

ASHTON 2045

Together We Grow Tomorrow

Comprehensive Plan 2025

CITY OF
ASHTON
Idaho

Working

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City of Ashton

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Introduction

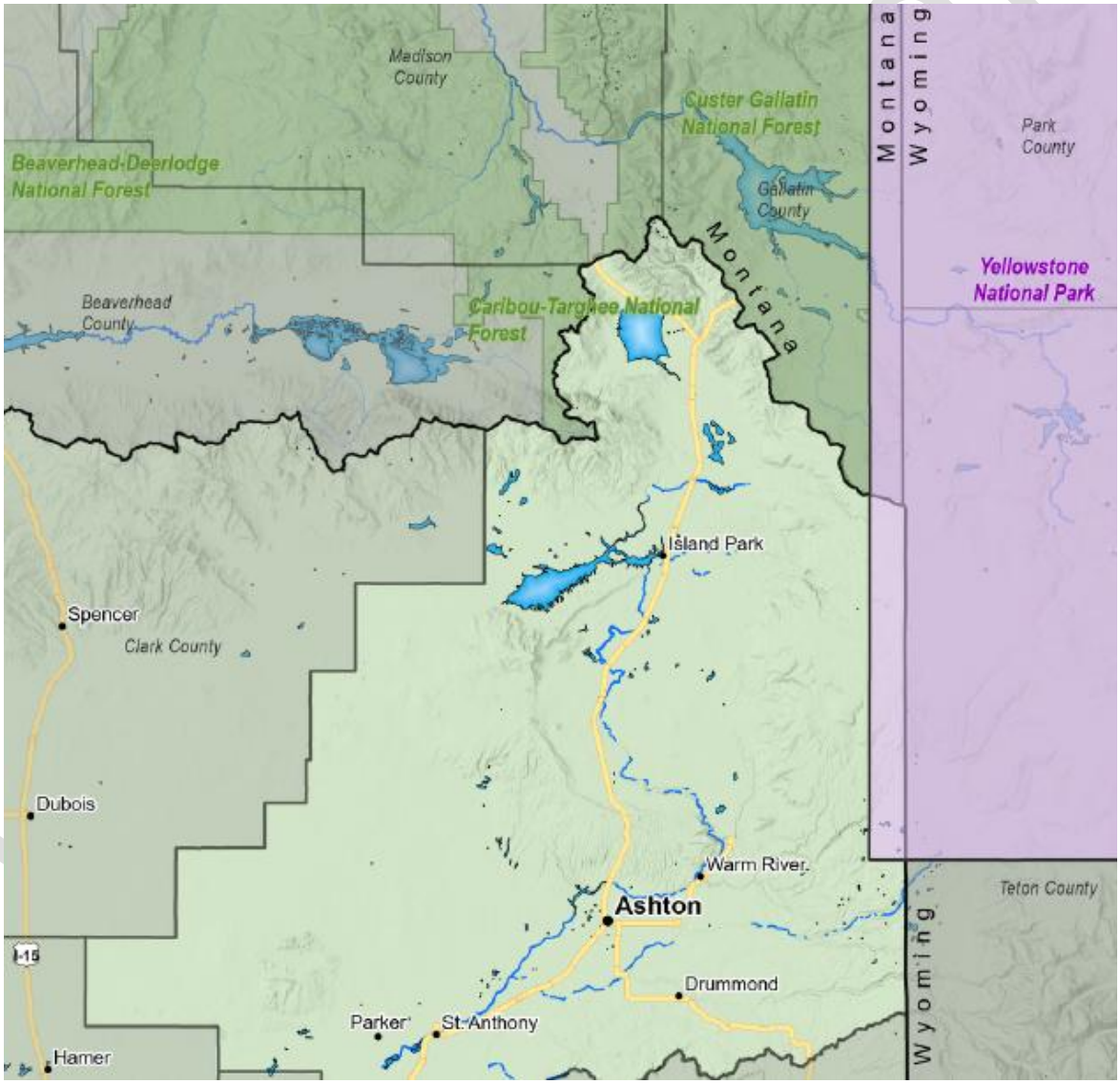
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1. INTRODUCTION

A SNAPSHOT OF ASHTON

Located in eastern Idaho an hour southwest (56 miles) of Yellowstone National Park, the City of Ashton is the second largest municipality in Fremont County, behind the County seat of St. Anthony (Refer to **Figure 1**, City of Ashton Vicinity Map). Ashton offers tremendous views of the Teton Mountain Range to the southeast, and the volcanic caldera rim to the north. The City was originally the byproduct of the railroad but has been heavily influenced by agriculture over the course of its history, due to the expansive and fertile farmland adjacent to the City. Ashton is now seeing a tourism and outdoor recreation boom due to its location to Yellowstone National Park.

Figure 1. *City of Ashton Vicinity Map*



POPULATION

The City has experienced a slight increase in population over the past decade. In 2023, the population of Ashton was estimated to be 1,329 people which was approximately an 15 percent increase from 1127 people in 2010.[1] The decennial census reflected the City population to be 921 in 2020; However, as Covid-19 impacted housing and employment opportunities, the American Community Survey population estimates have been determined to be a better representation of the more recent population estimations of Ashton. Additionally, the City, while growing in population, also has a large short-term rental presence that can create a seasonal influx in population. Today, the City of Ashton makes up approximately 10 percent of the total population in Fremont County, with a total County population of 13,519.



POPULATION

	1990	2000	2010	2016	2020	2023	2030	2040	2050
Population	1,114	1,128	1,127	1,063	1,185	1,329	1,441	1,617	1,814
% Change Per Year		0.125%	-0.0089%	-0.946%	2.879%	4.05%			
AAGR	1.218% per year								

A population forecast was estimated by utilizing current and historical population data for the City of Ashton. The estimated population projections outlined for the years 2030, 2040, and 2050 utilize decennial estimations through the year 2010, and American Community Survey estimations through 2023. An Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of 1.218% was determined by averaging the five data sets established through the % change per year through the years 1990 to 2023.







Median Household Income	Race & Ethnicity		Median Age
$66,250 Ashton	White	82.7 %	40.8
$66,250 Ashton	Black	0.5%	56.4% Male | 43.6% Female
	Native	0.5%	
	Asian	0%	
	Islander	0%	
	Other	0%	
	Hispanic	12.1%	

[1] U.S. Census Bureau (2023). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*

HISTORY

The Dawn of the 20th century electrified the United States with new inventions, new destinations and new communities. As Yellowstone National Park grew in demand and popularity, the Oregon Short Line Railroad, under chief engineer William Ashton, created a plan to extend the existing rail lines from Idaho Falls to Saint Athony, northward into Yellowstone. The railroad was originally slated to cut through the neighboring town of Marysville, but a disagreement culminated in the Railroad being moved about one mile west. In 1906, H.G. "Fess" Fuller and Charles C. Moore bought 640 acres of land from early settlers in the area and created a Town site company named after the Chief Engineer, William ASHTON. The railroad and the Yellowstone Coach line became Ashton's foray into the tourism industry. In 1910, the rail lines would not only serve as access to Yellowstone but also served as the main materials depot for the building of the Jackson Lake Dam and, by 1913, would include switches linking Ashton to Teton Valley. It was said that many Ashton residents woke up and went to sleep by "train time" (see Whistles and Smoke Ashton's Railroad Legacy). The City of Ashton capitalized greatly off the rail, and it remains a deep-seeded part of daily life. Today, the railroad bisects the city diagonally and serves as a key point of sale for agriculture.

Ashton is also known for its longstanding traditions. Ashton has been home to the All-American Dog Derby which started in 1917 to honor mail carriers and this year received the Idaho Historical Societies Esto Perpetua Award for Celebrating Idaho's Festivals and Community Traditions. Ashton also hosts the Mesa Falls Marathon which started in 1996 when Dave Jacobson organized it at the recommendation Keith Newell. It is known to runners across the nation for the unique vistas and wildlife sightings along the route. Another cherished tradition is the 4th of July Parade which dually celebrates the founding of America and the incorporation of the City of Ashton and has received national attention for going up main street and turning around and coming back as well.

Ashton's economy has always seen its agricultural opportunities paired with the tourism industry and outdoor recreation. Since those historic beginnings, Ashton has flourished as an iconic American small town. Most locals still recall multiple different car lots, cinemas, grocery stores, and a bowling alley. Even though the dotcom era has created some economic competition, Ashton welcomes businesses and wants to continue nourishing its agricultural, recreational, and commercial uses in ways that benefit residents and visitors alike.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FRAMEWORK

A Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document adopted by a city, town or county that outlines the community's vision for its future. Local governments can use a Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making regarding the community's land use and development. A Comprehensive Plan is not a regulatory document and does not require regulations to be adopted and utilized. However, other regulations must be consistent with and supported by the Comprehensive Plan for consistency and clarity.

A Comprehensive Plan encapsulates projections and trends that determine growth and allows a community to identify its strengths and weaknesses and outline improvement plans. The City Council can then implement those plans through thoughtful consideration and referencing the Comprehensive Plan when making decisions or taking regulatory actions. A Comprehensive Plan can also prepare a community for competitive grant funding opportunities, as it demonstrates a commitment to an intentional and planned future.

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This planning process serves an opportunity for the City of Ashton to build on the many other planning efforts to define objectives and outline an action plan. By doing so, it will assist the community in growing and developing in a manner that will allow Ashton's desired future to be realized. The City identified three main goals that serve as broad, but aspirational targets that are representative of the City's desired future. These goals are as follows:

ASHTON CITY GOALS

The City of Ashton will support its residents in opportunities to prosper, strengthen and diversify its economy.

The City of Ashton will preserve its natural resources and maintain the "small town feel" that is integral to the City's history.

The City of Ashton will provide adequate services that both meet the current and future needs of the community and encourage sensible development.

The Plan contains five chapters, all of which incorporate the 17 various planning components required by State Statute 66-6508, Local Land Use Planning, and provide the basis for achieving the goals identified and developed by the community. As outlined below, the chapters are followed by the required planning components to highlight compliance and for ease of reference within the Plan. The chapters are as follows:

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1. Introduction

- Population
- Private Property Rights

2. Community

- Land Use
- Housing
- Community Design
- Economic Development
- Recreation

3. Environment

- Natural Resources
- Hazardous Areas
- Agriculture
- Special Areas or Sites

4. Services and Infrastructure

- Public Services, Facilities and Utilities (including National Electric Transmission Corridors)
- School Facilities and Transportation
- Transportation (including Public Air Facilities)

5. Implementation

- Outlines goals, objectives, and actions/strategies with associated responsibility party and project partners required for successful implementation.

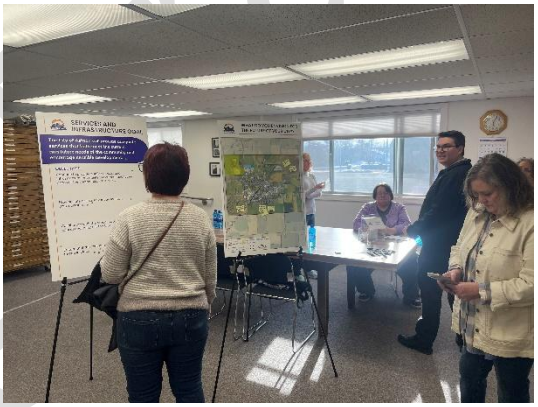
The planning process was initiated by the City of Ashton in May 2024 through a public survey to solicit feedback from the community. The planning process extended over a XX-month timeframe, with plan adoption occurring in XX.

OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

Ashton has been actively working to improve the quality of life for residents and increase economic opportunity through thoughtful planning. Since the adoption of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, the various planning efforts that have been completed are as follows:

- Downtown Ashton Master Plan, 2018
- Ashton Historic Preservation Plan, 2018
- Ashton Urban Renewal Plan and TIF District, 2019
- Adopted Subdivision Regulations, 2024
- Adopted Floodplain Regulations, 2019
- Capital Improvements Plan, 2016
- Zoning Ordinance, 2021
- Water Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), 2020
- Wayfinding Plan, 2023
- Deer Management Plan, Annual

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



An inclusive public involvement process was carried out to support the development of the Ashton Comprehensive Plan, ensuring broad community input and engagement. As part of this effort, a public survey was conducted to gather feedback from residents on key issues and priorities, allowing for a diverse range of perspectives to be considered. In addition, an open house event provided an interactive forum where community members could learn about the planning process, ask questions, provide input and share their ideas directly with project staff. These activities were designed to foster transparency, build trust, and ensure the comprehensive plan reflects the values and needs of the entire community. Further details regarding the public outreach efforts are included in **Appendix A**.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

The United States Constitution's Fifth Amendment sets the basis for private property rights, by stating "Nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation". Any action of the government that results in regulations and/or ordinances becoming so restrictive that a private property owner has lost economic viability without any compensation from the government is deemed a "taking".

Chapter 65 of the Idaho Local Land Use Planning Statute contains a provision that "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". Although a Comprehensive Plan that contains such language does not guarantee an absolute defense to a "taking" claim, most courts will consider its position in the Comprehensive Plan when making a judicial decision.

As the City of Ashton grows and develops, private property rights do not change, however, land uses may change. A comprehensive plan outlines recommendations regarding land use policies and programs, therefore, should regulations, conditions, or restrictions ensue as a result of implementation, the Office of Attorney General's Checklist for private property rights should be consulted (**Appendix B**). Additionally, the City must continue to review its land use regulations and ordinances and amend them accordingly concerning these new challenges with growth and expansion to ensure that there are no possibilities for a "taking".

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Community

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2. COMMUNITY

LAND USE AND HOUSING

LAND USE

The City of Ashton is largely comprised of commercial, industrial, and single-family residential land uses. Refer to **Figure 2** – *Zoning Map*. The City is situated along two highly trafficked state byway, Highway 20 and Highway 47, that brings upwards of two million tourists through the area each year. Ashton provides commercial land uses along the state facilities that includes a mix of retail, food establishments, banks, etc. Industrial land uses are present along the railroad corridor and serves as a historical reminder of Ashton's strong economic base in agricultural production. The agricultural industry is still active today. Ashton remains a leading producer of seed potatoes worldwide. As stated previously, the City is predominantly single-family residential with sparse larger lot residential developments adjacent to city limits.



FUTURE LAND USE & AREA OF IMPACT (AOI)

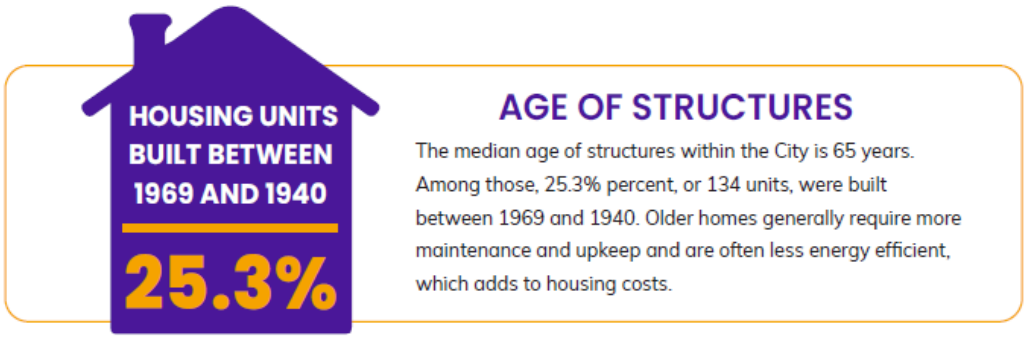
The Idaho Land Use Planning Act (§67-6502) sets forth the need for comprehensive planning in the state, and a subsequent statute (§67-6256) sets forth the need for a municipality to establish an Area of City Impact (AOI). The intent of the AOI is to protect private property rights, ensure adequate public facilities, and encourage urban development within municipalities. The AOI lays out the vision for the land adjacent to the City that may be annexed at some point but reviewing land use compatibility for future growth. As of July 1, 2024, Idaho State Legislature made amendments to Section 67-6526 regarding AOI's that allows decisions regarding properties located in the AOI in the jurisdiction of the county. While cities should receive notice to provide input on applications submitted to the county for properties located within a city's AOI, decision making authority will remain with the county as well as final determinations regarding AOI boundaries.

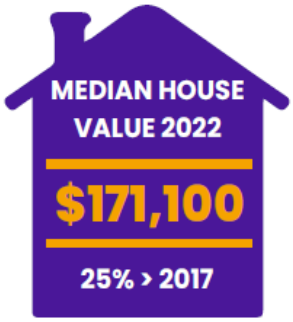
A Future Land Use Map was developed (**Figure 3**) that outlines the community's vision for future growth and development. As the City continues to grow beyond the city limits, identifying future land uses within the AOI was a priority of this planning effort. **Table 1** describes the future land use designations identified in the FLUM and the associated types of development that might occur in each of those designations.

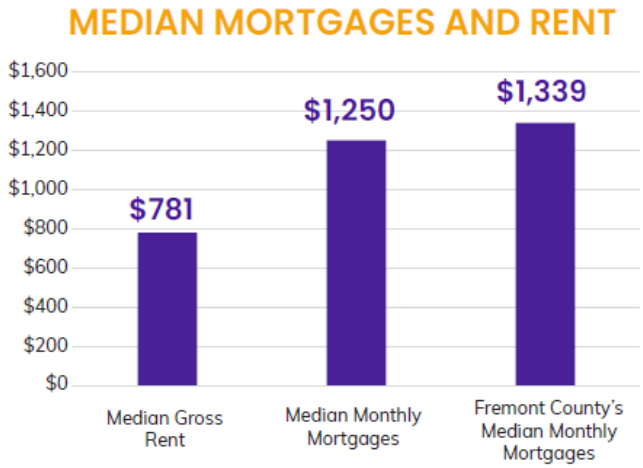
HOUSING

Like many Idaho communities, the City of Ashton has an aging housing stock. Due to this condition, a significant number of homes in City limits have undergone renovations. In some cases, the aging housing stock has increased maintenance and utility costs for some residents. In recent years, Ashton has seen a wider variety of housing types built to accommodate various budgets.

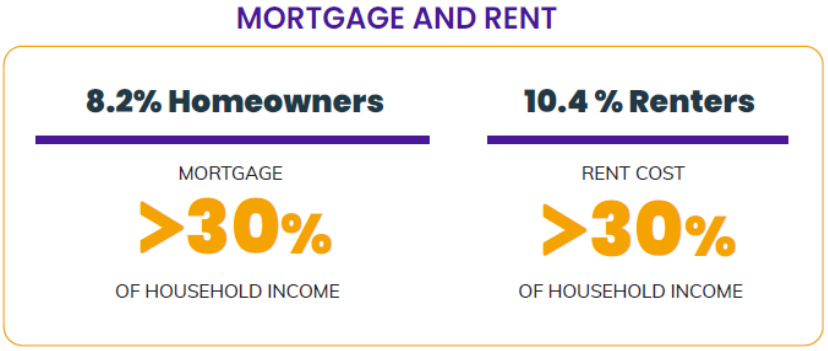
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The 2022 median house value in the City was $171,100, a 25% increase since 2017. The median gross rent in 2022 was $781. Median monthly mortgages were reported as $1,250, which is slightly lower than Fremont County's median monthly mortgage cost of $1,339. Approximately 10.4% of residents renting homes in Ashton reported their rent costs are greater than 30% of their household income. Among homeowners, 8.2% of homeowner's reported their mortgage cost to be greater than 30% of their household income. These statistics are important because home costs that exceed 30% of a household's income are considered "unaffordable", by national standards. Additionally, the City has experienced an increased number of short-term rentals (STR) within the community, contributing to nearly 13 percent of the total housing stock. STR's provide opportunity to accommodate tourists and commuters but can also be inconsistent economically compared to full-time residency. The STR market will be increasingly more important to track and manage as housing availability, along with buildable lots, are limited.



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There is an expressed need for additional housing options in Ashton. Since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, the City has and will continue to evaluate land use regulations that directly impact development, re-development, and housing availability within City limits. The City would also benefit from performing a housing needs assessment. Such a process would allow the City to identify achievable goals, such as renovating substandard housing, and spell out specific steps that could be taken to fund and complete such a project. Since providing safe and affordable housing is an issue that affects both the City and Fremont County, a joint approach might be the most efficient and beneficial.

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Figure 2. *Zoning Map*

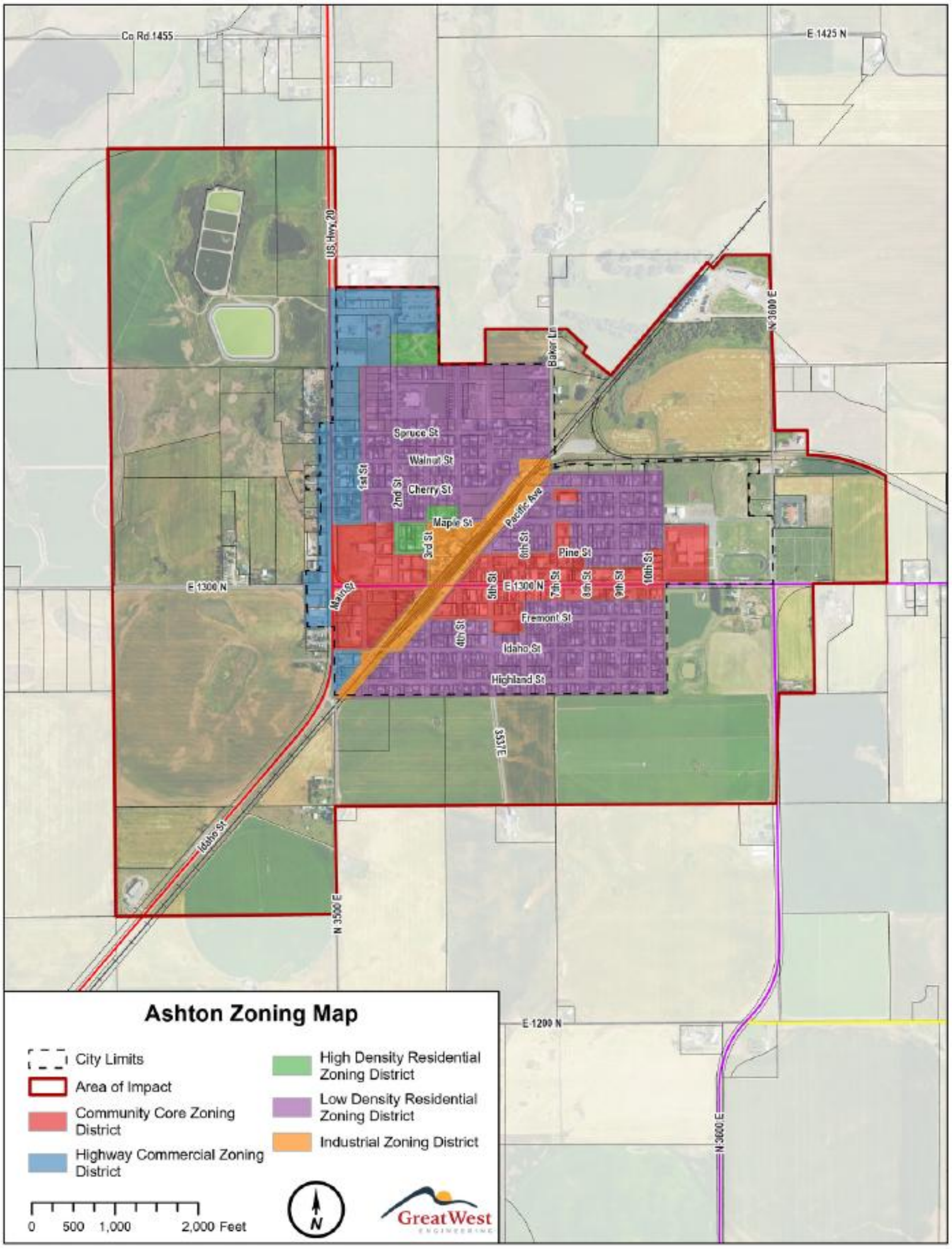


Figure 3. *Future Land Use Map*

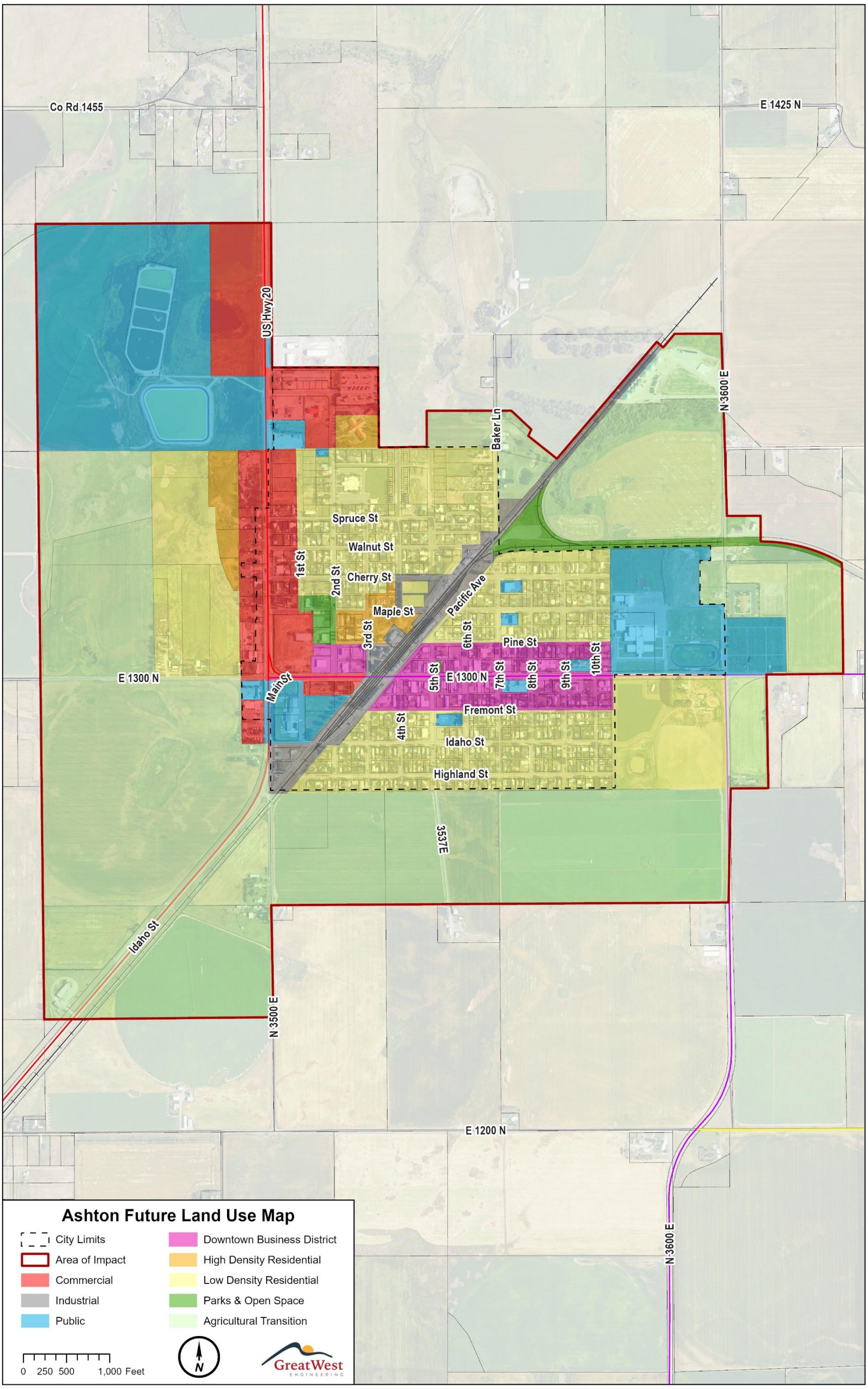


Table 1. *Future Land Use Designations*

Future Land Use Designation	Description	Example Reference
Ag Transition	Ag Transition designations allow large lots with single family residences and a variety of agricultural uses. These areas are located outside of city limits but inside the Area of City Impact. Property owners desiring urban uses (residential subdivision, commercial, industrial) should apply to the City for annexation through a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance amendment.	  
Low Density Residential	Low Density Residential designations allow for single-family dwellings on a variety of lot sizes. These areas generally include subdivisions and established neighborhoods, and may include duplexes and townhomes on larger lots. Uses such as places of worship and parks and open space may be allowed by special permit.	  
High Density Residential	Multi-family Residential designations encourage a mix of housing types including townhomes and fourplexes, as well as apartments. These areas often located adjacent to commercial or industrial uses and can buffer single-family residential areas.	  
Downtown Business District	Neighborhood Commercial designations may allow businesses such as retail, office, restaurants, public facilities, and other uses that can serve the surrounding neighborhood areas. These are areas located in or around the downtown that encourage a more walkable corridor. Certain mixed uses may be allowed in the Neighborhood Commercial designation by special permit.	  

Future Land Use Designation	Description	Example Reference
Commercial	Commercial designations generally follow major transportation corridors and may include hospitality, as well as larger retail and entertainment establishments. These areas encourage the grouping of businesses and may be considered for more intense use by special permit.	  
Industrial	Industrial designation may include manufacturing, warehousing, research facilities, and processing and assembling facilities. These areas are generally located adjacent to commercial areas and special permit may be required to ensure appropriate screening and mitigation for impacts on surrounding uses.	  
Parks and Open Space	Parks and Open Space designations allow parks and recreation facilities owned/and or operated by government entities.	  
Public	Public designations are facilities or parcels of land owned and/or operated by governmental entities or intended for use by the public. Uses may include government offices, schools, post offices, libraries, and facilities associated with first response.	  

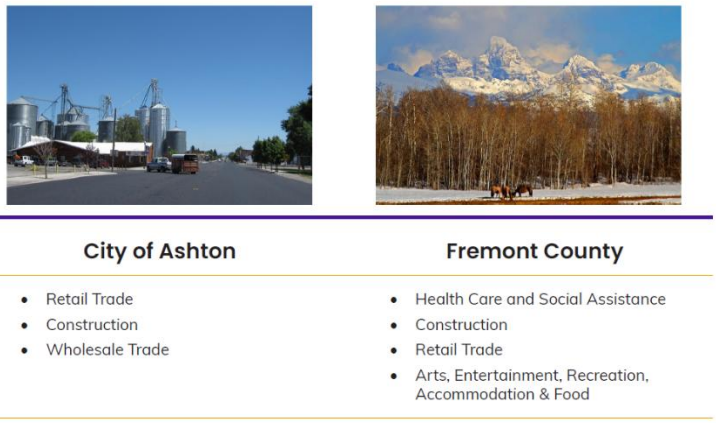
COMMUNITY DESIGN

The community survey had many respondents who emphasized the need for an attractive town that would ultimately bring in more visitors who are heading to the National Park and attract new residents and business owners. One way of achieving such a thing is to create and enforce a community decay ordinance to limit the number of properties that fall into disrepair. Typically, these ordinances can be paired with a weed management ordinance that eliminates unsightly, overgrown properties that have the potential to spread invasive species of weeds throughout the town, as well as eliminate the potential for vermin. Implementing community design standards and landscaping requirements within the City's zoning regulations would also assist in achieving the desired community design and appearance. Proper landscaping can serve as a buffer between more intensive land uses in the community, such as commercial or light industrial uses, while also adding an aesthetically pleasing aura to the community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program provides detailed demographic characteristics of job industries in Ashton. Understanding the difference in job industries between the County and the City is crucial, as the City can provide and improve upon services to accommodate both its residents and County residents. **Figure 4** outlines the top employment sectors within Fremont County and the City of Ashton. The largest employment sectors for Ashton are health services and construction.

Figure 4. *2021 Top 4 Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector*



In 2022, the median household income in Ashton was $62,819, which is slightly lower than the Fremont County median household income of $67,015, and statewide median household income of $70,284.

The number of building permits can provide insight to the local growth of a community. As depicted in **Table 2,** the number of building permits over the last five years has remained steady, which is consistent with the conservative growth trends outlined in the population section.

Table 2. *Building Permits 2020 - 2024*

Permit Type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Home	2	1	1	0	2
4 Plex	0	0	1	2	1
8 Plex	0	0	0	1	0
Addition	0	1	2	3	1
Remodel	7	3	2	3	4
Garage	0	1	1	1	2
Deck	3	4	6	2	3
Total	**12**	**10**	**13**	**12**	**13**

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URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT

The City of Ashton adopted the Downtown Ashton Urban Renewal Plan in 2018, establishing an Urban Renewal District (URD) known as the Downtown Ashton Urban Renewal District to activate redevelopment within its boundaries. The URD allows the City to generate revenues for "blighted" properties targeted for redevelopment. As improvements are made within the district, and as property values increase, the incremental increases (tax increment) in property tax revenue would be used to fund improvements within the district. All revenue generated must be spent within the district and can fund projects such as street and parking improvements, streetscape improvements such as tree planting, and the installation of new bike racks, trash containers, and benches within the district.

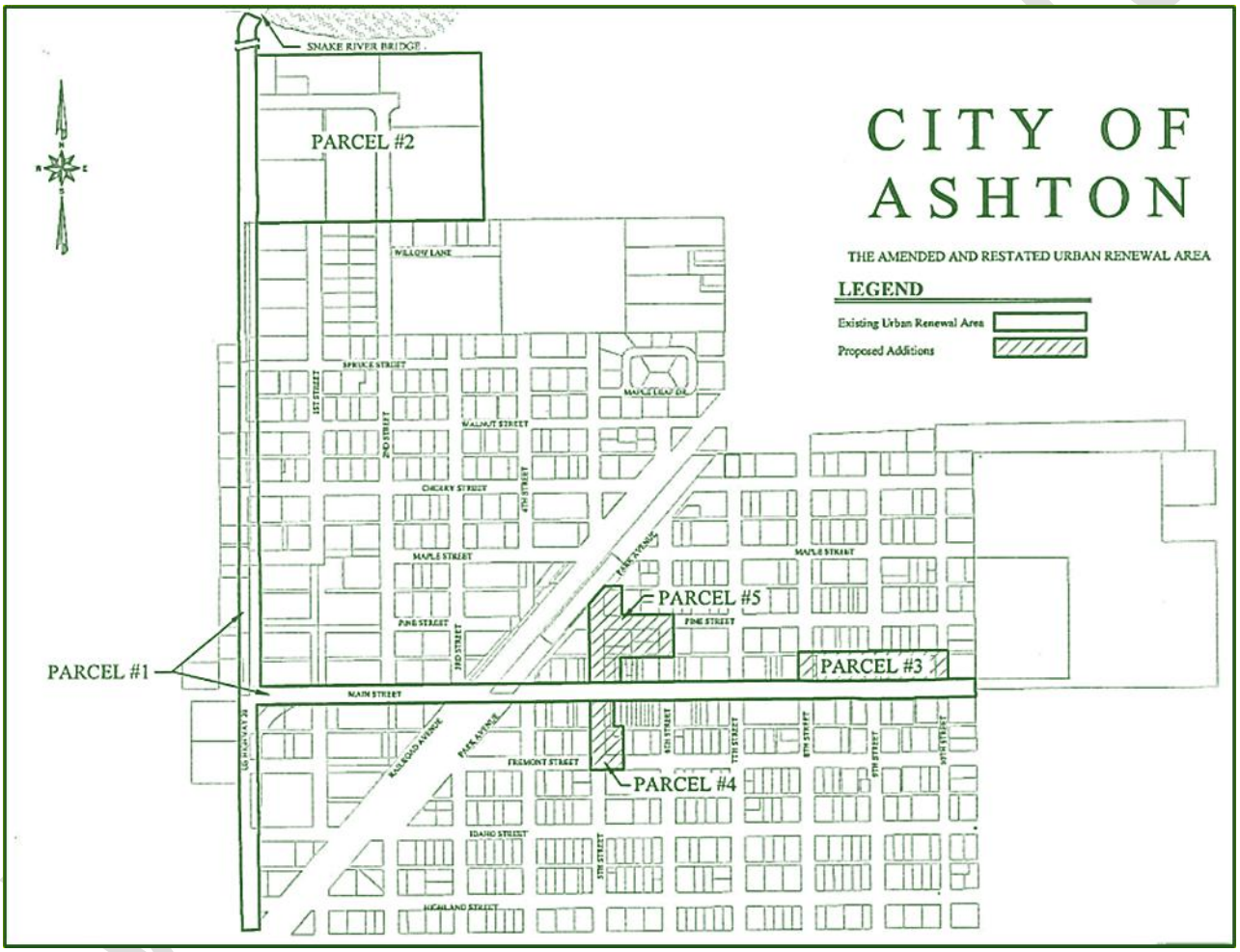
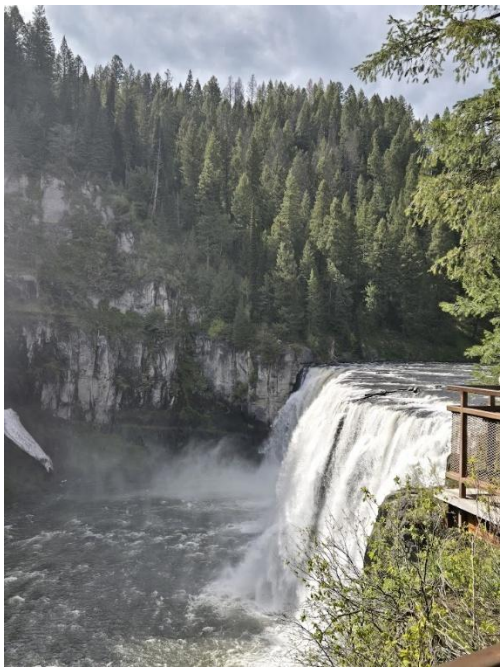


Figure 5. *City of Ashton Urban Renewal Area*

There was also an expressed interest by the public during the survey outreach for the preservation of the historic character of downtown. More specific design standards can be implemented into the zoning code through the creation of a historic overlay zoning district. By doing so, the requirements may consider new development or existing redevelopment to restore the building facades to as close to the existing historic nature as possible.

RECREATION



The City of Ashton provides no shortage of recreational opportunities as it is a well-known gateway to Yellowstone National Park and a common route providing access to Grand Teton National Park. The City owns and maintains three city parks, Ashton City Park, Ashton Softball Field, and the Main Street pocket park. The Ashton City Park provides for various amenities including tennis and pickleball courts, basketball and volleyball courts, a public swimming pool, and playground equipment. Additionally, Ashton's community center, housed inside Fremont County District Library, provides residents access to a full-sized gymnasium that is often used for gymnastics, aerobics, and volleyball.

Various recreational opportunities are also located within Fremont County, within close proximity to Ashton. Fremont County maintains groomed trails for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. A more notable trail frequented by residents and visitors is the Ashton-Tetonia Trail, managed through Harriman State Park. The Ashton-Tetonia Trail is administered through Idaho Parks and Recreation as it was established through the Rails to Trails program and follows 29.6 miles of abandoned railroad grade. There are also several waterways throughout the County that provide access for fishing and boating, and three golf courses located within 15 miles of Ashton. Refer to **Figure 6** – *Parks and Recreation*. Lastly, Highway 47 passes through the City of Ashton and is designated as a National Scenic Byway. The Scenic Byway offers scenic attractions and recreational access to fishing, horseback riding, camping, and hiking.

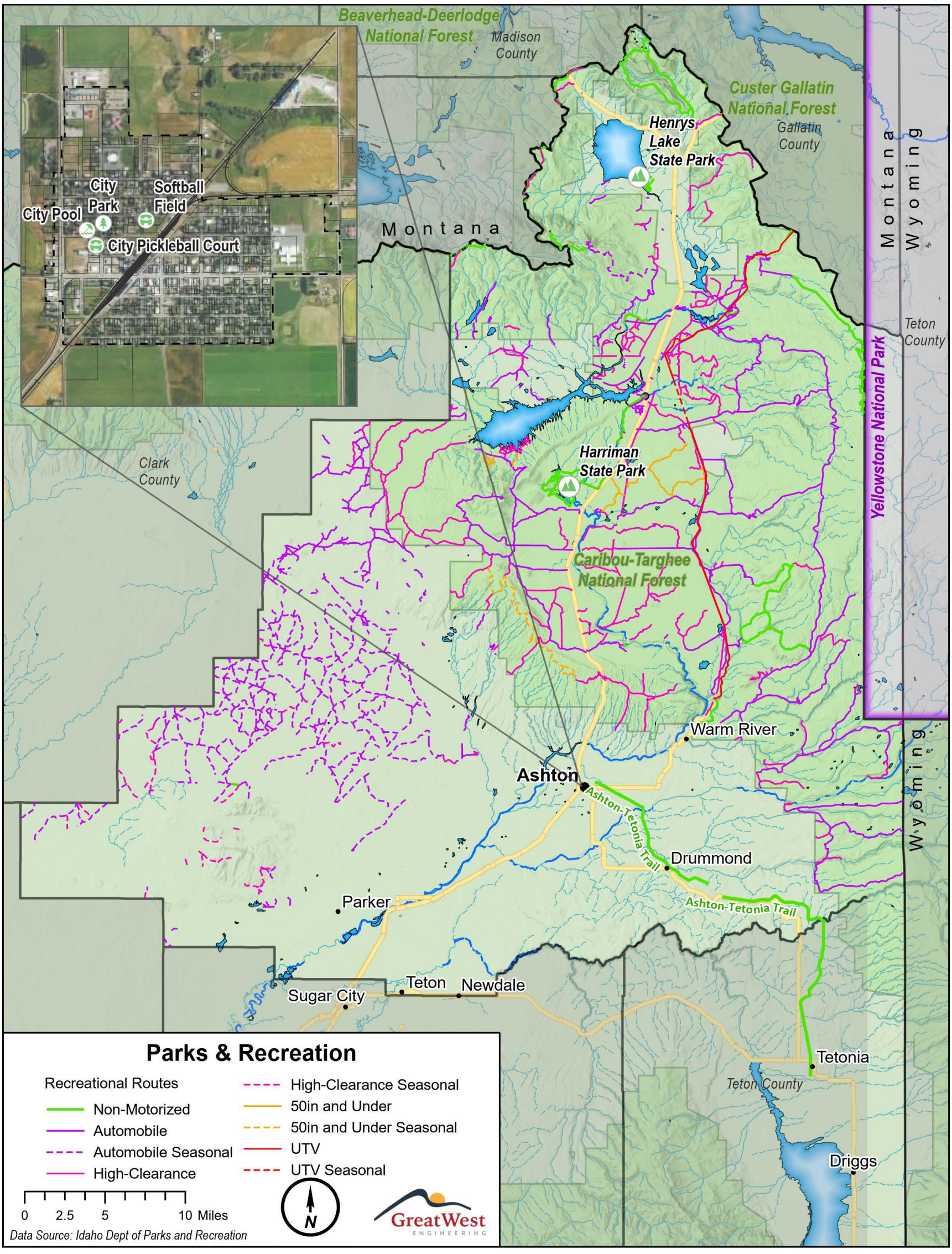


Early Days of the American Dog Derby

The City hosts a number of well-attended events throughout the year, including the American Dog Derby, Spirit of Christmas Tractor Parade, 4th of July celebration, and the Mesa Falls Marathon. Some of these yearly events have gained notoriety over the years, attracting hundreds of patrons, as the American Dog Derby is the oldest dog sled race held in the United States and the Mesa Falls Marathon has been highlighted in popular running/marathon magazines. It is events such as these that assist in promoting Ashton as a highly coveted tourist destination, especially in regard to recreational opportunities.

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Figure 6. Parks and Recreation



COMMUNITY GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

COMMUNITY GOAL

The City of Ashton will provide its residents with opportunities to prosper and work to strengthen its economy.

Community Objectives and Actions	
Objectives	**Actions**
1.1 Continue to promote regional events to attract tourism to Ashton.	1.1.a. Develop community branding with digital and print materials tailored to regional events.
	1.1.b. Establish a coordinated marketing strategy in partnership with local businesses and regional tourism boards to promote annual and seasonal events (e.g., Mesa Falls Marathon, American Dog Derby).
	1.1.c. Collaborate with local chamber of commerce organizations as well as neighboring cities to cross-promote events.
1.2 Support existing businesses and facilitate new commercial and industrial opportunities.	1.2.a. Prioritize infrastructure upgrades (roads, water, sewer, broadband) in areas designated for commercial or industrial development.
	1.2.b. Encourage the development of affordable housing to ensure there is adequate workforce housing for existing and future businesses
	1.2.c. Review and update zoning ordinances to ensure adequate land availability for future commercial and industrial development.
	1.2.d. Prioritize infill development and adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized downtown buildings to reduce barriers for new businesses.

Community Objectives and Actions	
1.3 Enhance and promote the parks and recreation facilities and access to other natural resources.	1.3.a. Maintain and upgrade existing park facilities with modern amenities (e.g., restrooms, playgrounds, lighting, benches, ADA access).
	1.3.b. Pursue funding from federal and state grant programs (e.g., LWCF, RTP, Idaho Parks & Recreation grants) to expand and maintain parks and trails.
1.4 Encourage land uses that contribute to a vibrant and economically accessible community.	1.4.a. Support a range of housing types—including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within residential zones.
	1.4.b. Position the downtown area as a vibrant community hub by supporting infill development, upper-floor housing, public art, and community events.
	1.4.c. Continue to require new development to include sidewalks, landscaping and pedestrian-friendly design standards.
	1.4.d. Promote complete neighborhoods where residents can walk or bike to parks, schools, shops, and jobs.
1.5 Promote initiatives and programs that connect residents with employment opportunities and career development resources.	1.5.a. Partner with regional organizations such as the Idaho Department of Labor, Eastern Idaho Workforce Development Board, and local community colleges to host job fairs, resume clinics, and career workshops in Ashton.
	1.5.b. Collaborate with the Fremont County Library District and School District to provide free public access to job search tools, computer training, and resume assistance.
	1.5.c. Collaborate with regional economic development organizations to align business recruitment strategies with local workforce capabilities.
1.6 Maintain a safe a well-designed community.	1.6.a. Consider implementing a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan that includes lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, benches, and public art.

Community Objectives and Actions	
	1.6.b. Support maintenance and beautification of parks, civic buildings, and rights-of-way to promote safety and community pride.
	1.6.c. Avoid incompatible land uses (e.g., heavy industrial next to homes) through clear zoning and thoughtful site planning.
	1.6.d. Develop and adopt design guidelines that address building form, site layout, materials, signage, and public improvements.

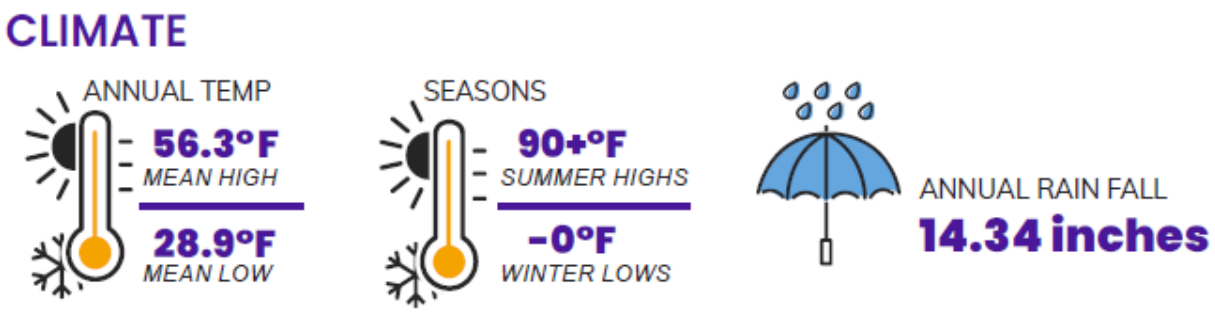
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Environment

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3. ENVIRONMENT

Ashton is nestled in the fertile river valley, between the Fall River and the Henry's Fork of the Snake River. The area surrounding Ashton lies in a relatively flat portion of the valley and is surrounded on all sides by prime farmland. The elevation is 5,259 feet. Ashton has a continental climate with cold winters, warm summers, and a marked variation in seasonal precipitation, which averages 14.34 inches annually. Ashton experiences a fairly consistent amount of precipitation throughout the year, with May being the wettest month of the year. The average annual high temperature is 56.3 degrees F and the average annual low temperature of 28.9 degrees F. Like much of Idaho, high temperatures in Ashton can range into the 90s and even the 100s in the summer months with low temperatures in the winter months down into the negative digits.



NATURAL RESOURCES



The City of Ashton has an abundance of natural resources, in part due to its geographic location. Many of Ashton's natural resources serve as both recreational and economic drivers to the community. Ashton lies to the south and to the west of the Caribou Targhee National Forest (Refer to **Figure 7** – *Natural Resources and Hazards*). This National Forest is part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and expands over the Caldera rim to the north of Ashton. The United Nations has designated this forest as a biosphere as it contains a robust mix of North American animals such as Elk, Deer, Grizzly Bears, numerous species of birds, and many more.

Ashton is surrounded by four blue ribbon trout fisheries, the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, the Teton River, the Fall River, and the Warm River. These rivers are all within 10 miles of Ashton. These rivers offer anglers a significant opportunity to catch both native and non-native trout, as well as provide resources for non-anglers alike. Ashton has taken economic advantage of its proximity to these rivers by promoting the fishing and aquatic recreation industry. The Idaho Fish and Game Department also promotes the use of these natural resources by offering a free fishing day. Ashton also provides an ideal location for permitted hunting for a variety of wild game. Various attractions, such as Mesa Falls and Cave Falls, are destinations along these waterways offering natural, scenic viewpoints for visitors.

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Identifying priorities for preservation and implementing an action plan would prove beneficial for the City of Ashton, especially as the City and County continue to grow in population. Engaging in communications and planning with local conservation and emergency mitigation personnel will ensure natural resource preservation stays at the forefront of development.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Many of the natural hazards present within the City are outlined in the 2016 Fremont County All Hazard Mitigation Plan, in which Ashton participated. Many of the existing natural resources, such as nearby rivers and irrigation facilities, also pose potential natural hazards within the community. Open surface waters can create safety hazards and should be approached with caution. Additionally, with open surface waters comes the risk of flooding. The City of Ashton is not a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has determined that the City is at low risk of riverine flooding, though unincorporated Fremont County is an active participant in the NFIP. Fremont County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) #1600610450B does show that there are multiple approximate flood zones adjacent to the City (see attached FIRM Panel). These approximate flood zones could potentially impact the City by way of limiting travel on the highway during times of floods, which could impact emergency services in times of need.

The City also has a lack of stormwater management conveyance that leads to flooding through stormwater events. Though not regulated by FEMA, these stormwater events can also impact the City by altering emergency routes, impeding travel, and flooding private property and homes, typically homes with basements. With a state-owned facility traversing through the City's downtown corridor, the City should regularly monitor freight spills from commuting freight traffic.

AGRICULTURE

The City of Ashton has historically been a farming community as the City is located in the Snake River Plain ecoregion, more specifically, the Dissected Plateaus and Teton Basin. This ecoregion is primarily used for cropland and rangeland, with potatoes being the most important cash crop. The majority of the cropland is considered prime farmland, allowing for potatoes, alfalfa, and pasture to dominate the area. Situated diagonally along the rail line, numerous grain elevators serve as a reminder of the critical role that agriculture has for the City. The respondents to the City's community survey expressed a love for the rural feel of the City adjacent to the surrounding farmlands. It is recommended that the City continue to preserve the rural lifestyle of the residents by ensuring that the development review process thoroughly analyzes the impact on the reduction of agricultural lands by ensuring that development on the periphery of the City is adjacent to existing services and limit the amount of urban sprawl into the existing agricultural lands.



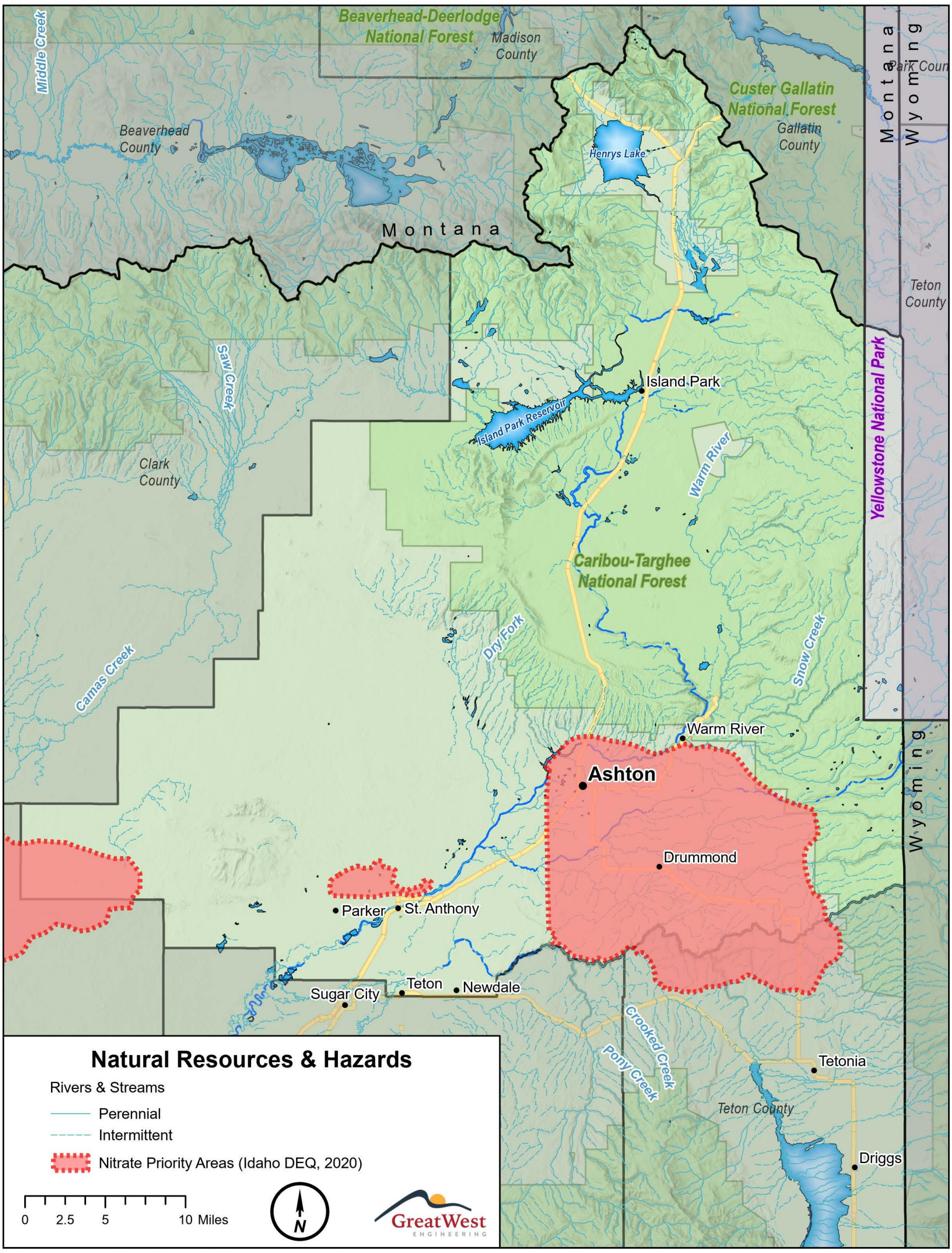
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SPECIAL AREAS OR SITES

The City of Ashton contains only two (2) sites on the National Register of Historic Places, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall and the Rankin Auto Court. The Odd Fellows Hall is a two-story brick commercial structure that was built in 1907. The primary decorative feature is an ornate and large brick cornice that dominates the south, southwest, and west sides of the building. The Rankin Auto Court was built in 1924 by the Rankin brothers and was maintained by D.K. Rankin his wife Eva, and their five children. The Auto Court capitalized on the boom in the auto industry as well as the location adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. The Auto Court has a variety of cabins and a motel that represent different architectural techniques ranging from the 1920s style to the 1970s. It was placed on the National Historic Register of Historic Places in 2022.

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Figure 7. *Natural Resources and Hazards Map*



ENVIRONMENT GOAL

The City of Ashton will preserve its natural resources and maintain the cultural and environmental factors that are integral to the City's history.

Environment Objectives and Actions	
Objectives	**Actions**
2.1 Protect the community from natural and manmade hazards.	2.1.a. Ensure development follows regulations and any areas prone to natural hazards are identified and designated as open space.
	2.1.b. Collaborate with regional agencies to coordinate emergency planning, hazard mitigation, and public safety initiatives.
2.2 Conserve natural resources while promoting long-term environmental sustainability.	2.2.a. Allow school field trips to City utilities- water treatment/ wastewater treatment facilities to provide students with education on the importance of essential services and their relation to the environment.
2.3 Ensure development activity does not negatively impact natural resources and open space.	2.3.a. Update the City's land use regulations to include considerations to preserve environmentally sensitive areas.
	2.3.b. Require stormwater management practices such as retention ponds, bioswales, and permeable surfaces to reduce runoff and protect water quality.
	2.3.c. Guide growth toward areas with existing infrastructure to limit urban sprawl and to protect farmland, open space, and scenic views.

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Services & Infrastructure

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4. SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Providing services and maintaining infrastructure effectively and economically are the primary functions of the City government. Services include, but are not limited to, providing drinking water, treating wastewater, maintaining streets, emergency services, solid waste disposal, libraries and parks. The infrastructure that the City is responsible for runs the gambit from water and sewer infrastructure to buildings and parks.

Local non-profit organizations such as Ashton Memorial and Ashton Senior Center also provide services to residents and visitors. A comprehensive list of the services and facilities found in Ashton is outlined below.

PUBLIC SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND UTILITIES

Public services provide the comforts to residents that make a community safe, livable, and operate efficiently. Public facilities and services include sewer and water services, public health services, emergency services, and utilities.

WATER AND SEWER

The City of Ashton is served by a central water system. The water system was last updated in 2011 and maintains purity and cleanliness. The City's biggest concern is keeping contamination from entering the water system. Back-flow contamination is always the greatest concern, a situation caused when the pumps shut off and the pressure drops, and contamination is potentially siphoned back into the water system. In areas where the City is not connected or unable to connect to the domestic water system, water may be supplied by private wells.

Ashton is also served by a central sewage system, last updated in 2026. The sanitary sewage treatment facility for the City of Ashton is an aerated lagoon system located outside of the City to the northwest. The treatment facilities consist of four lagoons with a total surface area of approximately ten acres.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

The City of Ashton has three police officers on the force, a Police Chief, a detective, and an officer. Ashton P.D. is dispatched through the Fremont County Sheriff's office along with emergency medical services. Fremont County provides emergency medical services through a volunteer system consisting of Emergency Medical Technicians and Certified 1st Responders in three communities within the County. Ambulances are based in St. Anthony, Ashton and Island Park. Two ambulances are housed in each location and have heavy and light duty vehicle extrication equipment available.



North Fremont Fire Protection District - Water Tender

North Fremont Fire Protection District, located on the north end of the City at the corner of 7th Street and Cherry Street (as shown on **Figure 8** – *Public Facilities*), has served the City of Ashton since 1991. The crew is comprised of volunteers and is managed by a 3-person commission board. Services are dispatched by the Sherrif's office and there is a mutual aid agreement with the department's counterpart in St. Anthony, U.S. Forest Service, and the BLM.

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MEDICAL SERVICES

Ashton Memorial Healthcare is a not-for-profit healthcare company that was established in 1950. Ashton Medical Clinic, owned by Ashton Memorial, provides a variety of services to the community, which can be found below in **Table 3**.

Table 3. *Ashton Medical Clinic*

Ashton Medical Clinic Services	
Family Practice	Outpatient Services
Annual Wellness visits	Immunizations
X-Rays	Laser and Shock wave therapy
Physical therapy	Skilled nursing services
Routine medical care	Pharmaceuticals

Ashton Memorial currently staffs a Living Center, Medical Clinic, and a Pharmacy. The biggest need is additional staffing to assist to adequately provide services to the residents of Ashton. Both the Pharmacy and the Clinic are part of the Emergency preparedness plan, and both have generators to house people in the event of an emergency. The Clinic is run by a board of directors consisting of seven members. Currently, the closest hospitals in the area are Madison Memorial in Rexburg, Teton Valley Hospital in Driggs, and Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho Falls Community Hospital, and Mountain View Hospital.

SOLID WASTE

Ashton's solid waste collection service is provided by a PSI of Idaho Falls. With the present system there is ample service capacity for future growth. The waste is hauled presently to the Fremont County landfill north of St. Anthony. For more information on this landfill, please see the Fremont County Comprehensive Plan (FCCP).

COMMUNICATIONS

The Post Office is located at 109 S 5th Street and provides a suite of services. These services include money orders, passport services, mailing services, and business services. Other communications companies providing telephone and internet services include Blackfoot Communications, Fybercom, and Starlink.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Ashton branch of the Fremont County District Library is located at 925 Main Street, in the Ashton Community Center. Because the library has a reciprocal borrowing contract with St. Anthony Library, the two libraries meet once a year with County Library Board to discuss and plan the budget for the following year. The library operates on county and federal funding and is open six days a week. The Ashton Public Library offers books, periodicals, newspapers, and e-books and audio books for loan. Additional services provided by the library include proctoring tests, summer reading programs, story hours, faxing services, and interlibrary loans. The library offers a wide variety of classes for further education and community development.

ASHTON SENIOR CENTER

The Ashton Senior Center, located at 522 Main Street, provides nutrition services, monthly entertainment, and preventative care (flu and COVID-19 shots). The Senior Center prioritizes the overall health and well-being of

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seniors in the community as the facility strives to reduce social isolation and provide community support, such as providing advice on Social Security benefits.

OTHER UTILITIES

Electricity is supplied by Rocky Mountain Power from a hydroelectric facility located on Henry's Fork of the Snake River, approximately 2.5 miles west of the City of Ashton. The 2025 Integrated Resources Plan does not identify any new national electric transmission lines extending to or around Ashton. There are future plans to expand new transmission lines through south Idaho through to eastern Wyoming. Natural gas is not available in the area, so residents operate appliances and heat by means of propane, electricity, or oil and wood stoves. Telephone and internet services are provided by Blackfoot Communications and Fybercom.

SCHOOL FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION

Ashton is served by the Fremont County Joint School District (District #215). The district includes Ashton Elementary School, kindergarten through fifth grade, and North Fremont Junior/Senior High School provides sixth through twelfth grade.

Ashton Elementary School has a student population of 242, per the Ashton Elementary School Wide Improvement Plan. 41% of the students receive free and reduced lunch, and the school offers a backpack program that sends food home to students who may need additional meals during the weekends. In 2001, School District #215 patrons passed a bond to build a new high school, and in 2004 at a cost of 9.4 million dollars, the current school was completed.

North Fremont Junior/Senior High School serves grades 6-12, as the 6th graders were moved to Junior High in 2006. North Fremont High School has a graduation rate of 95.2%. North Fremont Junior/Senior High is projected to have 356 students in the next 10 years, with an average class size of 25.4. There are not any anticipated capacity issues in the next 10 years.

Table 4. *Ashton School Enrollment Numbers*

ASHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL								
	Preschool	**Kindergarten**	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**	**TOTAL**
2025-2026	18	35	27	37	37	39	49	**242**
2024-2025	7	23	39	36	38	46	40	**229**
2023-2024	9	35	33	41	44	39	43	**244**
2022-2023	11	33	43	42	37	44	48	**258**
2021-2022	12	45	38	38	42	48	31	**254**
2020-2021	10	35	35	40	45	28	45	**238**

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NORTH FREMONT JR-SR HIGH SCHOOL								
	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	TOTAL
2025-2026	39	44	50	37	45	35	55	**305**
2024-2025	48	46	37	48	38	63	40	**320**
2023-2024	47	36	46	40	67	42	44	**322**
2022-2023	34	49	41	63	47	46	43	**323**
2021-2022	47	37	64	48	49	47	45	**337**
2020-2021	37	59	50	52	47	47	36	**328**

The School District offers transportation to any student who lives at least 1 ½ miles from their appropriate school which is determined by the nearest and best route. The types of transportation provided by the district are school buses, or other vehicles, which can be a parent who receives room and board reimbursements if they reside in an area the District has deemed impractical due to scarcity of students remoteness or the condition of roads.

TRANSPORTATION

The City of Ashton covers less than one square mile, the majority of Ashton's streets are classified as local roads providing connection to residential and commercial land uses. Refer to **Figure 9** – *Functional Classification*. There are currently four railroad crossings along the railroad corridor and limited traffic signals are present within city limits. Curb, gutter and sidewalk have been installed along Main Street and sidewalk is present along various streets in the residential area south of Main Street. North of Main Street, Pine Street and the north block of 2nd Street also have sidewalk. As there are significant sidewalk gaps and ongoing transportation improvements and maintenance required throughout the City, Ashton should consider applying for Local Rural Highway Investment Program funding to update the City's 2006 multi-jurisdictional transportation plan.



As the City is situated along a highly trafficked state corridor, the City experiences a large economic advantage from commuters and travelers utilizing the state facility that stop in Ashton to purchase fuel, shop, or eat. As is the case with most cities that were established along state facilities, the commuting traffic is a large economic driver for the community. Idaho Transportation Department has been developing a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study that discussed an alternative that would bypass the City of Ashton. While this is not a recommended alternative and has not yet been determined to be a viable option, it has been an expressed concern of the City's as it would greatly impact the community to lose the traffic currently received from US-20. The City of Ashton should continue to work with ITD to ensure that concerns are relayed to the project team as the PEL is finalized.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the closest airport to Ashton is located south of St. Anthony, approximately 15 miles away from Ashton's city center. The City of Ashton does not have an area of influence for the St. Anthony airport and therefore has no land use restrictions due to the distance from the airport.

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Figure 8. *Public Facilities*

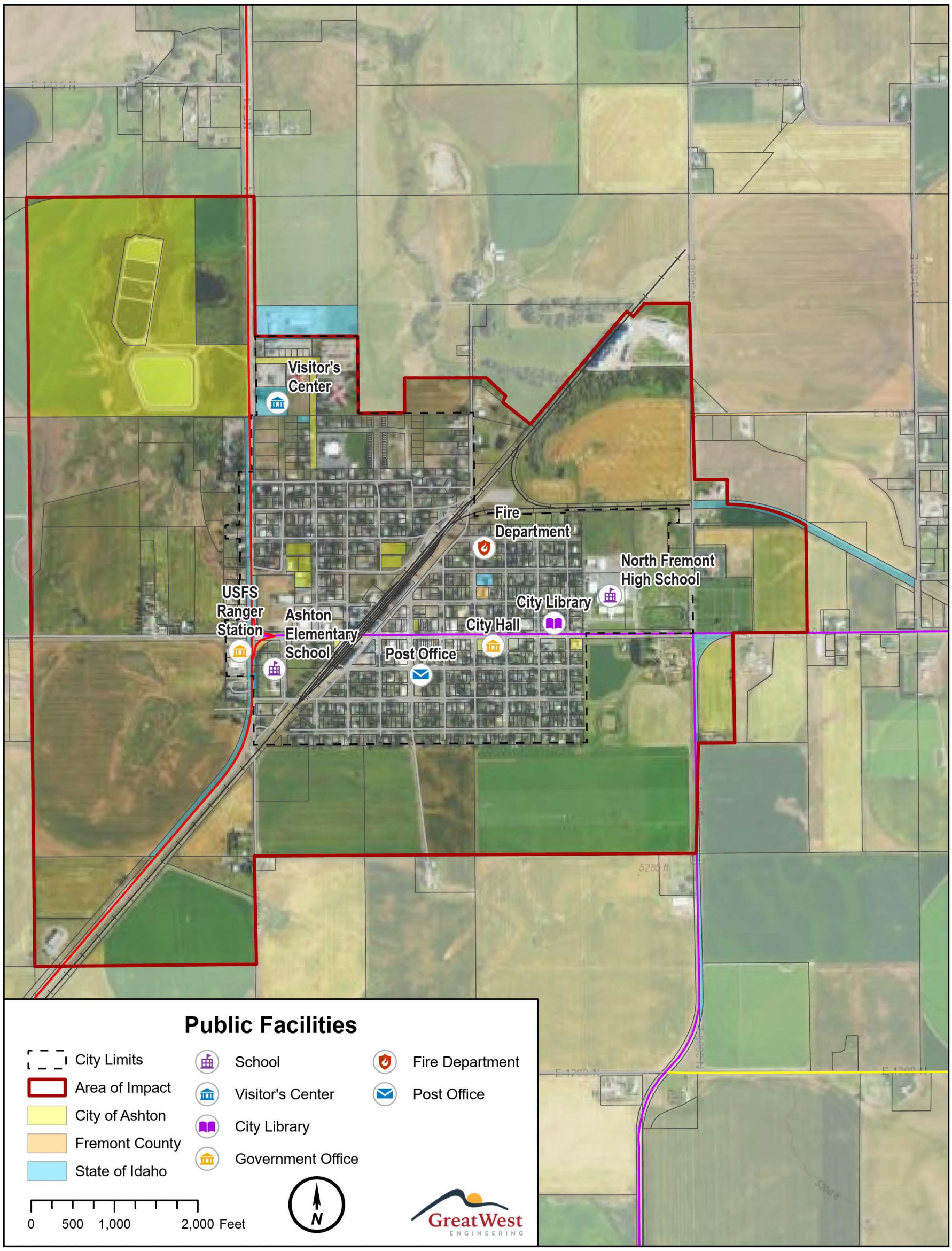
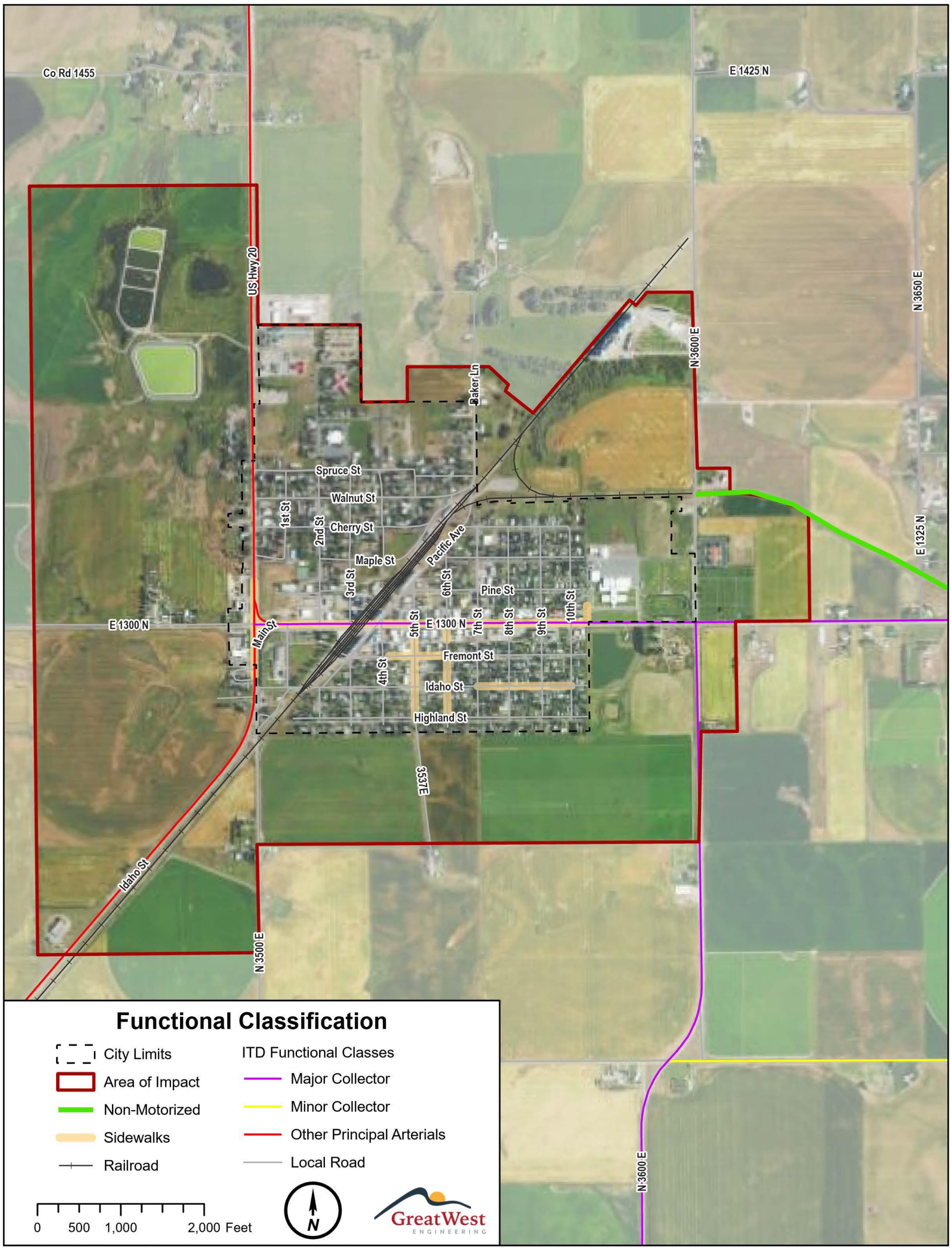


Figure 9. *Functional Classification*



SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOAL

The City of Ashton will provide adequate services that both meet the current and future needs of the community and encourage sensible development.

Services and Infrastructure Objectives and Actions	
Objectives	**Actions**
3.1 Ensure public services and infrastructure meet the current and future needs of the community.	3.1.a. Establish and periodically update a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to forecast and fund short-term and long-term infrastructure needs.
	3.1.b. Regularly engage the community to assess service satisfaction and identify emerging needs or concerns.
	3.1.c. Pursue state and federal funding (e.g., USDA Rural Development, DEQ State Revolving Fund, ARPA) to modernize and expand infrastructure.
	3.1.d. Require new developments to fund or extend necessary infrastructure improvements through developer agreements or impact fees.
3.2 Provide safe access to various modes of transportation.	3.2.a. Coordinate with Fremont County and ITD (Idaho Transportation Department) on regional transportation planning and funding.
	3.2.b. Explore funding opportunities from the LHTAC's Local Rural Highway Investment Program to develop and implement a city-wide Transportation Master Plan.
	3.2.c. Continue to collaborate with the Idaho Department of Transportation regarding any potential future upgrades State Highways 20 and 47 through Ashton.

Services and Infrastructure Objectives and Actions	
	3.2.d. Pursue Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants and collaborate on community outreach to promote walking and biking to school.
4.3 Collaborate with the school district to support the educational needs of the City.	3.3.a. Establish regular coordination meetings between City leadership and Fremont County Joint School District to discuss growth, safety, and facility needs.
	4.3.b. Include the school district as a stakeholder in future land use and comprehensive planning processes.
	4.3.c. Promote the availability and affordability of quality preschool and early childhood programs.
4.4 Ensure that the community is designed for residents to age in place.	4.4.a. Encourage a mix of housing types, including those that prioritize multigenerational living.
	4.4.b. Pursue grants and partnerships (e.g., AARP Livable Communities, Idaho Commission on Aging, HUD HOME Program) to support age-friendly improvements.
	4.4.c. Consider conducting a community survey to assess the needs and priorities of older residents.
	4.4.d. Partner with the Senior Center to align efforts in meeting the needs of the aging population.

Implementation

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5. IMPLEMENTATION

The following table outlines all actions presented in the previous chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) and lists a lead responsible party and/or project partner(s) to accomplish implementation.

Table 5. *Implementation Table*

Number	Implementation Action	Responsible Party / Project Partners
1.1.a.	Develop community branding with digital and print materials tailored to regional events.	Chamber of Commerce
1.1.b.	Establish a coordinated marketing strategy in partnership with local businesses and regional tourism boards to promote annual and seasonal events (e.g., Mesa Falls Marathon, American Dog Derby).	City of Ashton, Chamber of Commerce, Idaho Department of Commerce
1.1.c.	Collaborate with local chamber of commerce organizations as well as neighboring cities to cross-promote events.	City of Ashton, City of St. Anthony, Fremont County, Chamber of Commerce,
1.2.a.	Prioritize infrastructure upgrades (roads, water, sewer, broadband) in areas designated for commercial or industrial development.	City of Ashton, Public Works Department, Idaho Transportation Department
1.2.b.	Encourage the development of affordable housing to ensure there is adequate workforce housing for existing and future businesses	City of Ashton, Homebuilders Association
1.2.c.	Review and update zoning ordinances to ensure adequate land availability for future commercial and industrial development.	City of Ashton
1.2.d.	Prioritize infill development and adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized downtown buildings to reduce barriers for new businesses.	City of Ashton
1.3.a.	Maintain and upgrade existing park facilities with modern amenities (e.g., restrooms, playgrounds, lighting, benches, ADA access).	City of Ashton, Public Works
1.3.b.	Pursue funding from federal and state grant programs (e.g., LWCF, RTP, Idaho Parks & Recreation grants) to expand and maintain parks and trails.	City of Ashton, Idaho Parks and Recreation
1.4.a.	Support a range of housing types—including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within residential zones.	City of Ashton, Eastern Idaho Homebuilders Association
1.4.b.	Position the downtown area as a vibrant community hub by supporting infill development, upper-floor housing, public art, and community events.	City of Ashton, Chamber of Commerce
1.4.c.	Continue to require new development to include sidewalks, landscaping, and pedestrian-friendly design standards.	City of Ashton, Public Works
1.4.d.	Promote complete neighborhoods where residents can walk or bike to parks, schools, shops, and jobs.	City of Ashton, Public Works
1.5.a.	Partner with regional organizations such as the Idaho Department of Labor, Eastern Idaho Workforce Development Board, and local community colleges to host job fairs, resume clinics, and career workshops in Ashton.	City of Ashton, Fremont County High School, Idaho Department of Labor, Eastern Idaho Workforce Development

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1.5.b.	Collaborate with North Fremont High School and technical education partners to provide internship, apprenticeship, and job shadowing opportunities with local employers.	City of Ashton, North Fremont High School
1.5.c.	Collaborate with regional economic development organizations to align business recruitment strategies with local workforce capabilities.	City of Ashton, East Idaho Planning and Development Agency
1.6.a.	Consider implementing a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan that includes lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, benches, and public art.	City of Ashton
1.6.b.	Support maintenance and beautification of parks, civic buildings, and rights-of-way to promote safety and community pride.	City of Ashton, Chamber of Commerce
1.6.c.	Avoid incompatible land uses (e.g., heavy industrial next to homes) through clear zoning and thoughtful site planning.	City of Ashton
1.6.d.	Develop and adopt design guidelines that address building form, site layout, materials, signage, and public improvements.	City of Ashton, Public works
2.1.a.	Ensure development follows regulations and any areas prone to natural hazards are protected and designated as open space	City of Ashton
2.1.b.	Collaborate with regional agencies to coordinate emergency planning, hazard mitigation, and public safety initiatives.	City of Ashton, Idaho office of Emergency Management
2.2.a.	Allow school field trips to City utilities- water treatment/ wastewater treatment facilities to provide students with education on the importance of essential services and their relation to the environment.	City of Asthon, School District #215
2.3.a.	Update the City's land use regulations to include considerations to preserve environmentally sensitive areas.	City of Ashton
2.3.b.	Require stormwater management practices such as retention ponds, bioswales, and permeable surfaces to reduce runoff and protect water quality.	City of Ashton, Public Works
2.3.c.	Guide growth toward areas with existing infrastructure to limit urban sprawl and to protect farmland, open space, and scenic views.	City of Ashton
3.1.a.	Establish and periodically update a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to forecast and fund short-term and long-term infrastructure needs.	City of Ashton, Public Works
3.1.b.	Regularly engage the community to assess service satisfaction and identify emerging needs or concerns.	City of Ashton
3.1.c.	Pursue state and federal funding (e.g., USDA Rural Development, DEQ State Revolving Fund, ARPA) to modernize and expand infrastructure.	City of Ashton, IDEQ, USDA
3.1.d.	Require new developments to fund or extend necessary infrastructure improvements through developer agreements or impact fees.	City of Ashton, Local Developers
3.2.a.	Coordinate with Fremont County and ITD (Idaho Transportation Department) on regional transportation planning and funding.	City of Ashton, Public Works, Fremont County, ITD
3.2.b.	Explore funding opportunities from the LHTAC's Local Rural Highway Investment Program to develop and implement a city-wide Transportation Master Plan.	City of Ashton, ITD, Fremont County
3.2.c.	Continue to collaborate with the Idaho Department of Transportation regarding any potential future upgrades State Highways 20 and 47 through Ashton.	City of Ashton, ITD

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3.2.d.	Pursue Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants and collaborate on community outreach to promote walking and biking to school.	City of Ashton, Public Works
3.3.a.	Establish regular coordination meetings between City leadership and Fremont County Joint School District to discuss growth, safety, and facility needs.	City of Ashton, Fremont County, School District #215
3.3.b.	Include the school district as a stakeholder in future land use and comprehensive planning processes.	City of Ashton, School District #215
3.3.c.	Promote the availability and affordability of quality preschool and early childhood programs.	City of Ashton,
3.4.a.	Encourage a mix of housing types, including those that prioritize multigenerational living.	City of Ashton, Chamber of Commerce, Homebuilders Association
3.4.b.	Pursue grants and partnerships (e.g., AARP Livable Communities, Idaho Commission on Aging, HUD HOME Program) to support age-friendly improvements.	City of Ashton, AARP, HUD, Idaho Commission on Aging
3.4.c.	Consider conducting a community survey to assess the needs and priorities of older residents.	City of Ashton, Senior Center
3.4.d.	Partner with the Senior Center to align efforts in meeting the needs of the aging population.	City of Ashton, Senior Center, Idaho Commission on Aging

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Appendix A

Public Involvement Summary

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Appendix B

Office of Attorney General's Checklist

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