through Idaho Supreme Court rulings such as *Highlands Development Corp. v. City of Boise* and *Price v. Payette County*, ensures that decisions are transparent, evidence-based, and defensible.

In Priest River, the reasoned statement serves as both a procedural safeguard and a substantive affirmation of property rights. It documents how each decision balances the rights of property owners with the public interest and provides accountability consistent with the due process standards established by the courts.

Section 3 – Goal and Policies

Goal:

Ensure that all City policies and land use decisions protect private property rights while balancing the community's long-term interests.

Policies:

1. Apply the Idaho Attorney General's checklist when reviewing regulations or actions that could affect private property.
2. Evaluate all new and amended ordinances for potential regulatory takings before adoption.
3. Prepare and adopt a written reasoned statement for every land use decision, as required by Idaho Code §67-6535, clearly explaining the factual and legal basis and how the decision complies with the applicable standards.
4. Maintain public access to information and ensure property owners are notified and heard in the decision-making process.
5. Regularly review city code and procedures to ensure consistency with Idaho Code §67-6508, §67-6535, and §67-8001 through §67-8004.

Chapter 2: Population

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (b) Population: A population analysis of past, present, and future trends in population including such characteristics as total population, age, sex, and income.

This chapter summarizes population characteristics, historical and current trends, and projected future change based on U.S. Census and other population data sources.

Section 1 – Population Overview

Priest River's population has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, reflecting the city's transition from a historic mill town to a more diversified community that attracts families, retirees, and remote workers.

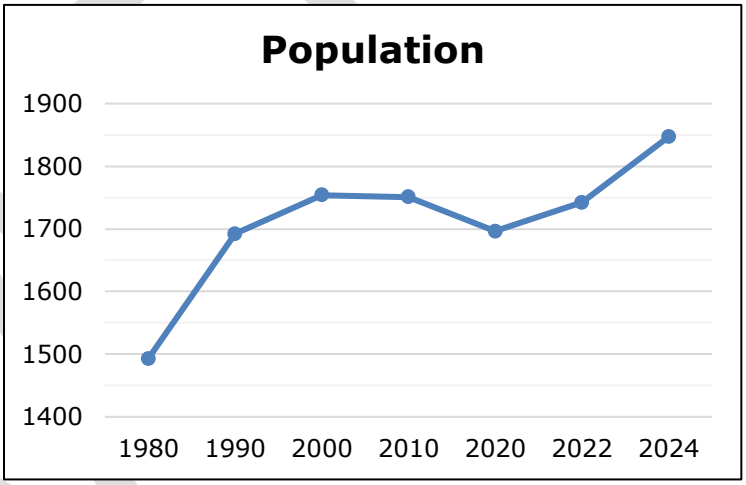


Figure 2: Population trends in Priest River, Idaho, 1980–2024
Note. Data source: Idaho Department of Labor population estimates.

While long-term growth has been modest, recent post-2020 increases align with broader trends in Bonner County, which grew 13% from 2010 to 2020. Priest River remains the third-largest incorporated city in the county, following Sandpoint and Ponderay.

The city covers approximately 2.2 square miles, resulting in a population density ranging from 750 to 900 residents per square mile. This density is significantly higher than the county's rural average of 27.2 people per square mile and reflects Priest River's role as a compact, service-oriented community.

Section 2 – Demographic Characteristics

Age Composition

Priest River's median age is in the early forties, which is older than the state average but younger than the broader county median. The community includes a balanced mix of age groups:

- Children and youth under 18
- Working-age adults in their prime employment years
- A growing number of residents aged 65 and over

This distribution shapes local needs for schools, parks, health services, transportation, and senior-friendly housing.

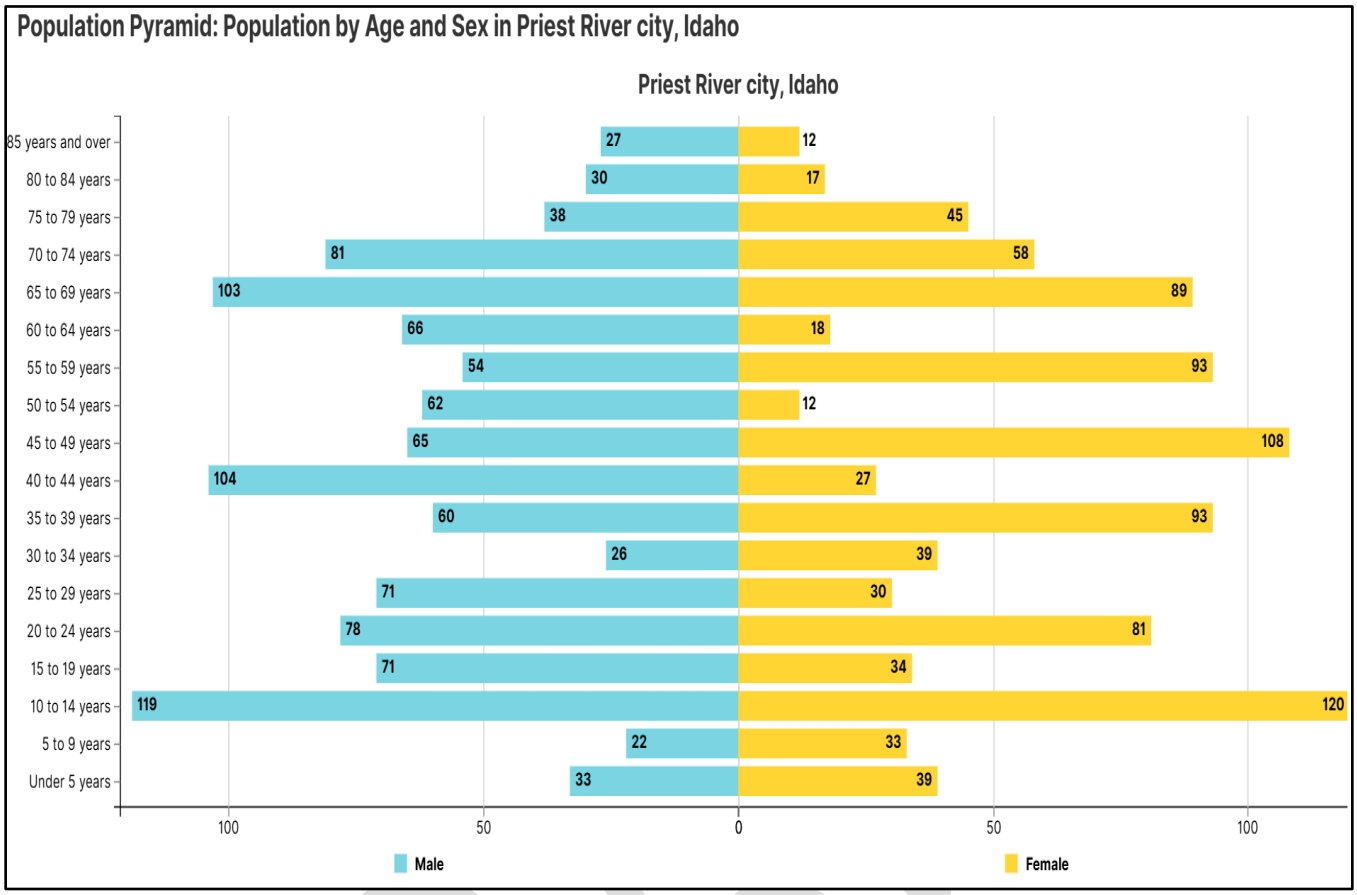


Figure 3: Population by age and sex in Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

Households and Families

Per the US Census data, the average household size in the city is approximately 3.19 people per household, slightly above the state average of 3.11. The mix of household types includes families with children, single-person households, and multi-generational households. Of the total household, married couples make up 44.4%, while a single male household is 23.4%, and a single female household is 25.8%. This diversity influences the types of housing that are most in demand, including smaller single-family homes, multi-family homes, and flexible living arrangements that support seniors aging in place.

Economic and Social Indicators

Priest River's economic profile includes a blend of local employment, regional commuting, and household incomes comparable to other rural Idaho communities.

Key demographic indicators influencing land use planning include:

- Median household annual incomes are between $33,381 and $80,536
- Poverty rates are around 14%
- Average commute times of approximately 25 minutes

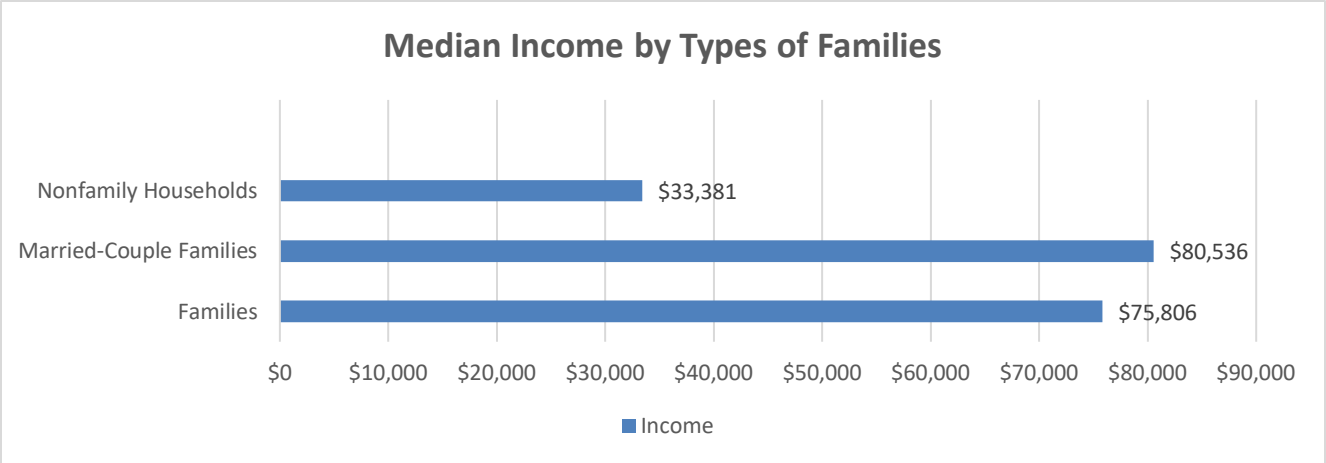


Figure 4: Median household income by family type in Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

A labor force that includes trades, service sectors, remote professionals, and cross-border commuters working in Washington. These characteristics impact housing affordability, city service needs, and the types of community facilities required to support residents.

Section 3 – Migration, Growth Trends, and Population Projections

Understanding how and why Priest River's population changes over time is essential for anticipating future needs for housing, utilities, transportation, and public services. While the city has experienced relatively stable population levels over the past several decades, recent increases reflect broader regional trends in Bonner County and North Idaho. By examining migration patterns, the factors driving local growth, and realistic long-term projections, the City can better plan for steady, manageable growth that aligns with available infrastructure and the community's desired character.

Migration Patterns

Priest River's population change is driven primarily by in-migration, consistent with Bonner County's long-term demographic trends. County data show a net migration rate of 9.6% between 2010 and 2018, while natural change (births minus deaths) was slightly negative. Priest River reflects this same dynamic: modest local birth rates combined with steady in-migration from other parts of Idaho and from out-of-state, particularly Washington, Oregon, and California.

Drivers of Local Growth

New residents are likely attracted by Priest River's small-town character, access to recreational amenities, and the availability of public water and sewer service. The community appeals to families, retirees, and remote workers alike. These trends align with Idaho Department of Labor projections for the northern region, which anticipate approximately 13% growth over the next decade.

Current Population Baseline

Based on recent Idaho Department of Labor data, Priest River's current population is estimated at approximately 1,847 residents. This estimate provides a reasonable baseline for evaluating future growth scenarios and planning for service needs, infrastructure, and land use.

Growth Scenario Projections

Using the current population estimate as a starting point, the following scenarios illustrate the city's potential long-term growth:

- Low Growth (0.5% annually): approximately 2,100 residents over 20 years
- Moderate Growth (1.0% annually): approximately 2,300 residents over 20 years
- Higher Growth (2.0% annually): approximately 2,800 residents over 20 years

These projections reflect observed migration trends, available housing supply, regional employment patterns, and the capacity of the city's water and sewer systems. Although Priest River is not expected to grow at the same pace as larger cities in the region, steady incremental growth is likely and should guide future land use planning, transportation improvements, and capital investment strategies.

Section 4 – Implications for City Planning

Priest River's population characteristics have several implications for future planning and infrastructure investment:

- **Housing:** A growing and diversifying population will require a range of housing options, including smaller single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, and housing designed for seniors.
- **Transportation:** Modest population increases will add to local traffic volumes, reinforcing the need for improved street connectivity, walkability, and safe school routes.
- **Utilities and Infrastructure:** Continued investment in water, sewer, stormwater, and street systems will be necessary to maintain service levels as growth occurs.
- **Public Safety and Services:** Population growth underscores the importance of coordination with fire, EMS, and law enforcement to ensure response times remain adequate.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Additional residents will increase demand for neighborhood parks, trails, and river access.

Planning for moderate, steady growth will help the City maintain its character while responsibly accommodating demand for services and infrastructure.

Section 5 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Plan for population growth that maintains adequate services, housing, and infrastructure for current and future residents.

Policies:

1. Maintain and review current Census, American Community Survey, and Idaho Department of Labor data to monitor population trends.
2. Encourage infill and redevelopment within areas served by existing infrastructure to promote cost-effective growth.
3. Coordinate demographic planning with housing, utilities, transportation, and capital improvement programs.
4. Support a housing mix that meets the needs of families, seniors, and individuals across income levels.
5. Monitor demographic shifts related to age, income, household size, and in-migration to support equitable access to community services.

Chapter 3: School Facilities and Transportation

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (c) School Facilities and Transportation: An analysis of public school capacity and transportation considerations associated with future development.

Public schools are essential community facilities that contribute to neighborhood stability, quality of life, and long-term community sustainability. While the City of Priest River does not operate or fund public schools, land use decisions and transportation infrastructure influence school access, traffic patterns, and long-term compatibility between school sites and surrounding development. This chapter provides an analysis of those relationships while recognizing the independent authority of the school district.

Section 1 - School District Context

The City of Priest River is served by West Bonner School District No. 83, which provides public education to students residing within the City and surrounding rural areas. The District operates multiple elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school, as well as administrative, maintenance, and transportation facilities, and is governed by an elected Board of Trustees.

WHERE GRIT MEETS GREATNESS
WEST BONNER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #83

West Bonner School District is an independent governmental entity with sole authority over educational programming, facility planning, transportation operations, attendance boundaries, and capital investments. The City does not control school operations, school funding, or facility expansion and does not have statutory authority to impose school impact fees.

Section 2 - Existing School Facilities Within City Limits

Several West Bonner School District facilities are located within the City of Priest River. These facilities represent long-standing institutional land uses that serve both city residents and the surrounding rural service area.

There are three schools located within city limits, all depicted on the map below. School facilities located within city limits include:

- Priest River Elementary School, 231 Harriet Street, Priest River, ID 83856
- Former Priest River Junior High School, 5709 Hwy 2, Priest River, ID 83856
- Priest River Lamanna Jr/Sr High School 596 ID-57, Priest River, ID 83856
- School District Offices, 134 Main St, Priest River, ID 83856
- The Bus Barn, 444 Highway 57, Priest River, ID 83856

Land uses surrounding these school facilities generally include established residential neighborhoods, public and institutional uses, and transportation corridors. Compatibility between school sites and adjacent land uses is influenced by traffic volumes, pedestrian access, building setbacks, hours of operation, and site circulation patterns.

Future land use decisions near existing school facilities should consider potential impacts related to traffic, pedestrian safety, and long-term compatibility, while recognizing that school operations and site design are governed by the School District.

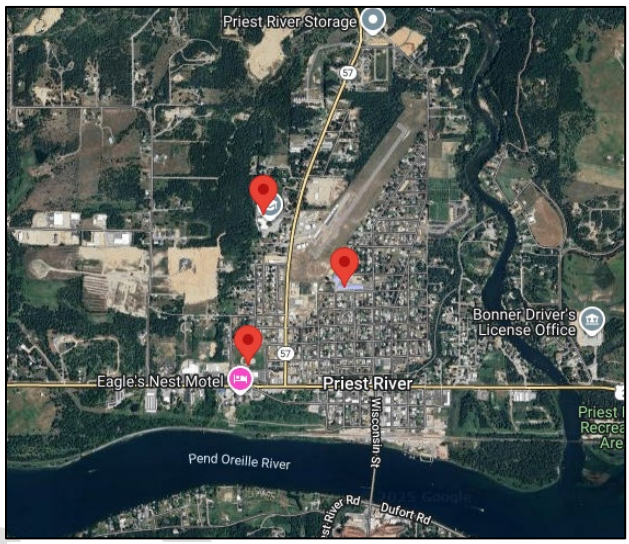


Figure 5: School locations in Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Base map imagery from Google Maps. School locations identified by the City of Priest River.

Section 3 – School Facilities Planning and Trends

West Bonner School District conducts ongoing facilities planning through its adopted Strategic Plan (2023–2028), which identifies school facilities and grounds as a core operational priority (West Bonner School District No. 83, 2023). The Strategic Plan calls for continuous evaluation of existing facilities, development of a rolling five-year facilities plan, and long-term consideration of building maintenance, repurposing aging structures, and safety improvements.

Enrollment levels and facility capacity vary by grade level and location across the District. Some facilities operate near capacity while others retain available capacity depending on enrollment distribution. Residential development within the City of Priest River has historically occurred at a modest scale and has resulted in incremental changes rather than sudden enrollment increases.

The City's role is limited to recognizing the relationship between land use patterns and potential long-term enrollment trends and providing opportunities for coordination during land use review.

Section 4 – School Transportation and Access

West Bonner School District provides student transportation services in accordance with Idaho law and the Standards for Idaho School Buses and Operations (SISBO)**.** Transportation planning and operations are identified as a strategic priority within the District's Strategic Plan, that include routing efficiency, fleet maintenance, driver staffing, and safety oversight (West Bonner School District No. 83, 2023).

Although the City does not operate school transportation services, City transportation

Figure 6: West Bonner County School District administrative office, Priest River, Idaho. *Note.* Photograph obtained via Google Maps Street View. Photographer and date unknown.

infrastructure affects school access and safety. Roadway design, traffic volumes, sidewalks, crossings, signage, and intersection configuration influence how students, families, and school buses access school sites.

The District's Strategic Plan specifically identifies the need to examine traffic management near school facilities, including bicycles, vehicles, signage, sidewalks, and bus circulation. These considerations intersect with City transportation planning and highlight the importance of coordination between the City and the School District.

Section 5 – Compatibility With Land Use and Transportation Planning

School facilities are long-term institutional land uses that benefit from compatibility with surrounding development. Residential densities, street connectivity, and transportation infrastructure all influence how effectively school sites function within the community.

Land use decisions within the City should consider proximity to existing school facilities and the potential cumulative effects of development on traffic patterns and student access. Coordination, rather than regulation, remains the primary tool available to address these considerations.

Figure 7: School bus parked in Priest River, Idaho. *Note.* Photograph from the West Bonner School District website.

Section 6 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Ensure that land use and transportation planning decisions in the City of Priest River consider existing school facilities, student transportation needs, and long-term land use compatibility while respecting the independent authority of West Bonner School District.

Policies:

1. Identify and consider the location of existing school facilities when evaluating land use policies, uses, and zoning establishment.
2. Consider existing conditions and long-term trends related to school facilities and student transportation during comprehensive planning and land use ordinance

review.

3. Provide notice of applicable land use applications to West Bonner School District for review and comment.
4. Consider school district input during land use review, recognizing that determinations regarding school capacity, facilities, and transportation remain the responsibility of the District.
5. Coordinate transportation planning efforts to support safe access to school facilities, including pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic safety considerations.

Figure 8: Our School. (n.d.). [Graphic]. Retrieved December 18, 2025, from https://lam.sd83.org/our-school

Chapter 4: Economic Development

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (d) Economic Development — An analysis of the economic base of the area including employment, industries, economies, jobs, and income levels.

This chapter evaluates previous and existing economic conditions, identifies trends, and establishes goals and policies to guide future economic development. It also considers how economic activity interacts with land use regulations and City objectives to create a balanced, sustainable economic environment.

Section 1 – Existing Conditions and Economic Base Analysis

Understanding Priest River's existing economic conditions is essential for evaluating how employment, industries, income levels, and labor force trends influence the City's long-term development. This section establishes a factual baseline of the local and regional economy by examining current workforce characteristics, major industry sectors, income patterns, and the city's relationship to surrounding employment centers.

Overview of the Local and Regional Economy

Priest River has transitioned over the past several decades from a timber-dependent mill town to a more diverse, service-oriented community. Historically, logging and wood-products manufacturing dominated the employment landscape, but technological shifts and global market changes have reduced the prominence of these sectors. Today, Priest River's economic base includes construction trades, small businesses, retail services, manufacturing, tourism-related enterprises, and an increasing number of remote workers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

While logging and wood-products manufacturing historically defined Priest River's economic identity, the structure of the forest products industry has changed significantly over time. Advances in mechanization, consolidation of facilities, and shifts in regional processing have reduced the number of logging-related jobs located within city limits. Today, forest-products employment is reflected more broadly within manufacturing and construction categories and remains part of the regional economy rather than a dominant local employment base. This evolution highlights the importance of economic diversification while recognizing the community's historic connection to the timber industry.

Priest River remains integrated with the broader Bonner County economy, where construction, information services, education and health services, and hospitality have shown significant growth over the past decade (Idaho Department of Labor, 2023). Manufacturing continues to be a competitive regional industry with higher-than-average wages and diverse employment opportunities.

Employment Characteristics

Priest River's labor force includes approximately 846 employed residents, with notable concentrations in construction, health care and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, and accommodation and food services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). These industry patterns reflect County-wide trends and highlight opportunities for diversified employment growth.

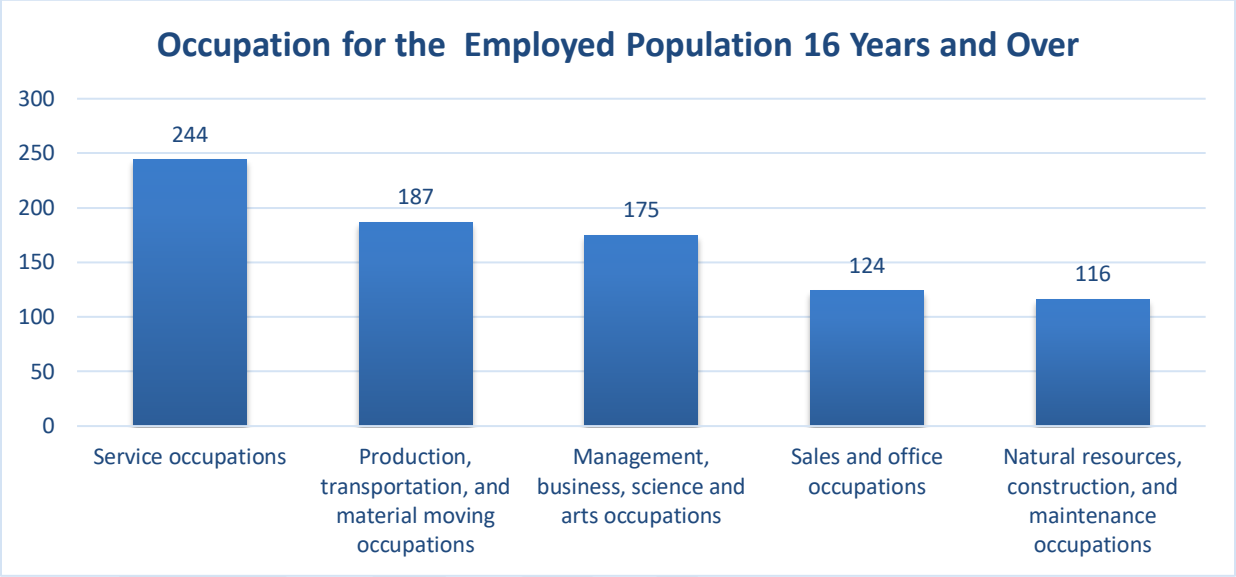


Figure 9: Occupation of the employed population age 16 and over in Priest River, Idaho. *Note.* Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

The City's commuting patterns indicate strong cross-boundary economic relationships. Priest River residents report a mean travel time of approximately 25–26 minutes, suggesting that many travel to regional employment centers such as Newport or Sandpoint (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Conversely, workers also commute into Priest River for employment in retail, trades, and small manufacturing firms.

In addition to commute distance, Census OnTheMap data provides insight into where jobs are physically located relative to where workers live. In 2022, approximately 741 workers were employed within Priest River but lived outside the City, while 493 residents of Priest River worked outside the City limits. Only 65 workers both lived and worked within Priest River. These figures indicate that Priest River functions as a regional employment center for surrounding areas while also exporting a portion of its resident workforce to nearby communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Workforce characteristics, including a balanced mix of age groups, families, and retirees, support a stable labor market, as evaluated in the Population Chapter.

Approximately 49 percent of Priest River residents participate in the labor force, with an unemployment rate of roughly 5 to 6 percent, consistent with small-city patterns in rural Idaho (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). About half of all residents are not currently in the labor force, a group that includes retirees, students, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities. These levels of participation reinforce the importance of maintaining a diverse economic base that supports both working-age households and older residents who contribute to the local economy in non-employment ways.

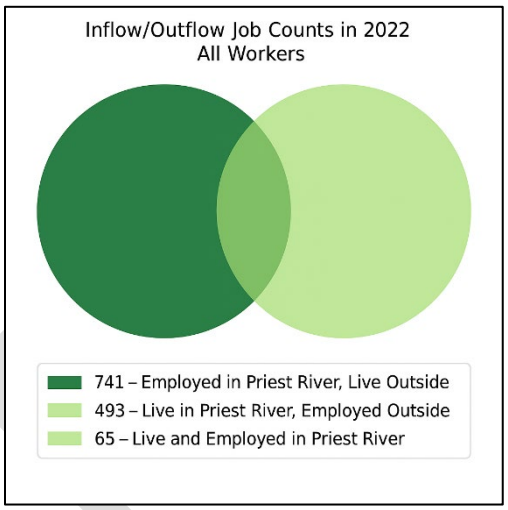


Figure 10: Inflow and outflow employment patterns for Priest River, Idaho. *Note.* Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), accessed via OnTheMap.

Income Levels

Income levels significantly shape the local economic environment. The median household income in Priest River is approximately $57,712 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Poverty rates range from 7 to 14 percent depending on the dataset year. These indicators influence consumer spending, local business vitality, and housing affordability.

As described in the Population Chapter, Priest River's income profile reflects both rural Idaho characteristics and the economic diversity of its working population. These conditions underscore the importance of expanding employment opportunities and supporting wage growth through diversified economic development.

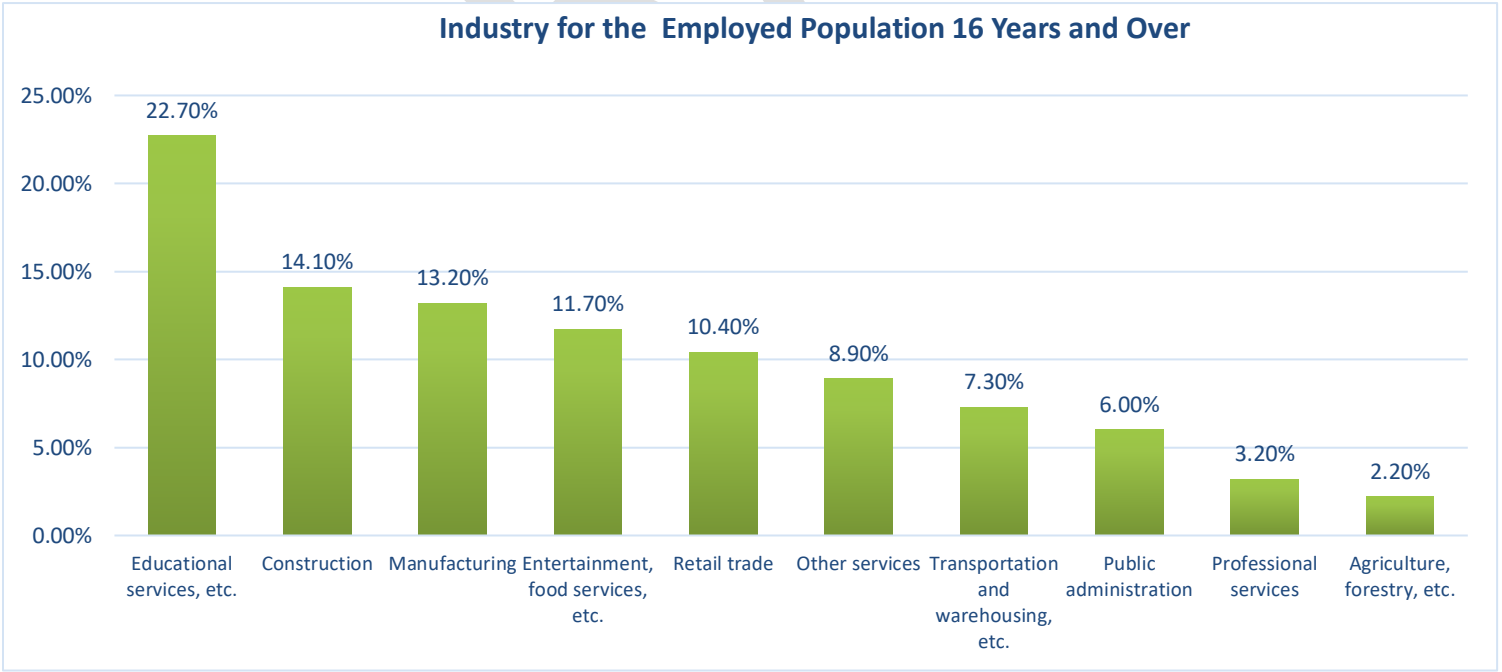


Figure 11: Industry of the employed population age 16 and over in Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2023).

Industry Sectors

Priest River and the surrounding region exhibit a wide range of economic activity, including:

- Construction: A major employer driven by regional housing demand and small-scale commercial projects.
- Manufacturing: Still significant in the county, with wood products and specialized manufacturing offering above-average wages.
- Health Care and Social Assistance: Among the largest employment sectors regionally, reflecting demographic shifts and service needs.
- Retail and Local Services: Supporting the community and visitors, concentrated along Highway 2 and downtown.
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation: Enhanced by proximity to the Pend Oreille and Priest Rivers, attracting visitors for boating, fishing, hiking, and seasonal activities.

The city's economic diversity allows for resilience, though small business and construction sectors remain particularly sensitive to broader economic cycles.

In addition to understanding the types of industries operating within Priest River, it is also important to evaluate the number of active businesses over time. Business registrations provide a clear indicator of economic activity, entrepreneurial vitality, and the community's overall commercial stability. As shown in Table 1, Priest River has maintained a consistently strong business presence over the past decade, with total registrations increasing from 119 in 2013 to 159 in 2025. While year-to-year fluctuations occur, the long-term trend reflects steady growth and resilience across a range of industries. This stability supports the conclusion that Priest River's economic base is broadening beyond its historic reliance on timber-related sectors and is increasingly driven by small businesses.

Year	Total Registered Businesses
2013	119
2014	131
2015	138
2016	144
2017	135
2018	134
2019	143
2020	148
2021	141
2022	152
2023	153
2024	152
2025	159

Table 1: Registered businesses in Priest River, Idaho

Economic Base Summary

Priest River's economic base is characterized by:

- A stable but modestly sized workforce
- Income levels consistent with rural North Idaho communities
- A reliance on regional employment centers
- Opportunities for tourism, small business development, and light industry

These conditions establish a foundation for long-term economic planning and coordinated land use decisions.

Section 2 – Economic Trends

Analyzing economic trends helps Priest River understand how the community's economic base is evolving and what conditions will shape future opportunities. Trends in population change, workforce characteristics, industry shifts, and regional market dynamics provide insight into both challenges and opportunities for local businesses and workers. By examining these indicators, the City can more effectively plan for strategic investment and ensure alignment between economic development goals and land use policy.

Population-Driven Economic Trends

As evaluated in the Population Chapter, Priest River's population has remained generally stable with recent growth driven mostly by in-migration. This demographic trend influences the local economy by:

- Increasing demand for retail and service businesses
- Attracting remote workers with stable incomes
- Supporting construction activity
- Expanding the need for health and social services

Population projections indicate that Priest River may reach 2,100 to 2,800 residents over the next 20 years depending on annual growth rates. These shifts suggest moderate increases in economic activity, particularly in housing, services, and local employment opportunities.

Employment and Industry Trends

Across Bonner County, construction, information services, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and certain manufacturing sectors have shown significant increases in employment and total wages (Idaho Department of Labor, 2023). These patterns are reflected locally and are likely to continue shaping Priest River's economic opportunities.

Workforce aging, the growth of remote work, and housing affordability trends will also influence employer recruitment and retention.

Small Business and Entrepreneurship Trends

As is common in rural Idaho communities, small businesses form the backbone of the local economy. Regional data indicate that over 80 percent of businesses in Bonner County have fewer than ten employees (Idaho Department of Labor, 2023). Local business registration records reflect this pattern as well, showing a consistently strong base of small enterprises in Priest River. Between 2013 and 2025, total registrations increased from 119 to 159 businesses, representing a 33.6 percent increase over twelve years. This steady expansion highlights both the resilience of the local business community and the City's appeal to entrepreneurs. Priest River's compact size, rural character, and access to recreation continue to support a diverse range of small ventures, including trades, food services, professional services, and home-based occupations.

Section 3 – Land Use Compatibility and Economic Development

Economic development must be compatible with existing land uses, community character, and infrastructure systems. Priest River uses zoning regulations, development standards, and long-range plans to guide the location and intensity of economic activity.

Commercial Areas

Commercial uses are primarily located along Highway 2 and downtown. These areas provide visibility, access, and utility service required for retail and service businesses. Clustering commercial uses in established corridors supports infrastructure efficiency and minimizes conflicts with residential neighborhoods.

Industrial Areas

Industrial and light-manufacturing uses are best located in areas with adequate transportation access, separation from residential zones, and sufficient utility capacity. Priest River's zoning code designates appropriate industrial areas to reduce conflicts related to noise, traffic, or emissions. These areas include Shannon Lane on the western edge of city limits and several mostly vacant properties west of downtown that abut the railroad right of way.

Downtown Revitalization

Downtown Priest River remains an important economic and community center. Reinforcing traditional building patterns, improving pedestrian amenities, and encouraging reinvestment will support small business growth, enhance community identity, and contribute to long-term economic vitality.

Home-Based and Remote Work Uses

The rise of remote work and home-based entrepreneurship creates new economic opportunities. Flexible zoning standards that allow low-impact home occupations help support household income while maintaining neighborhood character.

Section 4 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Support a diverse, resilient, and sustainable local economy that provides employment opportunities, strengthens the tax base, enhances community character, and aligns with Priest River's long-term vision.

Policies:

1. Encourage economic diversification to support employment across construction, manufacturing, health services, tourism, and small business sectors.
2. Maintain zoning that provides suitable areas for commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development.
3. Promote infill and redevelopment in areas already served by public infrastructure.
4. Support reinvestment in the downtown core to strengthen community identity and attract local businesses.
5. Encourage façade improvements, building rehabilitation, and pedestrian-oriented site design in downtown Priest River.
6. Enhance tourism opportunities by improving signage, river access, recreational amenities, and community event infrastructure.
7. Provide zoning flexibility that accommodates home occupations and small-scale entrepreneurship while protecting neighborhood character.
8. Foster a business-friendly regulatory environment through clear procedures and consistent application of land use standards.

Chapter 5: Natural Resources

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (f) Natural Resources — An analysis of the uses of rivers and other waters, forests, range, soils, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, thermal waters, beaches, watersheds, and shorelines.

The City of Priest River is shaped by the natural environment that surrounds it. The confluence of the Priest River and the Pend Oreille River influences community identity and provides ecological, cultural, and economic value. These natural resources support recreation, clean water, wildlife habitat, forest health, and overall community well-being. Because natural resource regulation is a sensitive subject in Idaho and conditions vary widely by site, this chapter emphasizes data-supported statements and avoids definitive assumptions where local data is not available.

Priest River lies within a significant watershed and wildlife corridor, meaning local land use decisions may have localized or downstream effects. This chapter provides an overview of natural resources and outlines policies that support balanced, responsible growth.

Section 1 – Water Resources

The Priest River and Pend Oreille River define the physical and ecological setting of the city. These surface waters provide recreation, habitat, and scenic value and are part of the wider Pend Oreille Basin *(U.S. Geological Survey, 2020).* Because water resource management is closely regulated in Idaho, this section uses general scientific principles supported by referenced sources.

Municipal Water Supply

The City of Priest River relies on surface water, with municipal drinking water drawn from the Pend Oreille River and treated at the city's water treatment facility before distribution. Because the drinking water system depends on surface sources, land use activities in the watershed may influence long-term water quality *(Idaho Department of Water Resources, 2025).* Protecting watershed conditions through appropriate land management could help maintain a reliable and clean municipal supply.

Surface Water

Residents and visitors use the rivers for recreation including fishing, kayaking, boating, and swimming *(USACE; EPA, 2015).* Upstream hydroelectric operations, particularly at Albeni Falls

Dam, may influence water levels and could affect shoreline conditions depending on operational schedules and hydrologic conditions.

Water Quality

Land use decisions may influence water quality *(EPA, 2015).* If best practices are not followed, ground disturbance could contribute to sediment that affects turbidity and aquatic habitat. Fertilizers, stormwater runoff, and failing septic systems may introduce nutrients that influence water quality. Removal of riparian vegetation may elevate water temperatures, potentially affecting cold-water species such as bull trout. Vegetation buffers, erosion control, and stormwater best practices could help maintain water quality.

Groundwater

Although the city does not depend on groundwater for its municipal water system, groundwater is an important regional resource, particularly for surrounding areas served by individual wells. IDWR regulates well construction, water rights, and aquifer protection *(Graham & Campbell, 1981; IDWR, 2025).* Groundwater conditions may be affected by spills, septic system failures, or reduced recharge from increased impervious surfaces.

Wetlands

The Valencia Wetlands, located within the city limits (*Valencia Wetland Mitigation Bank, 2025*) on the east side of Priest River, represent an important local example of wetland function and conservation. As a privately operated wetland mitigation bank, the site restores, enhances, and preserves wetland resources in accordance with federal Clean Water Act requirements. These wetlands provide habitat for a variety of waterfowl and wildlife, improve water quality through natural filtration processes, and offer floodwater storage that benefits downstream areas. Their presence within the city underscores the ecological diversity of Priest River and highlights the importance of protecting and managing wetland resources thoughtfully.

Figure 12: Valencia Wetland Mitigation Bank, Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Photographs from the Valencia Wetland Mitigation Bank website.

Wetlands surrounding Priest River contribute significantly to ecological health (EPA, 2015; National Wetlands Inventory, 2023). Wetlands surrounding Priest River filter pollutants, provide wildlife habitat, moderate floods, and store carbon. The Clean Water Act regulates dredging and filling activities in jurisdictional wetlands. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers administers permitting, with oversight from the Environmental Protection Agency. National Wetlands Inventory maps identify areas with

potential wetlands, and wetland delineations by qualified professionals are often necessary.

Wetlands provide critical habitat for fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals. The city can support wetland protection through development review, buffer requirements, site-specific evaluations, and public education.

Section 2 – Forest Resources

Forestlands near Priest River reflect the mixed conifer ecosystem common in North Idaho, including Douglas fir, western red cedar, hemlock, ponderosa pine, and grand fir. These forests provide scenic value, recreation opportunities, and wildlife habitat and support the region's forest products sector.

Within the city, tree canopy may help moderate stormwater runoff, reduce erosion potential, and improve community character. Preserving existing trees and incorporating native vegetation into landscaping could support long-term ecological function.

Section 3 – Soils and Farmland

Soils influence development suitability, stormwater infiltration, foundation conditions, and excavation feasibility. Common soil types include silt loams, sandy loams, and alluvial soils near waterways. Soil characteristics vary across locations, and some sites may require erosion control, stormwater design, or geotechnical review.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act helps identify potential impacts to prime and unique farmland in federally assisted projects. While the Act does not regulate private land use, crop data shows regional production of hay, wheat, oats, barley, and cultivated Christmas trees. Although agriculture is not a dominant use within city limits, soil conditions remain relevant to planning and development review.

Section 4 – Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat

Fisheries

The Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers support native and recreational fish species. Bull trout, a federally listed threatened species *(USFWS, 2017)*, rely on cold, clean, shaded waters. Other species include westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and mountain whitefish. Habitat suitability may be influenced by sediment, temperature, or changes in flow.

Wildlife

Forests, riparian areas, and open spaces may support habitat for deer, elk, moose, black

bear, waterfowl, raptors, and smaller mammals. Riparian areas may serve as seasonal movement corridors or nesting habitat depending on site conditions.

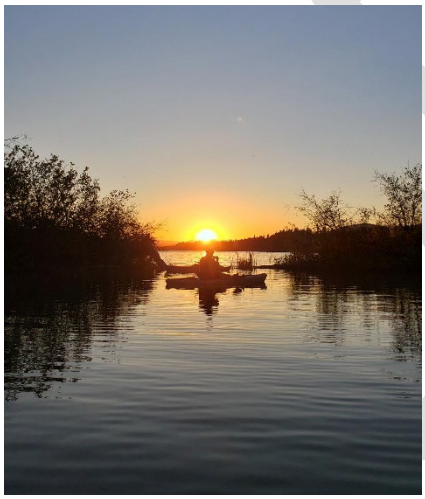
Threatened and Endangered Species

Species that may occur in the region include bull trout, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, whitebark pine, and monarch butterflies *(USFWS, 2025; IDFG, 2025).* Portions of the Pend Oreille Basin contain designated bull trout critical habitat. Such designations do not restrict private land use unless federal permitting or funding is involved, but they highlight the importance of considering potential habitat during development review.

Section 5 – Mineral and Aggregate Resources

Mineral extraction within the city is limited, but nearby sand, gravel, and rock quarries support construction, infrastructure, and road maintenance. These resources reduce transportation costs and support local development. Mining operations are regulated at the state level and require reclamation and environmental review.

Section 6 – Opportunities and Constraints



Priest River's natural features provide opportunities and considerations for future development. Forests, wetlands, rivers, and soils contribute to community character and ecological function and may support stormwater management, habitat, and recreation.

At the same time, floodplains may limit development potential in specific affected areas. Wetlands and high groundwater areas could pose construction challenges. Steep slopes may increase erosion potential. Recognizing these conditions helps support balanced land use decisions.

Section 7 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Protect and maintain Priest River's natural resources to ensure long-term environmental quality, public health, and a resilient community that reflects its rivers, forests, soils, and wildlife.

Policies:

1. Promote land use practices that help maintain clean and cold water in the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers by encouraging retention of natural shoreline vegetation, use of erosion and sediment control, and appropriate setbacks near waterways.
2. Protect delineated wetlands to the extent of the city's jurisdiction and consistent with the Clean Water Act and require site-specific delineations when appropriate.
3. Discourage new development within floodplains, steep slopes, and areas with high groundwater, and wetlands where feasible. Encourage site evaluations, wetland delineations, and geotechnical reviews when appropriate.
4. Support development practices that may reduce sedimentation, preserve riparian shading vegetation, and minimize potential impacts to fish species of concern.
5. Coordinate with IDWR, USACE, EPA, Idaho Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on development proposals that may involve wetlands, waterways, wildlife, or federal permitting requirements.
6. Make natural resource information readily available to property owners and applicants, including shoreline best practices, stormwater management guidance, wildlife-friendly design approaches, and wetland stewardship resources.

Chapter 6: Hazardous Areas

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (g) Hazardous Areas: An analysis of known hazards as may result from susceptibility to surface ruptures from faulting, ground shaking, ground failure, landslides or mudslides; avalanche hazards resulting from development in the known or probable path of snowslides and avalanches, and floodplain hazards.

This chapter provides an overview of the city's principal hazard categories, describes current conditions, and outlines planning implications to support a safe and resilient community.

Section 1 – Flood and River Hazards

Priest River's two major waterways shape the city's natural hazard profile. Flooding, bank erosion, spring runoff, and dynamic channel conditions influence development and long-term infrastructure planning.

FEMA Floodplains

FEMA-designated Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) are mapped along both the Priest River and Pend Oreille River and include Zone A and Zone AE, indicating a one-percent annual chance of flooding (FEMA, 2023). Flooding in Priest River is influenced by snowmelt-driven runoff, hydropower releases upstream on the Clark Fork River, and simultaneous high flows on all three rivers. Narrow floodplain areas limit storage capacity, increasing the potential for overbank events.

Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) ensures that residents have access to federally backed insurance, while development within SFHAs requires elevation and design standards consistent with federal regulations (FEMA, 2023). Floodplain and floodway maps, including designated boundaries, are available on the FEMA website.

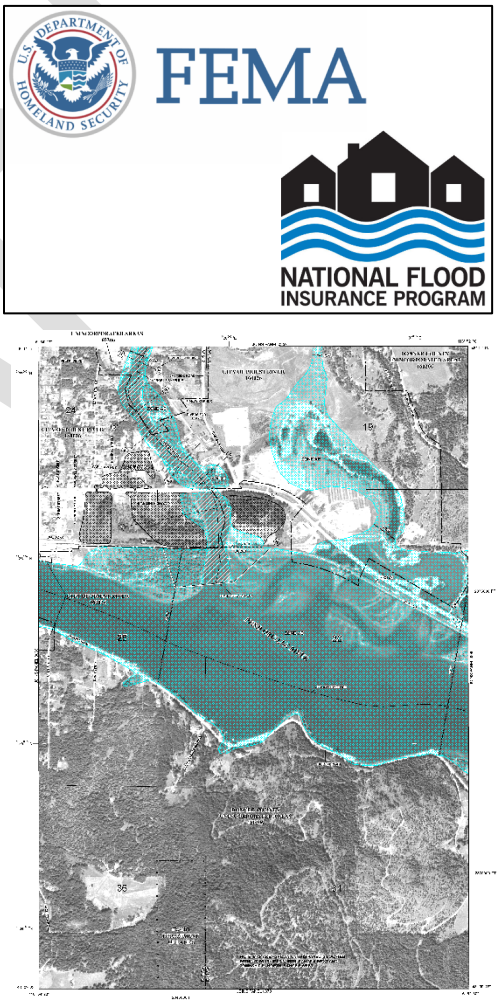


Figure 13. Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) panel for Priest River, Idaho. *Note.* Base map and flood hazard data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).

River-Related Hazards

Beyond mapped SFHAs, Priest River experiences additional risks associated with dynamic river systems.

Bank Erosion and Channel Migration:

Outer bends of the Priest River experience steady

lateral erosion, particularly during peak spring flows. Channel migration and undercutting can destabilize riverbanks, affect private property, and stress riparian vegetation (USGS, 2021).

Debris and High-Velocity Flows:
During runoff season, high-velocity flows carry logs, gravel, and sediment that can alter access points and strain bridges or docks. Rapid shifts in gravel bars and flow paths introduce variability in riverbank stability (USGS, 2021).

Recreational Hazards:
Cold water temperatures, swift currents, and sudden changes in depth create seasonal safety hazards, especially near parks and public access sites.

These factors inform the City's approach to shoreline development, riparian protection, and long-range facilities planning.

Section 2 – Geologic and Slope Hazards

Priest River contains limited but notable areas of steep slopes and is influenced by regional seismic and soil conditions. These hazards require careful attention during development review.

Slope and Erosion Hazards

Localized areas within and adjacent to the city include slopes exceeding 30 percent. Such areas are more susceptible to surface erosion, shallow slumping, and sediment delivery into waterways during heavy precipitation events (Highland & Bobrowsky, 2008). Vegetation removal increases these risks and may require erosion control plans, geotechnical studies, or engineered stabilization measures.

Seismic and Liquefaction Hazards

North Idaho is influenced by major fault systems, including the Purcell Trench Fault and Hope Fault, which extend across the inland Northwest (Harrison et al., 1972). While Priest River is not within the highest seismic hazard zone in Idaho, moderate earthquakes in the region could produce noticeable ground shaking.

Liquefaction risk is typically associated with saturated, loose soil conditions found in low-lying areas along the city's rivers (USGS, 2021). Liquefaction may cause settlement or lateral spreading, posing structural risks. Modern building codes and geotechnical evaluations help reduce potential impacts.

Section 3 – Wildland Fire Hazards

Priest River is bordered by forestlands and vegetated hillsides that form a Wildland–Urban Interface (WUI). Seasonal wildfire risks are shaped by vegetation density, steep terrain,

and prolonged summer dryness (North Idaho Fire Prevention Cooperative, 2012).

Areas surrounding the city limits contain higher concentrations of flammable vegetation. Defensible space principles, including vegetation thinning, fuel reduction, and building material standards, help reduce community vulnerability (Bonner County Emergency Management, 2020). Coordination with the West Pend Oreille Fire District strengthens prevention and response capacity.

Section 4 – Transportation and Industrial Hazards

Transportation corridors and legacy industrial uses introduce additional hazards into the built environment.

Hazardous Materials Transport

U.S. Highway 2 and the adjacent rail corridor are active freight routes that transport fuels and industrial chemicals. Although hazardous material incidents are rare, their proximity to residential areas, the school, and the rivers increases potential consequences. Emergency response coordination with state and regional partners is essential to minimize environmental and public health impacts.

Winter and Weather Hazards

Priest River experiences heavy snowfall, ice storms, and cyclical freeze–thaw events. These conditions may compromise structural integrity, reduce mobility, and create access challenges for emergency services. Winter weather hazards are particularly acute on older structures and on roads with steep grades. Maintaining snow removal capacity and resilient road surfaces is critical to public safety.

Section 5 – Brownfields and Historic Industrial Sites

Priest River contains two significant Brownfield locations that reflect its industrial past: the former Priest River Landfill and the former Joslyn Manufacturing pole-treatment site. A Brownfield is a property where the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant complicates expansion, redevelopment, or reuse (EPA, 2023). These sites can pose environmental and public health risks, but they also represent opportunities for reinvestment, recreation, and long-term community benefit when properly remediated. The City has partnered with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and local stakeholders to reclaim and manage these properties, reducing hazards and laying the groundwork for future safe and beneficial uses.

Former Priest River Landfill

The former municipal landfill is one of the most significant Brownfield sites in Priest River. From the early 1900s through 1973, the City operated the landfill on a river-adjacent parcel without modern environmental controls. Non-combustible waste was historically pushed downslope toward the Pend Oreille River, and no records exist documenting the full range of materials deposited there (Idaho DEQ, 2023).

Figure 13: Former Priest River landfill site during remediation.

In 2000, a reported mercury release from the landfill triggered an emergency response involving DEQ and EPA, launching a multi-decade remediation effort. Between 2006 and 2011, DEQ's Brownfields Program completed Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, an Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA), and risk evaluations. Cleanup in 2011 was funded by a $400,000 Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund subgrant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. During a five-week restoration period, contractors removed approximately 240,000 pounds of metal, recontoured the slope, installed erosion-control measures, and planted native vegetation.

Figure 14: Former Priest River landfill site during remediation.

Additional site assessments and monitoring occurred between 2020 and 2022, including LiDAR imaging, soil vapor sampling, groundwater monitoring, and an updated Risk Evaluation. DEQ's findings determined that the site is suitable for non-residential use, and a recorded Environmental Covenant prohibits residential uses and restricts soil disturbance in areas with residual contamination (Idaho DEQ, 2023).

In 2023, the City annexed the fully stabilized landfill property through Planning File No. 22-008 and Ordinance 629, formally bringing the remediated Brownfield into city limits. The reclaimed site now offers long-term potential for public access, open space, or compatible non-residential uses, representing one of the most significant environmental restoration achievements in the City's history.

Joslyn / Two Rivers Park (Former Wood-Preserving Site)

The second major Brownfield is the former Joslyn Manufacturing site, located at the confluence of the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers. Historically, the facility served as a large pole-treatment plant that burned approximately 22,000 creosote-treated poles per year, equating to more than 106,000 gallons of creosote annually—a process that generated substantial soil contamination in concentrated areas (Joslyn Park Master Plan, 2023). Archival aerial photographs show extensive industrial activity across both the northern and

southern parcels of the site, including log storage, treating operations, and material handling areas.

Figure 15: Historic aerial view of the former Joslyn Manufacturing wood-preserving site.
Note. Archival aerial photograph illustrating historic industrial activity prior to remediation.

As part of the eventual transfer of property to the City, Joslyn Manufacturing enrolled in DEQ's Voluntary Cleanup Program, completing environmental assessment and targeted remediation. A long-term Area of Concern (AOC) was established, capped, and recorded with an Environmental Covenant restricting excavation, prohibiting disturbance of the capped area, and limiting future residential use. These restrictions are standard for remediated industrial sites and ensure ongoing safety for users while allowing a range of permissible public uses.

In 2021, Joslyn gifted approximately 38 acres of property to the City for the creation of a public park. The City initiated stewardship efforts immediately, including a forest health assessment and fuel-reduction treatments across roughly 28.5 forested acres. The Forest Management Plan recommended hazard-tree removal, sanitation cutting to reduce insect and disease spread, and targeted hazardous-fuel treatments along the eastern portion of the site and near the railroad corridor to reduce wildfire risk and improve long-term forest resilience.

In addition to environmental mitigation, the City began a community-driven master planning process for what is now known as Two Rivers Park. Public outreach involved a steering committee, multiple workshops, and field visits to comparable regional parks. Community input emphasizes ecological restoration, wetland protection, multi-season recreation, and financial sustainability. These priorities guide the City's phased approach to future improvements.

Figure 16: Conceptual Two Rivers Park layout (December 2022).
Note. Concept plan developed by the City of Priest River as part of the Two Rivers Park master planning process.

The Joslyn site remains subject to environmental covenants and long-term monitoring requirements, and future development must adhere to DEQ-approved land-use restrictions. However, the combination of completed remediation, ongoing forest management, and strong public support positions Two Rivers Park as one of Priest River's most significant opportunities for environmental restoration, hazard reduction, and community recreation.

Section 6 – Implications for City Planning

Hazard identification supports informed land use decisions and infrastructure investments. Effective hazard planning reduces public costs and enhances long-term resilience. Key implications include:

- Directing growth away from high-risk areas.
- Ensuring NFIP compliance in floodplains.
- Incorporating geotechnical and hydrologic review into development applications.
- Supporting wildfire mitigation in WUI areas.
- Coordinating with emergency responders for transportation and winter hazards.
- Pursuing Brownfield assessment and environmental cleanup funding.

Section 7 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Enhance community safety and resilience by identifying hazardous areas and guiding development to minimize risk to life, property, and the environment.

Policies:

1. Maintain and apply current FEMA floodplain maps and require appropriate mitigation measures for development in or near designated flood hazard areas.
2. Require geotechnical, hydrologic, or engineering evaluations for projects located on steep slopes or within identified hazard zones.
3. Encourage environmental assessment and cleanup of Brownfield sites to support safe redevelopment and reduce contamination risk.
4. Integrate hazard mitigation considerations into capital improvement planning, infrastructure design, and long-range land use strategies.

Chapter 7: Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (h) Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities — An analysis showing general plans for sewage, drainage, power plant sites, utility transmission corridors, water supply, fire stations and fire fighting equipment, health and welfare facilities, libraries, solid waste disposal sites, schools, public safety facilities and related services. The plan may also show locations of civic centers and public buildings.

This chapter provides an overview of the public and quasi-public services available to residents and businesses within the City of Priest River and identifies how those services are planned, provided, and coordinated. Detailed system planning and capital needs are addressed in supporting documents, including the *Water Master Plan (2021)*, *Wastewater Facility Plan (2015)*, and the City's *Capital Improvement Plan*.

Section 1 - Existing Public Services and Service Providers

Public services in Priest River are delivered through a combination of City departments, special districts, and regional agencies. The City provides municipal water and wastewater service, local streets (with state highway coordination), police services, planning, building, code enforcement, and general public administration. Fire protection and emergency medical transport are provided through external agencies, with coordination and mutual aid when needed. Solid waste collection services are provided through a contract with Excess Disposal Services, with disposal and transfer services coordinated through Bonner County's solid waste system. Public health services are provided regionally by Panhandle Health District. Library services are provided by the West Bonner County District (Bonner County, 2025; Panhandle Health District, 2025; West Bonner County Library District, 2025).

Primary Service Providers

- Water: City of Priest River (City of Priest River, 2021a).
- Wastewater: City of Priest River (City of Priest River, 2015).
- Storm drainage: City of Priest River, coordinated with roadway projects and outfalls (City of Priest River, 2007).
- Police services: City of Priest River Police Department (City administrative records, 2025).
- Fire protection: West Pend Oreille Fire District (West Pend Oreille Fire District, 2025).
- EMS and ambulance transport: Bonner County EMS (Bonner County, 2025).
- Public health: Panhandle Health District (Panhandle Health District, 2025).

- Solid waste: Excess Disposal Services and Bonner County Solid Waste (City administrative records, 2025; Bonner County, 2025).
- Library: West Bonner Library District (West Bonner County Library District, 2025).
- Electric power: Avista Utilities (Avista Utilities, 2025).
- Natural gas: Not available within city limits (City of Priest River, 2026).
- Telecommunications: Multiple private providers (see Section 4).

Section 2 – Water Supply and Distribution

The City's water planning documents identify a system anchored by storage and pumping facilities, with distribution piping of mixed age and material. The Water Master Plan documents total distribution piping on the order of 125,090 linear feet (23.7 miles) across multiple pipe sizes and materials. It also identifies that over 11 miles of the system includes older steel and asbestos cement pipe, with a documented pattern of leak repair activity in recent years, indicating ongoing reinvestment needs in aging segments. (City of Priest River, 2021a).

Storage and Capacity

Water system capacity in Priest River is evaluated using both engineering analysis documented in the adopted Water Master Plan and operational tracking of system demand using Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs). This combined approach allows the City to manage long-term infrastructure constraints while evaluating incremental impacts from new developments.

The City's primary storage facilities include a 700,000-gallon and 440,000-gallon reservoir, which provides the bulk of system storage.

The water treatment plant is capable of producing approximately 2,100 gallons per minute, even with the largest filter or pump offline. This figure represents firm production capacity and provides an important benchmark for operational resilience and emergency conditions (City of Priest River, 2021a).

In addition to physical capacity, the City tracks water demand using ERUs to allocate system usage across connections and land use types. As of the most recent capacity tracking update, the municipal water system serves approximately 1,029 total connections. Based on adopted planning assumptions and current operating conditions, the City has an estimated 666.5 ERUs of remaining water system capacity available for future development.

While remaining ERU capacity indicates that additional connections can be accommodated, the Water Master Plan identifies system reliability, redundancy, and infrastructure condition as the primary constraints affecting long-term service availability. As a result, the practical use of remaining capacity is closely tied to implementation of planned capital improvements rather than raw production limits alone (City of Priest River, 2021a).

Planned Improvements and Capacity Implications

The Water Master Plan identified several priority capital improvements necessary to sustain and protect system capacity over time. These included replacement or rehabilitation of the existing reservoir, installation of standby power at the water treatment facility, booster station upgrades, and targeted replacement of aging distribution lines (City of Priest River, 2021a). These improvements have been substantially completed between 2022 and 2024, with additional system upgrades and line replacements continuing as part of the City's ongoing capital improvement program.

The City uses ERU tracking, capital planning, and development phasing to ensure that growth remains aligned with the system's ability to reliably deliver water while maintaining public health and fire protection standards.

Section 3 – Wastewater Collection and Treatment

The City of Priest River owns and operates a municipal wastewater collection and treatment system that serves residential, commercial, and institutional users within the city limits. The system includes gravity mains, manholes, and three primary sewage lift stations that form the backbone of the collection network.

The adopted Wastewater Facility Plan emphasizes that uninterrupted lift station operation is critical to system performance and that sustained lift station failure would likely result in sewer backups or overflows in affected service areas. Electrical reliability and emergency preparedness are therefore central considerations in wastewater system planning (City of Priest River, 2015).

Collection System Condition

The Wastewater Facility Plan identifies areas of the collection system requiring increased maintenance and rehabilitation. Approximately 6,000 feet of collection piping and 30 manholes have been identified as needing repair or replacement due to infiltration, inflow, and structural deficiencies. These conditions contribute to operational inefficiencies and increase the risk of overflows during wet weather events (City of Priest River, 2015).

These deficiencies contribute to infiltration and inflow during wet weather periods, increasing operational costs and elevating the risk of overflows when combined with power outages or lift station failures (City of Priest River, 2015).

Capacity and System Constraints

Wastewater system capacity is evaluated using both engineering analysis contained in the adopted Wastewater Facility Plan and operational tracking of system demand using Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs). This approach allows the City to assess hydraulic capacity while accounting for infrastructure condition and operational reliability.

Based on observed wet-season operating conditions, the City's lift stations operate well below firm capacity. Wet weather pumping represents approximately 5 percent of firm capacity at the James Street lift station, 17 percent at the Larch Street lift station, and 2.5 percent at the Highway 2 lift station (City of Priest River, 2015). These figures indicate that the system has adequate hydraulic capacity to accommodate existing flows and near-term growth.

As of the most recent capacity tracking update, the municipal wastewater system serves approximately 893 total connections, with an estimated 498 ERUs of remaining wastewater system capacity available for future development.

Although hydraulic capacity is sufficient, the Facility Plan identifies system condition and emergency resilience as the primary constraints affecting long-term service availability. With recent infrastructure improvements, all of the lift stations now have permanent standby power. Backup power improvements at lift stations are therefore a primary reliability measure to maintain service continuity and reduce overflow risk during extended outages (City of Priest River, 2015).

Capital Improvements and Capacity Management

The Wastewater Facility Plan provides a consolidated capital improvement program addressing collection system repairs, lift station rehabilitation, backup power, treatment process upgrades, and system controls. Between 2018 and 2023 all the identified upgrades

were completed by the City.

The City uses ERU tracking in conjunction with these planning documents to evaluate development proposals and annexation requests. Remaining ERU capacity reflects the system's ability to accommodate additional demand provided that planned reinvestment in maintenance, rehabilitation, and emergency preparedness occurs.

Section 4 – Utility Transmission Corridors and Rights-of-Way

Local Utility Corridors

Utility transmission corridors within the City of Priest River are primarily accommodated within existing public rights-of-way, including street rights-of-way, alleyways, and highway corridors. This pattern reflects the City's historic development layout and supports efficient access for construction, maintenance, and emergency repairs.

The majority of the city includes dedicated alley rights-of-way. These alleyways serve as the primary corridors for municipal sewer mains, with laterals extending from the alleys to individual homes and businesses. This configuration minimizes conflicts with surface transportation infrastructure and reduces the need for sewer mains within primary travel lanes.

Municipal water mains and service laterals are generally located within street rights-of-way throughout the city. Water infrastructure placement within street corridors allows for coordinated maintenance with roadway projects and supports consistent access for system upgrades and emergency response.

Water and wastewater transmission infrastructure is also located within state highway rights-of-way and at critical crossing points, including infrastructure located within or adjacent to the Priest River Bridge and the Pend Oreille River Bridge. These crossings represent essential system linkages and are coordinated with state and regional transportation authorities.

Electric Transmission and Substation Facilities

Electric service within the City of Priest River is provided by Avista Utilities with high voltage lines owned by Bonneville Power Administration. A power substation is located in the downtown area near the intersection of High Street and Franklin Street. High-voltage electric transmission lines are located within public rights-of-way along the Pend Oreille

River corridor, adjacent to the railroad right-of-way.

These transmission corridors support regional electric service and represent critical infrastructure that must be considered during land use decisions, redevelopment, and public works projects. Coordination with Avista Utilities is necessary to ensure adequate clearance, access, and safety when development or public improvements occur near electric transmission facilities.

National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors

Idaho Code §67-6508 requires comprehensive plans to address National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors as designated under federal law. At the time of adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, no federally designated National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors are located within the City of Priest River.

If a National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor is designated within or adjacent to the city in the future, the City will evaluate potential impacts through applicable land use review processes and coordinate with affected utility providers, state agencies, and federal authorities as required by law.

Planning and Coordination Considerations

Utility transmission corridors and rights-of-way play a critical role in the delivery of public services and utilities. The City recognizes the importance of protecting access to these corridors while balancing land use compatibility, public safety, and infrastructure efficiency.

Future ordinance updates, development review standards, and capital improvement planning should continue to emphasize:

- Use of existing rights-of-way for utility placement where feasible
- Coordination of utility installation and replacement with roadway and drainage projects
- Protection of access to critical transmission facilities
- Minimization of long-term maintenance conflicts within public rights-of-way

Section 5 – Utilities Not Operated by the City

Electric Power

Electric service within the City of Priest River is provided by Avista Utilities. Utility corridor

planning and land use coordination should maintain adequate space for electrical transmission and distribution upgrades as redevelopment and infill occur (Avista Utilities, 2025).

Natural Gas

There is no natural gas service within the City.

Telecommunications

Multiple telecommunications providers serve the City of Priest River. Fiber service is available in portions of the community through providers such as MiFiber and Ziply. Wireless service is provided by major carriers, and satellite-based services include HughesNet, Viasat, and Starlink (provider websites).

Section 6 – Transportation, Roads, and Drainage Infrastructure

Transportation infrastructure in the City of Priest River is addressed in dedicated plan components, including the Transportation Chapter and the Public Airport Facilities Chapter. This section provides a high-level overview of transportation-related public facilities as they relate to utility coordination, drainage, and long-term infrastructure management.

Street and highway rights-of-way within the city serve multiple functions. In addition to accommodating vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel, these corridors also contain water, sewer, storm drainage, electric, and telecommunications infrastructure. As a result, transportation planning and utility planning are closely linked and benefit from coordinated implementation (City of Priest River, 2024).

The City has adopted an updated Transportation Plan in 2024, which serves as the primary guiding document for evaluating roadway conditions, identifying deficiencies, and prioritizing future transportation investments (City of Priest River, 2024). Earlier capital planning efforts, including the 2007 Capital Improvement Plan, identified a range of roadway and circulation improvements. Some of the improvements outlined in that plan have since been completed, reflecting the City's ongoing reinvestment in its transportation system (City of Priest River, 2007).

Current transportation planning focuses on maintaining and improving existing infrastructure, enhancing safety, and coordinating roadway work with utility replacement and drainage improvements. Integrating transportation, utility, and drainage investments reduces long-term maintenance costs, minimizes repeated disruption of public rights-of-

way, and supports efficient system operation (City of Priest River, 2024).

Detailed transportation improvement needs, project prioritization, and cost estimates are provided in the Transportation Chapter and the adopted 2024 Transportation Plan.

Storm Drainage

Drainage needs in Priest River are closely tied to roadway corridors, outfalls, and maintenance of aging public infrastructure. Drainage planning is addressed through coordination of capital street improvements and related public works projects, as well as ongoing maintenance priorities. The City's historic capital planning documents treat circulation facilities as a major category of planned improvement and provide project level cost estimates that can be used as a baseline for updated drainage and roadway programming. (City of Priest River, 2007).

Section 7 – Emergency Services

Police Services

The City of Priest River provides law enforcement services through its own Police Department, supported by mutual aid agreements when needed. Current staffing includes a full-time police chief, a clerk, one sergeant, three full-time officers, and a part-time code enforcement officer (City of Priest River Police Department, 2025).

The Priest River Police Department is attached to City Hall and is located at 552 High St, Priest River, Idaho 83856. The Priest River Animal Impound is located at 13 Airfield Way, Priest River, Idaho 83856.

Fire Protection

Fire protection service is provided by the West Pend Oreille Fire District, with coordination and mutual aid as needed. The fire district is a separate taxing district from the City of Priest River, maintains its own budget, and assesses a separate levy. It relies heavily on volunteer firefighters. Fire protection planning is also linked to land use through water system fire flow and storage, road access, and development patterns.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification rating for the City of Priest River is Class 4, reflecting available fire suppression resources, water supply, and emergency response capabilities.

The West Pend Oreille Fire District operates four fire stations serving the City of Priest River and surrounding areas:

- Station 1: is at 61 Airfield Way, mailing address: PO Box 1267, Priest River, Idaho 83856
- Station 2: 88 Cedar St, Priest River, Idaho 83856
- Station 3: 4458 Old Priest River Rd, Oldtown, Idaho 83822
- Station 4: 26 Station Way, Priest River, Idaho 83856

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Emergency medical services and ambulance transport within the City of Priest River are provided by Bonner County Emergency Medical Services (Bonner County EMS). Bonner County EMS is a separate taxing district responsible for the coordination, funding, and oversight of emergency medical response and ambulance services throughout Bonner County.

The City of Priest River lies entirely within the Bonner County EMS service area. Bonner County EMS coordinates ambulance transport, emergency medical response standards, and service area coverage on a countywide basis. The City does not directly operate EMS facilities or employ EMS personnel but coordinates with Bonner County EMS as part of emergency response planning, incident management, and intergovernmental coordination. Bonner County EMS operates a facility at 83 Airfield Way, Priest River, Idaho 83856.

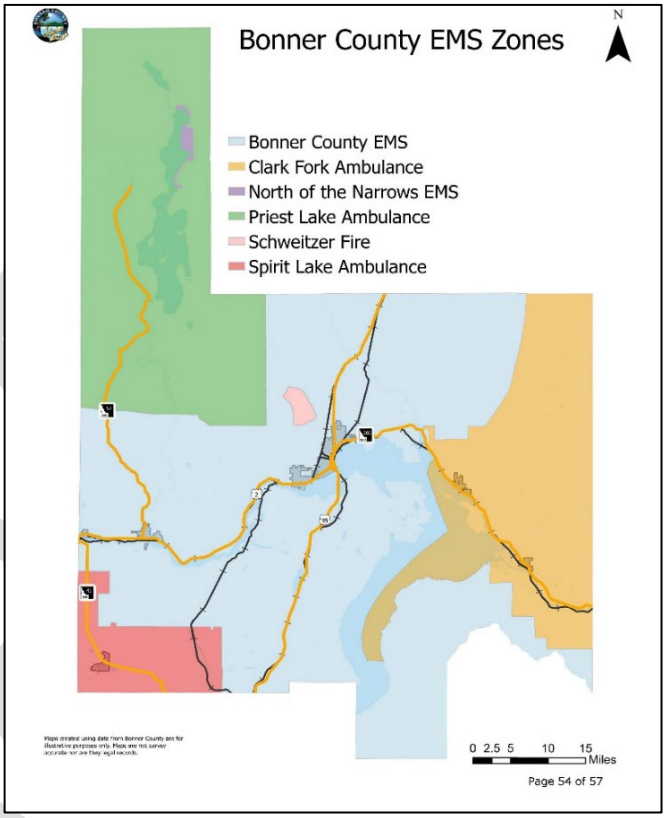


Figure 17: Bonner County EMS Coverage Areas
Note. Map illustrating Bonner County EMS service zones. Adapted from Bonner County Comprehensive Plan, Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities Component.

Figure 17 illustrates the Bonner County EMS service zones and identifies the City of Priest River's location within the countywide EMS coverage area.

Emergency Response Planning

The City maintains emergency response planning documents that support preparedness, response coordination, and continuity planning (City of Priest River, 2019). Bonner County's Emergency Operations Plan was adopted by the Bonner County Board of Commissioners on June 29, 2021, through Resolution 2021-55, and is used as the framework for intergovernmental emergency operations. The City of Priest River has adopted the county plan as its emergency operations plan (Bonner County, 2021).

Section 8 – Health and Welfare Facilities and Public Health

Public health services are provided regionally by Panhandle Health District, which administers more than forty programs addressing environmental health, community health, and public health coordination (Panhandle Health District,2025). The nearest Panhandle Health District facility is located at 2101 West Pine Street, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Reliable solid waste collection and disposal services support public health by reducing illegal dumping, and nuisance conditions in residential and commercial areas. Solid waste disposal and related services are provided to city residents through a contract with Excess Disposal Services, with waste processed through Bonner County Solid Waste. Excess Disposal Services collects waste in Priest River on Mondays and Thursdays, with modifications throughout the year for federal holidays (Bonner County, 2025).

The nearest Bonner County Solid Waste disposal sites are located at:

- Idaho Hill Site, located at 36608 Landfill Road, Oldtown, ID 83822
- Laclede Site, located at 65 N Riley Creek Rd. Laclede ID 83841

Section 9 – Public Buildings, Civic Facilities, Schools, and Library

Public Buildings and Facilities Inventory

The following inventory identifies key public buildings and utility facilities located within the City of Priest River. This inventory is provided for planning reference and does not represent a comprehensive list.

- City Hall: 552 High Street
- United States Post Office: 43 South Treat Street
- West Bonner County Library: 118 Main Street
- Department of Motor Vehicles: 75 Eastside Road
- Priest River Sheriff Substation: 75 Eastside Road
- Priest River Maintenance Facility: 15 Airfield Way
- Water Treatment Facility: 547 Montgomery Street
- Wastewater Treatment Facility: 296 Railroad Avenue

Lists of City-owned parks and school facilities are provided in the Recreation Chapter and School Facilities and Transportation Chapter, respectively.

Schools

Priest River lies entirely within the West Bonner School District. There are three schools within the city limits, as well as a bus barn and district office. More details related to the school facilities can be found in School Facilities and Transportation Chapter.

Library Services

Library services are provided by the West Bonner Library District. The library is open Monday through Saturday with varying hours of operation. The facility records more than 60,000 annual visits, has issued over 3,200 library cards, and maintains a collection exceeding 32,000 items. A new library facility was constructed at this location in the early 2020s and opened in October 2021, increasing service capacity and improving patron experience (West Bonner County Library District, 2025). The library is located at 100 Main Street in Priest River.

Section 10 – Capital Improvement Planning

The City's capital improvement planning framework functions as a bridge between long-range planning and annual budgeting. The capital improvement program is intended to be a living document reviewed during the budget process, with formal spending authorization occurring through adoption of the annual budget (City of Priest River, 2007).

Historic capital planning grouped projects into three timing categories: current fiscal year, two to five years, and five to twenty years (City of Priest River, 2007). While specific project lists and costs require updating, this framework continues to support coordinated investment in public services and utilities. This approach allows capital investments to be aligned with infrastructure capacity, service needs, and available funding over time.

Section 11 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Ensure that public services, facilities, and utilities are planned, provided, and managed in a manner that protects public health and safety, supports existing development, and allows for orderly growth consistent with available infrastructure capacity and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Policies:

1. Require proposed development, land use changes, and annexations to demonstrate the availability of adequate public services and utilities, consistent with adopted ordinances, plans, and standards.
2. Evaluate development proposals using adopted water and wastewater planning documents and utility capacity tracking, including ERU allocations, to ensure that cumulative impacts do not exceed system capacity or compromise service reliability.

3. Prioritize protection of public health and safety when reviewing development proposals in areas served by aging infrastructure, limited redundancy, or known system constraints.
4. Coordinate land use decisions with planned capital improvements to minimize infrastructure conflicts, reduce lifecycle costs, and support efficient long-term system operation.
5. Require new development to mitigate project-specific impacts to public services and utilities through on-site improvements, system upgrades, or other measures consistent with adopted codes and capital planning practices.
6. Recognize the role of independent districts, county agencies, and regional service providers in delivering public services and provide those entities opportunities to review and provide feedback on pending land use decisions.
7. Maintain flexibility in service provision and infrastructure planning to allow the City to respond to changing conditions, updated engineering analysis, and evolving regulatory requirements.
8. Use adopted infrastructure plans, utility capacity data, and service provider coordination to inform the drafting, amendment, and periodic review of land use ordinances.
9. Update development standards, design requirements, and procedural regulations as needed to ensure consistency with available utility capacity, infrastructure constraints, and documented system performance.
10. Incorporate infrastructure coordination requirements into ordinances to promote efficient extension of services, minimize conflicts within public rights-of-way, and reduce long-term maintenance and lifecycle costs.
11. Periodically review and revise ordinances governing public services and utilities to reflect changes in engineering standards, regulatory requirements, service provider capabilities, and community needs.
12. Incorporate utility transmission corridor protection and coordination requirements into development and right-of-way ordinances to ensure safe access, efficient maintenance, and long-term infrastructure reliability.
13. Ensure that ordinance updates maintain flexibility to address site-specific conditions while providing clear and predictable standards for applicants, staff, and decision-makers.
14. Coordinate ordinance development with the capital improvement planning process to support orderly growth and avoid creating regulatory expectations that exceed the City's ability to provide or maintain infrastructure.

Chapter 8: Transportation

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (i) Transportation — An analysis, prepared in coordination with the local jurisdiction(s) having authority over the public highways and streets, showing the general locations and widths of a system of major traffic thoroughfares and other traffic ways, and of streets and the recommended treatment thereof. This component may also make recommendations on building line setbacks, control of access, street naming and numbering, and a proposed system of public or other transit lines and related facilities including rights-of-way, terminals, future corridors, viaducts and grade separations. The component may also include port, harbor and other related transportation facilities.

This chapter provides an analysis of transportation facilities in Priest River that connect neighborhoods, support local businesses, and facilitate regional travel. It examines existing roadway and multimodal systems, summarizes recent infrastructure investments, identifies transportation needs related to safety, connectivity, and access, and establishes a goal and policies to guide future transportation planning decisions in coordination with state and other stakeholders (City of Priest River, 2024). Transportation planning is addressed in greater detail in the City's adopted *Transportation Plan (2024)*, which provides project-level analysis and implementation guidance.

Section 1 – Existing Conditions and Transportation System Overview

Priest River's transportation system functions primarily as a connector and service network rather than a high-capacity commuter system. City streets support regional travel, local access, freight movement, and downtown activity, with infrastructure investments historically focused on safety, maintenance, and system preservation rather than congestion mitigation (City of Priest River, 2024).

Regional Setting

Priest River is served by U.S. Highway 2 and State Highway 57, which provide regional connections to Newport, Priest Lake, Sandpoint, and surrounding rural areas. U.S. Highway 2 also serves as the principal east–west corridor through town, accommodating local traffic, commercial access, and freight movement (City of Priest River, 2024). These highways form the backbone of the city's transportation system and significantly influence local circulation patterns.

The city is not currently served by a public transit provider. Regional transit services do not operate within city limits, and daily mobility is primarily accommodated through private vehicles, walking, and bicycling (City of Priest River, 2024).

Local Street Network

The local street network consists of a traditional grid in the historic downtown and more curvilinear residential streets in surrounding neighborhoods. Collector streets distribute traffic between neighborhoods, employment areas, and the state highway system (City of Priest River, 2024).

Traffic volumes on local streets generally reflect the city's role as a service and employment center for the surrounding area rather than localized congestion. As documented in the Transportation Plan, the system generally functions as intended but is constrained in places by aging infrastructure, limited right-of-way, and drainage deficiencies (City of Priest River, 2024).

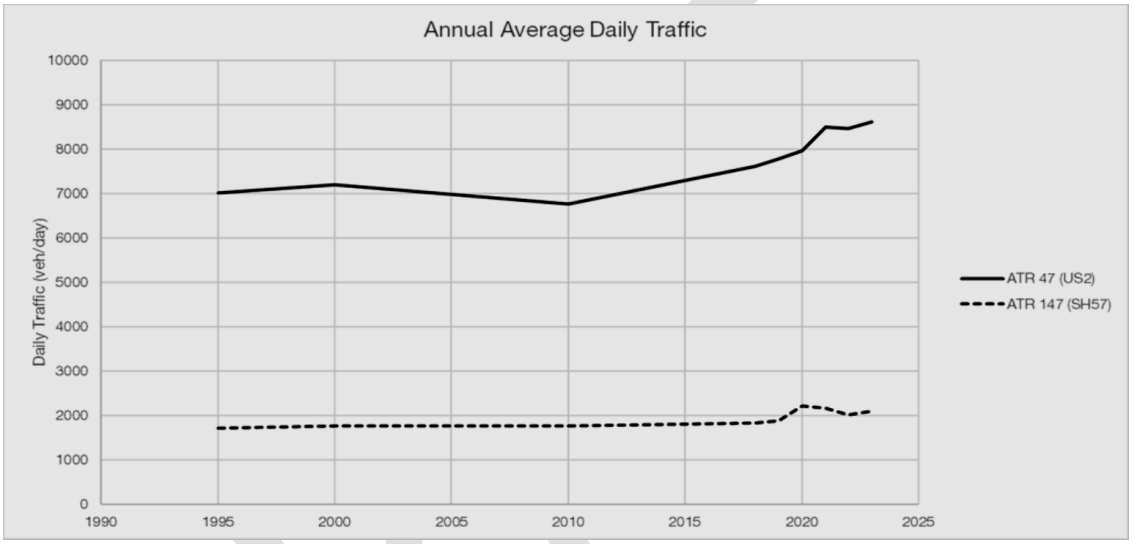


Figure 18: Annual average daily traffic on U.S. Highway 2 and State Highway 57 in Priest River, Idaho. *Source:* City of Priest River Transportation Plan (2024).

Historic Downtown Conditions and Infrastructure Investment

Prior to recent reinvestment, downtown streets experienced significant deterioration, including uneven sidewalks, substandard ADA access, inadequate lighting, failing pavement, and chronic stormwater issues (City of Priest River, 2016; City of Priest River, 2017). Structures in several locations were positioned above surrounding pavement grades, leading to ponding, winter icing, and pedestrian safety hazards (Idaho Department of Commerce, 2017).

Through grant-funded revitalization projects, the City reconstructed several downtown blocks, replacing roadways, sidewalks, curbs,

and drainage infrastructure while adding ADA-compliant crossings, pedestrian-scale lighting, and streetscape improvements. These investments addressed documented deficiencies and restored the basic function and safety of downtown transportation facilities (City of Priest River, 2017).

Capital Improvement Planning and Circulation

Transportation improvements in Priest River have been guided not only by planning efforts but also by long-range capital planning. The City's 2007 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) included a dedicated Circulation chapter that identified roadway function, connectivity needs, and phased investment priorities intended to support growth, safety, and system preservation (City of Priest River, 2007).

While many of the specific projects and cost estimates identified in the 2007 CIP have since been implemented, amended, or superseded by later plans and grant-funded improvements, the circulation principles established in the document remain relevant. The CIP emphasized aligning transportation investments with land use patterns, prioritizing maintenance of existing streets, improving safety at key intersections, and coordinating transportation improvements with available funding. These principles continue to inform how the City approaches roadway reconstruction, downtown infrastructure upgrades, and long-term transportation planning.

Maintenance Responsibilities and Coordination

Maintenance responsibilities for U.S. 2 and SH-57 are shared between the City and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). The 2001 Cooperative Agreement outlines duties for snow removal, sweeping, culvert care, stormwater system upkeep, and traffic control device maintenance (Idaho Transportation Department & City of Priest River, 2001).

In general, ITD maintains highway pavement, striping, traffic control devices, culverts, and sweeping activities. The City maintains sidewalks, curbs, certain stormwater components, roadside vegetation, pedestrian lighting, and city utility features. The City and ITD coordinate on access permits, safety improvements, and modifications that may affect the operation of the state highway system.

Collectively, these conditions illustrate a transportation system that functions primarily as a connector and service network rather than a high-capacity commuter system. The street network supports regional travel, local access, freight movement, and downtown activity, with infrastructure investments focused on safety, maintenance, and multimodal

accommodation rather than congestion mitigation.

Section 2 – Multimodal Transportation

Multimodal transportation in Priest River is primarily local in nature and supports short trips, downtown circulation, and neighborhood connectivity rather than regional travel (City of Priest River, 2024).

Multimodal Access and Downtown Circulation

Transportation in Priest River supports multiple modes of travel within the downtown area through a network of streets, sidewalks, parking areas, and pedestrian connections. These elements collectively support walking, bicycling, and vehicle access associated with downtown businesses, civic spaces, and community events. While no transit services operate within the city, this integrated system facilitates local circulation and access within the downtown core (City of Priest River, 2013).

Pedestrian Network

Sidewalk infrastructure is concentrated in the downtown core and nearby residential areas. Recent downtown improvements substantially enhanced pedestrian safety and accessibility by replacing damaged sidewalks, installing ADA-compliant curb ramps, improving lighting, and enhancing crosswalk visibility (City of Priest River, 2017; Idaho Department of Commerce, 2017).

Outside the downtown core, sidewalk coverage is more limited and often discontinuous. The Transportation Plan identifies opportunities to incrementally expand and repair sidewalks where feasible, particularly along collector streets and near community destinations (City of Priest River, 2024).

Bicycle Network

Priest River does not currently have dedicated on-street bicycle lanes. Bicycle travel occurs primarily in shared roadway environments, where narrow shoulders and traffic conditions can limit comfort (City of Priest River, 2024). Given the city's size and development pattern, bicycle use is most viable for short trips and recreational travel.

Future bicycle improvements are anticipated to be incremental and integrated into roadway

reconstruction projects where right-of-way and funding allow (City of Priest River, 2024).

Section 3 – Roadway Network Analysis

Evaluating roadway performance helps the City identify safety needs, connectivity gaps, and long-term improvement priorities. This section reviews traffic conditions, downtown safety concerns, access management, and future network needs.

Traffic and Safety

Traffic volumes on U.S. Highway 2 and local collectors reflect Priest River's role as a regional service center rather than a congested urban corridor (City of Priest River, 2024). Safety concerns are generally associated with roadway conditions, drainage, lighting, and pedestrian accommodation rather than capacity constraints.

Downtown reconstruction projects addressed several long-standing safety issues by correcting drainage deficiencies, improving pavement condition, enhancing pedestrian crossings, and reducing winter icing hazards (City of Priest River, 2017; Idaho Department of Commerce, 2017).

Commuting Patterns, Connectivity, and Access Management

Commuting patterns influence daily transportation demand within Priest River and help explain how the local street network functions. Census OnTheMap data indicate that Priest River hosts more jobs than resident workers, with approximately 741 workers commuting into the city for employment, while only 65 residents both live and work locally. At the same time, approximately 493 Priest River residents commute outside the city for work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Figure 19: Inflow and outflow employment patterns for Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), accessed via OnTheMap (2022).

This pattern is typical for small cities that serve as employment and service centers for surrounding rural areas. Inbound commuting contributes to daytime traffic volumes, downtown activity, and demand for parking and pedestrian facilities, while outbound commuting reflects regional labor market integration. These conditions do not indicate a transportation deficiency but provide context for observed travel patterns and reinforce the importance of maintaining safe, functional streets that accommodate a mix of local, regional, and service-related trips (City of Priest River, 2024).

Street connectivity plays an important role in managing this demand. The street grid provides relatively good connectivity for local circulation and access to businesses and civic destinations. Connectivity decreases in some outlying areas due to topography, historic subdivision patterns, and limited right-of-way, which can constrain routing options and emergency access. Future development within the Area of Impact and other future annexed properties present opportunities to improve collector connectivity and better distribute traffic across the network (City of Priest River, 2024).

Access Management

Access to U.S. Highway 2 and State Highway 57 is regulated through the Idaho Transportation Department's encroachment permitting process under an adopted cooperative agreement between the City and ITD. This coordinated approach to access management helps reduce conflict points, maintain roadway efficiency, and ensure that redevelopment and infill along these corridors do not compromise highway safety or long-term system performance. Together, commuting patterns, connectivity, and access management highlight the importance of continued coordination between land use decisions and transportation system operations (Idaho Transportation Department & City of Priest River, 2001).

Infrastructure Constraints and System Shortfalls

The Transportation Plan identifies several ongoing constraints affecting system performance, including aging pavement, limited right-of-way, and inadequate stormwater infrastructure (City of Priest River, 2024). Drainage deficiencies remain a recurring issue, contributing to pavement deterioration, standing water, and winter safety concerns on both local streets and state highway segments within the city.

Addressing stormwater infrastructure is a critical component of future transportation improvements, as drainage conditions directly affect roadway longevity, safety, and maintenance costs (City of Priest River, 2024).

Future Needs

Future transportation needs in Priest River are focused on system preservation, safety, and incremental enhancement rather than significant expansion. Key needs include continued roadway and sidewalk rehabilitation, stormwater and drainage improvements integrated with roadway reconstruction, targeted pedestrian safety enhancements, incremental bicycle accommodations where feasible, downtown parking management, freight and service vehicle turning considerations, and planned collector connectivity in future development areas (City of Priest River, 2024; City of Priest River, 2007).

Section 4 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Maintain a safe, accessible, and efficient transportation system that enhances mobility for residents and visitors, supports economic development, and coordinates effectively with regional partners while preserving Priest River's small-town character.

Policies:

1. Improve safety and mobility along U.S. 2 through ongoing coordination with ITD.
2. Enhance intersection performance and collector street connectivity to support local circulation.
3. Expand sidewalk networks and improve pedestrian crossings, particularly near schools and commercial areas.
4. Support continued reinvestment in the downtown street network, building on recent revitalization projects that improved pedestrian access, drainage, and safety.
5. Identify opportunities for bicycle facilities and routes that improve connectivity.
6. Require new development to construct or upgrade streets, sidewalks, and access improvements proportional to project impacts.
7. Support access management practices that reduce conflict points along commercial corridors.
8. Plan future roadway corridors in the Area of Impact to maintain efficient regional connections.
9. Consider truck circulation needs in roadway design and development review.
10. Maintain awareness of rail access opportunities for local industry.
11. Coordinate improvements and maintenance responsibilities with ITD in accordance with adopted cooperative agreements and applicable regulations.
12. Maintain functional street classifications that align with long-term growth and transportation demands.

Chapter 9: Recreation

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (j) Recreation — An analysis showing a system of recreation areas, including parks, parkways, trailways, river bank greenbelts, beaches, playgrounds, and other recreation areas and programs.

Recreation planning under the Local Land Use Planning Act is intended to consider existing conditions, trends, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and desirable future conditions.

This chapter provides an analysis of recreation resources within the City of Priest River, including city-owned parks, recreation facilities owned or operated by other jurisdictions within city limits, river access areas, trails, and planned recreation investments. The chapter documents existing conditions, summarizes long-range planning efforts related to recreation, and establishes goals and policies to guide future recreation planning and land use decisions in a manner consistent with community character and fiscal capacity (City of Priest River, 2007).

Section 1 – Existing Conditions and Recreation System Overview

Recreation in Priest River is closely tied to the City's riverfront setting, compact development pattern, and surrounding natural environment. Unlike larger communities with extensive park systems and dedicated recreation departments, Priest River's recreation system has historically consisted of a limited number of city parks, river access points, and facilities owned or operated by other public agencies (City of Priest River, 2013).

Recreation resources serve both residents and visitors and contribute to quality of life, community identity, and downtown activity. Many recreational opportunities used by Priest River residents are regional in nature and are located outside city limits on lands managed by Bonner County, the State of Idaho, or federal agencies. Within city limits, the City's role has traditionally focused on land use regulation, maintenance of city-owned parks, and coordination with partner agencies rather than operation of a large or comprehensive park system (Bonner County, 2022).

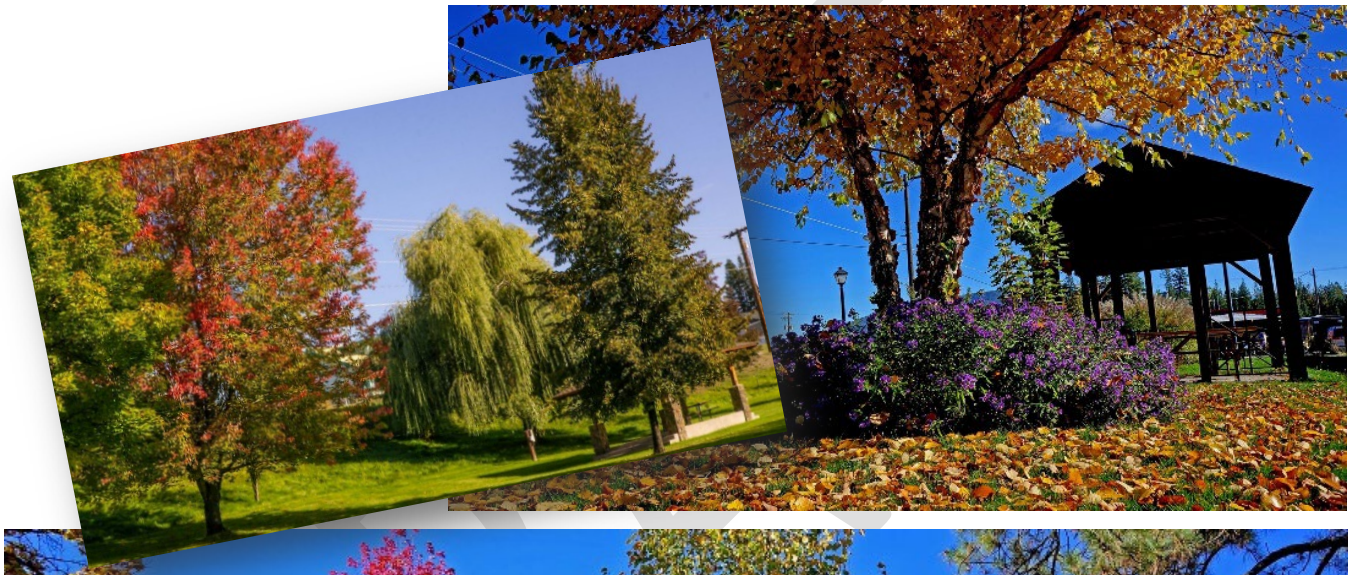
Recent planning efforts, property acquisition, and public-private partnerships reflect a shift toward a more intentional and long-term approach to recreation planning, particularly along the riverfront.

Section 2 – Parks and Recreation Facilities Inventory

Current City Parks and Recreation Areas

The City of Priest River owns and maintains a small number of parks and recreation spaces. These facilities primarily support passive recreation, informal gathering, and community events (City of Priest River, 2013).

- **City Park**, 235 High Street, Priest River, Idaho 83856
  An approximately 3.2-acre park with 18 parking spaces, bathrooms, playground equipment, a pavilion, a walking path, and a gazebo.



- **Dan Eskelson Memorial Park**, 522 High Street, Priest River, Idaho 83856
  A 0.15-acre pocket park in downtown with a path, benches, and trees.

- **Memorial Park**, 616 High Street, Priest River, Idaho 83856
  A 0.15-acre pocket park near downtown, used to remember influential members of the Priest River community.

- **4-H Park**, 69 Fourth Street, Priest River, Idaho 83856
  A 1.75-acres property that contains the senior center, a basketball court, two tennis courts, a skate park, and a pavilion.

Figure 20: Aerial view of 4-H Park in Priest River, Idaho.
Note. Base imagery and spatial data from Bonner County GIS.

- **Two Rivers Park**, Railroad Avenue, Priest River, Idaho 83856
  This 38-acre property was donated to the city to be used as a park and does not contain any major improvements yet. See Section 4 in this chapter for more details.

These facilities support day-to-day recreational use by residents and visitors and contribute to the City's overall quality of life. The inventory reflects existing conditions and may be updated over time as facilities are improved, expanded, or added.

Bonner Park West

Bonner Park West is located within the city limits and near the confluence of the Priest River and the Pend Oreille River. The park is owned and operated by Bonner County and functions as a day-use recreation area. Facilities include a boat launch, parking for both vehicles and boat trailers, swimming area, bathrooms, picnic tables, and associated river access amenities (Bonner County, 2022).

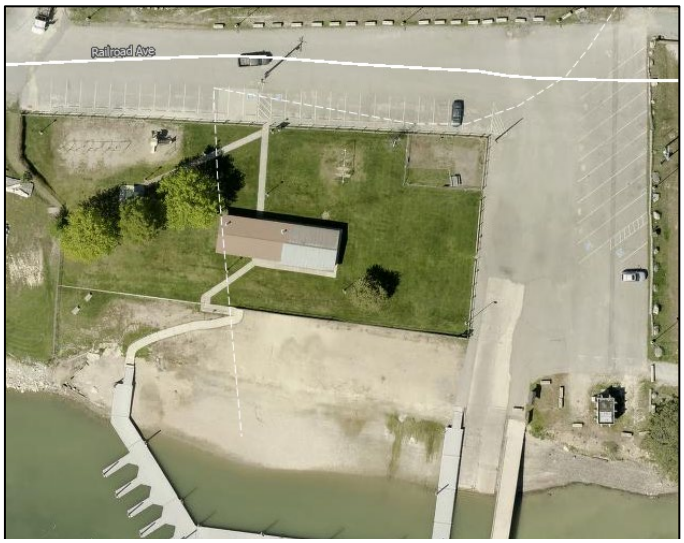


Figure 21: Aerial view of Bonner Park West.
Note. Base imagery and spatial data from Bonner County GIS.

Although Bonner Park West is included in Bonner County's Comprehensive Plan and managed by the County, the City of Priest

River retains land use jurisdiction over the property. Coordination between the City and Bonner County is important to ensure compatibility between park operations, surrounding land uses, shoreline conditions, and future development within the City.

Section 3 – Capital Improvement Planning and Recreation Investment

Recreation planning in Priest River has been influenced by long-range capital planning efforts, most notably the City's 2007 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP includes a dedicated Parks chapter that evaluated existing park facilities, identified deficiencies in recreational infrastructure, and outlined long-term priorities for park development and maintenance (City of Priest River, 2007).

The Parks chapter of the CIP emphasized several themes that remain relevant today. These included the limited size and distribution of developed city parks, the importance of river access as a defining recreational asset, the need for improved maintenance and infrastructure in existing parks, and the long-term financial implications of expanding recreation facilities (City of Priest River, 2007). The CIP also recognized that future park development would likely require phased implementation and external funding sources due to the City's limited fiscal capacity.

While many of the specific cost estimates and project concepts identified in the 2007 CIP have been superseded by later planning efforts, the underlying principles remain consistent with current recreation planning. These principles include aligning recreation investments with community needs, prioritizing maintenance of existing assets, leveraging partnerships and grants, and carefully evaluating long-term operational costs before committing to new facilities (City of Priest River, 2007).

The City's current approach to recreation planning, including development of Two Rivers Park, reflects the evolution of these earlier concepts on a larger scale and with greater emphasis on environmental remediation, public access, and financial sustainability.

Section 4 – Two Rivers Park (Joslyn Park)

Background and History

Two Rivers Park, also referred to as Joslyn Park, is a major riverfront property located at the confluence of the Priest River and the Pend Oreille River. The site encompasses approximately 38 acres and represents the largest planned park investment in the City's history (City of Priest River, 2023).

The property was historically used for industrial purposes and was later remediated through environmental cleanup efforts conducted in coordination with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Following remediation, the property was donated to the City with recorded restrictions limiting future

use to public park and open space purposes (City of Priest River, 2023). For more details related to the mediation, see the Hazardous Areas Chapter.

The City initiated a public planning process that included formation of a community steering committee, public outreach, and preparation of a conceptual master plan. This process emphasized river access, environmental stewardship, community gathering spaces, and long-term financial sustainability (City of Priest River, 2023).

Planning Status and Public-Private Partnership

The City is currently advancing Two Rivers Park through a public-private partnership with Stancraft Boat Company. A lease agreement has been executed, and the project is partway through a six-month due diligence period. Planning, environmental review, and financing strategies are being developed concurrently (City of Priest River, 2023).

Figure 22: Conceptual Two Rivers Park layout for (December 2022).
Note. Concept plan developed by the City of Priest River as part of the Two Rivers Park master planning process.

At the time of adoption of this comprehensive plan, final design details, amenity selection, and phasing schedules are still being refined. This chapter establishes the City's policy direction for the site while allowing flexibility for future implementation decisions to be

incorporated through subsequent planning actions and capital planning processes.

Future Development Considerations

Two Rivers Park is envisioned as a multi-use recreation area that balances natural open space, river access, community gathering areas, and revenue-generating uses to support long-term operations and maintenance. Anticipated elements may include, but are not limited to: a public marina, trails, river access features, open fields, event spaces, RV park, and supporting infrastructure, subject to environmental constraints and funding availability (City of Priest River, 2023).

Section 5 – Trails, River Access, and Natural Recreation

The Priest River and Pend Oreille River corridors are central to recreation opportunities within the City. These waterways support swimming, fishing, boating, paddling, and shoreline recreation and serve as defining features of Priest River's community character (Bonner County, 2022).

Trail opportunities within the City are currently limited and largely informal but are expected to expand incrementally, particularly within Two Rivers Park. Trail planning will emphasize accessibility, environmental protection, and connectivity between recreation areas, downtown, and adjacent neighborhoods while recognizing floodplain and shoreline constraints (City of Priest River, 2023).

Section 6 – Recreation Programs, Partnerships, and Coordination

Recreation in Priest River relies somewhat on partnerships with other public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities. These partnerships have been critical to advancing environmental remediation, master planning, and funding strategies associated with Two Rivers Park (City of Priest River, 2023).

The City will continue to coordinate with Bonner County, state and federal agencies, nonprofit partners, and private entities to expand recreation opportunities while ensuring regulatory compliance, fiscal responsibility, and public access.

Parks and Tree Commission

The City of Priest River has established a Parks and Tree Commission to advise the City Council on matters related to parks, recreation facilities, and the management of public trees and landscaped areas. The Commission serves in an advisory capacity and provides input on park planning, maintenance priorities, and long-range recreation initiatives (City of Priest River, 2025).

The existence of the Parks and Tree Commission reflects the City's commitment to

community involvement in recreation planning and provides a forum for public input on park-related issues. The Commission's role complements the City's land use authority and capital planning processes by offering recommendations that inform policy decisions without supplanting the authority of the City Council or Planning Commission.

Section 7 – Recreation Needs, Constraints, and Opportunities

Recreation planning in Priest River must account for environmental conditions along riverfront properties, long-term maintenance obligations, and limited municipal resources. At the same time, opportunities exist to expand public access to riverfront areas, improve connectivity between recreation spaces, and enhance community gathering opportunities through phased implementation and partnerships (City of Priest River, 2007; City of Priest River, 2023).

Section 8 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Support a connected, accessible, and sustainable recreation system that enhances quality of life, preserves riverfront resources, and reflects Priest River's community character.

Policies:

1. Support phased planning and development of Two Rivers Park, consistent with adopted master planning efforts.
2. Protect and enhance public access to the Priest River and Pend Oreille River while preserving environmental resources.
3. Coordinate with Bonner County regarding recreation facilities within city limits, including Bonner Park West.
4. Encourage recreation development that is compatible with surrounding land uses and community character.
5. Promote accessible and inclusive design in parks, trails, and recreation facilities.
6. Support partnerships and funding strategies that contribute to long-term financial sustainability.
7. Consider recreation impacts and opportunities when reviewing land use decisions affecting riverfront and open space areas.
8. Maintain flexibility in recreation planning to adapt to changing community needs and future opportunities.

Chapter 10: Special Areas or Sites

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (k) Special Areas or Sites: An analysis of areas, sites, or structures of historical, archeological, architectural, ecological, wildlife, or scenic significance.

Located at the confluence of the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers, the City of Priest River is surrounded by mountains, forest, and water that have shaped settlement, commerce, and recreation for more than a century.

This chapter identifies the city's most notable scenic, historical, ecological, and cultural features and outlines related goals and policies.

Section 1 – Scenic Significance

Priest River's setting is one of the community's most defining assets. The rivers, forested slopes, and valley vistas provide scenic backdrops that attract visitors and strengthen residents' connection.

Scenic Corridors

Two primary approaches frame the city's visual experience: U.S. Highway 2, the "*Panhandle Historic Rivers Passage Scenic Byway"*, and State Highway 57 leading toward Priest Lake. Both corridors reveal views of the Pend Oreille River, surrounding foothills, and downtown's historic streetscape. These routes serve as the city's gateways and should remain visually open and well-maintained.

Riverfront Views

The confluence of the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers offers exceptional views and recreational opportunities. Development along these shorelines should maintain public access where feasible, preserve riparian vegetation, and protect view corridors through site-sensitive design.

Community Character and Design

Scenic quality extends beyond natural landscapes. Building form, signage, lighting, and landscaping influence how residents and visitors experience Priest River. The city encourages compatible scale, and pedestrian-oriented design to maintain visual harmony between the built and natural environments.

Section 2 – Historical Significance

Priest River's history is rooted in timber, transportation, and community resilience. The

downtown area, recognized as a historic district, reflects early-20th-century prosperity when sawmills, merchants, and railroads defined local life.

Downtown Historic District

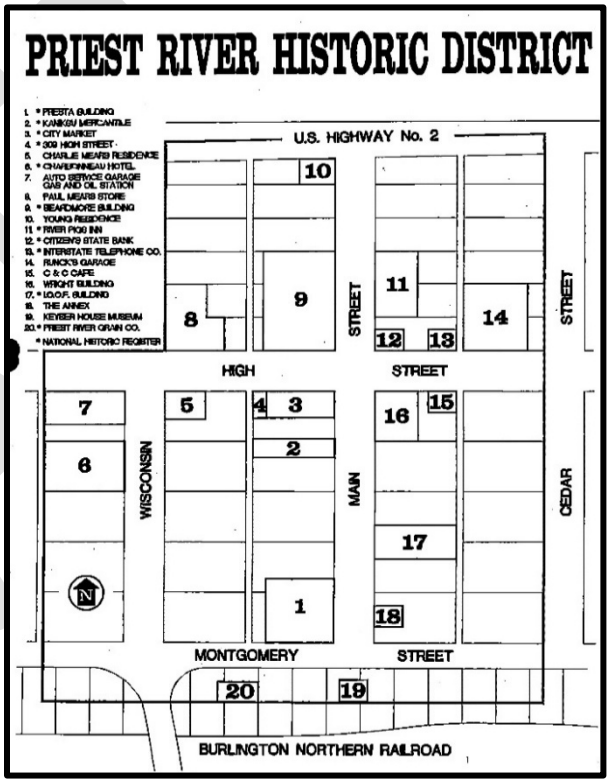
The city's historic core, centered along High and Main Streets, contains multiple structures listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, including:

1. Beardmore Building (1922) – A landmark of mixed-use design and a symbol of downtown revitalization.

2. Hotel Charbonneau (1912) – An early regional hotel, now preserved for its distinctive architecture.

3. Presta Building (1914) and City Market (1915) – Examples of early masonry commercial construction.

4. Keyser House Museum – An interpretive site showcasing local settlement history.



The 1998 *Downtown and Historic District Revitalization Plan* recommended design standards and guidelines for compatible infill, signage, and façade improvements. These principles continue to guide preservation and reinvestment.

Urban Renewal and Downtown Reinvestment

As part of a long-term effort to implement the vision established in the 1998 *Downtown and Historic District Revitalization Plan*, the City created the Priest River Urban Renewal Agency in 2007 through Ordinance 507. The *Urban Renewal Area Plan* was adopted to carry out the public infrastructure and downtown enhancement projects envisioned in the 1998 plan. It provided a financing mechanism through tax-increment financing to rehabilitate the historic district's streets, sidewalks, and utilities in alignment with the City's comprehensive planning goals (Priest River Urban Renewal Agency, 2007).

Building on this foundation, the City pursued a coordinated series of infrastructure and streetscape improvements through multiple grants and local funding sources. The effort began with an *Idaho Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG)* awarded in 2016–2017

and was later supplemented by an *Idaho Transportation Department Strategic Initiatives Grant* in 2018. Together, these programs enabled the reconstruction of roughly four blocks in the downtown historic district, High Street between Wisconsin and Cedar Streets and Main Street between U.S. Highway 2 and Montgomery Street. Improvements included full roadway reconstruction, ADA-compliant sidewalks and crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, new street trees and landscaping, stormwater and drainage upgrades, and replacement of aging water and utility infrastructure.

The total project cost was $1.633 million, funded through a combination of state and federal grants, City matching funds, and Urban Renewal Agency contributions. These investments corrected longstanding infrastructure deficiencies, improved safety and accessibility, and strengthened the overall appearance and economic vitality of the downtown core. The upgrades continue to support local commerce and tourism while maintaining the historic integrity of the district. Environmental and cultural resource reviews confirmed no adverse impacts, with concurrence from the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and consultation with the Kalispel Tribe.

Preservation and Revitalization Initiatives

The City supports participation in the Idaho State Historical Society's Certified Local Government (CLG) program, which provides technical assistance and potential grant funding for historic preservation. Adaptive reuse of historic structures is encouraged to retain architectural integrity while supporting new community functions. Future revitalization efforts will continue to align with the goals of the 1998 *Downtown and Historic District Revitalization Plan*, the 2007 *Urban Renewal Area Plan*, and the 2016–2017 *Downtown Revitalization Project* to ensure the downtown core remains vibrant, accessible, and historically authentic.

Section 3 – Ecological and Wildlife Significance

The ecological health of Priest River is closely linked to the rivers and wetlands that define its boundaries. These systems provide habitat, manage floodwaters, and enhance the city's scenic appeal.

River and Wetland Habitats

The Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers support fish, birds, and aquatic vegetation that are integral to the regional ecosystem. The Valencia Wetland Bank, encompassing nearly 200 acres under perpetual conservation easement, demonstrates successful wetland restoration and compensatory mitigation. The reclaimed Old City Dump site, remediated through the Brownfields Program, represents another example of ecological recovery and reuse. Further details are found in the Hazardous Areas and Natural Resources chapters.

Urban Wildlife Corridors

Even within city limits, wildlife is commonly observed: deer, moose, bear, osprey, and bald eagles frequent riparian corridors and forest edges. Maintaining vegetation buffers, open-space connections, and wildlife-friendly fencing helps sustain these populations and minimize conflict.

Conservation Practices

Future development should protect surface water quality through erosion control, native landscaping, and low-impact stormwater design. Partnerships with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and Idaho Fish and Game support ongoing monitoring and public education regarding habitat protection.

Section 4 – Archaeological and Tribal Significance

Long before incorporation, the confluence of the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers served as a gathering place for Indigenous peoples. The Kalispel Tribe of Indians historically inhabited the surrounding valleys, while the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and other regional nations also maintained seasonal and trade connections.

Tribal Heritage and Coordination

The City of Priest River recognizes the cultural significance of this landscape. In partnership with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and local tribes, the City will continue to identify and document any sites of archaeological or cultural importance within or near city limits.

Cultural Resource Protection

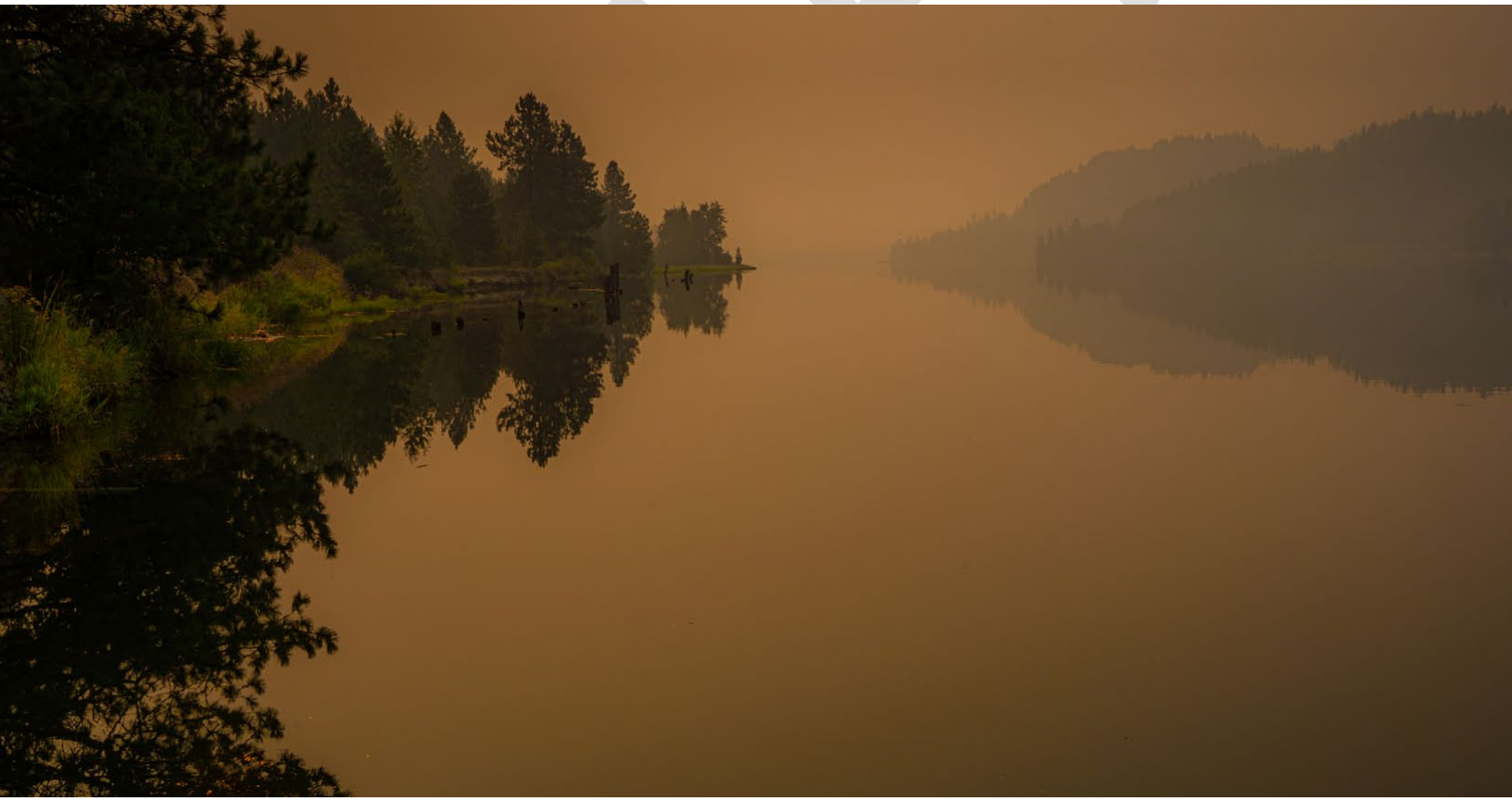
Development proposals that may affect known or potential cultural sites will be reviewed in consultation with tribal governments and SHPO. Discovery of artifacts during construction must be reported immediately, and work shall cease until appropriate evaluations are completed under state and federal law.

Section 5 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Protect and enhance the scenic, historical, ecological, and cultural resources that define Priest River's identity and contribute to the community's quality of life.

Policies:

1. Conserve scenic viewsheds along the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers and maintain clear visual gateways into the city.
2. Encourage restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic structures consistent with established design standards.
3. Participate in state and federal historic-preservation programs, including the Certified Local Government program.
4. Coordinate with tribal governments and the Idaho State Historical Society to identify and safeguard archaeological and cultural resources.
5. Promote public awareness, education, and heritage tourism that highlight the city's historic, cultural, and natural features.



Chapter 11: Housing

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (l) Housing — An analysis of housing conditions and needs; plans for improvement of housing standards; and plans for the provision of safe, sanitary, and adequate housing, including the provision for low-cost conventional housing, the siting of manufactured housing and mobile homes in subdivisions and parks and on individual lots which are sufficient to maintain a competitive market for each of those housing types and to address the needs of the community.

Housing is a fundamental component of community health, economic stability, and quality of life. This chapter evaluates existing housing conditions within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Priest River, identifies factors influencing housing availability and affordability, and examines infrastructure and land use constraints that affect housing capacity. While housing markets function regionally, the analysis and policies contained in this chapter apply only to lands within the City's jurisdiction, consistent with Idaho law (Idaho Code §67-6508, 2024).

Section 1 – Overview of Housing in the City of Priest River

Housing conditions are shaped by historic development patterns, land availability, infrastructure capacity, and market forces that extend beyond municipal boundaries.

Priest River's housing stock has developed incrementally over time, with periods of subdivision activity interspersed with infill, reinvestment, and redevelopment. Assessor data indicates that residential development within city limits included annexations followed by development, the improvement of existing parcels, and the absorption of previously vacant residential land (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a). Recent housing activity has occurred amid broader regional housing pressures affecting Bonner County and North Idaho as a whole (Bonner County, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

Section 2 – Housing Stock and Unit Characteristics

This section analyzes the composition of the City's housing stock, including the number of housing units, occupancy status, and structure types. Understanding the physical characteristics of housing is essential to evaluating housing needs, market diversity, and infrastructure demand.

Total Housing Units

The City of Priest River contains a finite number of housing units, including both occupied and vacant units. Housing units include single-family dwellings, multifamily units, manufactured homes, and other residential configurations as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019, 2023).

Assessor records and city building records indicate a steady increase in residential parcels with structures between 2017 and 2025, alongside a decline in vacant residential parcels over the same period (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a). Although some annexations have occurred, this trend suggests that housing growth within the City has been driven primarily by the development of existing residential land and by the creation of new residential areas. Table 1, below, summarizes parcel counts and acreage by property type, illustrating land use and development trends within the City.

Parcel Counts	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Farm/Ag properties	28	28	28	26	9	6	6	5	5
Residential Properties with Structures	654	670	692	700	719	732	773	793	802
Residential Vacant Properties	168	153	134	156	132	162	148	131	126
Commercial Properties with Structures	109	109	109	107	108	109	108	108	109
Commercial Vacant Properties	46	47	45	44	41	47	45	44	44
Industrial Properties with Structures	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8
Industrial Vacant Properties	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	10
Gov Lands, Tracts, and Common Areas	67	67	68	71	73	93	97	101	101
Total Number of Parcels	1090	1092	1094	1122	1100	1167	1195	1200	1205
Acreage	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Farm/Ag properties	968.6	987.8	984.0	966.3	108.5	93.8	93.8	86.6	86.6
Residential Properties with Structures	283.9	274.8	288.8	302.0	284.5	286.3	292.7	321.6	329.6
Residential Vacant Properties	178.3	167.8	168.7	170.6	128.1	143.2	135.6	110.2	105.2
Commercial Properties with Structures	295.2	295.2	295.2	299.2	299.8	300.2	297.7	297.2	294.6
Commercial Vacant Properties	124.2	124.7	123.8	121.7	117.6	144.7	134.2	134.1	134.1
Industrial Properties with Structures	42.1	42.1	42.1	41.0	41.0	41.0	41.0	45.1	45.1
Industrial Vacant Properties	36.6	36.6	36.6	36.6	36.6	36.6	36.6	32.5	32.5
Gov Lands, Tracts, and Common Areas	231.2	231.2	221.3	221.9	220.4	218.9	232.8	279.5	279.5
Total Acreage	2160.2	2160.3	2160.5	2159.4	1236.7	1264.7	1264.4	1306.9	1307.2

Table 2: Parcel Counts and Acreage by Property Type, City of Priest River (2017–2025)
Source: City of Priest River Assessor parcel data, 2017–2025.

In this table and within this section, the term "vacant" refers to parcels without residential structures, as identified in the Bonner County Assessor records, rather than vacant housing units. Vacant parcels represent land that may have future development potential but do not contribute to the current housing supply. As a result, trends showing declines in vacant residential parcels reflect land absorption and development activity, not changes in housing unit occupancy or availability.

Housing Units by Structure Type

Housing in Priest River is predominantly single-family in character, with limited multifamily development. Manufactured housing also contributes to the overall housing supply. This distribution reflects historic land use patterns, zoning regulations, and infrastructure limitations.

Assessor data indicates that manufactured housing parcels have remained relatively stable over time, confirming that manufactured housing continues to represent a component of the City's housing stock (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a). A housing stock dominated by single-family dwellings can constrain housing diversity and affordability, particularly for smaller households, seniors, and workforce residents (Bonner County, 2023).

Section 3 – Housing Tenure and Occupancy

This section examines housing tenure and occupancy patterns, including owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing, as well as primary versus non-primary residences. These factors influence housing stability, affordability, and effective housing supply.

Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Housing

Housing tenure in Priest River includes both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units. According to recent American Community Survey estimates, approximately 72.4% of occupied housing units in the City are owner-occupied, while about 27.6% are renter-occupied (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Owner-occupied housing contributes to neighborhood stability and long-term community investment, while renter-occupied housing provides flexibility and access for workforce households and residents with varying housing needs.

72.4% of Homes are Owner Occupied

27.6% of Homes are Renter Occupied

The increase in residential parcels with structures, coupled with rising assessed values, suggests continued reinvestment in owner-occupied housing within the City, reinforcing patterns of long-term occupancy and neighborhood stability (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a).

Primary Residence, Seasonal, and Non-Primary Use Housing

Homeowner exemption data provides insight into the proportion of housing units used as primary residences versus seasonal or non-primary housing. As of 2025, approximately 72 percent of residential parcels with structures within the City receive a homeowner exemption, while 28 percent do not (City of Priest River, 2025). Units without a homeowner exemption are more likely to function as second homes, seasonal residences, or investment properties, and therefore do not consistently contribute to the year-round housing supply.

The presence of non-primary housing reduces the number of units available to the year-round housing market and can create the appearance of housing availability that does not translate into accessible housing for permanent residents. Vacant housing units include those available for sale or rent as well as units held for seasonal or non-primary use. As a result, housing unit vacancy rates alone do not fully reflect housing availability for year-round residents, particularly in communities with a mix of primary and non-primary housing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

Section 4 – Housing Availability and Development Activity

This section evaluates housing availability by examining land inventory, development patterns, and permitting activity. Housing availability depends not only on zoning allowances but also on infrastructure capacity, parcel characteristics, and market feasibility.

Residential Land Inventory and Development Pipeline

Housing capacity within the City is influenced by the availability of vacant residential lots, approved subdivisions, and opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Assessor data indicates a substantial decline in available vacant residential acreage between 2017 and 2025, demonstrating that despite additional annexations a large percentage of the City's developable residential land has already been absorbed (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a). The data indicates that without additional annexations and given the history of residential development, there is approximately a ten-year supply of available vacant residential acreage.

Agricultural land within city limits also declined significantly during this period; however, this change reflects a policy decision rather than purely residential conversion. In 2022, the City de-annexed a large area of agricultural land that had not developed and imposed ongoing public maintenance costs that exceeded the tax revenue generated, with the majority of the de-annexed area held by a single property owner. As a result, future housing capacity within the City is unlikely to be met through conversion of agricultural lands and will instead depend on infill development, redevelopment of underutilized parcels, and efficient use of existing residential zoning (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a).

Approved developments and subdivision pipelines represent potential housing supply but do not guarantee construction or market delivery.

Building Permit Trends

Building permit data provides a record of development activity and housing production over time. From 2017 through 2022, permit activity in Priest River increased steadily, peaking in 2022. Permits for single family homes represented many total permits, see Figure 23 (City of Priest River, 2017–2025).

Permit activity declined in 2023 and 2024, reflecting broader economic conditions, construction costs, and infrastructure limitations.

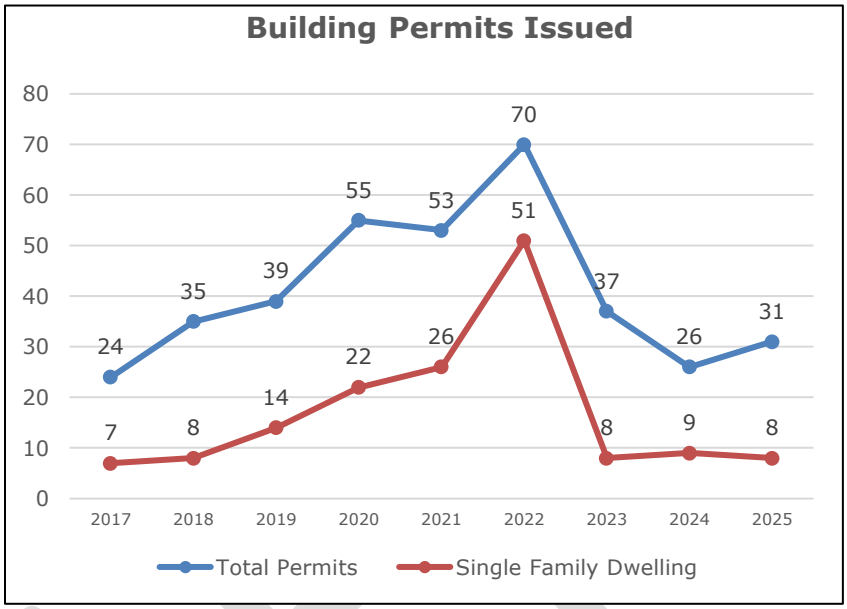


Figure 23: Building Permits Issued by Year, City of Priest River (2017–2025).
Source: City of Priest River building permit records, 2017–2025.

Accessory structures, additions, and remodel permits reflect reinvestment in existing housing stock and incremental changes.

Section 5 – Housing Market Activity and Affordability Context

This section evaluates housing market conditions in the City of Priest River using residential sales activity, days on market, and assessed valuation trends. While local rental data is limited, these indicators provide insight into housing demand, market accessibility, and affordability pressures affecting both buyers and existing homeowners.

Residential Sales Activity and Market Liquidity

Residential sales data from the Selkirk Multiple Listing Service (MLS) shows a general decline in the number of single-family dwellings sold in recent years, with the most pronounced reduction occurring since 2022 (Figure 24). This trend suggests a slowing in market turnover rather than an absence of demand. Periods of reduced sales activity may reflect a combination of higher interest rates, affordability constraints, limited inventory, and broader economic conditions affecting buyer participation (Selkirk MLS, 2019–2025).

At the same time, days on market have increased in recent years, indicating that homes are taking longer to sell compared to prior periods (Figure 24). Increased days on market can signal reduced buyer purchasing power, price sensitivity, or a mismatch between housing prices and household incomes. Together, declining sales volume and longer

marketing periods suggest reduced market liquidity within the housing market.

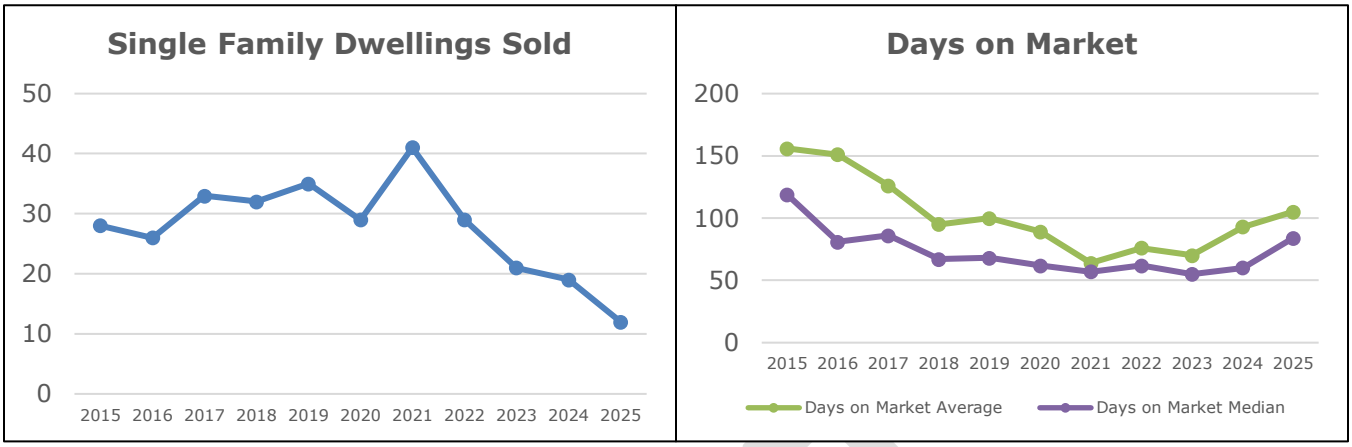


Figure 24: Total Single-Family Residential Sales and Days on Market Trends, City of Priest River (2015–2025)
Source: Selkirk Multiple Listing Service residential sales data, 2015–2025. Data compiled and summarized by the City of Priest River Planning Department.

Assessed Value Trends and Affordability Pressure

In contrast to slowing sales activity, assessor data shows a continued increase in both gross and net assessed property values across the City between 2017 and 2025 (Figure 25). Rising assessed values reflect long-term appreciation, reinvestment in existing housing stock, and broader regional housing pressures. However, increasing assessed values also translate into higher property tax burdens for homeowners, regardless of whether properties are actively changing hands.

The divergence between rising assessed values and declining sales activity suggests that while housing values remain elevated, fewer transactions occur at those price points. This condition can contribute to affordability challenges by increasing ownership costs for existing residents while limiting access for new buyers.

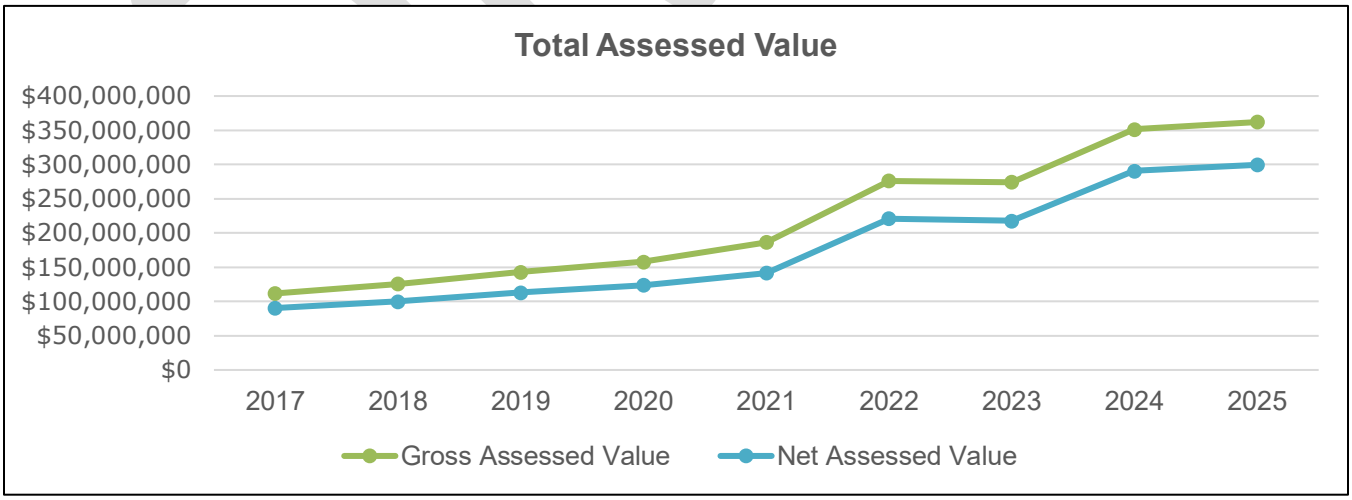


Figure 25: Total Gross and Net Assessed Property Value, City of Priest River (2017–2025)
Source: City of Priest River Assessor valuation records, 2017–2025. Data compiled and summarized by the City of Priest River Planning Department from Bonner County Assessor data.

Market Implications for Housing Access

Taken together, recent housing market trends in Priest River indicate reduced market liquidity and constrained housing access. Declining residential sales activity, longer marketing periods, and rising assessed values suggest that fewer households are able to participate in the ownership market at prevailing price levels, reinforcing supply limitations identified in Section 2, Section 3, and Section 4 of this chapter.

These conditions highlight the importance of maintaining a range of housing options and price points within the City, particularly those that can be accommodated through infill, redevelopment, and efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Affordability by Household and Family Type

Housing affordability in Priest River varies substantially by household and family type, with income differences influencing access to homeownership and housing stability. According to American Community Survey estimates, the median income for all families in the City is approximately $75,806, while married-couple families earn a higher median income of approximately $80,536. In contrast, nonfamily households have a significantly lower median income of approximately $33,281, less than half the income of married-couple families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

When evaluated alongside recent housing market data, these income disparities highlight uneven affordability across household types. The average sold price for single-family dwellings in Priest River increased from approximately $316,000 between 2020 and 2022 to approximately $376,000 between 2023 and 2025. This price point exceeds what many households can reasonably afford without cost burden, particularly nonfamily households and single-income households (City of Priest River, 2025b). While higher-income households may continue to access the ownership market, lower-income households face greater constraints in accessing the ownership market even when housing supply exists.

These income-based affordability differences help explain observed market patterns within the City, including declining residential sales activity and longer average days on market. As fewer households are financially positioned to purchase homes at prevailing prices, market participation narrows, reducing housing mobility and limiting access for first-time buyers, workforce households, and seniors living alone. Over time, this dynamic can increase demand for rental housing, smaller units, and alternative housing arrangements.

Taken together, variations in income by household and family type highlight the importance of maintaining a range of housing options within Priest River that align with diverse income levels and household compositions. Incremental housing strategies, including manufactured

housing, small-scale infill development, and accessory dwelling units, can help expand housing access by leveraging existing parcels and infrastructure while supporting reinvestment within established neighborhoods.

Section 6 – Infrastructure Constraints

Water and Sewer Capacity

Housing development in Priest River is constrained by the availability of water and sewer infrastructure. Capacity tracking data expressed in Equivalent Dwelling Units demonstrates how individual projects and subdivisions draw down system capacity over time (City of Priest River, 2021–2025a). While this chapter evaluates water and sewer capacity specifically as it relates to housing feasibility and growth potential, a more detailed analysis of system operations, capital improvements, and long-term service planning is provided in The Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities Chapter.

While remaining capacity exists, it is finite and must be managed to ensure housing development remains consistent with system capabilities and public health standards.

Realized Connections and Growth

Water and sewer connection data provides a record of actual system use over time. Incremental increases in connections confirm that capacity allocations generally correspond with constructed development and reflect steady, measured growth rather than rapid expansion (City of Priest River, 2021–2025b).

Section 7 – Special Housing Considerations

This section addresses housing types and conditions specifically referenced in Idaho Code §67-6508(l), including manufactured housing, mobile homes, and accessory dwelling units.

Manufactured housing and mobile homes provide an important source of relatively affordable housing and contribute to housing diversity. Assessor data confirms the continued presence and stability of manufactured housing parcels within the City, underscoring the importance of maintaining appropriate siting opportunities in subdivisions, parks, and on individual lots (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a; Idaho Code §67-6508, 2024).

Older housing stock contributes to Priest River's character but may require reinvestment to maintain safe and sanitary conditions. Infill development, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse support improved housing standards while minimizing infrastructure expansion.

Accessory Dwelling Units

In addition to manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) represent a housing option that aligns with Priest River's predominantly single-family development pattern and observed development trends within the City. Assessor data indicates a steady increase in residential parcels with structures and a corresponding decline in vacant residential land, suggesting that future housing opportunities are increasingly reliant on infill and reinvestment rather than expansion into undeveloped areas (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a).

Building permit data further demonstrates that a substantial share of residential activity in recent years has involved additions, accessory structures, and remodels in addition to new dwelling construction, indicating ongoing investment in existing homes and lots (City of Priest River, 2017–2025b). These trends suggest that incremental housing strategies, such as ADUs, may be more feasible than large-scale residential development in certain areas of the City.

ADUs can provide relatively lower-cost housing opportunities by utilizing existing land, infrastructure, and buildings, reducing development costs associated with subdivision development. They may support housing needs for seniors, extended family members, caregivers, or workforce households, while allowing property owners to retain control over their property.

Demographic trends toward smaller household sizes and an aging population further support consideration of flexible housing options, including secondary units that enable aging in place and multigenerational living arrangements (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). When appropriately regulated, ADUs can increase housing supply incrementally without significantly altering neighborhood character or placing undue strain on public facilities.

Section 8 – Summary of Housing Conditions and Needs

Housing conditions in the City of Priest River are characterized by a predominantly single-family housing stock, limited multifamily development, incremental growth patterns, and finite land and infrastructure capacity. Assessor and market data indicate that housing growth has increasingly occurred through infill and reinvestment rather than expansion, while non-primary housing and rising property values affect effective housing availability and affordability.

Taken together, these conditions highlight the need for careful planning to ensure the continued provision of safe, sanitary, and adequate housing that aligns with community needs, supports housing access across income levels, and remains consistent with available infrastructure and public services.

Section 9 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Provide safe, sanitary, and adequate housing in Priest River that supports a range of housing types and household needs while remaining consistent with available infrastructure and public services.

Policies:

1. Evaluate housing proposals based on demonstrated availability of water, sewer, and related public infrastructure capacity.
2. Encourage a range of housing types, including low-cost conventional housing, manufactured housing, and limited multifamily development, where compatible with zoning and infrastructure.
3. Support reinvestment, rehabilitation, and maintenance of existing housing stock to improve housing standards and neighborhood stability.
4. Recognize the role of seasonal and non-primary housing when assessing housing availability, demand, and community housing needs.
5. Coordinate housing planning and development decisions with the City's capital improvement planning to ensure safe and sanitary development.
6. Regulate accessory dwelling units in appropriate residential zoning districts in a manner that ensures compatibility with existing neighborhoods and available infrastructure.

Chapter 12: Community Design

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (m) Community Design — An analysis of needs for governing landscaping, building design, tree planting, signs, and suggested patterns and standards for community design, development, and beautification.

Community design is inherently influenced by local values, physical context, and long-term community goals. Unlike other planning components that rely heavily on quantitative data, community design emphasizes compatibility, visual character, and the relationship between development and public spaces.

This chapter evaluates existing development patterns, identifies community design considerations relevant to Priest River, and establishes a goal and policies to assist in guiding future land use decisions. The analysis and policies contained in this chapter apply only to lands within the incorporated boundaries of the City of Priest River and are intended to support growth and reinvestment while preserving the community's small-town character.

Community design considerations are informed by related plan chapter, including Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, and Natural Resources, as well as prior downtown and park planning efforts.

Section 1 – Community Character and Design Context

Priest River's community character is shaped by its riverfront setting, historic role as a mill town, compact downtown core, and surrounding natural environment. Development within the City has occurred incrementally over time, resulting in a mix of older neighborhoods, established commercial corridors, and residential development.

The City's small-town character is expressed through modest building scale, informal streetscapes, and close proximity between residential, commercial, civic, and recreational areas. Public parks, river access points, and downtown gathering spaces contribute to a sense of community identity and place. At the same time, changing economic conditions,

housing demand, and infrastructure investment have increased interest in infill development, redevelopment, and annexations.

Community input and policy direction reflected throughout this comprehensive plan emphasize a desire to accommodate future growth without compromising the qualities that make Priest River distinct. Community design considerations therefore focus on maintaining compatibility, supporting reinvestment, and ensuring that new development contributes positively to the public realm.

Previous planning efforts, including downtown revitalization and urban renewal planning, have emphasized the importance of reinvestment, walkability, infrastructure improvements, and preservation of community identity as part of Priest River's long-term vision.

Section 2 – Existing Development Patterns and Influences

Development patterns within Priest River reflect a combination of historic neighborhoods, incremental infill, and recent planned developments approved under varying regulatory frameworks. Residential areas range from older grid-based neighborhoods near downtown to newer subdivisions located closer to the City's edges. Commercial development is concentrated along Highway 2 and within the downtown core, where visibility and access support local businesses.

Recent residential development experience has highlighted the long-term implications of subdivision and site design decisions related to street layout, pedestrian facilities, stormwater management, landscaping, and public maintenance responsibilities. In some cases, development patterns have resulted in limited connectivity, or reduced walkability that affect long-term functionality.

Public investments in parks, riverfront access, transportation improvements, and utility infrastructure further influence community design expectations. Projects such as Two Rivers Park and downtown reinvestment efforts elevate the importance of cohesive site design, landscaping, and integration between private development and public spaces.

Together, these influences highlight the importance of clear, consistent, and context-sensitive approaches to community design that balance flexibility with long-term community needs.

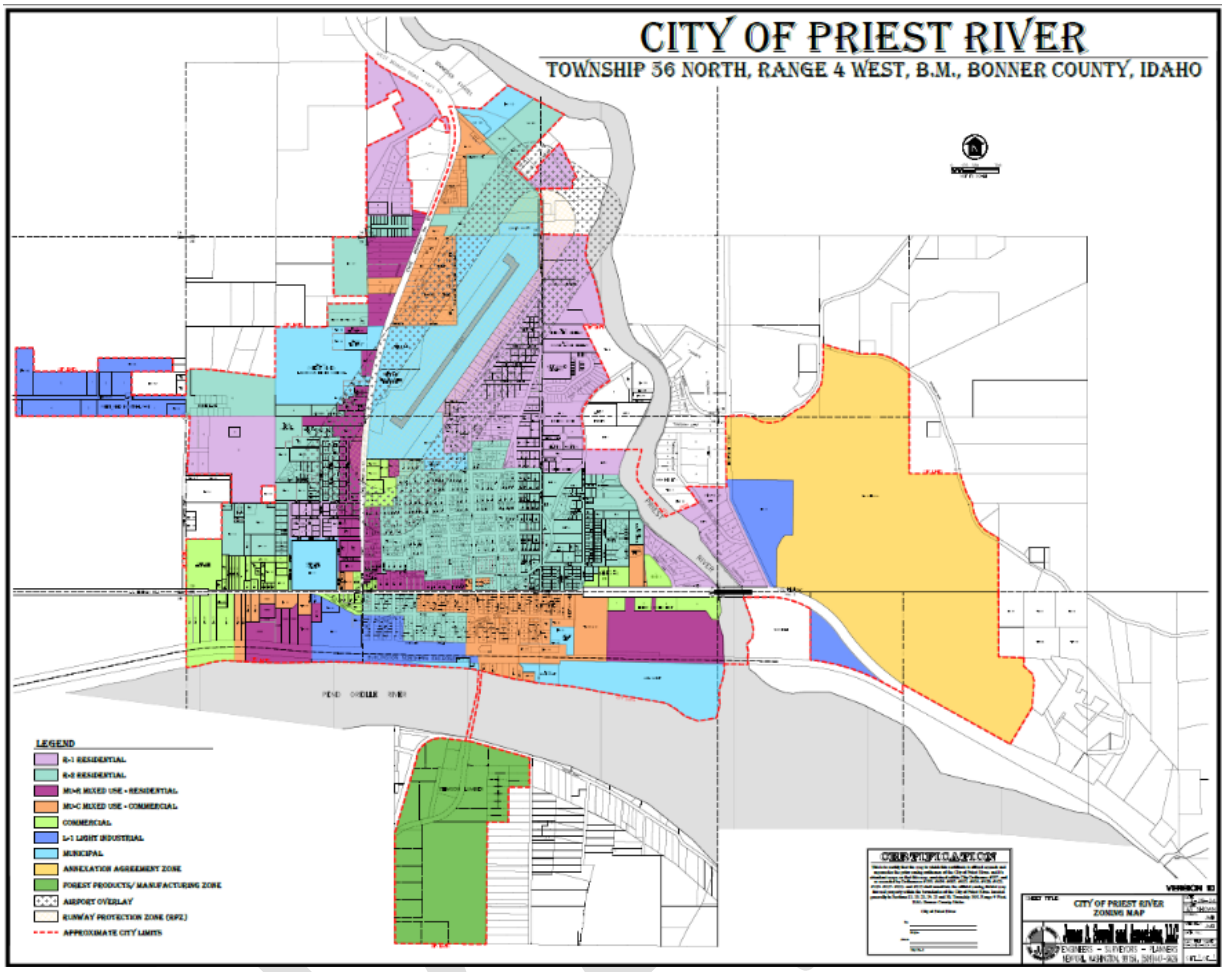


Figure 26: 2025 City of Priest River zoning map.
Note. Official zoning map adopted by the City of Priest River and maintained as part of the City Code and land use regulations. The Zoning Map will be updated after the comprehensive plan is approved.

Section 3 – Community Design Considerations and Needs

Community design considerations in Priest River extend beyond building appearance and include how development interacts with streets, utilities, public spaces, and surrounding land uses. Key considerations include building scale and massing, site layout, landscaping, tree planting, signage, lighting, and the relationship between private development and the public realm.

Building design considerations may focus on maintaining compatibility with surrounding development rather than prescribing architectural styles. Building height, bulk, and orientation can influence neighborhood character, pedestrian experience, and transitions between land uses.

Landscaping and tree planting contribute to visual quality, shade, stormwater management, and environmental function. Trees and landscaped areas along streets, within parking areas, and around buildings can soften development impacts and enhance community character while providing long-term environmental benefits. Landscaping and tree planting

considerations are also addressed in Natural Resources Chapter of this plan.

Signage and lighting play an important role in supporting business visibility and public safety while minimizing visual clutter and light pollution. Appropriately scaled signage and well-designed lighting can support economic activity and community identity without detracting from surrounding areas.

Site design considerations, including street connectivity, pedestrian facilities, and integration with adjacent development, influence long-term accessibility and public maintenance obligations. These considerations are particularly relevant in areas experiencing infill, redevelopment, or future annexation, where design decisions shape long-term patterns of use and infrastructure demand.

Section 4 – Areas Where Community Design Is Most Relevant

While community design considerations apply citywide, certain areas warrant additional attention due to their visibility, function, or long-term impact on community character. These areas include the downtown core, Highway 2 corridors and gateways, riverfront areas, major infill and redevelopment sites, and potential future annexation areas.

Downtown Priest River serves as a focal point for civic life, small businesses, and community events. Design considerations in this area influence pedestrian activity, business vitality, and community identity. Downtown planning and reinvestment efforts have been the subject of prior City studies and continue to inform how design considerations support economic vitality and community identity.

Highway corridors and gateways shape first impressions of the City and provide opportunities to reinforce community character through landscaping, signage, and coordinated site design.

Riverfront areas and parks represent defining community assets where development must balance public access, environmental conditions, and visual character.

Future annexation areas and larger development sites present opportunities to establish development patterns that support connectivity, infrastructure efficiency, and long-term maintenance considerations.

Identifying these areas does not impose design mandates but helps guide future discussions regarding where community design considerations may be most impactful.

Section 5 – Relationship to Other Plan Components

Community design intersects with multiple chapters of this comprehensive plan. Chapter 11: Housing planning highlights the importance of compatibility and infill development within established neighborhoods. The goal within Chapter 4: Economic Development emphasizes downtown reinvestment, small business support, and attractive commercial environments. Chapter 8: Transportation planning emphasizes the role of street design, pedestrian safety, and connectivity. Chapter 9: Recreation and Chapter 5: Natural Resources planning reinforce the importance of landscaping, tree canopy, riverfront design, and integration between built and natural environments.

By coordinating community design considerations with these components, the City can support cohesive land use decisions that align with broader planning objectives while maintaining flexibility in implementation.

Section 6 – Summary of Community Design Conditions

Community design in Priest River reflects a balance between historic development patterns, incremental growth, and evolving expectations related to infrastructure, public spaces, and long-term maintenance. As the City continues to experience reinvestment, infill, and potential expansion, community design considerations provide an important framework for evaluating how development contributes to overall community character and functionality.

Rather than prescribing specific design outcomes, this chapter establishes a policy foundation that supports thoughtful, context-sensitive decision-making and preserves the City's ability to adapt to future needs and community input.

Section 7 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Preserve Priest River's small-town character while supporting growth, reinvestment, and economic vitality through flexible, context-sensitive community design.

Policies:

1. Encourage development patterns, uses, and site designs that are compatible with surrounding land uses and community character.
2. Recognize the importance of landscaping, tree planting, and site design in enhancing public spaces, streetscapes, and environmental function.
3. Support building design approaches that emphasize compatibility and scale rather than prescriptive architectural requirements.
4. Encourage signage and lighting that support business visibility and public safety while minimizing visual clutter and light impacts.
5. Consider community design implications when drafting regulations for infill development, redevelopment, annexations, and major subdivision proposals.
6. Maintain flexibility in community design standards to allow for future refinement through public input, staff analysis, and City Council direction.

Chapter 13: Agriculture

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (n) Agriculture — An analysis of the agricultural base of the area including agricultural lands, farming activities, farming-related businesses and the role of agriculture and agricultural uses in the community.

While active agricultural production within the City of Priest River is limited, agriculture remains an important part of the broader region's economy, landscape, and cultural identity. Many residents have ties to farming and ranching in the surrounding county, and agricultural lands located outside city limits contribute to the community's rural character. This chapter describes the agricultural context relevant to Priest River and outlines policies that recognize agriculture's regional significance while addressing land use considerations at the city scale.

Section 1 – Agricultural Lands, Activities, and Land Use Compatibility

Although Priest River contains no active agricultural operations, the city and its surroundings include a mix of forested lands, resource-based uses, and rural open-space areas that shape the community's landscape and development patterns. Understanding how these lands function within city limits and in the Area of Impact provides important context for future planning decisions, especially where new development interfaces with long-standing forestry activities or rural land uses. The following subsections describe the extent of agricultural and forest lands, their role in defining community character, and the considerations necessary to maintain compatibility as Priest River grows.

Agricultural Lands Within the City Limits

Assessment data from 2024 show that no properties within the City of Priest River carry an agricultural exemption, confirming that there are no active farms or commercial agricultural operations inside city limits. This is consistent with existing development patterns, which are primarily residential, commercial, or forested.

However, several properties carry forest land exemptions, indicating active forest management consistent with state classifications (Idaho State Tax Commission, 2025).

Approximately 80.54 acres within the city are designated as forest land, accounting for roughly 0.65 percent of the city's total acreage. These parcels include a significant holding by Stimpson Lumber, which manages approximately 55 acres of forested land on the south side of the Pend Oreille River within city limits.

These forested lands, while not agricultural in the traditional sense, contribute to Priest River's open-space character and reflect longstanding resource-based activities in the region.

Agricultural Lands in the Area of Impact

While the city contains no active agricultural exemption parcels, the Area of Impact (AOI) includes lands that demonstrate continued forest management and rural open-space functions.

Although these parcels are primarily forested rather than farmed, they form part of the broader agricultural and resource landscape that frames Priest River. Their management practices influence wildlife habitat, viewsheds, and the transitional edge between incorporated and unincorporated lands.

Role of Agriculture in Community Character

Agriculture and forestry have shaped Priest River's cultural identity for generations. Even though no active farming occurs within the city, surrounding forested lands, rural homesteads, and timber operations maintain a sense of open space and rural living that residents value (Bonner County, 2023).

These lands play several important roles:

- Preserving scenic and ecological open space.
- Maintaining a rural transition area around the city.
- Supporting wildlife corridors and natural drainage patterns.
- Reflecting historic ties to timber production and natural resource industries.

As growth pressures continue, these fringe landscapes will play an increasingly important role in shaping the city's sense of place.

Land Use Compatibility Considerations

Development near forested or agricultural lands requires attention to land use compatibility. Idaho's Right-to-Farm and Right-to-Harvest protections establish that normal farming and forestry practices may generate dust, noise, smoke, or seasonal activity that cannot be considered nuisances when conducted according to standard practices (Idaho Code §22-4501).

Section 2 – Regional Agricultural Context

Priest River is influenced by agricultural patterns occurring at the county level. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture data summarized in the Bonner County Agriculture Component (Bonner County, 2023):

- Bonner County contains approximately 89,331 acres of agricultural land.
- The total number of farms increased by 76.8% between 2012 and 2017, driven almost entirely by growth in small farms under 50 acres.
- Mid-sized and large farms remained relatively stable, indicating ongoing demand for hay, pasture, and livestock production.
- Direct-to-consumer sales nearly doubled from 2012 to 2017, signaling rising interest in farmers markets, CSA programs, and local food systems.

These trends demonstrate that agriculture continues to play a role in the region even though it is not occurring inside the city limits.

Section 3 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Recognize that active agriculture occurs outside the city and plan accordingly.

Policies:

1. Recognize agricultural and forested lands surrounding the city when evaluating annexation, zoning, or Area of Impact decisions.
2. Encourage compatible development patterns at the urban–rural interface to reduce potential conflicts with nearby agricultural or forest management activities.
3. Make information available on Idaho's Right-to-Farm and forestry protections so residents understand typical activities associated with nearby agricultural or timber lands.
4. Encourage preservation of open space or natural buffers where new development abuts working forest or rural land uses.

Chapter 14: Public Airport Facilities

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508(q): An analysis prepared with assistance from the Idaho transportation department division of aeronautics, if requested by the planning and zoning commission, and the manager or person in charge of the local public airport identifying, but not limited to, facility locations, the scope and type of airport operations, existing and future planned airport development and infrastructure needs, and the economic impact to the community.

Priest River is home to the Priest River Airport, a public-use general aviation facility located entirely within the city limits. Although the airport is owned and operated by Bonner County, the City of Priest River holds full land use jurisdiction over the site. The airport serves as an important transportation asset for the region, supporting general aviation traffic, emergency services, wildfire response, tourism access, and small-business aviation needs.

The intent of this chapter is to provide an overview of current airport facilities, operational characteristics, planned improvements, and long-term land use considerations. This information will help the City coordinate growth, protect aviation safety, and ensure compatible development around the airport in accordance with Idaho Code, FAA regulations, and best practices for airport-adjacent land use planning. This chapter draws from the Priest River Airport Master Plan, Bonner County's Public Airport Facilities comprehensive plan component, and FAA standards for airspace protection.

Section 1 – Airport Overview

Priest River Airport (FAA Identifier: 1S6) sits just north of Highway 2 and has been part of the community's transportation landscape for decades. Although the City does not own the facility, it benefits from its presence, both economically and operationally. The airport is publicly accessible and primarily accommodates small aircraft typical of rural Idaho aviation.

The facility consists of a single paved runway aligned northeast–southwest. The runway is approximately 3,000 feet long, surfaced in asphalt, and supported by basic taxiways, apron space, and hangar areas. The airport is eligible for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) Aeronautics grant programs, which fund maintenance and improvements.

The airport's location inside city limits means land use decisions made by Priest River directly affect aviation safety and future development potential. Coordination with Bonner County remains essential as improvements occur or as aviation needs evolve over time.

Section 2 – Operations and Community Role

Priest River Airport functions as a small but meaningful general aviation airport. Activity levels are modest compared to larger regional airports, yet the facility supports a wide range of community needs. Pilots use the airport for recreational flying, business travel, and flight training. Emergency responders rely on it for wildfire operations, medical evacuations, and search-and-rescue missions.

The airport also contributes to the local economy. General aviation brings visitors into Priest River, supports local spending, and enhances regional access for outdoor recreation and tourism. Idaho Code recognizes public airports as essential facilities that strengthen economic opportunities across the state, a description that holds true for Priest River's role within Bonner County. These benefits make the airport a valuable community asset.

Section 3 – Safety, Airspace Protection, and Compatible Land Use

Because the airport is surrounded by private property and lies directly within city limits, land use compatibility remains a central planning consideration. FAA regulations under 14 CFR Part 77 establish "imaginary surfaces" around airports that must be protected from obstructions. These include approach surfaces extending 5,000 feet from both runway ends at a 20:1 slope, transitional surfaces along each side of the runway, and horizontal surfaces that ensure safe climb-out and approach paths.

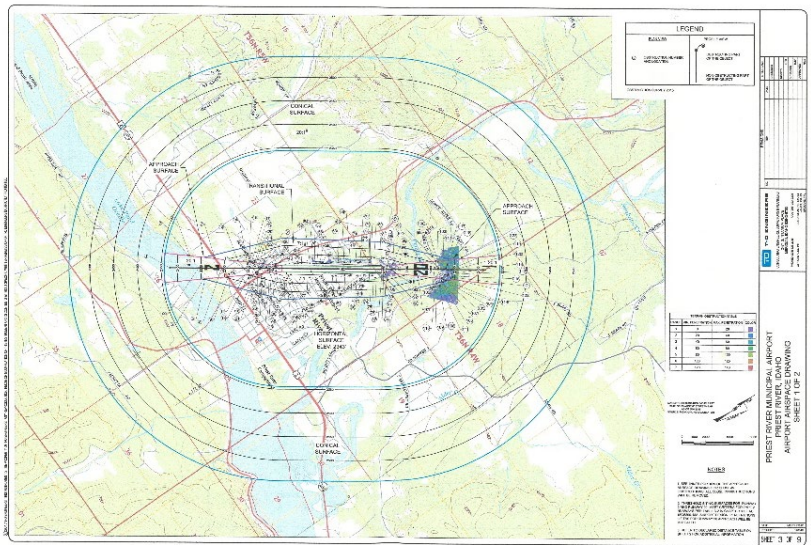


Figure 27: Airport airspace and approach surfaces for the Priest River Airport.
Note. Source: Priest River Airport Master Plan.

Maintaining clear airspace protects pilots and residents by reducing risks associated with obstructions, tall structures, or incompatible development patterns. Proposed development that may affect navigable airspace requires the submission of FAA Form 7460-1 so the FAA can evaluate potential hazards.

The City's land use authority allows it to manage growth around the airport through zoning standards, height limitations, and thoughtful review of development proposals.

Airport Overlay Zone

In addition to federal airspace protections, the City reinforces aviation safety through its Airport Overlay Zone (PRCC 10-12-1). The overlay establishes several airport-related land use zones intended to ensure that development within the influence area remains compatible with aviation operations. These zones include the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ), Lateral Safety Zone (LSZ), Inner Critical Zone (ICZ), Traffic Pattern Area (TPA), and the broader Airport Influence Area (AIA). Together, these zones identify areas where heightened awareness of aviation activity, safety, and potential noise impacts is appropriate.

The overlay also incorporates FAA Part 77 height limitations and requires review of structures or uses that may interfere with flight operations. These standards help avoid conflicts related to building height, lighting, glare, wildlife attraction, or electronic interference. Although the zones are established in ordinance, the current code does not provide detailed purpose statements or land use standards specific to each zone. As the City updates its regulations over time, clarifying the intent and regulatory effect of the Airport Overlay Zone will help strengthen compatibility between airport operations and surrounding land uses.

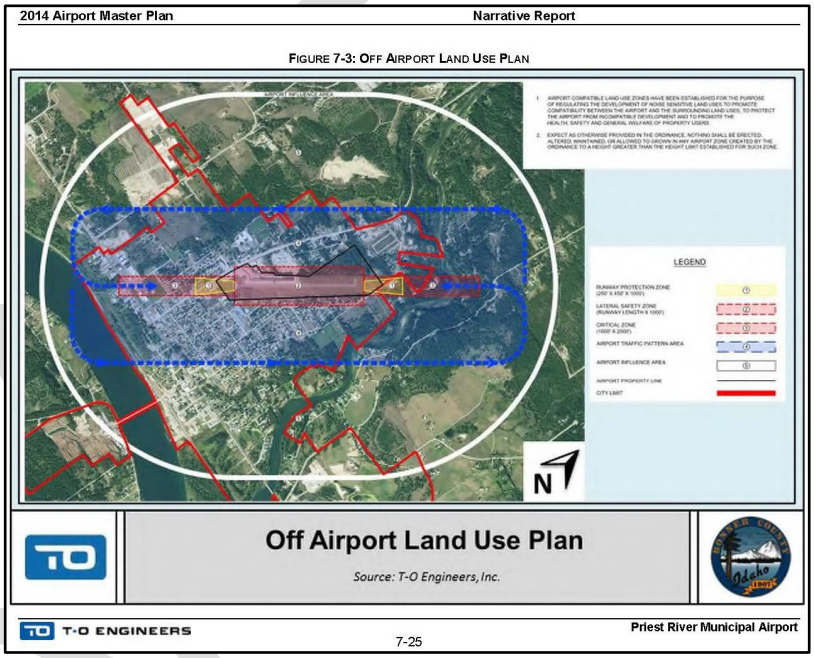


Figure 28: Off-airport land use planning areas associated with the Priest River Airport.
Source: Priest River Airport Master Plan (2014). Prepared by T-O Engineers, Inc.

Key considerations for local land use compatibility include:

- Ensuring that structures or vegetation do not penetrate FAA Part 77 surfaces
- Encouraging land uses that align with airport activity, particularly light industrial or commercial uses
- Coordinating with Bonner County on airport improvements that could influence surrounding land use
- Maintaining communication with the airport manager on development proposals that could affect aviation safety
- Considering noise, height, and safety buffers within zoning districts adjacent to the airport

These planning practices help protect both the operational integrity of the airport and the long-term livability of nearby neighborhoods.

Section 4 – Airport Improvements and Long-Term Needs

The Priest River Airport Master Plan provides a roadmap for maintaining and improving the facility in a way that aligns with FAA standards and community needs. Planned improvements may include runway rehabilitation, apron upgrades, improved lighting or navigational aids, hangar expansion, vegetation management, and enhanced safety areas.

While aviation activity at Priest River is not expected to grow dramatically, steady regional population growth, increasing tourism, and a rise in outdoor recreation have influenced aviation use across North Idaho. As these trends continue, the airport may see incremental increases in operations. Maintaining compatibility with future improvements ensures that the airport remains an asset rather than a constraint on development.

Long-term coordination between the City, Bonner County, and ITD Aeronautics strengthens the planning foundation needed to support the airport's continued operation.

Section 5 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Ensure the long-term safety, compatibility, and operational viability of the Priest River Airport by aligning land use policies and zoning standards with FAA requirements and coordinating with Bonner County as necessary.

Policies:

1. Support safe and compatible operations at Priest River Airport through land use decisions that respect FAA Part 77 surfaces, safety areas, and recommended height limitations.
2. Coordinate with Bonner County and the airport manager when development proposals or planning actions may influence airport operations.
3. Encourage aviation-compatible commercial and industrial development within the Airport Overlay Zone and surrounding areas where such uses do not conflict with airport operations.
4. Ensure that zoning standards, including the Airport Overlay Zone, reflect appropriate height, noise, and safety considerations for property within airport influence areas.
5. Consider the Airport Master Plan when reviewing development proposals or updating the zoning ordinance.

Chapter 15: Land Use

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (e) Land Use — An analysis of natural land types, existing land covers and uses, and the intrinsic suitability of lands for uses such as agriculture, forestry, mineral exploration and extraction, preservation, recreation, housing, commerce, industry, and public facilities. A map shall be prepared indicating suitable projected land uses for the jurisdiction.

This chapter establishes a policy framework for future land use decisions based on an analysis of natural land types, existing land covers and uses, and the intrinsic suitability of land for housing, commerce, industry, public facilities, recreation, and preservation. This chapter is organized around intrinsic suitability to ensure land use planning remains grounded in the physical, environmental, and service-related realities of the city. By evaluating location, existing development patterns, infrastructure availability, environmental constraints, and long-term public costs, the City can guide growth in a manner that is orderly, efficient, and sustainable.

This chapter does not establish zoning or development rights but is intended to guide updates to land use ordinances, including permitted uses and development standards. It also serves as a coordinating element among other components of the Comprehensive Plan, using established trends, needs, conditions, and capacity to evaluate whether sufficient land is designated for various uses over the planning horizon. The accompanying Comprehensive Plan Map translates these policy considerations into a visual framework that communicates long-range land use expectations.

Section 1 – Existing Land Use Pattern and Development Context

Existing Land Use Pattern

Priest River's land use pattern reflects its history as a mill town. The community contains a compact downtown and older residential neighborhoods, with commercial services concentrated near the highway corridors and downtown, and industrial areas associated with historic and contemporary employment centers as well as the industrial park located on Shannon Lane on the west end of the city.

Assessor parcel summaries indicate that by 2025 the city contained approximately 1,205 total parcels, including 802 residential parcels with structures, 126 vacant residential parcels, 109 commercial parcels with structures, 44 vacant commercial parcels, 8 industrial parcels with structures, and 10 vacant industrial parcels (City of Priest River, 2017–2025). This distribution reflects incremental urban growth occurring through a combination of infill development, redevelopment, annexation, and subdivision rather than large-scale expansion.

Residential Land Demand and Absorption

Building permit activity provides a direct indicator of housing demand and residential land absorption within the City of Priest River. Between 2017 and 2025, the City issued between 24 and 70 total building permits annually, with single-family dwelling permits ranging from 7 to 51 per year (City of Priest River, 2025). Permit activity increased steadily through 2019, accelerated between 2020 and 2022, and moderated after 2022, mirroring the broader regional housing market conditions.

Subdivision activity over the past decade demonstrates that residential demand has not been met through infill alone and that the City has continued to create new buildable inventory through land division and platting. Based on City subdivision records from 2016 through 2025, the City approved 39 land division applications, resulting in the creation of approximately 288 gross residential lots, six of which included land annexed into the city at the time of approval (City of Priest River, 2016–2025). Lot creation has been uneven across time, with a small number of larger subdivisions producing a significant share of new lots, while other years experienced limited or no residential land division activity. This stepped pattern of supply is consistent with market-driven subdivision development in small cities.

The inclusion of annexed land in a portion of these subdivisions highlights the City's historical reliance on incremental annexation, rather than large greenfield expansion, to maintain residential land supply. Lot creation has occurred in phases, reflecting both market conditions and the physical and service constraints of a largely built-out city.

The peak year of residential construction occurred in 2022, when 70 total permits were issued, including 51 single-family dwellings (City of Priest River, 2017–2025a). During this same period, assessor data shows a continued shift from vacant land toward developed residential parcels. Residential parcels with structures increased from 654 in 2017 to 802 in 2025, while vacant residential parcels declined from 168 to 126 over the same period

(Bonner County Assessor, 2017–2025). Together, sustained permit activity, subdivision-based lot creation, annexation, and declining vacant parcel counts indicate continued absorption of residential land within city limits.

These trends support the conclusion that land designated for residential use has generally been sufficient to meet housing demand over the past decade. However, the data also indicate that remaining vacant residential land is finite and that future residential supply has depended in part on annexation. Long-term adequacy will therefore depend not only on the amount of land designated for residential use, but also on the City's ability to facilitate timely annexation, allow a broader range of housing types, and align development standards with available infrastructure capacity and neighborhood compatibility (City of Priest River, 2026).

Current Vacant Land Supply

Assessor data provides a practical indicator of land availability by identifying vacant parcels and the acreage associated with major property categories. As of 2025, the city had approximately:

- 105.2 acres of vacant residential property
- 134.1 acres of vacant commercial property
- 32.5 acres of vacant industrial property

"Vacant" in this context means parcels without structures of any kind, not constructed and non-occupied vacant housing units.

These figures are useful for identifying where remaining land capacity exists within the city. However, vacant acreage alone does not determine development feasibility. Intrinsic suitability, including infrastructure availability, environmental constraints, access, and long-term public service costs, ultimately determines whether remaining land can support residential, commercial, or industrial development in a feasible and sustainable manner.

Section 2 – Intrinsic Suitability

Intrinsic suitability describes the underlying characteristics of land that influence whether a use is appropriate, safe, and economically feasible. In Priest River, the most important suitability factors for land use planning are physical & environmental constraints and infrastructure serviceability.

Physical and Environmental Constraints

Key constraints and suitability considerations include:

- Floodplain and river adjacency, including the need for flood-resilient site design and limitations on certain intensities of development.
- Steep slopes and unstable soils in localized areas that increase development costs and constrain road connectivity.
- Wetlands, riparian areas, and environmentally sensitive areas that support preservation, recreation, and low-impact uses.

This chapter does not replace the detailed analysis in the Natural Resources and Hazardous Areas chapters. Instead, it uses those constraints to evaluate which land use categories are realistic in different parts of the city.

Infrastructure Serviceability and Capacity

The practical ability to serve land with public water, wastewater, streets, storm drainage, and other municipal services is often the strongest determinant of what types and intensities of development are appropriate in different areas of the city. Infrastructure serviceability, rather than land availability alone, plays a central role in determining intrinsic suitability. Where utility services exist or can be extended efficiently within planned capital improvement frameworks, land is intrinsically more suitable for higher-intensity and urban forms of development, including:

- Smaller residential lots
- Attached housing types and multifamily
- Commercial uses
- Industrial and employment-related uses
- Public and institutional facilities
- Parks and recreational amenities

Conversely, where service extensions would require substantial capital investment or exceed system capacity, land is less suitable for higher-intensity development and may be more appropriate for lower-intensity uses. This distinction is particularly important in a compact city with finite infrastructure systems and limited opportunities for large-scale expansion.

As detailed in the Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities chapter, the City owns and operates both its water and wastewater systems and maintains available capacity to serve existing development and anticipated growth. That chapter identifies current system capacities,

service areas, and planned improvements that inform where and how growth can occur over the planning horizon. Land use designations and development expectations in this chapter are intentionally aligned with those capacity assessments to ensure growth occurs in a safe, sanitary, and fiscally responsible manner.

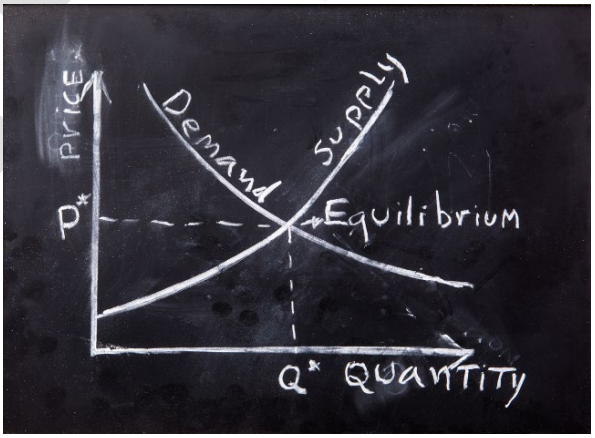
This serviceability-first approach supports coordinated planning across plan components and helps the City avoid designating land for uses that would require premature, inefficient, or unrealistic expansion of public facilities. By aligning land use patterns with documented infrastructure capacity and capital planning, the City can accommodate growth while protecting existing investments and maintaining reliable delivery of service.

Section 3 – Land Demand, Capacity, and Adequacy

Residential Demand and Land Capacity

The Housing chapter identifies an active housing market with significant pricing pressure in recent years, and notes that non-primary housing reduces effective supply for year-round residents.

The City's housing stock is predominantly single-family, with limited multifamily development, which can constrain affordability and housing choice.



Assessor data shows two simultaneous trends: residential parcels with structures increased from 654 in 2017 to 802 in 2025, while vacant residential parcels declined from 168 to 126 over the same period. This is a strong indicator that, despite additional land annexations, land absorption continues while available lands decrease.

In addition, vacant residential acreage is approximately 105.2 acres as of 2025. Standing alone, that number does not convert directly into units because future yield depends on zoning, subdivision design, environmental constraints, and infrastructure capacity.

Based on the observed absorption of vacant residential parcels and the remaining vacant residential acreage, the City's residential land base appears adequate for projected growth, but with an important caveat: adequacy depends on whether residential areas allow enough housing types and densities to meet demand without forcing growth into only large-lot patterns. Stated differently, Priest River likely has enough residential land. The bigger risk is that regulatory friction and limited housing types slow production, resulting in increased prices and reduced affordability.

What To Loosen or Streamline to Meet Residential Demand

If the City wants residential development to happen smoothly and predictably, the most effective changes are usually procedural and dimensional rather than expanding land designations. Consistent with the Housing chapter's emphasis on housing diversity and incremental supply tools such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), the City should prioritize:

- Clear, objective subdivision standards that reduce negotiation and rework.
- Housing type flexibility in appropriate districts, including ADUs and limited attached housing where services exist.
- Predictable review timelines and complete application standards that reduce stop and start processing.
- Alignment between zoning density assumptions and utility capacity tracking, so applicants know what is feasible early.

Commercial Land Demand and Capacity

The Economic Development chapter identifies a diverse and evolving local economy, with growth in services, construction trades, tourism-related enterprises, and small businesses. In small cities, commercial land demand is often expressed through redevelopment, building reuse, and small site infill rather than through large commercial subdivisions.

Assessor data indicates 44 vacant commercial parcels and approximately 134.1 acres of vacant commercial property as of 2025.

Commercial land appears adequate for projected demand. The more meaningful policy issue is not acreage, but whether commercial areas allow a mix of uses and site design patterns that match market realities, particularly small-scale downtown and corridor reinvestment.

Industrial Land Demand Land Capacity

Industrial demand in Priest River is likely to remain focused on light industrial, contracting, storage, and small manufacturing uses, rather than large heavy-industrial campuses, due to market size and workforce scale.

Assessor data indicates 10 vacant industrial parcels and approximately 32.5 vacant industrial acres as of 2025.

Industrial land supply appears adequate for projected needs. The main policy priority should be to protect industrial land from piecemeal conversion to non-industrial uses that would erode the City's long-term ability to support employment and a diversified tax base.

Land Use Findings

Based on analysis of existing land use patterns, building permit activity, subdivision history, assessor parcel data, and housing and economic trends, the City makes the following findings:

1. Land designated for residential use within city limits has generally been sufficient to meet housing demand over the past decade.
2. Remaining residential land capacity exists, but future adequacy depends on regulatory flexibility and housing type diversity rather than expansion of residential acreage.
3. Commercial land supply exceeds recent development demand, and future commercial growth is expected to occur primarily through infill, redevelopment, and reuse of existing sites.
4. Industrial land supply appears adequate for projected needs, but long-term economic resilience depends on protecting existing industrial areas from conversion to incompatible uses.
5. Infrastructure serviceability, rather than land availability alone, is the primary constraint on future development intensity.
6. Areas outside city limits but within logical service and annexation corridors represent appropriate locations for long-range land use planning to support orderly growth and annexation when requested.

Section 4 – Future Land Use Categories and Map

Purpose of the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map expresses the City's policy direction for where different land use types are suitable over the planning period based on intrinsic suitability, existing development patterns, and infrastructure serviceability. The map provides a framework to guide zoning updates, subdivision standards, annexation decisions, and capital

improvement planning. It is not zoning and does not confer development rights.

Future Land Use Categories

- **Low Density Residential:**
  Areas intended primarily for single-family residential development at lower densities. These areas are typically served by public water and sewer or are planned for future extensions and emphasize neighborhood stability, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and gradual incremental growth.
- **Medium Density Residential:**
  Areas suitable for a mix of housing types, including smaller-lot single-family homes, duplexes, and limited multifamily development, where infrastructure capacity, access, and site conditions support higher residential intensity. These areas often function as transition zones between lower-density residential neighborhoods and higher-intensity mixed-use or commercial areas.
- **Mixed Use:**
  Areas intended to accommodate a mix of residential, commercial, civic, and employment uses in a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment. Mixed-use areas are generally located where transportation access, utilities, and surrounding development patterns support integrated and flexible land use.
- **Commercial:**
  Areas intended to accommodate a broad range of commercial uses, including regional retail, professional offices, personal and business services, lodging, restaurants, entertainment, and employment-related activities. Commercial areas may also include highway-oriented commercial development designed primarily for vehicular access and on-site parking, as well as more compact commercial forms, depending on location, access, and surrounding land use context. Appropriate access management, site design, and compatibility with adjacent land uses are essential considerations in these areas.
- **Industrial:**
  Areas intended for industrial, light manufacturing, warehousing, and employment-generating uses that require larger sites, transportation access, and separation from incompatible uses to ensure operational efficiency and long-term viability. Industrial areas are intended to support sustained employment activity and should be protected from incremental conversion to non-industrial uses that would limit long-term economic and infrastructure planning objectives.
- **Public:**
  Areas designated for public facilities, utilities, schools, parks, civic uses, and other institutional activities that serve community needs and support public service delivery.

Comprehensive Plan Map Requirement

Appendix D, contains the City of Priest River Comprehensive Plan Map. The map illustrates projected land use patterns based on intrinsic suitability, existing development,

serviceability, and adopted community goals.

Portions of the Future Land Use Map extend beyond the city limits and, in some cases, beyond the adopted Area of Impact. These designations reflect long-range planning assumptions intended to support coordinated land use planning, infrastructure investment, and annexation when requested. They do not imply annexation approval or a commitment to extend services outside the city limits.

Comprehensive Plan Map Color Legend	
	Low Density Residential
	Medium Density Residential
	Mixed Use
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Public

Table 3: Comprehensive Plan Map Color Legend

Section 5 – Land Use Planning Implications

Based on intrinsic suitability and the demand and capacity indicators above, the City's land use program should emphasize:

- Infill and reinvestment where streets, water, and wastewater already exist.
- Targeted residential flexibility to increase housing options and reduce cost pressure.
- Mixed-use and adaptive reuse in the downtown and corridor areas to match market realities.
- Protection of employment land, especially industrial areas, so the City retains long-term job capacity and tax base diversity.
- Coordinated planning with public facilities so land use decisions remain safe, sanitary, and financially sustainable.

Section 6 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Guide land use decisions to support orderly growth, adequate housing opportunity, and efficient provision of public facilities based on intrinsic suitability.

Policies:

1. Evaluate land use and development proposals based on intrinsic suitability, including availability of water, wastewater, transportation access, and other public facilities.
2. Maintain sufficient land designated for residential use to accommodate projected housing demand while prioritizing infill development and redevelopment in areas served by existing infrastructure.
3. Support a range of residential development types, including manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units, and limited multifamily housing, where compatible with surrounding land uses and infrastructure capacity.
4. Encourage reinvestment, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of existing residential and mixed-use properties to efficiently utilize existing land and public facilities.
5. Coordinate land use designations and development standards with capital

improvement planning to ensure growth occurs in a safe, sanitary, and fiscally responsible manner.

6. Recognize the influence of seasonal and non-primary housing on housing availability when evaluating land use patterns and future residential capacity.

Chapter 16: Implementation

Introduction

Idaho Code §67-6508 (o) Implementation — An analysis to determine actions, programs, budgets, ordinances, or other methods including scheduling of public expenditures to provide for the timely execution of the various components of the plan.

This chapter serves as the operational link between the goals, policies, and analyses contained in the City of Priest River Comprehensive Plan and the day-to-day decisions, capital investments, and regulatory actions undertaken by the City. While the preceding chapters establish the community's vision, land use framework, and service needs, this chapter identifies the mechanisms through which those policies are carried out over time.

It evaluates the actions, programs, budgets, ordinances, and public expenditures necessary to carry out the Comprehensive Plan in a timely and coordinated manner. Implementation is an ongoing process that aligns land use decisions, infrastructure investments, and regulatory updates with adopted policy direction.

The chapter also provides guidance to elected officials, staff, and partner agencies in prioritizing actions and maintaining consistency across planning, budgeting, and capital programming efforts. Implementation of this plan occurs through adopted ordinances, the Capital Improvement Program, annual budgeting, and supporting plans such as the *Transportation Plan (2024)* and utility master plans; see the Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities Chapter for more details and analysis.

Section 1 – Governance and Administrative Framework

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan relies on coordinated action among the City Council, City staff, and partner agencies. The City Council is responsible for adopting ordinances, approving budgets, authorizing capital expenditures, and making final land use decisions that must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. City staff provide professional analysis and recommendations to the City Council to support land use decisions and policy implementation. City staff are also responsible for administering adopted ordinances, preparing staff analyses, coordinating with service providers, maintaining data used to evaluate plan effectiveness, and recommending updates as conditions change.

Implementation also somewhat depends on coordination with external agencies including

Bonner County, the Idaho Transportation Department, Panhandle Health District, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, local school districts, and public safety providers.

Section 2 – Regulatory Implementation Tools

Zoning and Development Regulations

The City's zoning ordinance, development standards, and zoning map are the primary regulatory tools used to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning districts, permitted uses, dimensional standards, design requirements, and other land use regulations must remain consistent with the land use designations and policies adopted in this plan.

As part of implementation, the City should periodically evaluate zoning regulations to ensure they reflect current plan policies, infrastructure capacity, and community objectives. This includes reviewing subdivision standards, design requirements, and procedural provisions to ensure they promote predictable outcomes and long-term community sustainability.

Recent planning efforts and development trends indicate the importance of aligning subdivision standards with long-term infrastructure maintenance and public service costs, particularly where prior approvals relied on discretionary development models rather than uniform standards.

Ordinance Updates and Amendments

Ordinance amendments should be scheduled strategically and proactively rather than reactively. Priority should be given to amendments that:

- Address inconsistencies between adopted plan policies and existing code.
- Implement infrastructure and service assumptions identified in supporting plans.
- Improve clarity and administrative efficiency.
- Reduce long-term fiscal and maintenance impacts.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan may include comprehensive review and modernization of the City's land use and associated regulations, as well as phased and targeted updates over time, to ensure consistency with adopted policies, infrastructure capacity, and community objectives.

Section 3 – Capital Improvement Planning and Public Investment

Capital Improvement Plan Coordination

Capital investments are a critical component of plan implementation. The City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) provides the primary mechanism for aligning public expenditures with planned growth and service needs.

Historic capital planning efforts, including the City's Development Impact Fee Program and Capital Improvement Plan, establish a framework for evaluating facility needs, levels of service, and funding responsibilities associated with growth (City of Priest River, 2007)

The City should continue to coordinate capital planning with land use decisions to ensure that infrastructure investments support planned development patterns rather than react to unanticipated growth pressures.

Transportation and Infrastructure Alignment

Transportation improvements should be implemented consistent with the City's Transportation Plan and in coordination with regional and state agencies. Infrastructure investments should prioritize safety, connectivity, and system maintenance while supporting land uses identified in the Comprehensive Plan (City of Priest River, 2024).

Public expenditures related to streets, utilities, parks, and facilities should be evaluated for consistency with both short-term service demands and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Section 4 – Budget, Time Commitment, and Code Maintenance

Annual Budget Alignment

Annual budgeting is an important implementation tool for ensuring that sufficient time and resources are allocated to carry out the Comprehensive Plan. Rather than focusing on staffing expansion, implementation in Priest River relies on intentional allocation of staff time and coordination with the City Council to support ongoing plan and code maintenance.

Departmental budgets should account for routine planning responsibilities, periodic code review, professional development, and coordination with contracted services. Budget decisions should recognize that maintaining up-to-date land use and development regulations reduces long-term administrative burden, legal risk, and inefficiencies in development review.

Code Maintenance and Review

Effective implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires regular review of land use regulations, development standards, and related ordinances to ensure continued consistency with adopted plan policies, infrastructure capacity, and community objectives.

City staff should conduct a structured review of land use and development regulations on a regular basis, such as annually or biennially, and prepare a summary report to the City Council identifying recommended actions. These actions may include proposed code amendments, comprehensive plan updates, or identification of areas requiring further study.

Legal and Policy Awareness

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan also depends on maintaining awareness of changes in state law, administrative rules, and relevant case law affecting land use, property rights, and local government authority. City staff should monitor proposed, pending, and enacted changes to state statutes, as well as significant court decisions, and evaluate their potential implications on local ordinances and procedures.

When appropriate, staff should advise the City Council of legal or policy changes that may warrant updates to local codes or administrative practices to ensure continued compliance with state law.

Section 5 – Monitoring, Evaluation, and Plan Updates

Ongoing Review and Monitoring

The Comprehensive Plan should be treated as a living document. Implementation includes regular monitoring of development trends, infrastructure capacity, and policy effectiveness.

Key indicators for monitoring may include:

- Development activity and permit trends.
- Infrastructure capacity and maintenance needs.
- Housing availability and land supply.
- Transportation system performance.

Plan Amendments and Periodic Updates

Periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan ensures that policies remain relevant and defensible. Updates may be initiated in response to statutory changes, infrastructure constraints, demographic shifts, or community priorities.

Minor amendments may be processed as needed, while more comprehensive updates should be scheduled deliberately and supported by data and public engagement.

Section 6 – Interagency Coordination and Partnerships

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan requires coordination beyond City boundaries. Many services and facilities influencing land use decisions fall under the jurisdiction of external agencies.

The City should continue to coordinate planning activities with stakeholders to ensure consistent application of standards and avoid duplication of effort. Coordination is particularly important within the Area of Impact, where land use decisions have long-term implications for annexation, infrastructure extension, and service provision.

Section 7 – Implementation Framework and Action Table

The following implementation framework identifies key tools and actions used by the City to carry out the Comprehensive Plan. This table is intended to guide prioritization and coordination rather than establish fixed schedules or funding commitments. Many actions are ongoing and are implemented through routine City operations, development review, and annual budgeting processes.

Table 4: Implementation Framework for the Priest River Comprehensive Plan

Implementation Area	Primary Tools or Actions	Responsible Parties	Timing
Land Use Regulation	Maintain and update zoning ordinance and development standards for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan	City Council, Staff	Ongoing
Subdivision Standards	Periodically review subdivision and infrastructure standards to address long-term maintenance and service impacts	City Council, Staff	Short- to mid-term
Capital Planning	Align capital investments with planned growth through the Capital Improvement Program	City Council, Staff	Annual
Transportation	Implement transportation improvements consistent with the adopted Transportation Plan and agency coordination	City Council, Staff, ITD	Ongoing

Public Facilities and Utilities	Coordinate development approvals with infrastructure capacity and service provider input	City Council, Staff, Service Providers	Ongoing
Budgeting	Align departmental budgets with implementation responsibilities and workload demands	City Council, Staff	Annual
Interagency Coordination	Coordinate land use and infrastructure planning with County and state agencies	Staff, Partner Agencies	Ongoing
Plan Monitoring	Track development trends, infrastructure capacity, and policy effectiveness	Staff	Ongoing
Plan Updates	Conduct periodic review and initiate plan amendments as needed	City Council, Staff	Periodic

This framework supports implementation without limiting the City's ability to adapt priorities or respond to unforeseen circumstances. Specific projects, funding levels, and schedules are addressed through separate adopted documents such as the Capital Improvement Program and annual budget (City of Priest River, 2007; City of Priest River, 2024).

Section 8 – Implementation Summary

Implementation of the Priest River Comprehensive Plan is an ongoing process that integrates regulatory tools, capital planning, budgeting, routine code maintenance, and coordinated decision-making. Successful implementation depends on intentional allocation of staff time, clear direction from the City Council, and regular attention to maintaining current and effective land use regulations.

Carrying out the plan requires a disciplined approach to reviewing and updating land use ordinances to ensure continued consistency with adopted policies, infrastructure capacity, and community objectives. Regular administrative review and proactive code maintenance reduce long-term inefficiencies, legal risk, and the need for reactive amendments.

Implementation also relies on monitoring development trends, infrastructure conditions, and policy effectiveness to inform when plan amendments or code updates are warranted. Awareness of changes in state law and relevant case law affecting land use and property rights is essential to maintaining compliance and protecting the City's regulatory authority.

By aligning land use decisions with capital investment, administrative maintenance, and periodic evaluation, the City can ensure that growth and change occur in a manner that is deliberate, fiscally responsible, and consistent with long-term community goals.

Section 9 – Goal and Policies

Goal: Ensure the timely, coordinated, and fiscally responsible implementation of the City of Priest River Comprehensive Plan through consistent regulatory practices, strategic public investment, and ongoing evaluation.

Policies:

1. Implement the Comprehensive Plan through adopted land use regulations that reflect the plan's goals and policies.
2. Maintain flexibility in implementation methods to allow the City to respond to changing conditions, community priorities, and statutory requirements.
3. Prioritize ordinance updates and administrative actions that improve clarity, consistency, and predictability in land use decision-making.
4. Coordinate implementation efforts with stakeholders to ensure efficient service delivery and regulatory consistency.
5. Periodically review and update the Comprehensive Plan and land use ordinances to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.
6. Provide for regular administrative review of land use regulations and procedures, including periodic reporting to the City Council on recommended code amendments, plan updates, and the implications of changes in state law or relevant case law affecting land use and property rights.

Appendix A: List of Figures and Tables

List of Figures

List of Tables

Appendix B: Bibliography by Chapter

This appendix serves as the complete bibliography for the Comprehensive Plan. Citations are provided throughout the document and correspond to the sources listed below by chapter.

As noted in the Introduction, several photographs, landscapes, and cityscapes used throughout this document are images held in the City of Priest River's archives and were originally produced under contract by Clearwater Landscapes for City use.

Several historic photographs reproduced in this document are unattributed images displayed at Priest River City Hall or maintained as digital copies by the City. Photographer and dates are unknown unless otherwise noted.

This document also includes construction, project, and park photographs taken by City of Priest River staff in the course of routine public works, parks, and capital improvement activities and maintained in the City's records.

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Appendix C: Goals and Policies by Chapter

The goals and policies adopted as part of this Comprehensive Plan are presented at the conclusion of each chapter. Appendix C compiles those goals and policies into a single, consolidated reference to provide a clear and concise overview of the Plan's policy framework.

This appendix is intended for ease of reference only. The goals and policies listed herein are identical to those contained within the individual chapters and do not alter, expand, or supersede the adopted text of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 1: Property Rights

Goal: Ensure that all City policies and land use decisions protect private property rights while balancing the community's long-term interests.

Policies:

1. Apply the Idaho Attorney General's checklist when reviewing regulations or actions that could affect private property.
2. Evaluate all new and amended ordinances for potential regulatory takings before adoption.
3. Prepare and adopt a written reasoned statement for every land use decision, as required by Idaho Code §67-6535, clearly explaining the factual and legal basis and how the decision complies with the applicable standards.
4. Maintain public access to information and ensure property owners are notified and heard in the decision-making process.
5. Regularly review city code and procedures to ensure consistency with Idaho Code §67-6508, §67-6535, and §67-8001 through §67-8004.

Chapter 2: Population

Goal: Plan for population growth that maintains adequate services, housing, and infrastructure for current and future residents.

Policies:

1. Maintain and review current Census, American Community Survey, and Idaho Department of Labor data to monitor population trends.
2. Encourage infill and redevelopment within areas served by existing infrastructure to promote cost-effective growth.
3. Coordinate demographic planning with housing, utilities, transportation, and capital improvement programs.
4. Support a housing mix that meets the needs of families, seniors, and individuals across income levels.
5. Monitor demographic shifts related to age, income, household size, and in-migration to support equitable access to community services.

Chapter 3: School Facilities and Transportation

Goal: Ensure that land use and transportation planning decisions in the City of Priest River consider existing school facilities, student transportation needs, and long-term land use

compatibility while respecting the independent authority of West Bonner School District.

Policies:

1. Identify and consider the location of existing school facilities when evaluating land use policies, uses, and zoning establishment.
2. Consider existing conditions and long-term trends related to school facilities and student transportation during comprehensive planning and land use ordinance review.
3. Provide notice of applicable land use applications to West Bonner School District for review and comment.
4. Consider school district input during land use review, recognizing that determinations regarding school capacity, facilities, and transportation remain the responsibility of the District.
5. Coordinate transportation planning efforts to support safe access to school facilities, including pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic safety considerations.

Chapter 4: Economic Development

Goal: Support a diverse, resilient, and sustainable local economy that provides employment opportunities, strengthens the tax base, enhances community character, and aligns with Priest River's long-term vision.

Policies:

1. Encourage economic diversification to support employment across construction, manufacturing, health services, tourism, and small business sectors.
2. Maintain zoning that provides suitable areas for commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development.
3. Promote infill and redevelopment in areas already served by public infrastructure.
4. Support reinvestment in the downtown core to strengthen community identity and attract local businesses.
5. Encourage façade improvements, building rehabilitation, and pedestrian-oriented site design in downtown Priest River.
6. Enhance tourism opportunities by improving signage, river access, recreational amenities, and community event infrastructure.
7. Provide zoning flexibility that accommodates home occupations and small-scale entrepreneurship while protecting neighborhood character.
8. Foster a business-friendly regulatory environment through clear procedures and consistent application of land use standards.

Chapter 5: Natural Resources

Goal: Protect and maintain Priest River's natural resources to ensure long-term environmental quality, public health, and a resilient community that reflects its rivers, forests, soils, and wildlife.

Policies:

1. Promote land use practices that help maintain clean and cold water in the Priest and

Pend Oreille Rivers by encouraging retention of natural shoreline vegetation, use of erosion and sediment control, and appropriate setbacks near waterways.
2. Protect delineated wetlands to the extent of the city's jurisdiction and consistent with the Clean Water Act and require site-specific delineations when appropriate.
3. Discourage new development within floodplains, steep slopes, and areas with high groundwater, and wetlands where feasible. Encourage site evaluations, wetland delineations, and geotechnical reviews when appropriate.
4. Support development practices that may reduce sedimentation, preserve riparian shading vegetation, and minimize potential impacts to fish species of concern.
5. Coordinate with IDWR, USACE, EPA, Idaho Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on development proposals that may involve wetlands, waterways, wildlife, or federal permitting requirements.
6. Make natural resource information readily available to property owners and applicants, including shoreline best practices, stormwater management guidance, wildlife-friendly design approaches, and wetland stewardship resources.

Chapter 6: Hazardous Areas

Goal: Enhance community safety and resilience by identifying hazardous areas and guiding development to minimize risk to life, property, and the environment.

Policies:

1. Maintain and apply current FEMA floodplain maps and require appropriate mitigation measures for development in or near designated flood hazard areas.
2. Require geotechnical, hydrologic, or engineering evaluations for projects located on steep slopes or within identified hazard zones.
3. Encourage environmental assessment and cleanup of Brownfield sites to support safe redevelopment and reduce contamination risk.
4. Integrate hazard mitigation considerations into capital improvement planning, infrastructure design, and long-range land use strategies.

Chapter 7: Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities

Goal: Ensure that public services, facilities, and utilities are planned, provided, and managed in a manner that protects public health and safety, supports existing development, and allows for orderly growth consistent with available infrastructure capacity and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Policies:

1. Require proposed development, land use changes, and annexations to demonstrate the availability of adequate public services and utilities, consistent with adopted ordinances, plans, and standards.
2. Evaluate development proposals using adopted water and wastewater planning documents and utility capacity tracking, including ERU allocations, to ensure that cumulative impacts do not exceed system capacity or compromise service reliability.

3. Prioritize protection of public health and safety when reviewing development proposals in areas served by aging infrastructure, limited redundancy, or known system constraints.
4. Coordinate land use decisions with planned capital improvements to minimize infrastructure conflicts, reduce lifecycle costs, and support efficient long-term system operation.
5. Require new development to mitigate project-specific impacts to public services and utilities through on-site improvements, system upgrades, or other measures consistent with adopted codes and capital planning practices.
6. Recognize the role of independent districts, county agencies, and regional service providers in delivering public services and provide those entities opportunities to review and provide feedback on pending land use decisions.
7. Maintain flexibility in service provision and infrastructure planning to allow the City to respond to changing conditions, updated engineering analysis, and evolving regulatory requirements.
8. Use adopted infrastructure plans, utility capacity data, and service provider coordination to inform the drafting, amendment, and periodic review of land use ordinances.
9. Update development standards, design requirements, and procedural regulations as needed to ensure consistency with available utility capacity, infrastructure constraints, and documented system performance.
10. Incorporate infrastructure coordination requirements into ordinances to promote efficient extension of services, minimize conflicts within public rights-of-way, and reduce long-term maintenance and lifecycle costs.
11. Periodically review and revise ordinances governing public services and utilities to reflect changes in engineering standards, regulatory requirements, service provider capabilities, and community needs.
12. Incorporate utility transmission corridor protection and coordination requirements into development and right-of-way ordinances to ensure safe access, efficient maintenance, and long-term infrastructure reliability.
13. Ensure that ordinance updates maintain flexibility to address site-specific conditions while providing clear and predictable standards for applicants, staff, and decision-makers.
14. Coordinate ordinance development with the capital improvement planning process to support orderly growth and avoid creating regulatory expectations that exceed the City's ability to provide or maintain infrastructure.

Chapter 8: Transportation

Goal: Maintain a safe, accessible, and efficient transportation system that enhances mobility for residents and visitors, supports economic development, and coordinates effectively with regional partners while preserving Priest River's small-town character.

Policies:

1. Improve safety and mobility along U.S. 2 through ongoing coordination with ITD.

2. Enhance intersection performance and collector street connectivity to support local circulation.
3. Expand sidewalk networks and improve pedestrian crossings, particularly near schools and commercial areas.
4. Support continued reinvestment in the downtown street network, building on recent revitalization projects that improved pedestrian access, drainage, and safety.
5. Identify opportunities for bicycle facilities and routes that improve connectivity.
6. Require new development to construct or upgrade streets, sidewalks, and access improvements proportional to project impacts.
7. Support access management practices that reduce conflict points along commercial corridors.
8. Plan future roadway corridors in the Area of Impact to maintain efficient regional connections.
9. Consider truck circulation needs in roadway design and development review.
10. Maintain awareness of rail access opportunities for local industry.
11. Coordinate improvements and maintenance responsibilities with ITD in accordance with adopted cooperative agreements and applicable regulations.
12. Maintain functional street classifications that align with long-term growth and transportation demands.

Chapter 9: Recreation

Goal: Support a connected, accessible, and sustainable recreation system that enhances quality of life, preserves riverfront resources, and reflects Priest River's community character.

Policies:

1. Support phased planning and development of Two Rivers Park, consistent with adopted master planning efforts.
2. Protect and enhance public access to the Priest River and Pend Oreille River while preserving environmental resources.
3. Coordinate with Bonner County regarding recreation facilities within city limits, including Bonner Park West.
4. Encourage recreation development that is compatible with surrounding land uses and community character.
5. Promote accessible and inclusive design in parks, trails, and recreation facilities.
6. Support partnerships and funding strategies that contribute to long-term financial sustainability.
7. Consider recreation impacts and opportunities when reviewing land use decisions affecting riverfront and open space areas.
8. Maintain flexibility in recreation planning to adapt to changing community needs and future opportunities.

Chapter 10: Special Areas or Sites

Goal: Protect and enhance the scenic, historical, ecological, and cultural resources that

define Priest River's identity and contribute to the community's quality of life.

Policies:

1. Conserve scenic viewsheds along the Priest and Pend Oreille Rivers and maintain clear visual gateways into the city.
2. Encourage restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic structures consistent with established design standards.
3. Participate in state and federal historic-preservation programs, including the Certified Local Government program.
4. Coordinate with tribal governments and the Idaho State Historical Society to identify and safeguard archaeological and cultural resources.
5. Promote public awareness, education, and heritage tourism that highlight the city's historic, cultural, and natural features.

Chapter 11: Housing

Goal: Provide safe, sanitary, and adequate housing in Priest River that supports a range of housing types and household needs while remaining consistent with available infrastructure and public services.

Policies:

1. Evaluate housing proposals based on demonstrated availability of water, sewer, and related public infrastructure capacity.
2. Encourage a range of housing types, including low-cost conventional housing, manufactured housing, and limited multifamily development, where compatible with zoning and infrastructure.
3. Support reinvestment, rehabilitation, and maintenance of existing housing stock to improve housing standards and neighborhood stability.
4. Recognize the role of seasonal and non-primary housing when assessing housing availability, demand, and community housing needs.
5. Coordinate housing planning and development decisions with the City's capital improvement planning to ensure safe and sanitary development.
6. Regulate accessory dwelling units in appropriate residential zoning districts in a manner that ensures compatibility with existing neighborhoods and available infrastructure.

Chapter 12: Community Design

Goal: Preserve Priest River's small-town character while supporting growth, reinvestment, and economic vitality through flexible, context-sensitive community design.

Policies:

1. Encourage development patterns, uses, and site designs that are compatible with surrounding land uses and community character.
2. Recognize the importance of landscaping, tree planting, and site design in enhancing public spaces, streetscapes, and environmental function.

3. Support building design approaches that emphasize compatibility and scale rather than prescriptive architectural requirements.
4. Encourage signage and lighting that support business visibility and public safety while minimizing visual clutter and light impacts.
5. Consider community design implications when drafting regulations for infill development, redevelopment, annexations, and major subdivision proposals.
6. Maintain flexibility in community design standards to allow for future refinement through public input, staff analysis, and City Council direction.

Chapter 13: Agriculture

Goal: Recognize that active agriculture occurs outside the city and plan accordingly.

Policies:

1. Recognize agricultural and forested lands surrounding the city when evaluating annexation, zoning, or Area of Impact decisions.
2. Encourage compatible development patterns at the urban–rural interface to reduce potential conflicts with nearby agricultural or forest management activities.
3. Make information available on Idaho's Right-to-Farm and forestry protections so residents understand typical activities associated with nearby agricultural or timber lands.
4. Encourage preservation of open space or natural buffers where new development abuts working forest or rural land uses.

Chapter 14: Public Airport Facilities

Goal: Ensure the long-term safety, compatibility, and operational viability of the Priest River Airport by aligning land use policies and zoning standards with FAA requirements and coordinating with Bonner County as necessary.

Policies:

1. Support safe and compatible operations at Priest River Airport through land use decisions that respect FAA Part 77 surfaces, safety areas, and recommended height limitations.
2. Coordinate with Bonner County and the airport manager when development proposals or planning actions may influence airport operations.
3. Encourage aviation-compatible commercial and industrial development within the Airport Overlay Zone and surrounding areas where such uses do not conflict with airport operations.
4. Ensure that zoning standards, including the Airport Overlay Zone, reflect appropriate height, noise, and safety considerations for property within airport influence areas.
5. Consider the Airport Master Plan when reviewing development proposals or updating the zoning ordinance.

Chapter 15: Land Use

Goal: Guide land use decisions to support orderly growth, adequate housing opportunity,

and efficient provision of public facilities based on intrinsic suitability.

Policies:

1. Evaluate land use and development proposals based on intrinsic suitability, including availability of water, wastewater, transportation access, and other public facilities.
2. Maintain sufficient land designated for residential use to accommodate projected housing demand while prioritizing infill development and redevelopment in areas served by existing infrastructure.
3. Support a range of residential development types, including manufactured housing, accessory dwelling units, and limited multifamily housing, where compatible with surrounding land uses and infrastructure capacity.
4. Encourage reinvestment, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of existing residential and mixed-use properties to efficiently utilize existing land and public facilities.
5. Coordinate land use designations and development standards with capital improvement planning to ensure growth occurs in a safe, sanitary, and fiscally responsible manner.
6. Recognize the influence of seasonal and non-primary housing on housing availability when evaluating land use patterns and future residential capacity.

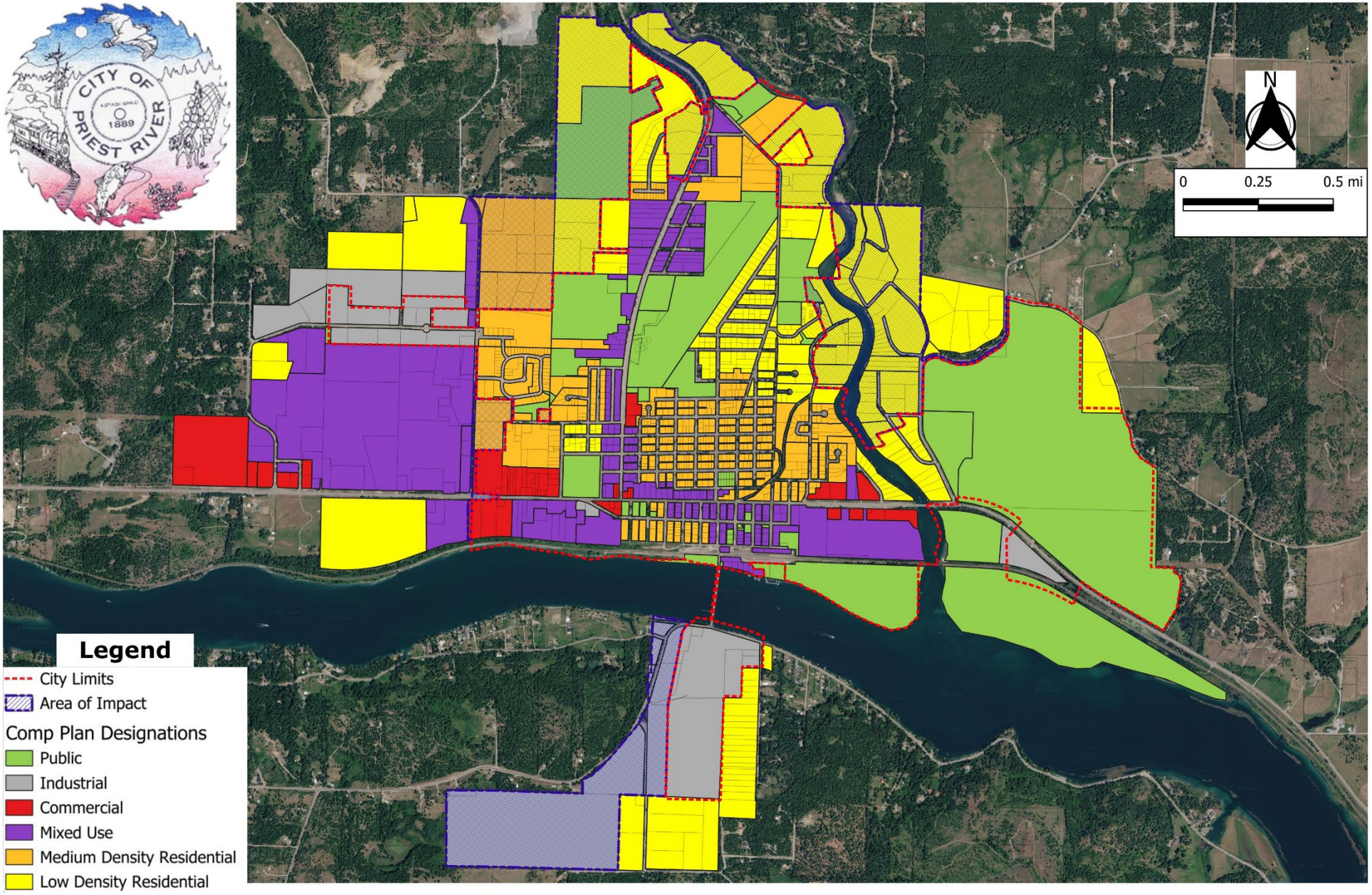
Chapter 16: Implementation

Goal: Ensure the timely, coordinated, and fiscally responsible implementation of the City of Priest River Comprehensive Plan through consistent regulatory practices, strategic public investment, and ongoing evaluation.

Policies:

1. Implement the Comprehensive Plan through adopted land use regulations that reflect the plan's goals and policies.
2. Maintain flexibility in implementation methods to allow the City to respond to changing conditions, community priorities, and statutory requirements.
3. Prioritize ordinance updates and administrative actions that improve clarity, consistency, and predictability in land use decision-making.
4. Coordinate implementation efforts with stakeholders to ensure efficient service delivery and regulatory consistency.
5. Periodically review and update the Comprehensive Plan and land use ordinances to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.
6. Provide for regular administrative review of land use regulations and procedures, including periodic reporting to the City Council on recommended code amendments, plan updates, and the implications of changes in state law or relevant case law affecting land use and property rights.

Appendix D: Comprehensive Plan Map



Appendix E: Deliverables by Plan Update Phase

The Comprehensive Plan Update Framework was presented to and accepted by the Priest River City Council on October 20, 2025.

Priest River Comprehensive Plan Update Framework (2025–2026)

Why Update the Comprehensive Plan Now?

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan has served the City well, but significant changes in growth patterns, housing demand, infrastructure needs, and development regulations since that time warrant a comprehensive update. The new plan will help Priest River proactively manage growth, preserve its small-town identity, and reaffirm the community's shared vision for the future.

What Gives the Plan Its Authority? (Purpose and Statutory Authority)

The Idaho Local Land Use Planning Act (Idaho Code Title 67, Chapter 65) requires every city to maintain a current comprehensive plan that addresses topics such as population, property rights, land use, and public facilities. Priest River's plan, adopted in 2013, still reflects enduring community values but must be updated to ensure continued legal defensibility, fiscal responsibility, and alignment with public priorities.

Key points:

- Complies with Idaho Code § 67-6508, which identifies 16 required plan components.
- Provides a transparent, data-driven framework for managing growth.
- Establishes the basis for zoning, subdivision, and infrastructure decisions.
- Serves as a shared vision among City Council, staff, and residents.

What's Included in the Comprehensive Plan? (Plan Overview)

A comprehensive plan is both a policy guide and a community vision. It outlines how land use, public services, and infrastructure will support the City's goals over the next 20 years. The updated plan will integrate all required statutory components into a single, cohesive document that reflects Priest River's unique identity and aspirations.

Components*:

Property Rights
School Facilities & Transportation
Land Use
Hazardous Areas
Transportation
Special Areas or Sites
Community Design
Implementation
Population
Economic Development
Natural Resources
Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities
Recreation
Housing
Agriculture
National Interest Electric Transmission

Public Airport Facilities

*These are the minimum components that are required, and additional topics can be added, such as Public Engagement, Environmental Impact, etc. These components can be drafted as individual components/chapters or be combined. Additionally, If any statutory component is not addressed, the City will need to specify why it is unnecessary.

When Does It Happen? (Timeline and Milestones)

The process is structured to begin in late 2025 and conclude with plan adoption by summer 2026. The schedule allows time for research, early Council review, and public participation.

The following schedule outlines the anticipated timeline for each phase and serves as a flexible framework that can adjust as needed based on Council direction or community feedback.

Phase	Milestone	Target Date
1	Project Initiation	Fall 2025
2	Data Collection & Existing Conditions	Winter 2025
3	Preliminary Drafting	Late Winter 2025
4	Public Engagement	Spring 2026
5	Drafting & Revision	Late Spring 2026
6	Adoption	Summer 2026

How Will the Process Work? (Project Phases and Deliverables)

Updating the Comprehensive Plan will follow a structured sequence designed to ensure accuracy, inclusiveness, and transparency. Each phase will build upon the last, progressing from foundational data to draft policies and ultimately to adoption. The process emphasizes early City Council input, public transparency, and practical deliverables at every stage.

Phase 1 – Launch the Process

- Confirm project goals and schedule.
- Define roles of City Council and staff.
- Establish a communication plan and kickoff meeting.
- Deliverable: timeline and communication plan, Comprehensive Plan update webpage.

Phase 2 – Build the Foundation (Data Collection & Existing Conditions)

- Compile data on demographics, housing, land use, utilities, transportation, etc.
- Review relevant local and state planning documents.
- Prepare land use and infrastructure maps.
- Deliverable: *Data Summary Report* summarizing baseline data and trends.

Phase 3 – Draft the Framework (Internal Review)

- Develop working drafts for each of the plan's elements.
- Develop a draft Comprehensive Plan map.
- Identify outdated goals and policies from the 2013 plan.
- Present early findings to City Council for input before public outreach begins.
- Deliverable: *Working Draft Comprehensive Plan and Map* for Council review and direction.

Phase 4 – Engage the Community

- Conduct community engagement using multiple methods:
    - Public survey (digital and/or paper)
    - Community open houses and workshops
    - Stakeholder interviews (agencies, districts, business groups)
    - Youth and school involvement (e.g., classroom visioning)
    - Interactive map and/or online comment portal
- Deliverables: *Public Engagement Summary* and *Community Vision Report*.

Phase 5 – Refine and Integrate

- Integrate public feedback into revised plan content.
- Align goals and policies across all components for consistency.
- Develop updated Future Land Use Map and implementation strategies.
- Deliverable: *Draft Comprehensive Plan* ready for Council workshop.

Phase 6 – Adopt and Implement

- Conduct public review and comment period.
- Hold a public hearing before the City Council, per Idaho Code §67-6509.
- Adopt the plan by resolution.
- Deliverable: *Adopted Comprehensive Plan*.

Who's Involved? (Roles and Responsibilities)

Comprehensive planning succeeds when all participants understand their role in shaping the process. In Priest River, the City Council serves as both the guiding and adopting body, with support from staff, public agencies, and the public.

Roles:

- City Council: Provides direction, approves milestones, and adopts the final plan.
- Planning & Zoning Administrator: Leads day-to-day management, data collection, drafting, and coordination.
- City Staff: Support analysis, mapping, and outreach logistics.
- Public and Stakeholders: Offer input through surveys, meetings, and workshops.

- Partner Agencies: Provide data and feedback (IDEQ, ITD, Fire District, School District, etc.).

How Will the Plan Stay Current? (Implementation and Follow-Through)

Adoption of the updated Comprehensive Plan will mark not an endpoint, but a beginning. The document will serve as a living framework to guide land use decisions, budget priorities, and community investments. Regular review and updates will help ensure the plan reflects changing conditions and continues to represent the community's vision.

Implementation Steps:

- Conduct a regular review of goals and policies.
- Align City budgets and infrastructure investments with plan priorities.
- Conduct a full plan review every five years to ensure continued relevance.

As the update progresses, supplemental materials such as public engagement summaries, data inventories, or implementation tools may be developed as needed to support the plan.

Phase 1 - Project Initiation Report

The Comprehensive Plan Update Phase 1 Project Initiation was presented to City Staff and Mayor Connolly at staff meeting held on October 14, 2025, at the Priest River City Hall.

Introduction and Purpose

The Priest River City Council has approved the initiation of the Comprehensive Plan Update, launching a coordinated citywide effort to refresh the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. This update will provide a data-driven, policy-based roadmap to guide growth, infrastructure investment, and community priorities for the next 20 years.

As required by the Idaho Local Land Use Planning Act (Title 67, Chapter 65), the updated plan will address each of the 16 statutory components while integrating local needs and goals. The process will take place between Fall 2025 and Summer 2026, culminating in City Council adoption of the updated plan.

Department Head Involvement

Department heads will play a key role in shaping the content and accuracy of the updated Comprehensive Plan. Each department's knowledge and expertise are essential to ensuring the plan reflects real-world conditions and achievable strategies.

Your involvement will include:

- Assisting with Data Gathering (as requested): Provide available data, maps, and reports related to your department's services, facilities, or operations when requested by Planning & Zoning staff.
- Review and Feedback: Review draft components when distributed, ensuring factual accuracy and alignment with your department's operations and plans.
- Coordination: Participate in interdepartmental discussions when topics overlap (e.g., utilities, parks, transportation).

Planning & Zoning will lead the drafting process but will rely on each department to contribute information and review relevant sections to ensure the plan is both practical and actionable.

Timeline and Workflow

Phase	Milestone	Target Period	Department Involvement
1. Project Initiation	Council approval, kickoff meeting, establish roles, schedule, and project web page	Oct-25	Participate in kickoff meeting; confirm roles and data sources
2. Data Collection & Existing Conditions	Compile demographics, housing, infrastructure, and service data	Oct-Dec 2025	Assist with data gathering as requested; verify baseline information
3. Preliminary Drafting	Draft plan components and maps; internal review	Dec 2025-April 2026	Review draft components; confirm data accuracy and policy alignment

4. Public Engagement	Surveys, open houses, stakeholder interviews	May-26	Provide technical input and participate in outreach as needed
5. Drafting & Revision	Integrate feedback; finalize draft plan	Jun-26	Review full draft plan and provide final comments
6. Adoption	Public hearing and City Council adoption	Jul-26	Support Council review and respond to any final revisions

Roles and Accountability

- Planning & Zoning Administrator (Project Lead): Coordinate project tasks, compile data, draft plan components, and manage interdepartmental communication.
- Department Heads: Provide subject-matter input, ensure timely review of drafts, and identify operational or budget implications of proposed goals or policies.
- City Council: Provide policy direction, review drafts, and adopt the final Comprehensive Plan.

Each department's early and consistent participation will help ensure the plan accurately represents current conditions, community priorities, and shared objectives.

Component Review Assignments

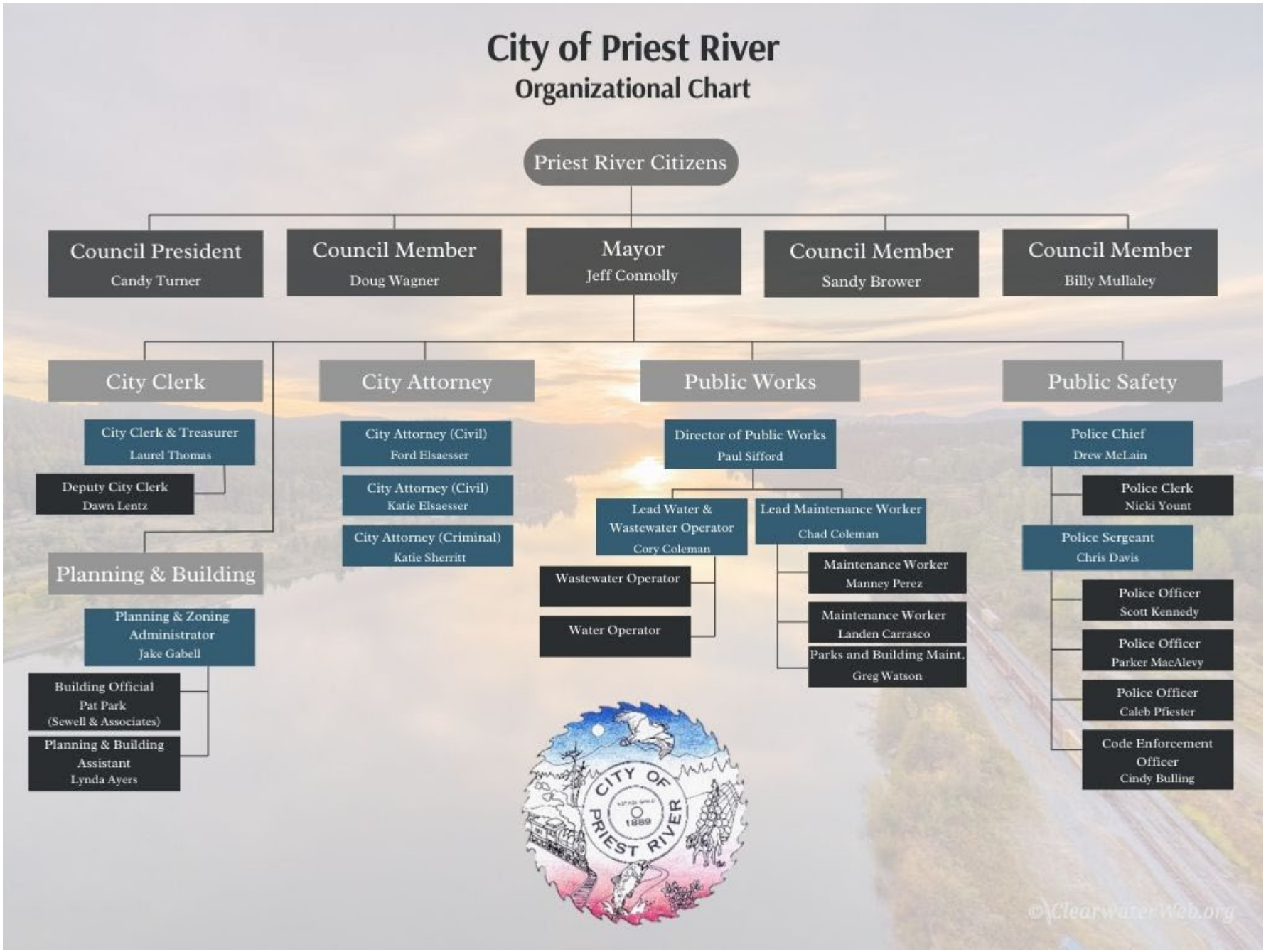
Component / Chapter	Reviewer(s)
Property Rights	Katie Elsaesser
Population	Laurel Thomas
School Facilities & Transportation	School District
Economic Development	Karly Kurylo, Jim Martin
Land Use	Department Heads
Natural Resources	Jeff Connolly
Hazardous Areas	Department Heads
Public Services, Facilities & Utilities	Paul Sifford, Laurel Thomas
Transportation	Chad Coleman, Laurel Thomas
Recreation	Greg Watson, Laurel Thomas
Special Areas or Sites	Department Heads
Housing	Department Heads
Community Design	Department Heads
Agriculture	Jeff Connolly
Implementation	Jeff Connolly, Laurel Thomas
National Interest Electric Transmission	N/A
Public Airport Facilities	Dave Schuck (Bonner County)

Next Steps

The Planning & Zoning staff will begin requesting data and information from departments during phases two and three. Draft components will be circulated by chapter for review prior to internal consolidation.

Your continued collaboration will ensure the updated Comprehensive Plan represents the collective expertise of all City departments and supports Priest River's long-term vision.

Figure 29: City of Priest River Organizational Chart



Phase 2 - Data Summary and Existing Conditions Report

The Comprehensive Plan Update Phase 2 report, along with the complete Appendix B, was presented to and accepted by the Priest River City Council on January 20, 2026.

Introduction and Purpose

This Data Summary and Existing Conditions Report was prepared as part of Phase 2 of the City of Priest River Comprehensive Plan Update (2026). Its purpose is to document baseline conditions, summarize key trends, and identify notable changes that have occurred since adoption of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. This report provides the factual foundation that informed the development of goals, policies, and implementation strategies contained in the draft Comprehensive Plan.

The report consolidates demographic, housing, land use, infrastructure, transportation, environmental, and economic data into a single reference document. Detailed analysis of these topics is integrated throughout the draft Comprehensive Plan. This report is intended to function as a supporting technical document and reference point for City Council, staff, partner agencies, and the public.

Community Context and Planning Area

Priest River is a small city that historically developed as a mill and river-oriented community. The planning area includes all land within the City's incorporated limits and reflects the City's role as a service and employment center for surrounding rural areas. Since 2013, the City has experienced gradual population growth, changing housing demands, evolving infrastructure needs, and increased regional development pressure.

Population and Demographic Trends

Population data indicate modest but steady growth since the last comprehensive plan update. The City's age distribution reflects an aging population alongside an increase in working-age residents and families. Household sizes remain relatively small, consistent with regional and statewide trends.

Key trends include:

- Gradual population growth rather than rapid expansion
- An increasing share of older adults and retirees
- Continued importance of family households and long-term residents

These trends informed policies emphasizing housing diversity, aging-in-place, and long-term infrastructure planning.

Housing Conditions and Trends

Housing data show a limited and constrained housing supply, with a predominance of single-family detached units. Manufactured housing remains an important component of the local housing stock. Rental availability is limited, contributing to affordability challenges for

workforce households.

Notable housing trends include:

- Limited new housing construction relative to demand
- Aging housing stock requiring reinvestment and rehabilitation

These conditions informed policies supporting housing reinvestment, a broader mix of housing types, and coordination between housing development and infrastructure capacity.

Land Use Patterns and Development Trends

Land use within Priest River remains primarily residential, with commercial and industrial uses concentrated along key transportation corridors and historic development areas. Since 2013, development activity has been incremental, with limited large-scale projects.

Observed land use trends include:

- Stable established neighborhoods with minimal redevelopment
- Continued demand for residential lots
- Commercial activity focused along U.S. Highway 2 and downtown areas

These patterns reinforced the need for compatibility, neighborhood stability, and clear land use designations in the updated plan.

Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities

Public services and utilities are generally adequate to serve current development levels but require ongoing maintenance and long-term planning. Water, wastewater, roads, and other facilities represent significant public investments.

Key observations include:

- Infrastructure improvements completed since adoption of the 2007 capital planning documents
- Ongoing need for reinvestment in aging systems
- Importance of aligning growth with available service capacity

These findings informed policies emphasizing fiscal responsibility, infrastructure coordination, and phased growth.

Transportation and Mobility Conditions

Transportation conditions are shaped by the City's location along U.S. Highway 2 and State Highway 57. Local streets serve both local circulation and regional travel needs. Multimodal options exist but are limited in scope.

Transportation trends include:

- Continued reliance on personal vehicles
- Increasing interest in pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- Importance of access management along state highways

These conditions influenced policies supporting coordination with state agencies and

incremental improvements to local connectivity.

Environmental and Hazard Constraints

Natural features such as the Pend Oreille River, wetlands, floodplains, and surrounding forested lands influence development patterns. Hazard areas, including flood-prone lands, require careful consideration in land use planning.

Key considerations include:

- Presence of flood hazard areas
- Importance of protecting water quality and natural resources
- Balancing development with environmental constraints

These factors informed policies addressing hazardous areas, natural resource protection, and land suitability.

Economic and Employment Context

Priest River's economy has transitioned from a timber-dominated base to a more diverse mix of construction, services, manufacturing, and tourism-related activity. Many residents commute to employment centers elsewhere in Bonner County and the region.

Economic trends include:

- Reduced local employment in traditional timber industries
- Growth in small businesses and service-oriented enterprises
- Increasing importance of regional economic integration

These trends support policies focused on economic diversification and land use flexibility.

Key Takeaways Informing the Comprehensive Plan

The data and trends summarized in this report led to several overarching conclusions:

- Growth is occurring incrementally and should be managed deliberately
- Housing diversity and affordability are ongoing challenges
- Infrastructure reinvestment is essential for long-term stability
- Land use compatibility and neighborhood character remain priorities
- Environmental constraints require continued attention

These conclusions directly informed the goals, policies, and implementation strategies contained in the draft Comprehensive Plan.

Bibliography

A comprehensive list of data sources, planning documents, and agency materials used in preparing this report and the draft Comprehensive Plan is provided in the Comprehensive Plan bibliography. The bibliography documents the factual basis for the City's planning decisions and ensures transparency and defensibility.

Phase 3 - Working Draft Council Review Report

Phase 3 focused on drafting the Comprehensive Plan update by chapter and completing an internal review prior to public outreach. Working drafts were prepared and reviewed for each required plan component in accordance with the chapter outline established during Phase 1. City staff reviewed all draft components for internal consistency, statutory compliance, and alignment with adopted City policies. Staff used a data driven approach to updating the plan, see Appendix B for all the sources referenced throughout the plan update.

City Council reviewed draft plan components over multiple meetings as chapters were completed. This phased approach allowed Council to provide feedback and direction on individual components prior to final compilation of the full draft Comprehensive Plan. The table below summarizes the dates each chapter or component received initial City Council review.

Chapter	Component / Chapter	City Council Review
	Introduction Section	12/15/2025
1	Property Rights	12/15/2025
2	Population	12/15/2025
3	School Facilities & Transportation	2/3/2026
4	Economic Development	2/3/2026
5	Natural Resources	1/20/2026
6	Hazardous Areas	1/5/2026
7	Public Services, Facilities & Utilities	2/3/2026
8	Transportation	2/3/2026
9	Recreation	1/20/2026
10	Special Areas or Sites	1/5/2026
11	Housing	2/3/2026
12	Community Design	2/3/2026
13	Agriculture	1/20/2026
14	Public Airport Facilities	12/15/2025
15	Land Use	2/3/2026; 2/17/2026
16	Implementation	2/3/2026

Phase 4 - Public Engagement

The Comprehensive Plan Public Engagement Plan was presented to and accepted by the Priest River City Council on February 17, 2026.

Public Engagement Plan

Purpose and Role in the Planning Process

Phase 4 of the Comprehensive Plan Update focuses on engaging the Priest River community in reviewing and responding to the draft Comprehensive Plan. This phase builds on the technical analysis and internal review completed during earlier phases and is intended to validate community priorities, gather focused feedback, and inform final revisions prior to adoption.

Public engagement during this phase emphasizes accessibility, transparency, and documentation. The intent is not to reopen foundational policy decisions, but to ensure the draft plan reflects community values, identifies areas of concern, and provides a clear public record demonstrating how input was considered.

Public Engagement Objectives

The Phase 4 public engagement process is guided by the following objectives:

- Provide clear and understandable information about the draft Comprehensive Plan and its purpose.
- Offer opportunities for residents, stakeholders, and agencies to provide input.
- Confirm community priorities related to growth, land use, housing, infrastructure, and community character.
- Identify areas of general support as well as topics requiring clarification or refinement.
- Document public input and its relationship to subsequent plan revisions.

Engagement Methods

1. **Public Survey**

   A community-wide public survey will be conducted to collect broad input on the draft Comprehensive Plan.

   The survey will be administered primarily through a digital platform, with a paper option available to ensure accessibility. The survey will be designed to be concise and focused, prioritizing clarity and usability.

   The survey will:

   - Ask participants to identify key community priorities over the next 20 years.
   - Gather general feedback on growth, land use, housing, and infrastructure.

- Include a limited number of open-ended questions to capture qualitative input.

Survey responses will be summarized thematically and incorporated into a Public Engagement Summary and Community Vision Report.

2. Online Comment Portal

An online comment portal will be provided to allow residents and stakeholders to submit written comments on the draft Comprehensive Plan.

The portal will include:

- Access to the draft Comprehensive Plan
- A high-quality Future Land Use Map in PDF format
- Clear instructions regarding how comments will be reviewed and documented

All comments received will be logged and summarized thematically.

3. Community Open Houses

The City will host community open houses to provide opportunities for in-person engagement and discussion.

Open houses will be conducted in an informal, drop-in format and will include informational displays, draft plan summaries, and maps. City staff will be available to answer questions and receive comments.

Public notice and outreach will include the City website, social media, local newspaper notices, and posted flyers at public locations.

4. Stakeholder and Agency Review

Public agencies, service districts, and stakeholder organizations will be invited to review the draft Comprehensive Plan.

Following City Council review, the draft plan will be posted on the City website and shared with partner agencies. Agencies will be provided with a defined review period and invited to submit written comments related to service coordination, jurisdictional considerations, or factual accuracy.

Agency input will be summarized and documented as part of the Public Engagement Summary and Community Vision Report.

5. Youth and School Engagement

The City will make reasonable efforts to engage youth and school representatives as part of the public engagement process.

Outreach will include contacting local schools and educators to offer classroom presentations or visioning activities related to land use and community planning. Where participation occurs, feedback will be summarized. Where participation is

limited, outreach efforts will be documented to demonstrate good-faith engagement.

Documentation and Deliverables

The primary deliverable for Phase 4 will be the Public Engagement Summary and Community Vision Report. This report will document:

- Engagement methods used
- Participation levels
- Key themes and priorities identified through public input
- A summary of the community vision expressed during engagement
- How public input informed revisions to the draft plan

Supporting materials, including survey instruments, meeting dates, and comment summaries, will be included as appendices.

Relationship to Plan Adoption

Phase 4 public engagement is a critical step in refining the draft Comprehensive Plan prior to formal adoption. Input gathered during this phase will inform Phase 5 revisions and support a transparent and defensible decision-making process.

Public Engagement Summary and Community Vision Report

The phase 4 deliverable is the Public Engagement Summary and Community Vision Report, which will be produced at the conclusion of all the public engagement activities listed in the Phase 4 Public Engagement Plan.

Public Survey Link: https://forms.gle/Cj7UwVrNuGQeTX1r7

Public Comment Link: https://forms.gle/9c3xJW4v6uWaqdJb7

Phase 5 – Revised Draft Comprehensive Plan Report

The phase 5 deliverable is a Draft Comprehensive Plan that has been refined after public review and is ready for the City Council final review prior to a public hearing.

Phase 6 – Comprehensive Plan Update Adoption Resolution

The phase 6 deliverable is the Adoption Resolution, which will be produced at the conclusion of Phase 5 and presented to the City Council final at the public hearing.