

Resolution #2020-4

LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

BACKGROUND

Cities and towns work diligently to protect Montana's land and water resources through wise community development policies that emphasize centralized water and wastewater systems, efficient delivery of services to concentrated populations, and compliance with fair and affordable environmental standards. Despite this work, new development in Montana continues to sprawl beyond municipal boundaries, threatening our legacy of open space and clean water. At the same time, housing costs are rapidly rising due to the growth of second homes, the rising cost of labor and materials, and rising land values. While cities and towns seek to make urban development more affordable, they must retain their ability to make local decisions about the form, density, and impacts of land development based on community desires and needs. Municipalities are dedicated to working with state and federal agencies, counties, the private sector, and the public to establish growth and land use policies that recognize property rights and the need to efficiently deliver services while preserving the natural assets of Montana.

ACTION

MLCT will support bills to:

1. Encourage the use of community water, wastewater, and stormwater systems to protect environmental quality and assure that cities and towns are not obligated for a disproportionate share of the cost of complying with Nutrient Standards, MS4, TMDL, and other state or federal regulatory standards.
2. Promote environmentally responsible energy development and conservation through grants, loans, and technical assistance and education programs, and allow cities and towns authority under the energy and building codes to promote conservation.
3. Protect and expand the authority of cities and towns to use tax increment districts and locally approved tax abatements for opportunities as part of an effective local economic development strategy that reflects the needs and priorities of the local community.
4. Encourage, streamline, and finance the development of housing that is affordable for persons of all income levels, while maintaining local authority for land use decision-making.
5. Support and encourage the development, funding, and local authority over multi-modal transportation systems within municipalities, including streets, roads, transit, paths, bikeways, sidewalks, trails, and other infrastructure on state and local transportation routes that create a more attractive urban environment.

MLCT will oppose bills to:

1. Restrict the annexation, zoning, planning, and subdivision review authority of cities and towns or limit local control of community development practices.
2. Limit the effectiveness of the options under the tax increment district statutes.

October 6, 2020