



# Bonnars Ferry

## Existing Conditions Assessment

*Updated: 5/26/2022*

### Introduction:

The existing conditions assessment is organized by and rooted in the social determinants of health, but also contains certain required and essential elements for comprehensive planning. Understanding the existing conditions and historical trends of Bonners Ferry is intended to inform conversations and directions for the plan update.

This assessment is important for several reasons:

- ◆ It establishes a broad understanding of the community's existing social, economic, and demographic context, helping to determine the extent of change that any policy initiative might entail.
- ◆ It increases the plan's accuracy and credibility, illustrating to those interested in the plan the level of rigor involved in the plan's preparation, which provides opportunities for correction and refinement as the process continues.
- ◆ It provides a baseline for the development of key performance indicators, allowing for an assessment of the plan's success based on the degree to which targeted conditions improve.

For these reasons, the existing conditions assessment focuses on those elements of greatest importance to the plan that may be most easily tracked and updated over the plan's life. It is not intended to be a comprehensive compilation of all available data. Instead, the information is developed and organized in a manner consistent with the plan's preparation and likely policy initiatives.

The community's social determinants of health form the backbone of the existing conditions assessment:

- ◆ Social and Community Context
- ◆ Economic Stability
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Neighborhood & Built Environment
- ◆ Community Health & Safety (including access to health care)

They provide a lens into existing community conditions. They relate directly to the ways in which the plan is shaped and proposes public policy in achieving overall community objectives.

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## Social & Community Context:

A community's future competitiveness is dependent on its people's relationship with each other and their community<sup>1</sup>. This section provides a brief history of Bonners Ferry, examines demographics, provides population forecasting scenarios, and outlines previous planning efforts.

### Overview and History

Bonnors Ferry is located within the Kootenai River Valley as a gateway community to world-class recreation, including the Kootenai Wildlife Refuge and three mountain ranges. It is the county seat and largest city in Boundary County—aptly named for its adjacency to Canada, Washington, and Montana. Like other amenity-rich communities in the inter-mountain West, the city draws many annual visitors, but it has also drawn new residents seeking a better quality of life. The character and development of Bonners Ferry has been shaped by a multitude of natural features, resources, and individuals over the last century.



Photo Credit: Idaho Tourism

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Building a Healthy Idaho: Improving the Conditions in Which Idahoans Are Born, Grow, Live, Work, & Age (2020).

The heart of Bonners Ferry is its traditional downtown, located on the south side of the Kootenai River and across Highway 95 from the Kootenai River Inn and Casino. The city has made recent progress in preserving the traditional and walkable fabric of the built environment downtown by deregulating off-street parking and providing an underpass from the casino. The city recently added “parklets” downtown, where local shops or restaurants may provide additional seating in business adjacent on-street parking spaces. In residential areas, the recent allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) may provide additional housing options, helping to off-set impacts of rising housing costs for the city’s workforce.

The commercial areas along Hwy 95 south of the downtown have seen recent improvements by the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). The improvements include a pedestrian connection along the highway into the downtown core. Most of the residential areas, as well as the high school and middle school, are located behind the commercial areas on Highway 95. To the north, residential areas surround the medical district, which includes a hospital, the health district, and an assisted living facility. A municipal outdoor pool, buffered by residential housing, is located east of Hwy 95 between the commercial area to the south and the downtown.



**Figure 1 - Downtown Bonners Ferry**  
*(photo credit: Idaho Tourism)*



Prior to the arrival of western prospectors seeking gold in the mid 1800's, bands of the Ktunaxa (or Kootenai) Nation occupied territories along the Kootenai River in parts of Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia. The Kootenai River is an important resource for the tribe, which now owns approximately 2,500 acres of reservation land in the county. Tribal land ownership essentially began following the "War of 1974" when tribal representatives successfully gained recognition and the additional services needed to serve members suffering from poor health outcomes were provided.<sup>2</sup>

The "Ferry" from which the city gets its name, was first created in 1864 by Edward Bonner. The ferry provided access across the Kootenai River to gold discoveries in the East Kootenays of British Columbia. The community of Bonners Ferry began to flourish as a supply hub for mining and timber in the 1800s as the "Midge" steamer began service for passengers and freight between Bonners Ferry and British Columbia in 1883. The Great Northern Railroad was built in 1892 and the Spokane International and Kootenai Valley Railroad lines soon followed. The first bridge across the Kootenai at Bonners Ferry was built in 1905 (now Highway 95), followed by the Spokane International Rail Bridge in 1906.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 2 - Original ferry in Bonners Ferry**  
**photo source: Boundary County Historic Society**

Bonners Ferry was formally established in 1893 and continued to grow, supported primarily by timber and agriculture, which remain important economic sectors today. Bonners Ferry's downtown, originally built on stilts because of flooding before the Libby Dam was constructed in the early 1970s, contains a mix of historic buildings adjacent to Highway 95 and the river. Two of the 5 known properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are downtown. Across Highway 95 from downtown is The Kootenai River Inn Casino and Spa. It was opened by the Tribe in 1986.

Today, Bonners Ferry draws many visitors annually but has also drawn many new residents seeking a better quality of life. Like other amenity-rich communities, the arrival of new residents has placed significant strains on the housing market, affecting all aspects of life for residents and businesses of the city.

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<sup>2</sup> Indian Country Today (2018), <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-kootenai-tribe-of-idaho/> / Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (2022), <https://www.npaihb.org/member-tribes/kootenai-tribe/#:~:text=The%20Kootenai%20Reservation%20was%20first,on%20a%202%2C695%20acre%20reservation.>

<sup>3</sup> Bob Gunter (2022), <https://www.sandpoint.com/community/bonners-ferry.php>

## Demographics & Population

While the population of the City of Bonners Ferry has remained fairly constant for the past 10 years<sup>4</sup>, the 2020 Census showed that the population actually decreased by less than 1% since 2010, from 2,543 to 2,520. Boundary County, on the other hand, grew by nearly 10% in the same period. This indicates that the growth seen in Boundary County is occurring outside of Bonners Ferry city limits. Bonners Ferry's population accounts for approximately 21% of the County's population, which has decreased from 23% in 2010 and 25% in 2000.

The slight decrease in the City's population is dissimilar from what is happening on a statewide basis. Idaho has seen significant growth in the last few decades, including a 17% increase between 2010 and 2020. Table 1 below shows the population changes between 1980 and 2020 for the City, County and state.

**Table 1: Historic Population (US Census)**

Census Population	Bonners Ferry		Boundary County		State of Idaho	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>1980</b>	1,906		7,289		943,935	
<b>1990</b>	2,193	15.1%	8,332	14.3%	1,006,749	6.7%
<b>2000</b>	2,515	14.7%	9,871	18.5%	1,293,953	28.5%
<b>2010</b>	2,543	1.1%	10,972	11.2%	1,567,582	21.1%
<b>2020</b>	2,520	-0.9%	12,056	9.9%	1,839,106	17.3%

## Household Size

Ninety-two percent of Bonners Ferry's housing units are occupied by the city's 2,520 people. This creates an average household size of 2.32 people, which is slightly less than the Boundary County average of 2.53 people per household.

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<sup>4</sup> Except for a jump in 2013 where the ACS estimates show a population growth of 23% from 2012. Estimates between 2014 and 2020 show this number dropping back down to be on track with a more consistent growth pattern.

## 2042 Projections

According to census data, Boundary County experienced an average annual growth of 1.0% between 2010 and 2020. Idaho Dept of Labor (IDOL) forecasts an annual 1.1% regional growth across Northern Idaho. Applied to Boundary County, this growth rate equates to a projected population of 15,190 in the County by 2042.

Based solely on historical census data, Bonners Ferry has not kept pace with growth rates at the County level. Census data shows an average annual growth of 0.3% between 2010 and 2020—decreasing slightly in size by 23 people between the 2010 and 2020 Census. The data also shows an unexplained spike in 2013. Per the Census Bureau, the data for that year is based off a sample from the American Community Survey (ACS), so there is a degree of uncertainty.

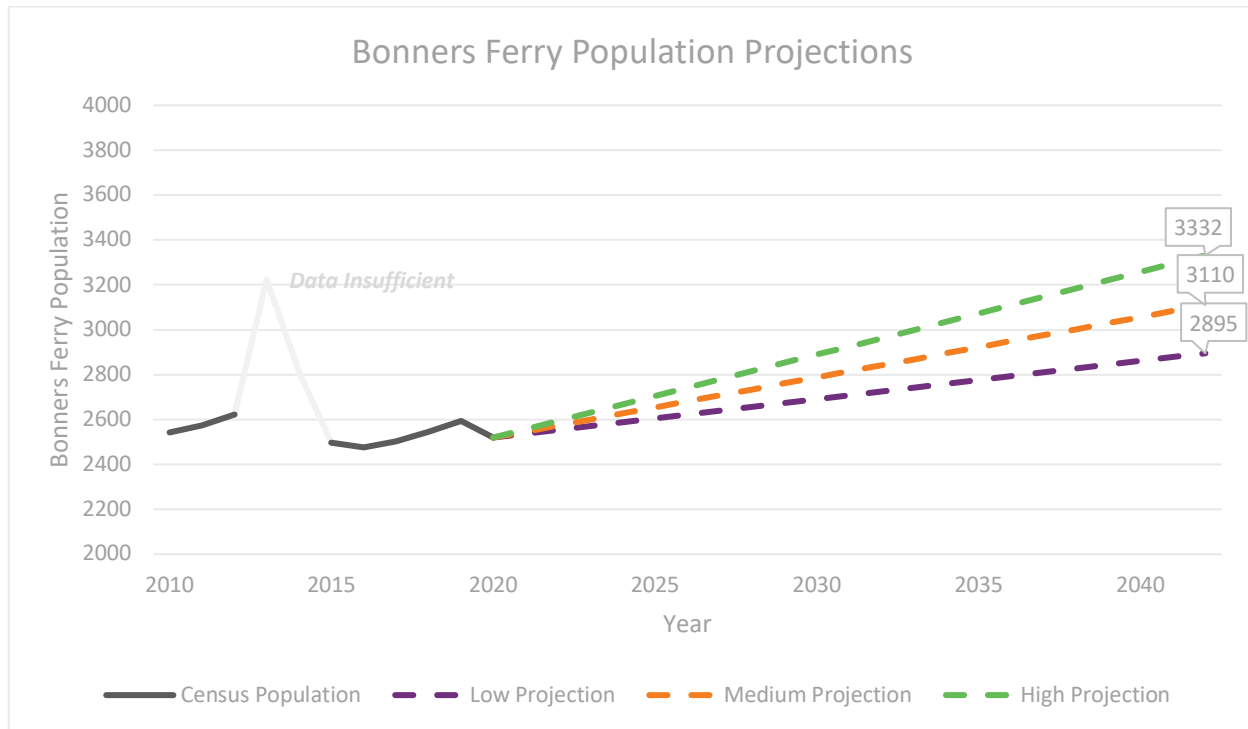
In projecting a high, medium, and low forecast through 2042, other dynamics have been considered. Potential development discussions suggest another 300-400 units may soon be planned within the city. Regional and national migration trends to rural areas accelerated following the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the proliferation of broadband internet in the County. These factors have made remote work viable for many. Just in 2021 alone, the median selling price of homes in Boundary County increased from \$342,000 in 2020 to over \$400,000 in 2021/22<sup>5</sup>, indicating high demand in the region.

Considering historical and emerging trends, a 0.6% annual growth is the low population projection, a 1.1% annual growth is the medium projection, and a 1.4% annual growth rate is the high projection. The low projection averages the historical county growth rate with the city's historical growth rate. The medium projection assumes the City will grow at the same historical rate of the County. Finally, the high projection relies exclusively on pending development which, if realized, would yield approximately 350 new units when multiplied by the 2.32 average household size of Bonners Ferry.

**Table 2: Low, Medium, High Projections**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2042 Low (City/County Av.)</b>	<b>2042 Med (County Rate)</b>	<b>2042 High (350 New Units)</b>
<b>Population</b>	2520	2895	3110	3332
<b>Population Change</b>	-	375	590	812
<b>Percent Growth from 2020</b>	-	14.9%	23.4%	32.2%
<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>	-	0.6%	1.1%	1.4%

<sup>5</sup> Dealing with growth in Bonner, Boundary Counties. Raphael Barta (2021).



**Figure 3 - Low, Medium and High Population Projections**

These low, medium, and high population projections for Bonners Ferry indicate the potential range of additional population the City may expect by 2042. The low projection would add about 375 residents (14.9% total growth), the medium projection would add 590 residents (23.4% total growth), and the high projection would add 812 residents (32.2% total growth) to the 2020 Census numbers. This indicates Bonners Ferry may expect a population of between 2,895 and 3,332 by 2042. The unexplained population spike in 2013 is assumed to be an error in the census data received.



## Age & Gender

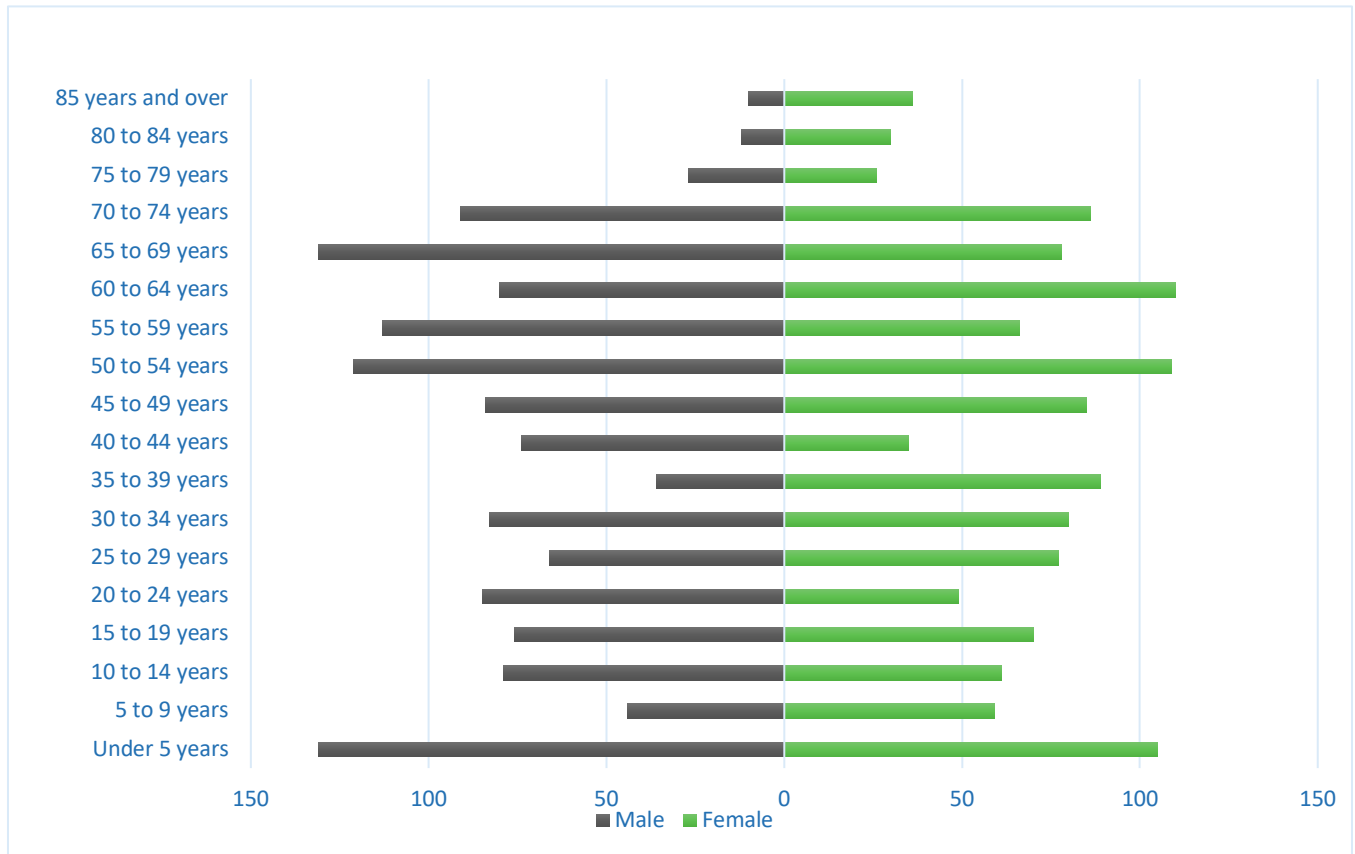
Bonnors Ferry has a slightly higher percentage of male residents than female residents. The 2019 ACS estimates show the age categories with the highest populations in Bonners Ferry: 45-54 years (15.4%), 65-74 years (14.9%), 25-34 years (11.8%). There is also a high number of people under 5 years of age (9.1%). The median age in Bonners Ferry is 44.8, slightly older than Boundary County's median age of 43.5. About one-fifth (21%) of the population is under 18 and another one-fifth (20.3%) is age 65 or older.

**Table 3: Gender**

<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Estimate</u></b>	<b><u>Percent</u></b>
<b>Male</b>	1343	51.8
<b>Female</b>	1251	48.2

**Table 4: Age Group**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Under 5 years</b>	236	9.1
<b>5 to 9 years</b>	103	4
<b>10 to 14 years</b>	140	5.4
<b>15 to 19 years</b>	146	5.6
<b>20 to 24 years</b>	134	5.2
<b>25 to 34 years</b>	306	11.8
<b>35 to 44 years</b>	234	9
<b>45 to 54 years</b>	399	15.4
<b>55 to 59 years</b>	179	6.9
<b>60 to 64 years</b>	190	7.3
<b>65 to 74 years</b>	386	14.9
<b>75 to 84 years</b>	95	3.7
<b>85 years and over</b>	46	1.8



**Figure 4: Population Pyramid**

The population pyramid in Figure 4 shows how age categories broken down by gender.

## Race & Ethnicity

More than 90% of the Bonners Ferry population is White. About 6% are two or more races. Fewer than 1% of the population are Black or African American, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. About 1% are American Indian and Alaskan Native and about 1.5% are some other race. Approximately 5% of the population is Hispanic or Latino.

**Table 5: Race**

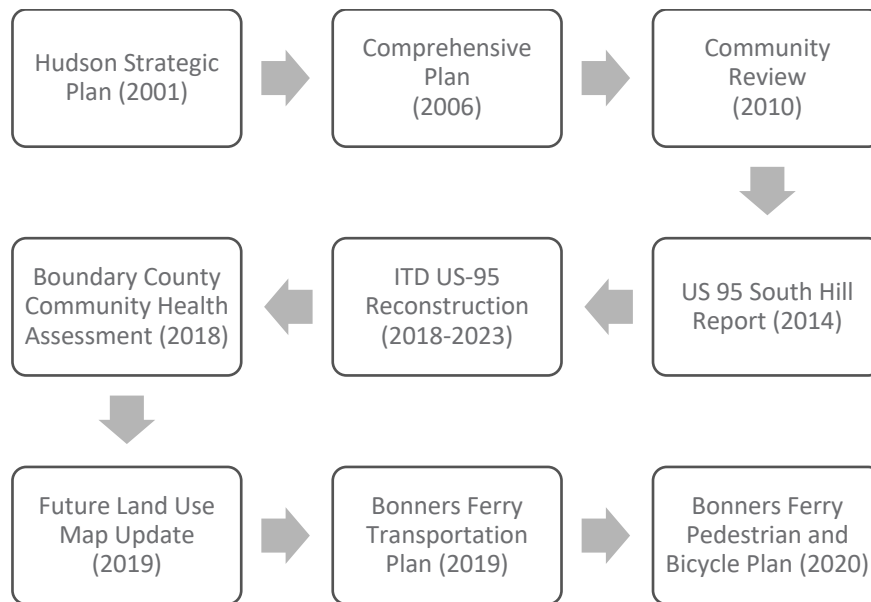
<b>Race</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>White alone</b>	2280	90.5%
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	10	0.4%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	26	1.0%
<b>Asian alone</b>	9	0.4%
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone</b>	3	0.1%
<b>Some Other Race alone</b>	37	1.5%
<b>Population of two or more races</b>	155	6.2%
<b>Total</b>	2,520	100.0%

**Table 6: Ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	125	5%
<b>Not Hispanic or Latino:</b>	2395	95%

## Past Planning Efforts

This plan updates the existing 2006 Comprehensive Plan, folding in elements of and references to more recent planning efforts. Below is a general timeline of past planning efforts:



The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has initiated several highway-related improvements from the southern commercial areas along Highway 95 to the downtown core, which also includes bike and pedestrian facilities. The City made recent progress addressing multimodal connectivity through its 2020 Bike and Pedestrian plan and its 2019 Transportation Plan, following the US 95 South Hill Report. These documents must be carefully considered in the context of any future land use revisions, along with the significant impacts that future planning may have on the health and well-being of Bonnors Ferry residents.

## Key Takeaways

- The character and development pattern of Bonnors Ferry has been shaped by a multitude of natural features, infrastructure investments, natural resources, and individuals over the last century.
- The traditional small town feel and exceptional recreational opportunities bring many visitors but also new residents seeking a better quality of life.
- Recent growth in the area has occurred primarily outside of City Limits
- Demographic data indicates a high percentage of older age, single individuals in Bonnors Ferry.
- Multi-modal transportation options have emerged as a top priority by the city from recent planning efforts.



## Economic Stability:

A dynamic community economy provides a place for residents to earn good wages, remain employed, and meet basic needs<sup>6</sup>. This section contains basic economic information about supporting industries, inflow and outflow of employees, and income ranges.

### Jobs and Industry

Bonnors Ferry-based businesses and industries provide approximately 1,700 total jobs per 2019 Census estimates. Bonners Ferry has about one-fifth of the population of Boundary County, yet the City offers space for over half of the jobs in the County. Bonners Ferry is an essential component to the countywide economy. There are a total of 3,323 jobs in Boundary County, according to 2019 Census data.<sup>7</sup>

The largest industries in Bonners Ferry include the following:

- Health Care and Social Assistance (23%)
- Retail Trade (18%)
- Accommodation and Food Service (15%)
- Public Administration (13%)
- Educational Services (8.2%)

All other industries account for fewer than 5% of the total jobs in Bonners Ferry. Countywide, the same top five industries are significant. Other industries that stand out as top employers include Manufacturing (13%), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (9%), and Construction (8%).

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Building a Healthy Idaho: Improving the Conditions in Which Idahoans Are Born, Grow, Live, Work, & Age (2020).

<sup>7</sup> <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

**Table 7: North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Industry Sector**

NAICS Industry Sector	Bonners Ferry		Boundary County
	Count	Share	Share
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	28	1.6%	8.5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%	0.2%
Utilities	2	0.1%	0.2%
Construction	30	1.8%	8.0%
Manufacturing	37	2.2%	12.7%
Wholesale Trade	6	0.4%	1.4%
Retail Trade	306	18.0%	11.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	8	0.5%	1.3%
Information	17	1.0%	0.5%
Finance and Insurance	39	2.3%	1.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	11	0.6%	0.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	81	4.8%	4.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0.0%	0.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	70	4.1%	2.8%
Educational Services	139	8.2%	7.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	388	22.8%	16.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2	0.1%	0.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	258	15.2%	9.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	58	3.4%	2.3%
Public Administration	220	12.9%	10.8%

**Table 8: Jobs by Worker Age**

Jobs by Worker Age		
	2019	
	Count	Share
Age 29 or younger	342	20.1%
Age 30 to 54	830	48.8%
Age 55 or older	528	31.1%

**Table 9: Jobs by Earnings**

<b>Jobs by Earnings</b>		
	<b>2019</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Share</b>
<b>\$1,250 per month or less</b>	580	34.1%
<b>\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month</b>	727	42.8%
<b>More than \$3,333 per month</b>	393	23.1%

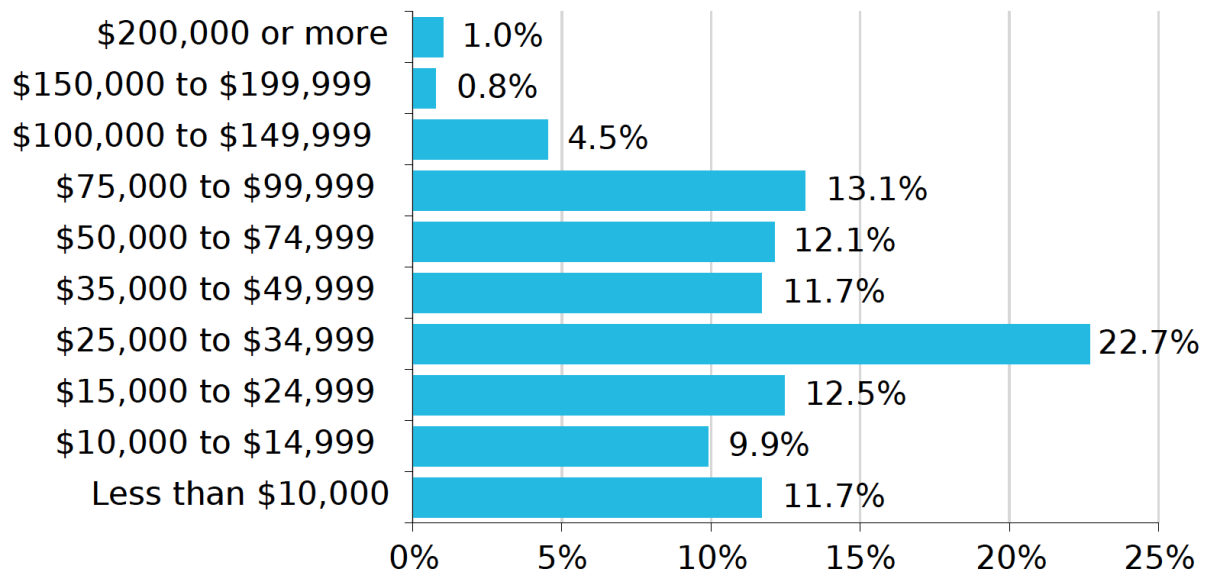
## Income

The median household income in Bonners Ferry per 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates was \$32,000. This median income is significantly lower than Boundary County's median household income of \$43,423.

**Table 10: Household Income**

<b>Household Income</b>	<b>Bonners Ferry Households</b>	<b>Boundary County Households</b>
<b>Less than \$10,000</b>	11.7%	7.0%
<b>\$10,000 to \$14,999</b>	9.9%	6.4%
<b>\$15,000 to \$24,999</b>	12.5%	9.3%
<b>\$25,000 to \$34,999</b>	22.7%	19.5%
<b>\$35,000 to \$49,999</b>	11.7%	12.7%
<b>\$50,000 to \$74,999</b>	12.1%	16.4%
<b>\$75,000 to \$99,999</b>	13.1%	15.4%
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	4.5%	7.5%
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	0.8%	1.2%
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	1%	4.4%
<b>Total Households</b>	1,172	4,653
<b>Median income (dollars)</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>	<b>\$43,423</b>

The relatively low Area Median Income (AMI) of households within Bonners Ferry is likely, to a degree, affected by a lower-than-average household size—indicative of a retirement community with single person households. From 2019 Census data sources, household income is distributed as follows:

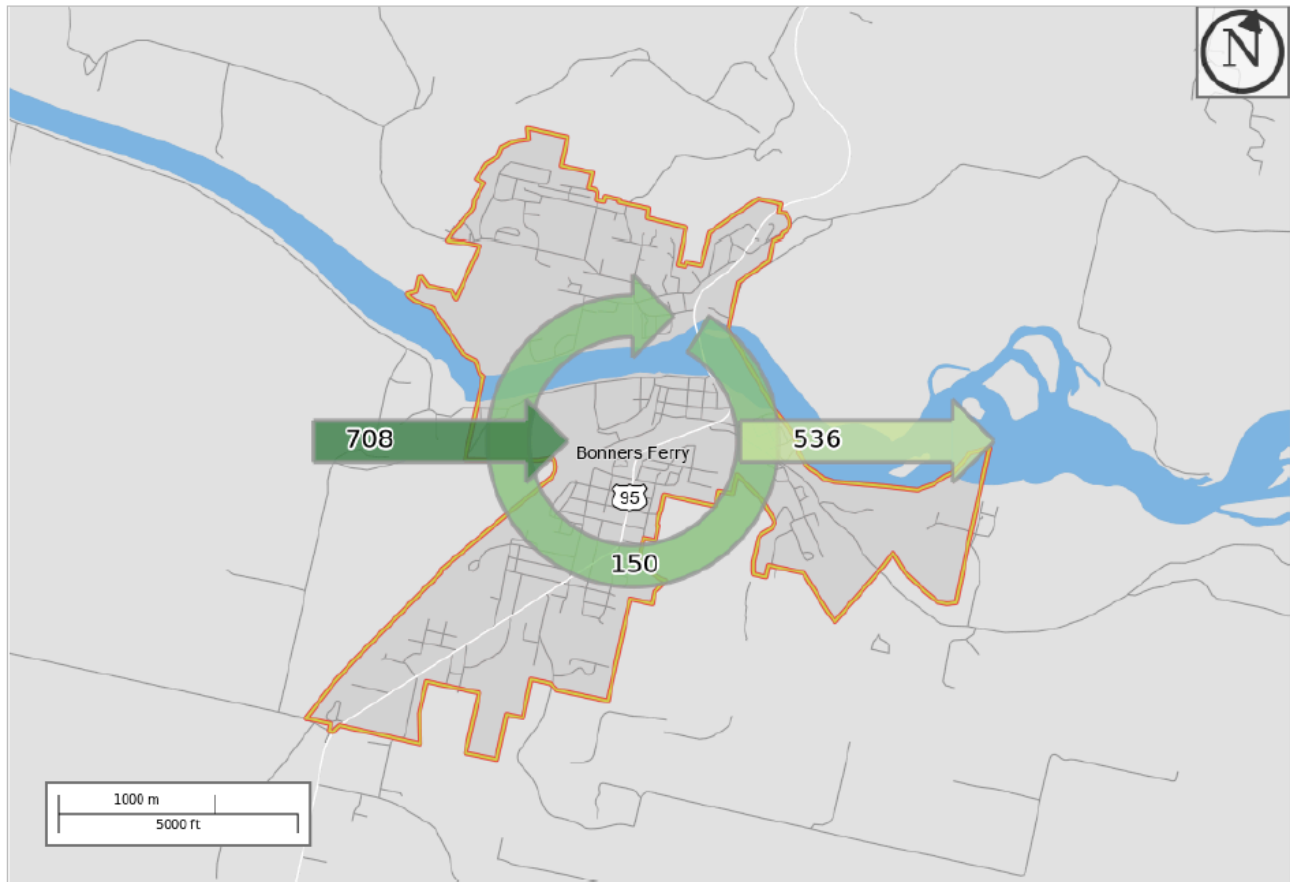


**Figure 5 - Household Income Distribution of Bonners Ferry (2019)**

### Inflow/Outflow of Employees

Figure 6 shows the inflow and outflow of employees in Bonners Ferry according to 2019 Census estimates. Bonners Ferry sees a net gain of about 172 people (708 IN minus 536 OUT) commuting into the city limits daily for work. The available data indicates that 150 people that work in Bonners Ferry also live in the city limits. 82% of the jobs in the City are held by non-residents. The data also indicates how vital the City is to the economy of the surrounding region. It is important to note that this data can be somewhat skewed by larger employers with a corporate address outside of the area. The overall trend, however, may be indicative that most who work in the City do not reside within the City, either by choice or necessity.





### Map Legend

#### Selection Areas

Analysis Selection

#### Inflow/Outflow

- Employed and Live in Selection Area
- Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside

Note: Overlay arrows do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.



**Figure 6: Inflow/Outflow of All Jobs in Bonners Ferry, ID (2019)**

## Broadband Availability

Despite its remote geography, Bonners Ferry has many options for broadband connectivity (over 25 Mbps connection speeds) that enables video conferencing and video streaming<sup>8</sup>. Although very high speeds do not compare to some other areas of the State, remote work in the City has become viable. High speed connectivity will likely continue to draw more residents who are able and willing to work remotely.

## Agriculture

Agriculture is a significant contributor to the economy in the surrounding area of Bonners Ferry and the broader region. The production of canola, wheat, and barley account for over half of the agricultural output in the region. Livestock production accounts for a smaller percentage but remains significant.

## Key Takeaways

- Bonners Ferry is a significant contributor to the county-wide economy.
- A vast majority of workers in Bonners Ferry live outside of city limits, either by choice or economic necessity.
- The Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sectors of Bonners Ferry are currently relatively low contributors to the economy considering the natural amenities of the area.
- Agriculture remains a significant contributor to the regional economy.
- Historically, Bonners Ferry relied heavily on extraction industries but apart from forestry/timber, those industries have declined in their overall contribution to the current economy.
- The ability to work remotely in Bonners Ferry is likely to continue to draw new residents. This may raise AMI over time, but may also contribute to further income disparity if local wages do not keep pace with rising land costs.

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<sup>8</sup> Broadband Now (<https://broadbandnow.com/Idaho/Bonners-Ferry?zip=83805>)

## Education:

High-quality education from early childhood through postsecondary is essential to access jobs. Post-secondary education, including universities, colleges, trade and vocational schools are becoming increasingly important<sup>9</sup>.

### Educational Attainment

Based on the most recent American Community Survey Data available, the educational attainment of Bonners Ferry closely resembles that of the County. About 40% of City residents have graduated high school and pursued no further education. Approximately one-fourth of the population of Bonners Ferry holds a higher-education degree, and another quarter has acquired some college education without obtaining a degree. Approximately 8% of the population has not graduated from high school.

**Table 11: Educational Attainment**

	<b>Bonners Ferry Estimate</b>	<b>Bonners Ferry Percent</b>	<b>Boundary County Percent</b>
<b>Population 25 years and over</b>	1835	100%	100%
<b>Less than 9th grade</b>	24	1.3%	3.5%
<b>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</b>	118	6.4%	4.7%
<b>High school graduate (GED)</b>	738	40.2%	42.7%
<b>Some college, no degree</b>	489	26.6%	22.5%
<b>Associate's degree</b>	115	6.3%	6.8%
<b>Bachelor's degree</b>	216	11.8%	13.3%
<b>Graduate or professional degree</b>	135	7.4%	6.5%

<sup>9</sup> Source: Building a Healthy Idaho: Improving the Conditions in Which Idahoans Are Born, Grow, Live, Work, & Age (2020).

## Schools

Boundary County School District serves Boundary County with three school locations in the City of Bonners Ferry:

- Valley View Elementary
- Bonners Ferry Middle School
- Bonners Ferry High School

There are two additional elementary schools within the district, but outside of the city. The two schools are Naples Elementary and Mount Hall Elementary. There were 1,302 students enrolled in the district in 2021, down slightly from 1,397 students in 2020 and 1,370 students in 2019. Adult education is offered at Bonners Ferry High School through North Idaho College (NIC). NIC also offers post-secondary education in Sandpoint, ID.

**Table 12: Boundary County School District Student Race/Ethnicity Demographics**

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
<b>Asian</b>	0.5%
<b>Black/African American</b>	0.5%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	6.6%
<b>Native American or Alaskan Native</b>	2.8%
<b>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>	0.2%
<b>Multiracial</b>	3.6%
<b>White</b>	85.7%

The graduation rate for the Boundary County School district in 2020 was 85.6%, up from 74.1% in 2019 and 78% in 2018. The district's per pupil expenditures in 2020 was \$9,403. This was higher than the statewide average of \$8,361.

Aging school facilities and lack of funding for structural and other needed improvements are a concern. Valley View Elementary is identified by the district as at risk of catastrophic failure. Should students need to be relocated to other areas or schools while funding is identified and improvements made, transportation modes and routes during peak hours may be significantly affected, along with current



student service offerings. Broadband connectivity for many students in the district, particularly those who live outside of the city, is limited.

The overall percentage of residents in Bonners Ferry with a Bachelor's degree or higher is 19.2%. Although not necessarily atypical for a remote rural area, it is significantly lower than the State of Idaho overall estimate of 28.7%.

## Key Takeaways

- Capacity issues of existing public schools may be compounded, and services may be under threat of decline because of the need for facility improvements.
- Broadband availability is low for many students, particularly those outside of city limits.
- Any long-term closure of older schools may significantly impact transportation patterns and school related services.
- Bonners Ferry does not currently have many post-secondary offerings.

## Neighborhood and Built Environment:

Safe, obtainable housing for a variety of tenures and incomes, as well as neighborhoods that promote physical activity and access to daily needs can, over the long term, contribute to positive community health outcomes<sup>10</sup>. Community character, municipal budgets, transportation, and economic development are all impacted by how and where a community builds to accommodate growth.

## Existing Land Use and Zoning

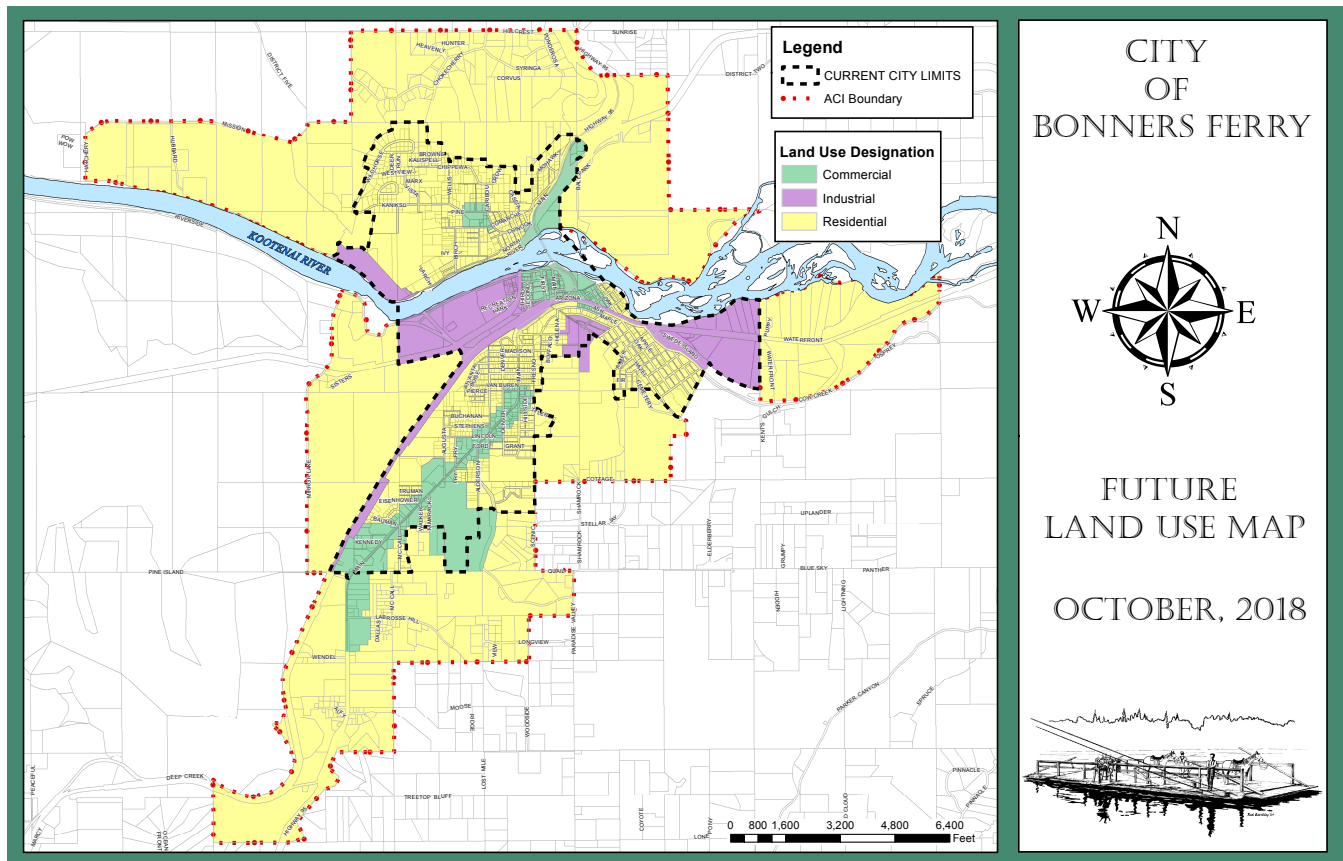
Neighborhoods and districts of Bonners Ferry are somewhat defined by unique natural features, such as the Kootenai River and the variations of topography within the City. The downtown and older neighborhoods such as “South Hill” (often characterized as “Presidential Streets”) are more typical of pre-World War II development patterns where a more traditional “grid” street pattern exists with smaller blocks, smaller lots, and more moderate to medium densities.

Newer areas to the north and south tend to exhibit a more contemporary development pattern. The pattern is more auto-oriented in nature, with larger blocks, cul-de-sac development, and lower density. Based on interviews conducted in advance of this report, infrastructure investments and highway improvements to the north and south of city limits are seen as a potential threat to business viability within the City and in particular, the downtown.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Building a Healthy Idaho: Improving the Conditions in Which Idahoans Are Born, Grow, Live, Work, & Age (2020).

The existing 2019 Future Land Use Map component of the 2006 Bonners Ferry Comprehensive Plan contains three broad land use designations for the City and Area of City Impact (ACI), which include Residential, Commercial, and Industrial (See Figure 7). Although there are policies that pertain to types of development within the existing comprehensive plan, the existing future land use areas that were designated later are not specifically referenced or described in the existing 2006 plan.



**Figure 7 - 2018 Future Land Use Map**

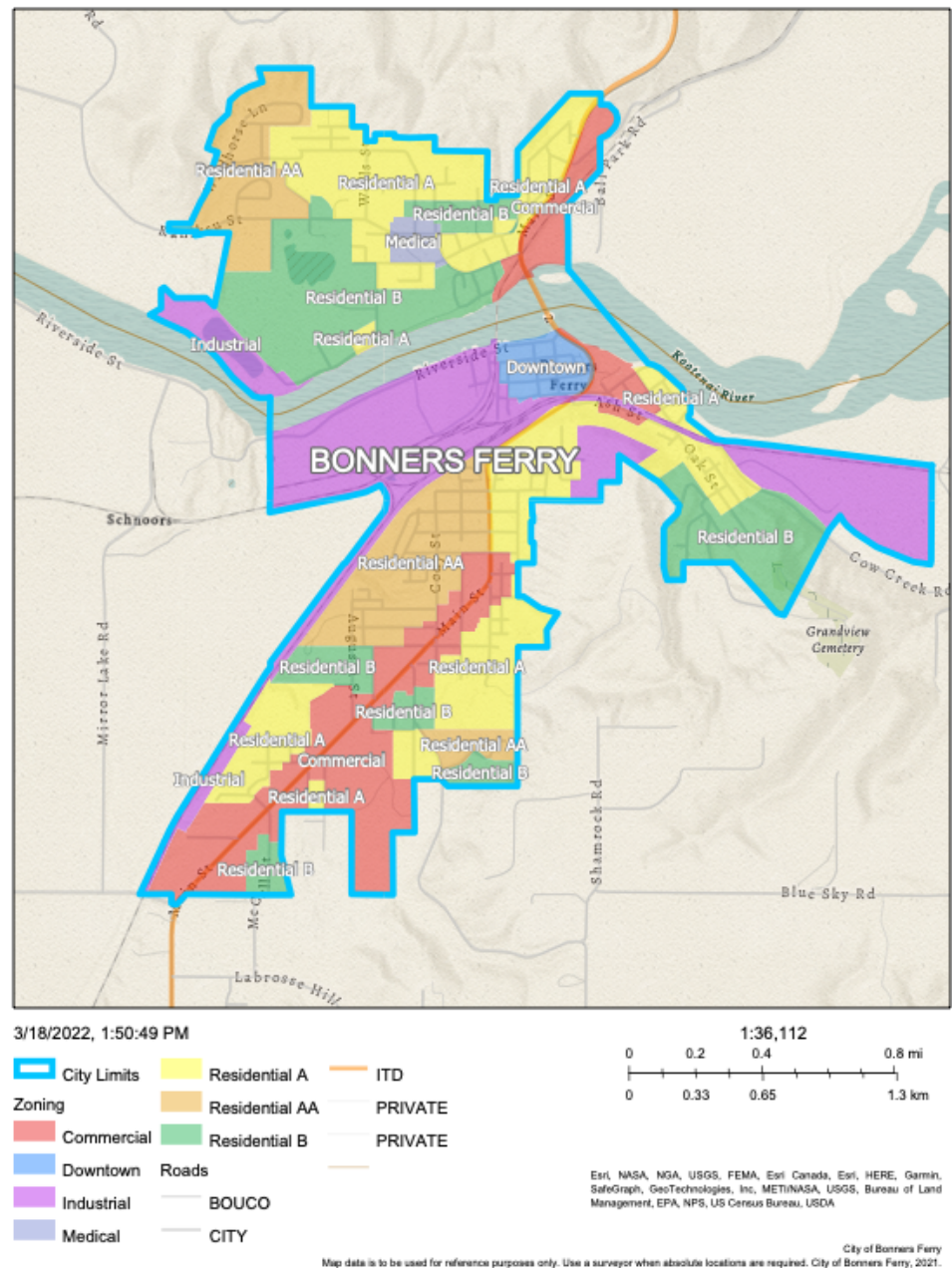
The City of Bonners Ferry currently has the following seven zoning districts, which generally correlate with the much broader categories within the 2019 Future Land Use map:

- Residential AA District
- Residential A District
- Residential B District
- Commercial District
- Industrial District
- Medical District
- Downtown District

Broadly within the city, residential zoning accounts for 58.8% (859 acres), industrial areas account for 21.6% (316 acres) and commercial areas encompass 19.6% (286 acres). Height within all current zones are limited to 35 feet, and the existing lot size minimums within residential zones of 5000 square feet are fairly consistent with the existing development pattern of the older neighborhoods.

Multifamily (3 units or more) is currently allowed only within the Commercial and Downtown districts. Duplexes are currently allowed in all but the Residential AA and Medical District. Recently, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have been permitted throughout all residential zones as well as the general commercial zone of the city.

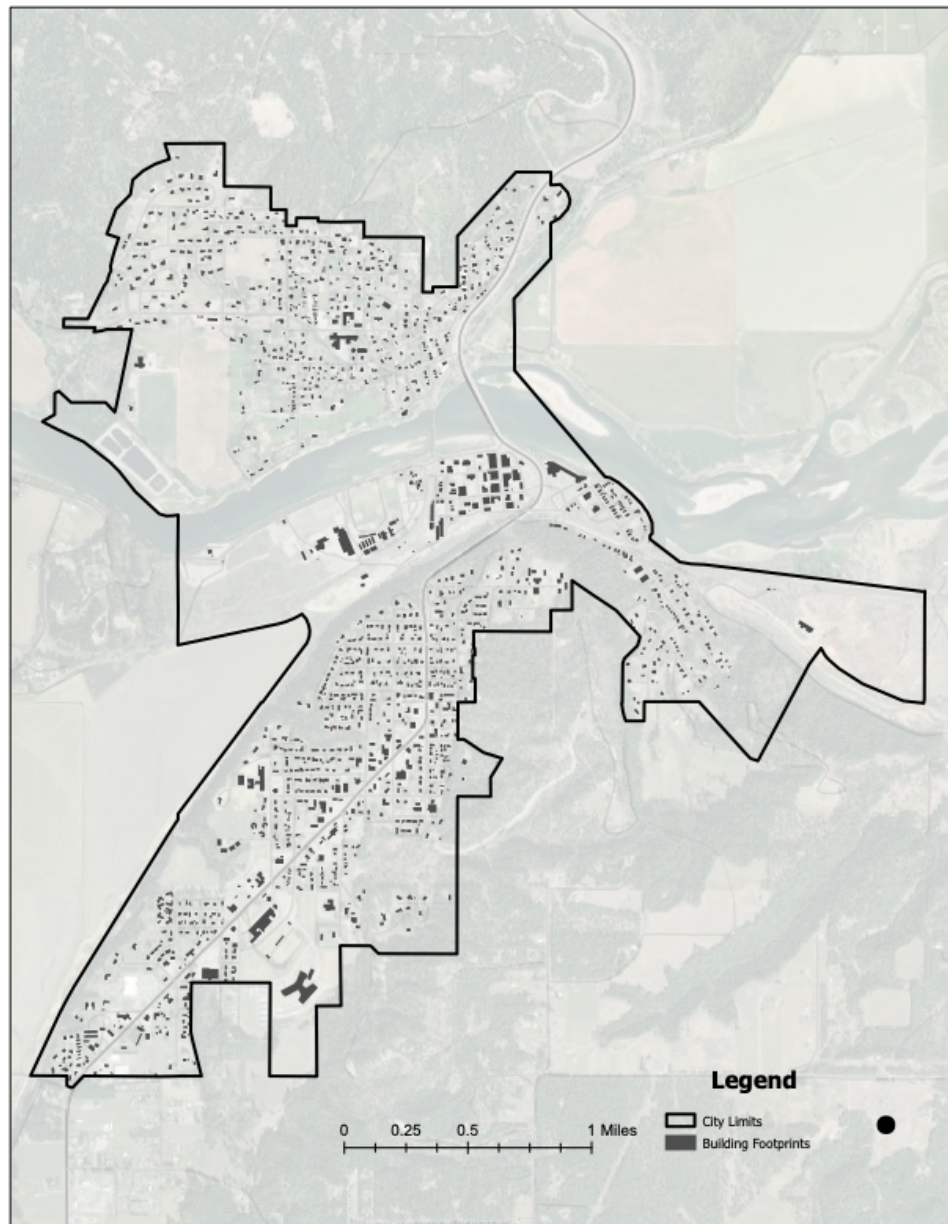
Certain lower impact, non-residential uses may be allowed in various residential zones only by issuance of a Special Use Permit or within an approved planned unit development. Such uses include barber shops, offices, churches, schools, medical clinics, and pet care. No buffer or neighborhood mixed use zones currently exist within the City.





## Existing Building Footprints

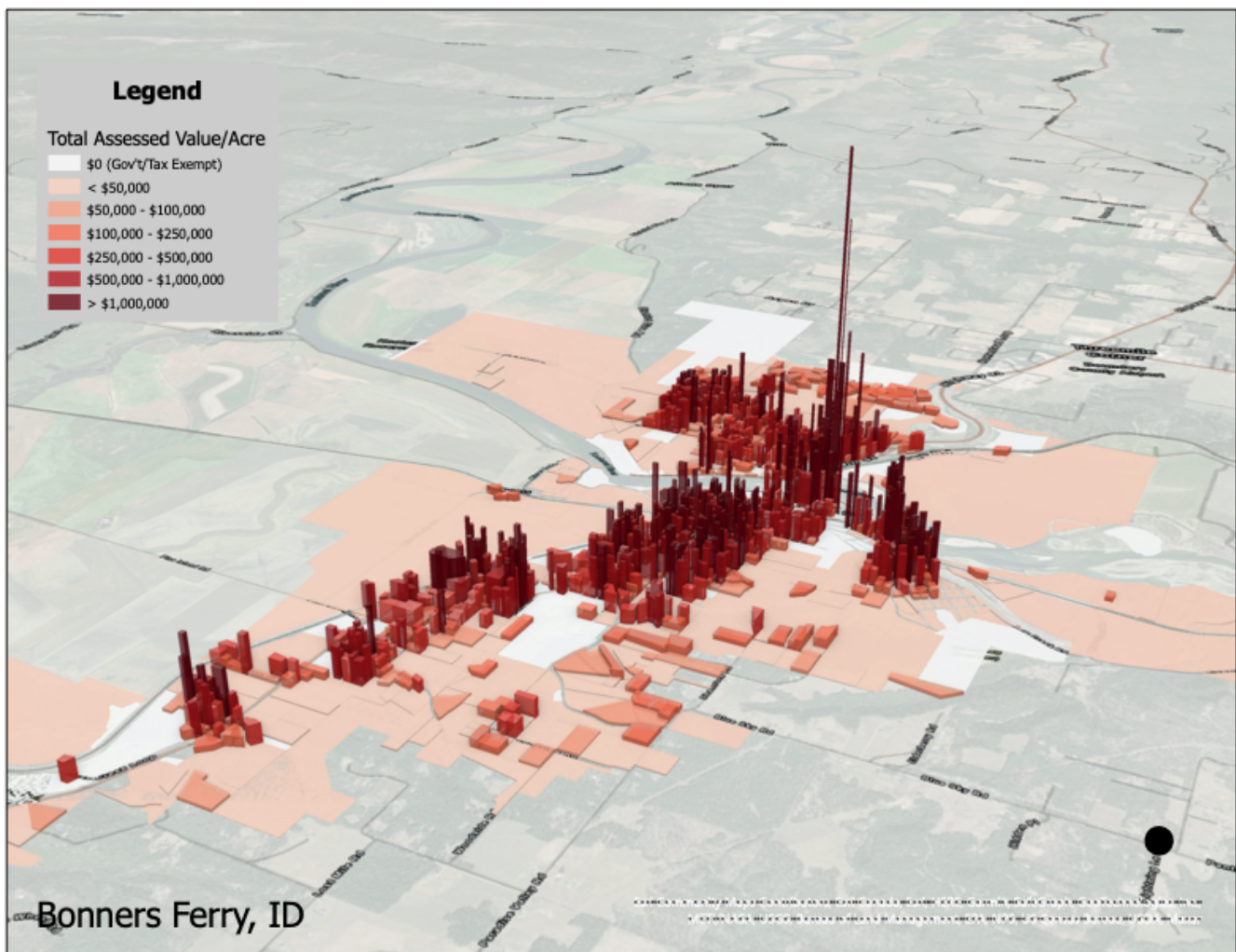
The map shown in Figure 8 shows existing building footprints within existing city limits. As shown, the largest undeveloped areas within the City with present or nearby services include locations in north Bonners Ferry (currently zoned Residential B), the former mill site to the west of downtown, and the fairgrounds (currently zoned Industrial). The map also highlights how development patterns have changed over time in Bonners Ferry. The downtown and older neighborhoods are characterized by shorter blocks, moderate densities, and a traditional grid street pattern as compared to newer areas of town that are more spread out with fewer street connections.



**Figure 8 - Existing Buildings in City Limits**

## Assessed Value Per Acre Analysis

Generally, within rural communities of Idaho where most sales tax revenue is allocated by the State based on population, property taxes are often the greatest source of revenue for maintaining infrastructure and services. Property taxes fund streets, parks and recreation, schools, emergency services and utilities. Efficiency in land consumption is therefore an important consideration for future land use. Although tax revenue in absolute numbers may vary, the assessed value per acre analysis below (*Figure 9*) indicates where value is generated most as compared to the amount of land used. Somewhat analogous to miles per gallon for vehicles, the examination helps to indicate how certain development patterns are supported (or not) by property tax revenue.



**Figure 9 - Assessed Value per Acre in Bonners Ferry (Source: Boundary County 2020 Assessor Data)**

The analysis indicates the downtown and the older neighborhoods of Bonners Ferry (characterized by smaller lots and shorter blocks) produce the most taxable value per parcel than newer areas to the north and south.

## Housing Stock

According to 2019 5-year estimates from the census, there are approximately 1,283 total units in Bonners Ferry, with 70% of them that are single unit (single family). A total of 23% of units are multi-unit (2-or more), and 8% of the housing stock is comprised of mobile homes.

**Table 13 - Types of Housing Structures in Bonners Ferry**

	<b>Boundary County, ID</b>	<b>Bonners Ferry, ID</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5474</b>	<b>1283</b>
1, detached	4336	883
1, attached	56	8
2	37	37
3 or 4	145	85
5 to 9	156	87
10 to 19	105	65
20 to 49	21	21
50 or more	92	0
Mobile home	520	97
Boat, RV, van, etc.	6	0

## Housing Tenure

Excluding a vacancy rate within the city of approximately 9%, out of those occupied units, 39% are rentals and 61% are occupied by the owner. Boundary County has a much lower portion of rental units, only making up 23% of all County housing units.

**Table 14: Housing Occupancy**

	<b>Bonners Ferry #</b>	<b>Bonners Ferry %</b>	<b>Boundary County %</b>
<b>Owner-occupied</b>	716	61.1%	76.7%
<b>Renter-occupied</b>	456	38.9%	23.3%

## Housing Affordability

According to 2019 ACS estimates, the median rent in Bonners Ferry was \$477 per month, and \$613 per month for Boundary County. It should be noted, however, that based on community member interviews and a review of rentals currently available in the area, prices for homes and rentals have continued to surge in the past year. Availability of both homes and rentals is low at the time of this report. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as “housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.”

In Bonners Ferry, nearly one-third (30.5%) of rental households spend more than 30% of their household income on rent. Almost half (48.5%) of owner-occupied households with mortgages spend more 30% of their household income on housing costs<sup>11</sup>, and even 15% of owner-occupied households *without* mortgages spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs.

In all, this means about 31% of all households in Bonners Ferry are not considered affordable by HUD standards.

**Table 15: Housing Affordability**

<b>Occupied Housing Unit Type</b>	<b>Bonners Ferry #</b>	<b>&gt;30% of HH Income on Housing Costs</b>
<b>Owner w/ Mortgage</b>	410	199
<b>Owner w/out Mortgage</b>	306	45
<b>Paying Rent</b>	401	121
<b>No Rent Paid</b>	55	No data
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>1172</b>	<b>365</b>

Despite a significant portion of households in Bonners Ferry that are not considered affordable, according to the 2018 Community Health Assessment from Panhandle Health, Boundary County has the lowest rate for North Idaho for HUD-assisted housing units per 10,000 at 42.5<sup>12</sup>. The number of Low-

<sup>11</sup> Housing costs may include rent, mortgage, insurance, utilities, etc. Transportation costs are typically not included but may also contribute to overall affordability.

<sup>12</sup> HUD offers help to apartment owners by offering reduced rent to low-income tenants, elderly, and persons with disabilities. Source: 2018 Community Health Assessment, Panhandle Health District.



Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) housing units within the county, as of 2014, is 32<sup>13</sup>. For comparison, neighboring Bonner County to the south has a total of 382 LIHTC units. Also according to the 2017 health assessment, Boundary County had the highest cost of living in all categories (shelter, transportation, food, health care and utilities) than other counties in N. Idaho.

## Transportation

Within city limits, several transportation modal types exist, including public transit, rail, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and van pools. Additionally, Boundary County Airport is located 2 miles north of the City center. Regional truck and heavy vehicle traffic is generated primarily along Hwy 95 by private enterprise and the school district.

Bonnors Ferry has recently adopted plans for improving multi-modal connections throughout the City. In partnership with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), many improvements have been implemented as part of the multi-year Hwy 95 Reconstruction Project.

Orientation interviews indicate a growing congestion concern from various side streets along Hwy 95 due to vehicular left-turn movements. Certain projects recommended in the 2019 Bonners Ferry Transportation plan are intended to provide more local connections within neighborhoods, which may significantly reduce the number of local trips currently taken on Hwy 95.

## Public Transit

The Selkirks-Pend Oreille Transit (SPOT) bus service operates through a joint powers agreement serving the cities of Dover, Sandpoint, Kootenai, Ponderay, and Bonners Ferry. SPOT represents the first public transit system to serve the City of Bonners Ferry, providing access to health care services, shopping, recreation, and other basic needs.

## Rail

Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) are the two rail lines operating within the City of Bonners Ferry, which are used exclusively for the movement of goods. There is no



**Figure 10 - High Priority Crossing Opportunity on Hwy95/2**  
(Source: 2020 Bonners Ferry Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan)

<sup>13</sup> Created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program gives State and local LIHTC-allocating agencies the equivalent of approximately \$8 billion in annual budget authority to issue tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. Source: <https://www.huduser.gov> / 2018 Community Health Assessment, Panhandle Health District.

passenger service or stations within or near the City. The closest passenger rail availability is 30 miles away within the City of Sandpoint. According to the 2019 Bonners Ferry Transportation Plan, the two at-grade crossings within the City (at Riverside Street and at Plaza Street) have been recommended for improvements and are likely grant eligible.

### **Boundary County Airport**

Although located outside of city limits and the area of city impact, the Boundary County Airport has seen persistent growth. Currently, commercial service is not provided but the airport does provide hangars for corporate aircraft and a variety of aviation-related activities.

## **Utilities**

### **Electricity**

The City of Bonners Ferry Electric Department is a municipal electric utility governed by the Bonners Ferry City Council and owned by the City since the 1920s. The City serves just over 2,400 customers, sells around 64,000 megawatt hours per year, with an annual budget of just under \$5 million per year. The electric department has four linemen, two power plant operators, and an electrician.

The City owns and operates the Moyie Hydroelectric project northeast of the city, which generates approximate 1/3 of its customer's electricity requirements. The remainder of the power is purchased from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The power system owned by the City also consists of overhead transmission lines and a distribution system consisting of overhead and underground power lines. There are no National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors within the County.

### **Water and Sewer**

The City's primary source of drinking water is from Myrtle Creek. The Kootenai River is used as a backup source, and the City has recently constructed a new well that can be used to supplement the system when needed. The City is interconnected with Cabinet Mountain Water District as an emergency back-up source.

The water treatment plant utilizes two clarifiers and two rapid sand filters to treat the surface water from Myrtle Creek and the Kootenai River. The City's treated water storage consists of six water tanks that store a combined volume of approximately 1.7 million gallons.

The City's wastewater is treated in a four-cell lagoon system on the north side of the Kootenai River. A total of eight pump stations deliver wastewater to the lagoon system from the City service area.

## Parks, Trails, and Recreational Facilities

Within City limits, the streets department manages all city owned park facilities, including Riverside Park, Memorial Park, the Georgia Mae Plaza, the City Swimming Pool and the Visitor Center. In partnership with 9B Trails and Boundary County Parks and Recreation, a grant was recently received to provide additional ADA-approved walking and biking trails at Riverside County Park, which is currently undeveloped and located on the North Side of the bridge. According to interviews, access to the Kootenai River is somewhat limited in or nearby city limits.

Bonn timers Ferry is also located along the International Selkirk Loop, a 280-mile-long scenic highway in the U.S. The loop connects Idaho, Washington, and the Canadian province of British Columbia.

Outside of the City, many recreational opportunities exist. Recreational activities include hunting, fishing, mountain biking, hiking and wildlife viewing. Located just south of the city is the Kootenai Wildlife Refuge, which is a popular destination for residents and visitors. Local non-profit 9B Trails has been developing various public non-motorized trails within the County. The City of Bonners Ferry owns and manages the 9-hole Mirror Lake Golf Course located about 1 mile south of the city limits.



**Figure 11 - Kootenai Wildlife Refuge (Photo Credit: Idaho Tourism)**

## Key Takeaways

- Bonners Ferry has a very small number of HUD sponsored and Low Income Housing Tax Credit Affordable housing units, relative to other north Idaho communities.
- Development patterns of the city have changed in the newer areas of town from the more traditional, older historic patterns.
- A significant number of renters and home owners are considered cost burdened by HUD standards, indicating that wages have not kept pace with housing costs.
- Current zoning only allows multi-family development within the commercial and downtown zones.
- Housing stock within Bonners Ferry is predominantly single-family in nature.
- The City has been an active partner with outside agencies and jurisdictions in support of Bonners Ferry community priorities, particularly with respect to multi-modal transportation options.
- Funding was recently secured to expand trail opportunities at the County owned Riverside Park.
- Although the Kootenai River runs through the city, there are not many public recreational amenities along its edges.

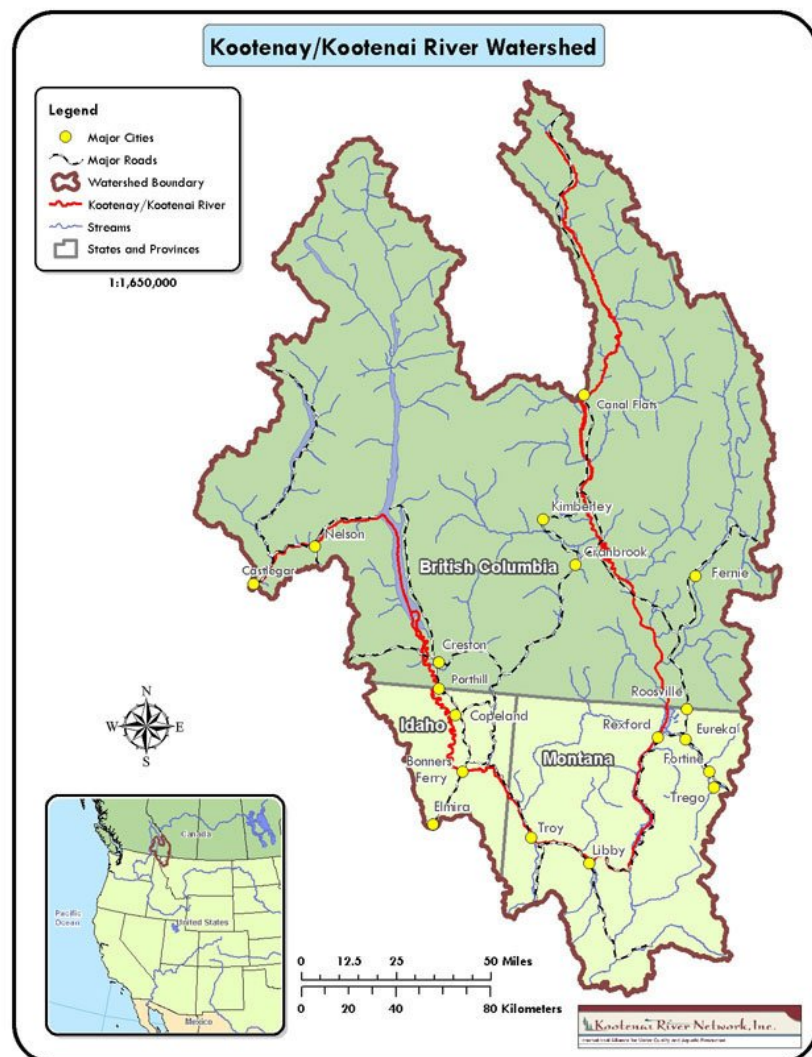
## Community Health and Safety

This section provides an overview health and safety services within Bonners Ferry, including emergency services, health care facilities, hazardous areas, and environmental characteristics.

### Natural Resources

#### Kootanay/Kootenai River Watershed

Bonners Ferry is located within the Kootanay/Kootenai River Watershed. The watershed encompasses approximately 18,000 square miles and includes areas of British Columbia and Montana. The Kootenai River originates in British Columbia north of the Kootenay National Park and flows 485 miles through Montana and Idaho. The watershed plays a crucial economic role to Bonners Ferry and the broader region including forest products, hydroelectric energy production, and agriculture<sup>14</sup>.



<sup>14</sup> Source: <https://kootenairivernetwork.org/>



## Hazardous Areas

The 2016 All hazards Mitigation Plan for Boundary County Identifies the following hazards that may pose the greatest threat to people and structures:

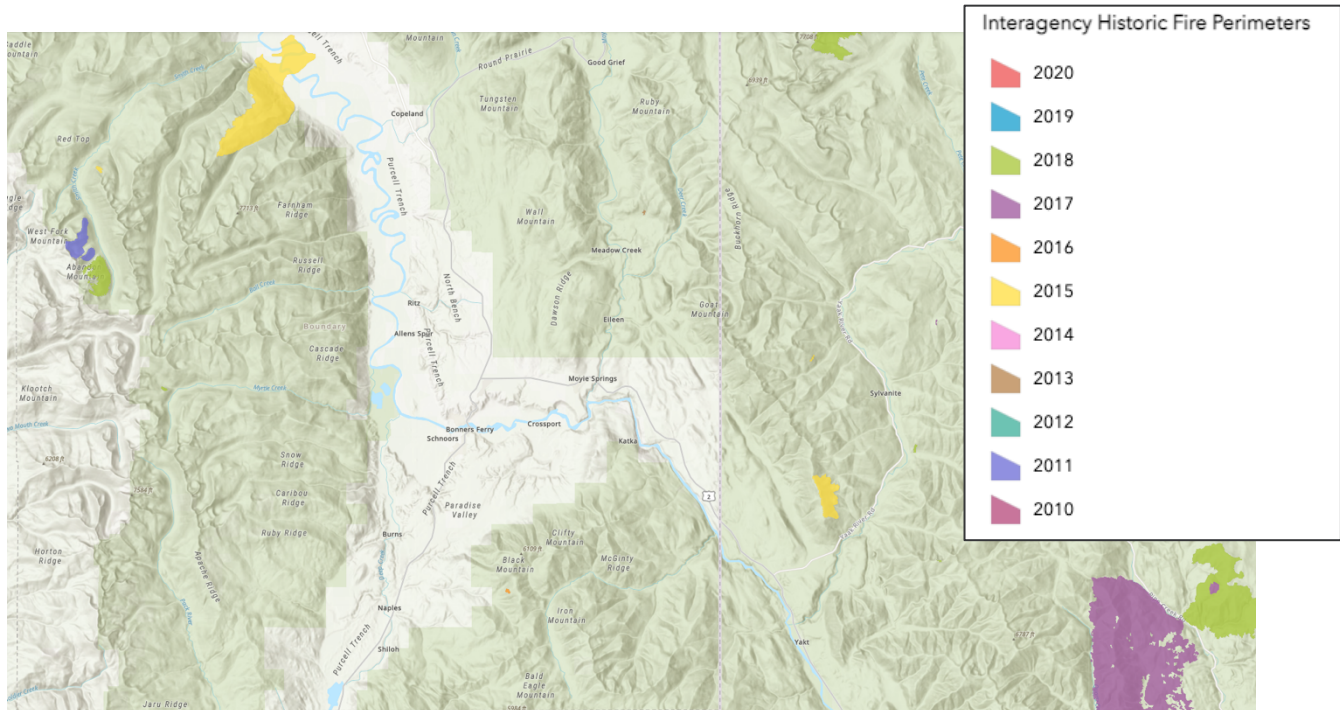
- 1) Major Fire – Wildland and/or Urban
- 2) Landslides and Erosion
- 3) Severe Winter Storm
- 4) Flooding
- 5) Earthquakes

Also acknowledged below is the transportation of hazardous materials through the city and any known waste remediation sites, according to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ).

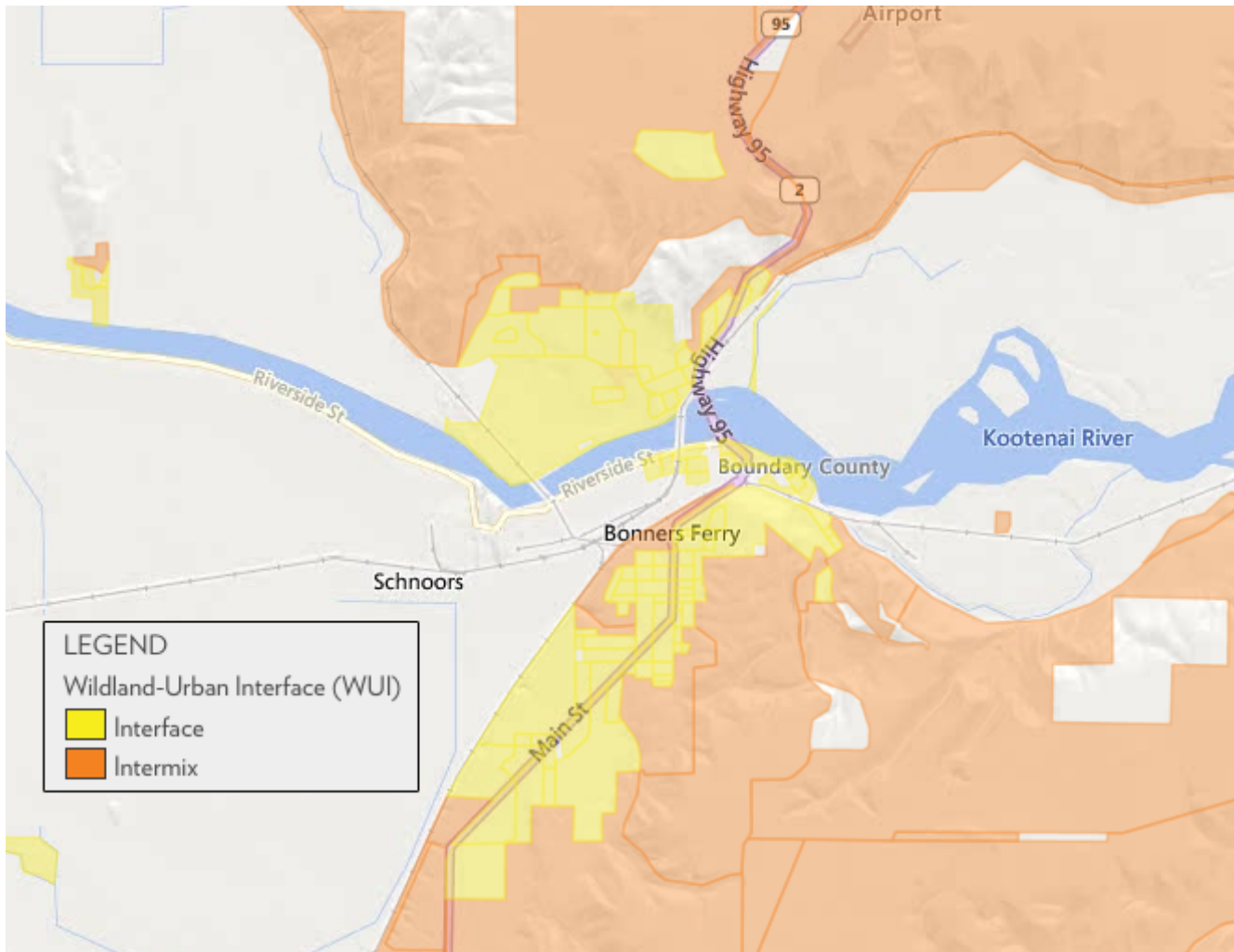
Boundary County has recently begun the process to update the 2016 plan, which formally kicked off in December of 2021.

## Fire

Wildfires have increased regionally within North Idaho and are often started from human activities. Since 2010, there have been 5 wildfire incidents in Boundary County according to the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System Idaho Fire Map (*Figure 12*). The wildland-urban interface (*WUI – Figure 13*) is the area where human development borders or intermingles with forestland or other wildlands.



**Figure 12 - Historic Fire Perimeters 2010-2020**



**Figure 13 - Wildland-Urban Interface (Source: SILVIS Labs, 2010)**

The WUI is defined both in terms of the “interface,” or the area where development is clustered adjoining wildlands, and the “intermix,” or the area where development is interspersed with wildlands<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> American Planning Association, Planning Advisory Service, QuickNotes (ISSN 2169-1940) No.69 (2017)

## Landsides and Erosion

Bonnerr's Ferry contains a variety of slopes within city limits. The most common causes of landslides are precipitation and human activities. Over the last 100 years, most of the landslides in the County have occurred on steep slopes adjacent to roads, with reduced or removed vegetation due to road construction or wildfire<sup>16</sup>.

## Severe Winter Storm

Weather incidents such as high winds, heavy snow, or ice may cause downed power lines, road and school closures, and similar incidents. On the average, these events occur more than once a year. Costs in direct losses are usually not high from these incidents, but they are disruptive to the businesses and lives of county residents. Effects can be significant if the condition is long lasting and/or covers a wide area<sup>14</sup>.

## Flooding

Before the Libby Dam was constructed in the early 1970s, flooding was of much greater risk to a larger number of areas within the city. Dikes were also constructed prior from 1917 through the 1940s to restrict natural flooding from the Kootenai River. Some areas within the City and ACI, however, are still susceptible to flooding typically during the later winter or early spring<sup>17</sup>. Figure 15 shows the current flood zones, according to City GIS records.

## Earthquakes

The Purcell Trench Fault (north portion) runs north-south just to the west of the City of Bonners Ferry. Based on historical records and current information from the 2014 USGS Seismic Hazard Map for Idaho, earthquake risk is relatively low in Boundary County. The primary risk comes from earthquakes that may occur along nearby fault lines elsewhere in Idaho or in Montana<sup>14</sup>.

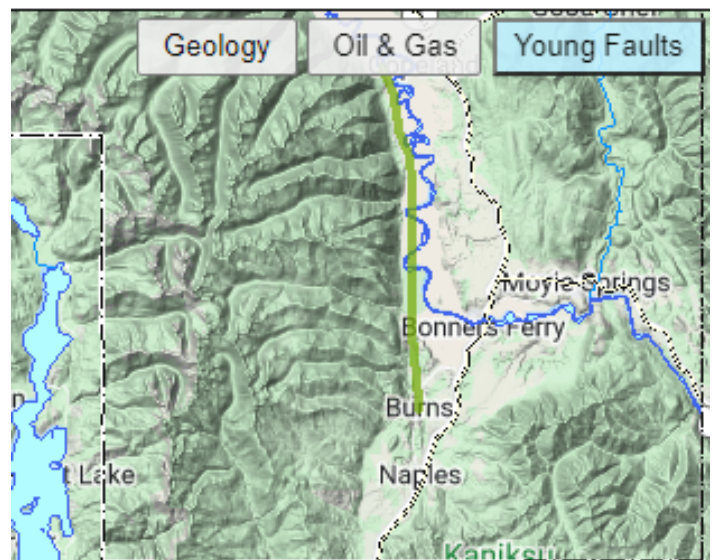


Figure 14 - North Purcell Trench fault

<sup>16</sup> 2016 Boundary County All Hazards Mitigation Plan

<sup>17</sup> Bonners Ferry 2006 Comprehensive Plan





## **Hazardous Material Transport**

Although quantities and exact materials are not fully known, hazardous material transport through the City of Bonners Ferry occurs by rail and by truck, primarily on Hwy 95.

## **Waste Remediation Sites**

According to the IDEQ Waste Management and Remediation Division Facility Mapper<sup>18</sup>, there are no known brownfields within the city limits of Bonners Ferry. The facility mapper does indicate, however, various other sites that have been or may need some remediation. In Bonners Ferry, the facility mapper indicates the presence of underground storage tanks (with some reported as leaking), and some properties that may contain by-products of manufacturing processes, discarded commercial products, or unused chemicals such as cleaning fluids or pesticides.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://idaho.terradox.com/>

## Access to Health Care & Human Services

The largest health care and human services facilities for the City and broader region include:

- ◆ Boundary County hospital
- ◆ Kaniksu Health Services
- ◆ Panhandle Health District 1

The high cost of living for many residents is evident by the PHD county-wide 2018 Community Health Assessment (CHA), in which 16% of respondents in Boundary County stated that they needed to cut a meal at least once a month due to insufficient money or food—twice as high compared to the neighboring county of Bonner to the South.

Obesity and diabetes have also been on the rise according to 2017 data and relative to other counties within District 1 of PHD. When survey respondents were asked in the past seven days how many days they exercised for at least 30 minutes, Boundary County had a significantly higher answer of “none” out of all the five counties in Idaho.

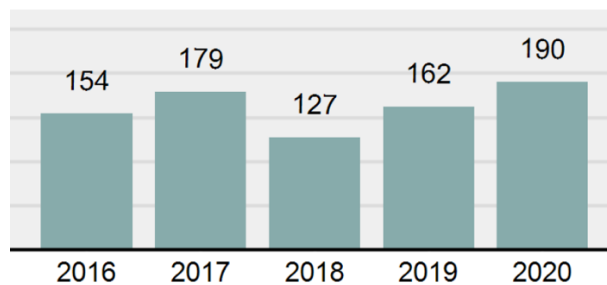
Demand on health care services is expected to grow with new residents moving to the area. As demographic shifts continue to occur within the City and the broader health care service area to a more aged population, additional specialty care will also be needed, along with assisted care facilities. The Boundary County Hospital is currently 68 years and is likely due for several upgrades and current ambulance service; the hospital is limited with essentially one way in and one way out. Land costs have also put additional strain on obtaining and/or retaining healthcare professionals.

Mental health and substance abuse have also been identified as key health priorities by the CHA. No current mental health facility exists within the City or County.

## Police

The Bonners Ferry Police Department has a total of four fulltime officers, one police sergeant, a police chief, and an assistant chief. Data obtained for Boundary County from the Idaho State police department indicates that Countywide, drugs and narcotics represent the steepest rise in reported offenses from 2019 to 2020 (see Table 16). According to local police records, the synthetic opioid Fentanyl has seen a recent rise in use within the area.

Over the past 5 years, total crime offenses recorded by the Bonners Ferry Police Department have risen somewhat after a dip in 2018.



**Figure 16 - Bonners Ferry Total Offenses 5-year trend (Source: Bonners Ferry Police Dept.)**

## Fire

The City Fire Department is a volunteer department with two fire stations. Station #1 is the primary station, located downtown at 7137 First Street. Station #2 is located on the south hill at 6316 McCall Street. No fire station exists north of the Hwy 95 Bridge.

**Table 16 - Bonners Ferry Offenses in 2020  
(Source: Bonners Ferry Police Dept.)**

Group "A" Offenses	Offenses		Arrests	
	# Reported	# Cleared	Adult	Juvenile
Murder	1	1	1	0
Negligent Manslaughter	0	0	0	0
Rape	1	0	0	0
Sodomy	1	0	0	0
Sexual Assault w/Obj	0	0	0	0
Fondling	2	0	0	0
Aggravated Assault	9	7	7	0
Simple Assault	25	16	5	1
Intimidation	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping	1	1	1	0
Incest	0	0	0	0
Statutory Rape	0	0	0	0
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	0	0	0	0
Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude	0	0	0	0
Robbery	0	0	0	0
Burglary/Breaking and Entering	2	0	0	1
Larceny/Theft Offenses	16	5	3	0
Motor Vehicle Theft	0	0	0	0
Arson	0	0	0	0
Destruction Of Property	9	2	1	1
Counterfeiting/Forgery	1	0	0	0
Fraud Offenses	0	0	0	0
Embezzlement	0	0	0	0
Extortion/Blackmail	0	0	0	0
Bribery	0	0	0	0
Stolen Property Offenses	3	3	3	0
Drug/Narcotic Violations	73	64	52	1
Drug Equipment Violations	46	41	4	0
Gambling Offenses	0	0	0	0
Pornography/Obscene Material	0	0	0	0
Prostitution Offenses	0	0	0	0
Weapons Law Violations	0	0	0	0
Animal Cruelty	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Group "A"</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4</b>

Group "B" Arrests	Arrests	
	Adult	Juvenile
Bad Checks	0	0
Curfew/Loitering/Vagrancy Violations	0	0
Disorderly Conduct	0	0
DUI	35	2
Drunkenness	0	0
Family Offenses, Nonviolent	0	0
Liquor Law Violations	2	1
Peeping Tom	0	0
Trespass of Real Property	2	0
All Other Offenses	19	0
<b>Total Group "B"</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Takeaways

- Continued in-migration of retirees and growth generally may increase the need for additional health care services in Bonners Ferry.
- Wildfire is likely the most significant identified hazard, followed by landslides, erosion, and severe winter storms
- The Kootenai River Watershed plays a crucial economic role to Bonners Ferry and the broader region.
- No Fire station exists North of the Hwy 95 Bridge.
- Mental health and substance abuse are identified key health challenges