

**DRAFT**

# GARDINER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



**Park County, Montana**

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## INTRODUCTION:

The town of Gardiner is located at the northern gateway to Yellowstone National Park, at the junction of the Gardner and Yellowstone rivers, and between the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness and the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Gardiner was, and in many ways still is, a tough little frontier town. Native Americans were some of the first visitors and inhabitants of the area. The National Park Service reports that at least 27 tribes currently claim to have historical connections to the region surrounding Yellowstone National Park

Though its identity is tied to Yellowstone, early residents were fur trappers and then miners coming to join the area's gold rush. The town was officially founded in 1880 but has existed since the early 1800's serving visitors to Yellowstone even before its establishment as a national park in 1872. Gardiner remains the only gateway community with year-round access to the Park..

Gardiner continues to bring together people with different backgrounds, values and purpose particularly in regard to the natural resources that surround it. Unfortunately, the town has suffered several destructive fires that have changed the face of its historic buildings and streetscapes. However, the spirit and legacy of this history-rich community at the north entrance to the world's first national park remains strong.

Visitation to Yellowstone has continued to increase since World War II with a significant upswing over the past 20 years. It seems there is an endless opportunity to provide services for visitors. The face of Gardiner, community dynamics, and the town's ability to house its own residents is changing fast. With little guidance in place for the future many community members fear that the character, community spirit and even the town's ability to support its residents and provide a healthy, happy place to live will continue to degrade.

Recent community efforts to establish next steps toward a more planned future for Gardiner, supporting the town's needs and recognizing its challenges, have resulted in the preparation of the **Gardiner Neighborhood Plan (Neighborhood Plan)**. This plan will endeavor to address what is needed to strengthen the community and protect its character while supporting affordable housing as well as a sustainable local economy.



Park Street before the Fire Drawing by Elizabeth Mordensky, 2020



Jon Catton

## COMMUNITY VISION:

Planning for the future must be focused on a vision for ideal conditions. The general concepts for what Gardiner's residents want their town to have remained consistent through many past planning efforts. They were most recently refined and supported during the Successful Gardiner process ([www.successfulgardiner.org](http://www.successfulgardiner.org), 5/2019). The vision below captures all that has been presented, in one overarching statement:

*Gardiner will strive to be a vibrant community with well-functioning infrastructure and a sustainable economy. It will preserve and celebrate its history and identity as the first gateway to the world's first National Park, Yellowstone. Gardiner will have a strong sense of community clearly connected with surrounding natural resources and supporting a healthy ecosystem for its setting. Gardiner will be a great place to live and work for all generations, providing high quality community services, opportunities for its residents and managing growth and change to protect its values.*

The Gardiner Neighborhood Plan will set the stage for what is needed to realize this vision. It is organized into three chapters to provide context to the planning effort resulting in clear intentions for the future:

Chapter One: **Background for the Plan**

Chapter Two: **Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Future Land Use Designations**

Chapter Three: **Community Profile**

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND FOR THE PLAN

This chapter describes the overall purpose of and need for the Neighborhood Plan. It also describes the process by which the plan was created and how it works in concert with the Park County Growth Policy.

### PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

This is a plan for Gardiner, Montana, intended to be adopted by the Park County Commissioners as a “neighborhood plan” amendment to the Park County Growth Policy (Growth Policy). This plan sets out the vision and goals and general strategies to achieve them, specific to Gardiner, that are not detailed in the Growth Policy.

### AUTHORITY FOR THE PLAN

Montana’s Land Use and Planning Statutes authorize use of growth policies and neighborhood plans. These types of community plans are intended to provide important resource information helping guide future growth that corresponds with community needs and desires.

State law (76-1-601 through 76-1-607 Montana Code Annotated) specifies what should be included in a growth policy and provides the process for adopting and revising a growth policy. State laws indicate neighborhood plans are an optional element of a growth policy, provided the plan is consistent with the growth policy. Specific requirements for what must be included in a neighborhood plan are not discussed in state law.

The Gardiner Neighborhood Plan conforms to state law. It is intended as a policy guide to the future. The plan is not regulatory and does not have the force and effect of law. However, potential subdivision regulations and zoning in Gardiner must be consistent with this plan as required by state statute (76-2-203(a) and 76-1-606).

### RELATIONSHIP TO THE PARK COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

Because Gardiner is an unincorporated community it falls under the statutory jurisdiction of Park County and the Park County Growth Policy. Park County’s Growth Policy is intended to provide a framework for continued planning efforts in the unincorporated areas of the county. It provides or authorizes:

- Guidance for subdivision regulations.
- Construction, alteration, or abandonment of public ways, places, structures or utilities.



- Acceptance, or construction of water mains, sewers, connections, facilities, or utilities.
- Adoption of zoning ordinances or resolutions.



The Livingston Enterprise, 7/15/2020

The Gardiner Neighborhood Plan is intended to recognize Gardiner as a community with unique issues that are specific to Gardiner. The Neighborhood Plan meets the following actions and objectives from the Growth Policy:

- Policy: Support a planning approach that recognizes some issues are localized, and other issues are countywide.
- Action 16.3.1: “Use neighborhood and area planning to provide specific policy direction to specific areas that have unique issues.”
- Objective 16.2: “Develop tools that will allow the County to respond to and address evolving land use issues.
- Objective 14.3: Assist with implementing the strategies in the Gardiner Area Housing Action Plan.

This plan is proposed to be adopted as an amendment to the Park County Growth Policy.

Similar to growth policies, neighborhood plans are not regulatory documents. They instead are documents resulting from efforts by community members to articulate and formalize a future

The Gardiner Neighborhood Plan is intended to help guide growth and in-fill development through 2041. While it is expected that the Neighborhood Plan will remain valid for 20 years, periodic review of the plan will be necessary. Reviewing the Park County Growth Policy every five years, as required by state law, should trigger a review of the Neighborhood Plan as well.

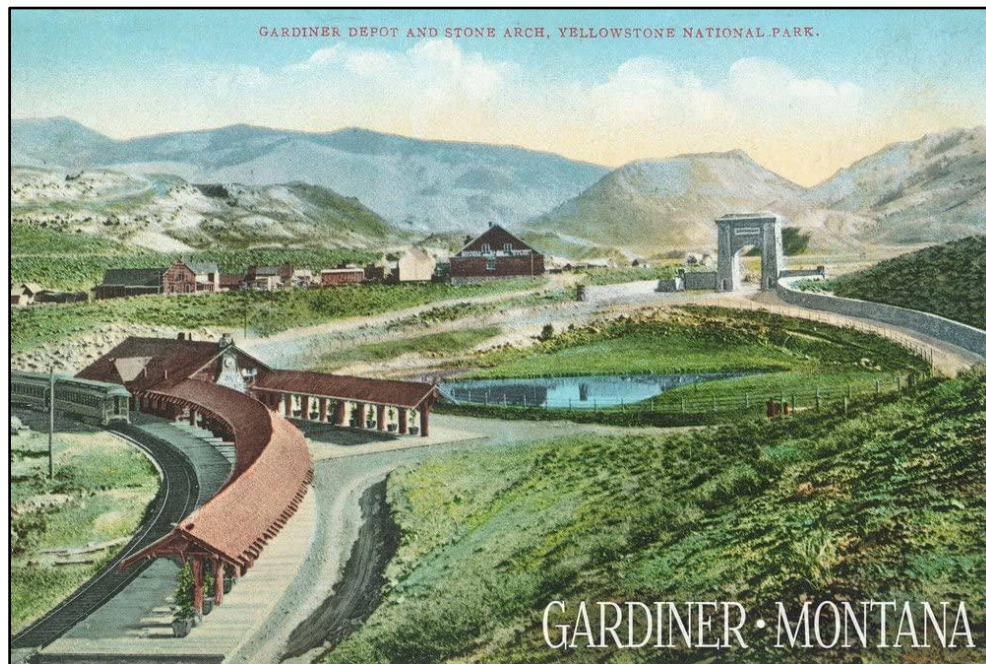


## 1. North Entrance Environmental Assessment Environmental Assessment (EA) 2011

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## 2. North Entrance Cultural Landscape Inventory, Yellowstone National Park 2013

In 2013 the National Park Service completed a Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the area surrounding the north entrance to the Park. This included a comprehensive inventory of the landscape features, structures and developments having historic and cultural significance to Yellowstone.



### PLANNING PROCESS

For many years residents in the Gardiner community have been concerned about declining school enrollment, lack of affordable housing and loss of “community feel” As far back as 1992 community members began meeting to discuss issues related to growth and change. A series of community workshops, surveys, studies, and planning efforts occurred in the intervening years. They sought to identify community values and threats to values held by greater Gardiner residents. In addition, they identified key resources, issues and a desired future for the Gardiner community.

These efforts included:

- Northern Yellowstone Successful Communities-Fall 1992 to Summer 1993
- Gardiner Historic Resources Survey-2013
- Comparative Analysis of Resident and Visitor Community Image: Gardiner, Montana 2013
- Gardiner Housing Needs Assessment and Five Year Housing Plan-2015
- Gardiner Area Housing Action Plan-2015
- Gardiner, Montana: Resident Perceptions Before and After Development 2018



Unfortunately, none of these efforts were developed into a concrete action plan to resolve key issues. Although a Gardiner resort tax was initiated in 2018 and does help fund tourism-aggravated infrastructure costs, issues related to declining school enrollment, affordable housing and loss of community feel remain.

## Current Planning Efforts

In 2018 an ad hoc steering committee was established by a group of community members concerned that growth and change to Gardiner be managed by design, rather than by default.

- The **Successful Gardiner Community Initiative (Successful Gardiner)** was formally established. It is led and supported by: Bear Creek Council, Gardiner Chamber of Commerce, Gardiner School District, Gardiner Food Pantry, Greater Gardiner Community Council, Northern Yellowstone Education Foundation, MSU Extension, Park County, Gardiner Resort Tax Board.
- The Steering Committee, using donated funds, contracted with Future West, a non-profit organization from Bozeman whose mission is: “To help communities identify, choose and achieve their desired future.” Future West provided technical and facilitation assistance to the community initiative.

## 2019 Successful Gardiner Public Process

- **Community/Stakeholder Interviews—January to April 2019**
  - In order to reach a broad spectrum of stakeholders Successful Gardiner conducted a series of interviews and surveys to identify key issues as well as community held values. Personal interviews, web-based and postcard surveys and a youth event reached a total of 226 community members.
  - Key issues identified by stakeholders were: Affordable Housing; Community Growth & Change; Economy; Demographic Change; Education; Governance; Tourism Impacts; Health
  - Key values identified by stakeholders were: A Connected and Caring Community; A Unique Small Town; Good Stewards of Yellowstone; A Great Place for Families; Civic-Minded and Engaged; A Safe Community
- **Creation of Marketing Presence**
  - In order to facilitate on-going community participation, Successful Gardiner created a website [www.successfulgardiner.org](http://www.successfulgardiner.org) and established a [Successful Gardiner Facebook](#) profile in 2019.

- **Informational Webinars—April and May 2019**

- In April of 2019 Successful Gardiner hosted a webinar titled “How Things Get Done In Gardiner”. This webinar allowed participants the opportunity to learn how Gardiner’s “operating system” functions as an unincorporated community. It also identified various options to strengthen local control. “Operating System” options identified were:
  - Continue the existing decentralized, volunteer-driven, unincorporated operating system.
  - Work with the Park County Commissioners to create a land use plan for the community that would be implemented through a zoning district.
  - Incorporation as a municipality.
- In May of 2019 Successful Gardiner hosted a webinar titled “The Future of Gardiner Schools”. This webinar gave participants an overview of the current state of Gardiner’s schools and the projected future.

- **Gardiner Community Workshop— May 7-9 , 2019**

- Successful Gardiner hosted a two-night community workshop to discuss options for Gardiner’s future. A total of 116 participants worked in break out groups to discuss the following five topics: Affordable Housing; Protecting Community Character; Sustainable Tourism & Economy; Strengthening Community; Creating A More Youth & Family-friendly Community. (A more detailed summary of the workshops can be downloaded from [successfulgardiner.org](https://successfulgardiner.org).)
- As part of this process community members discussed potential options for future governance:
  - 1.) Status quo, no community specific plan and no town governance
  - 2.) Creation of a neighborhood plan, and consideration of a land use plan
  - 3.) Incorporation as a municipality

- The majority of Gardiner community residents who participated in the workshops expressed interest in pursuing the second option, the creation of a **neighborhood plan and consideration of a land use plan**.

See Appendix A, Planning Process, for a more detailed description of the Successful Gardiner planning process.



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## Neighborhood Plan Development Process

In April 2020, members from the Successful Gardiner steering committee met to discuss the recommended next steps. With the community committed to further planning, a small group volunteered to re-format the information gathered into a draft neighborhood plan for further review and comment by the community. The goals, objectives and strategies were organized with suggestions for strategies Gardiner might take in order to meet goals. This section of the document then became the main focus for further community review and input in 2021.

The following process was followed for developing the neighborhood plan:

Task	Schedule	Notes
Compile DRAFT Neighborhood Plan with information gathered from Successful Gardiner process.	June - December 2020	A small group of members from the Successful Gardiner Steering Committee volunteered to re-format the information and conclusions into a neighborhood plan.
Draft submitted to Park County Planning Department	January 2021	Ensure county planners agree that the right elements are in place to move forward.

Meetings with Gardiner Organizations and Stakeholders 1) Introductory meeting 2) Four review meetings 3) Recap meeting	March, April, May 2021 - weekly	A series of meetings held with Gardiner Organizations and Stakeholders: 1) Discuss and ensure support for the plan 2) Provide review and comment. record results and details for review.
Review and Include appropriate comments from organizations	June/ September 2021	Step back for busy summer season
Public Notification for community review of DRAFT	November 2021	Gardiner Chamber Newsletter, Successful Gardiner website, Facebook and other social media, hard copies available at Chamber, legal notification (Livingston Enterprise), post in PO, bank and Gardiner Market, postcard mailing
Review meetings with all community members 1) Introduce the plan 2) Three review meetings	November/ December 2021	Review and refine the plan with community input - documentation of comments, analysis and changes made.
Provide mechanisms for public comment	November/ December 2021	email, phone, website
Submit DRAFT plan to the Park County Planning Board to inform them of the community's intent to develop the Neighborhood Plan	December 2021 - January 2022	Submit after approval from community organizations. Notification that Gardiner is working on a plan.
Compile comments, make final changes	January/ February 2022	Share a final draft with community
Present final DRAFT to the Park County Planning Board and Commissioners with an official request to adopt.	April 2022	



## **CHAPTER TWO: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND FUTURE LAND DESIGNATIONS**

This part introduces the planning goals, objectives and detailed “planning strategies” that outline specific policies to adopt and actions to take in order to accomplish the goals. It concludes a priority action plan that lists those actions to begin in the first year of the plan.

### **GUIDING POLICIES FOR PLANNING**

While developing these actions and managing them in the future, the Gardiner community will remain ethical and focused throughout;

- Work will be undertaken openly, with information available to the public and public involvement encouraged.
- A can-do and positive attitude about the community will be encouraged.

### **PRIMARY GOALS**

The primary goals are short statements clarifying direction and addressing key issues needed to achieve the vision. They have not been assigned any priority order. The overarching theme of the goals is to ensure Gardiner is a great place to live for all residents; that there are opportunities for people who work in town to live in town; that the town’s character and community spirit are maintained and; the cultural and natural resources that are key to Gardiner’s economy are preserved supporting revenue and business opportunities.

**GOAL 1: A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE WITH A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

**GOAL 2: PROTECTED AND ENHANCED HISTORIC CHARACTER**

**GOAL 3: A HEALTHY NATURAL ECOSYSTEM**

**GOAL 4: MANAGED PHYSICAL GROWTH**

**GOAL 5: HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**GOAL 6: WELL-FUNCTIONING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

**GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING MEETS LOCAL NEEDS**

**GOAL 8: A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SUPPORTING GARDINER’S VISION**

### **PLANNING STRATEGIES**

The Neighborhood Plan is a comprehensive, long-range plan intended to help guide growth and development in Gardiner. It establishes goals and objectives that will help set the stage for future action. The Vision Statement is a short declaration of what Gardiner will strive to be. The Primary Goals further define how to achieve the vision but are still fairly general. More detail is

needed to explain how to achieve the goals and vision. The objectives and planning strategies of this section provide that detail.

Following each goal, a context is provided in the form of a brief discussion of the rationale or background for the goal including issues leading to the specific planning strategies. The context reflects community comments received during the Successful Gardiner process.

*Note: The objectives and strategies presented are DRAFT only until the Neighborhood Plan is finalized. They could be confirmed, edited, eliminated or added to through community discussion and input.*

## **GOAL 1: A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE WITH A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

### **Context**

Gardiner residents generally care strongly about their town and want its rather rough and tumble character and unique setting to be preserved. The actual experience of living in Gardiner is an equally important aspect for the town to remain vibrant and provide quality of life. Opportunities for life and work and support for one another can create a feeling of belonging and value, and in turn a more vibrant and successful community.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 1.A Support community leaders, organizations and activities working toward Gardiner's vision
  - **Strategy 1.A1:** Identify an organizational framework for implementing Gardiner's Neighborhood Plan.
  - **Strategy 1.A2:** Define specific organization roles and responsibilities and identify gaps and functions still needing community leadership.
  - **Strategy 1.A3:** Create a network for community organizations to share goals, work plans and collaborative projects (e.g. Gardiner Chamber, Community Council, Housing Committee, emergency services, non-profits).
  - **Strategy 1.A4:** Develop a process for problem-solving through civil dialogue opportunities.
- 1.B Support youth, a stable school and high-quality education
  - **Strategy 1.B1:** Conduct an annual review of school successes and challenges with organizations and stakeholders and how the community as a whole can continue to support the school.
  - **Strategy 1.B2:** Support youth activities and provide places and opportunities for youth to engage, gather and socialize beyond school.
- 1.C Foster pride of place; a physical and social image in line with Gardiner's vision
  - **Strategy 1.C1:** Promote Gardiner's Neighborhood Plan and continuing related efforts with residents, businesses and visitors and develop specific .
  - **Strategy 1.C2:** Develop initiatives such as sustainability efforts that can be promoted through business, community events and organization goals.
  - **Strategy 1.C3:** Continue to generate and track funding sources that help support community events and venues.

- **Strategy 1.C4:** Fund a community newsletter that tells the story of the Gardiner community; topic reports, events, issues and local news.
- 1.D Ensure community gathering places are available and affordable
  - **Strategy 1.D1:** Renovate and utilize Gardiner's historic community center.
  - **Strategy 1.D2:** Maintain and utilize Arch Park for the community
  - **Strategy 1.D3:** Develop and financially support a shared network of community use spaces.

## **GOAL 2: PROTECTED AND ENHANCED HISTORIC CHARACTER**

### **Context**

The mix of existing buildings in Gardiner is a reflection of its ad-hoc development over time and emulates the modest houses for mine workers and pioneer business owners, as well as rustic lodges and bars that were provided for visitors to Yellowstone. Many historic buildings have been torn down or destroyed by fires over the years and the modern buildings and renovations often present little similarity to the rustic character that was typical for the town. In order to retain the town's own interest and charm Gardiner must recognize and prioritize the importance of its history and historic character.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 2.A Celebrate Gardiner's history
  - **Strategy 2.A1:** Tell the story of Gardiner's history to visitors through wayside exhibits and walking tours.
  - **Strategy 2.A2:** Provide educational opportunities related to Gardiner's history including the story of Native Americans in the region.
- 2.B Protect historic properties
  - **Strategy 2.B1:** Assist interested building owners with nominating eligible historic buildings to the National Register of Historic Properties.
  - **Strategy 2.B2:** Identify guidance and funding opportunities available for historic preservation, as well as renovation and adaption of historic buildings.
- 2.C Encourage traditional forms, design and scale in the built environment
  - **Strategy 2.C1:** Identify traditional and period significant building and built-element styles as a tool to assist future development that is in keeping with historic character.

## **GOAL 3: A HEALTHY NATURAL ECOSYSTEM**

### **Context**

Gardiner is surrounded by vast public lands and borders the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park. Gardiner's image and economy today are centered around the preservation of natural resources; whether that involves hunting and fishing, research, recreation, sightseeing or just a sense of place. Gardiner itself is small and wildlife often wander through town, crossing roads and property reminding residents and tourists of the close and important connection to nature.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 3.A Live in balance with wildlife and support healthy ecosystem management.

- **Strategy 3.A1:** Implement best practices for healthy wildlife protection and management, food storage and no wildlife feeding requirements and support of the “Bear Aware” program.
- **Strategy 3.A2:** Work with the surrounding public land agencies to minimize natural resource pollution, littering and potential wildland fire danger from summer visitation such as out of bounds and roadside camping.
- **Strategy 3.A3:** Ensure responsible and adequate garbage collection and management of the Park County Waste Transfer Station.
- 3.B Provide opportunities for wildlife and habitat conservation education for residents, business employees and visitors
  - **Strategy 3.B1:** Provide events, education, forums and opportunities for discussing and debating ecosystem management.
  - **Strategy 3.B2:** Encourage local businesses to help educate residents and visitors about the value of a healthy ecosystem.
- 3.C Reduce invasive species
  - **Strategy 3.C1:** Coordinate a local chapter for invasive species management.
  - **Strategy 3.C2:** Work with property owners, local contractors and outfitters to develop a plan for managing invasive species.
  - **Strategy 3.C3:** Share and encourage best practices for vegetation management that enhances native vegetation cover for disturbed and construction sites.
- 3.D Protect area rivers and groundwater resources
  - **Strategy 3.D1:** Protect the wild character, scenic and recreational value of the Yellowstone River.
  - **Strategy 3.D2:** Develop a comprehensive stormwater management program for Gardiner and
  - **Strategy 3.D3:** Minimize impacts to groundwater, and the Yellowstone and Gardiner rivers, from point and nonpoint pollution sources (stormwater runoff, sewage, fertilizers, etc).
- 3.E Protect the Dark Night Sky
  - **Strategy 4.D2:** Consider developing an Outdoor Lighting Ordinance with guidelines for dark sky preservation and best practices for minimizing light pollution.
  - **Strategies 4.D3:** Develop incentives and funding assistance to replace existing non-compliant outdoor lights.

## **GOAL 4: MANAGED PHYSICAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Context**

Gardiner has a very limited ability to expand as it is surrounded by public land and limited by topography. Making the best use of the available land is a priority for meeting future goals. As the town is remote there has never been much concern about industrial businesses setting up in Gardiner, however any industrial use could be developed at the present time.

The increase in visitation to Yellowstone has led to a huge demand for overnight lodging. With no development guidance this has encouraged more and larger hotels with expansive parking



areas on valuable land. This development has in turn changed the town's overall appearance and character and the increased visitation has caused traffic congestion and taken residential parking throughout the town.

Establishing priorities for Gardiner's limited land, encouraging development that maintains the town's character, and ensuring safety and quality were highlighted as important goals in community meetings.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 4.A Use limited land wisely
  - **Strategy 4.A1:** Investigate opportunities that help ensure new development adds to the overall quality of life and promotes public health, safety and welfare for the Gardiner community.
  - **Strategy 4.A2:** Develop a Future Land Use Map with particular land use designations that reflect Gardiner's vision.
  - **Strategy 4.A3:** Inventory vacant lots and vacant buildings and develop incentives for owners to use properties for year-round rentals or to sell for in-fill development.
- 4.B Maintain character and visual quality
  - **Strategy 4.B1:** Explore the use of design guidelines for future planning and development that preserve visual quality and a sense of place.
  - **Strategy 4.B2:** Investigate the capacity for a regulatory structure that helps manage and mitigate potential impacts from industrial and commercial uses.
  - **Strategy 4.B3:** Ensure desired current uses are allowed to continue through an appropriate grandfathering clause.
- 4.C Protect residential neighborhoods
  - **Strategy 4.C1:** Investigate planning processes that minimize conflicting functions while enabling a mix of residential and business uses that help promote good neighborhoods.
  - **Strategy 4.C2:** Explore opportunities for Park County to locate a satellite planning office in Gardiner to support growth and development.
  - **Strategy 4.C3:** Work with Park County to make subdivision procedures easier and less expensive while respecting setbacks, infrastructure and parking capacity.
- 4.D Encourage quality, sustainability and resilience
  - **Strategy 4.D1:** Promote green building practices and increase compliance with building codes adopted and required in Montana for new construction and major renovations - particularly those elements which improve resilience but are not yet inspected in the state. These would include the International Existing Building Code, International Building Code, International Residential Code and International Energy Conservation Code.
  - **Strategy 4.D2:** Support electric vehicle charging at appropriate locations.
  - **Strategy 4.D3:** Investigate renewable energy production opportunities and support appropriate renewable energy installations.

- **Strategy 4.D4:** Develop initiatives for improving Gardiner’s resilience to hotter drier climate conditions such as drought tolerant vegetation, reflective roofs, micro-grids.

## **GOAL 5: HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Context**

Gardiner often struggles to provide services to its community and often relies on Mammoth and Livingston for support. Emergency medical and structural fire services are volunteer-based, under-staffed and underfunded. There are many opportunities to improve public health and safety measures within the county. Wildland fire is an increasing threat to the region with climate change creating hotter and drier conditions for longer periods. In addition, with many wood buildings positioned close together Gardiner has been particularly vulnerable to structural fires as evidenced by the July 14, 2020 blaze that started in the Two Bit Saloon.

More recognition of the importance of local services and support and prioritization for them would likely encourage more participation and success.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 5.A Support local medical and emergency services to meet community needs
  - **Strategy 5.A1:** Provide annual funding support for emergency structural fire, law enforcement, and medical services.
  - **Strategy 5.A2:** Ensure emergency services personnel are provided adequate support for training, health and safety.
  - **Strategy 5.A3:** Consider proactive fire-protection measures such as limiting the sale and use of fireworks and improving fire and safety for buildings and structures.
- 5.B Provide adequate space and venues for community support services
  - **Strategy 5.B1:** Make community rental space for health and support services such as a pharmacy, physiotherapy, gym, mental health services and food bank available and achievable.
- 5.C Develop and support an effective local leadership structure for community services
  - **Strategy 5.C1:** Further develop a user-friendly framework for sharing community services information including initiatives, services, challenges and activities.
  - **Strategy 5.C2:** Support a reliable network for shared rides to Livingston and Bozeman.

## **GOAL 6: WELL-FUNCTIONING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Context**

With the exception of the Gardiner Gateway Project (2014 to 2017), most of Gardiner has grown without comprehensive infrastructure planning for over 100 years. Street design and utilities such as water and sewer that support the town are often haphazard, old and inadequate for today’s growing needs. Residents often feel the town is the last priority for Park County infrastructure improvements. Gardiner needs a plan to support and holistically address and prioritize infrastructure needs and improvements.

## Objectives and Planning Strategies

- 6.A Provide streets, sidewalks, alleys, trails that are appropriately designed and adequately maintained
  - **Strategy 6.A1:** Work with Park County to develop a 10-year plan for street improvements.
  - **Strategy 6.A2:** Plan and maintain appropriate easements, setbacks, and surface water drainage on private and public property such that community infrastructure needs can be met.
  - **Strategy 6.A3:** Identify and designate pedestrian and cycling routes through and around town including access agreements and signing.
  - **Strategy 6.A4:** Coordinate with Park County on efforts to ensure Gardiner is fully involved in planning to connect vehicular, pedestrian and cycling routes.
  - **Strategy 6.A5:** Promote traffic management solutions that increase walkability and overall safety and reduce noise, dust and pollution.
- 6.B Provide water, sewer and electric systems that are appropriately designed and adequately maintained for the community's needs
  - **Strategy 6.B1:** Work with Park County to develop a 10-year plan for utility improvements.
  - **Strategy 6.B2:** Create an annual funding source to match county funding for infrastructure improvement through the resort tax revenues.
- 6.C Ensure effective stormwater and surface water drainage that protects public and private property and the environment
  - **Strategy 6.C1:** Carry out a comprehensive survey of existing stormwater and surface water drainage and implement plans for improvements.
  - **Strategy 6.C2:** Implement stormwater design and retention requirements for new construction that protects neighboring properties and streets.

## GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING MEETS LOCAL DEMAND

### Context

Gardiner has a shortage of housing for its residents. Though this has always been an issue in a small town surrounded by public land, in more recent years the increase in visitation to Yellowstone has led to a huge demand for lodging. Many new hotels have been built and previously year-round residences have become vacation rentals. Though this allows more visitors to stay in Gardiner, it has also exacerbated the housing shortage. The lack of supply and high demand has kept house prices out of reach for many residents when they do become available. Creating affordable, quality housing in Gardiner, particularly those that work to support businesses and the community is critical for the overall wellbeing of the town.

### Objectives and Planning Strategies

- 7.A Increase the percentage of residential properties lived in year-round, or available for year-round occupancy to Gardiner's workforce
  - **Strategy 7.A1:** Create a Gardiner housing co-op to coordinate fundraising and investments for affordable housing.
  - **Strategy 7.A2:** Develop incentives for employers and businesses to develop housing for their employees.

- **Strategy 7.A3:** Investigate land opportunities to provide permanent housing including with the US Forest Service.
- **Strategy 7.A4:** Create incentives for property owners to help meet local housing needs such as creating year-round apartment rentals in outbuildings
- **Strategy 7.A5:** Encourage and incentivize property owners to rent units long-term over short-term.
- 7.B Neighborhood and housing development efforts encourage economically diverse neighborhoods
  - **Strategy 7.B1:** Develop projects that encourage a range of quality housing types, particularly mid- to low-income affordability.
  - **Strategy 7.B2:** Prioritize housing for Park County law enforcement personnel
  - **Strategy 7.B3:** Investigate opportunities to replace mobile homes with permanent affordable housing.
  - **Strategy 7.B4:** Update the Gardiner Area Housing Action Plan and use it as a broad guide for actions.
- 7.C Encourage quality new residential and commercial construction that is in keeping with Gardiner's character and history
  - **Strategy 7.C1:** Develop standards that will guide the size, design and location of future lodging facilities.
  - **Strategy 7.C2:** Explore grants and programs that provide support for adapting existing and new residences to make them more energy and water efficient.

## **GOAL 8: A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY SUPPORTING GARDINER'S VISION**

### **Context**

Businesses in Gardiner are largely dependent on the fluctuations of visitors to Yellowstone through the north gate. Visitation tends to be very high in the summer and early fall, low in the winter and very low in early spring and late fall during seasonal transitions. Visitors to Yellowstone find a place to stay and eat in Gardiner but few other attractions or businesses are open year-round. A large number of lodging facilities are vacant during the winter months. Gardiner's residents would benefit from a more diverse and balanced economy that sustains and supports its various elements.

### **Objectives and Planning Strategies**

- 8.A Support business activities compatible with Gardiner's vision.
  - **Strategy 8.A1:** Consider branding for Gardiner based on sense of place.
  - **Strategy 8.A2:** Develop a town investment fund that supports compatible small businesses through grants or/and subsidies.
  - **Strategy 8.A3:** Collaborate with small business ventures to help support and market year-round business.
- 8.B Encourage a diverse and sustainable business portfolio for Gardiner with the potential for year-round income
  - **Strategy 8.B1:** Incentivize sustainable lodging, dining and business practices through a community "A Gardiner Green Business" endorsement program.
  - **Strategy 8.B2:** Further develop categories for resort tax funds that support sustainability efforts throughout the community.



- 8.C Incentivize support for the community from the business community
  - **Strategy 8.C1:** Develop a forum (through the Chamber) for new and existing businesses and business ventures that develops connections and relationships such as staffing, space, and contributions for meeting Gardiner’s vision and goals.

## PRIORITY ACTION PLAN

Strategies from above are carried forward for immediate attention in the first year of the plan’s adoption. *Note: These are to be determined once strategies are further developed through community input ...*

## FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

*Note: Area boundaries need to be determined before the Neighborhood Plan is complete. The ones described provide an example for community review and comment.*

This section is a visual guide and narrative of desired future land use consistent with the Gardiner Neighborhood Plan vision statement and goals. It indicates how Gardiner could be developed over the next 20 years by showing locations and characteristics for possible future land management.

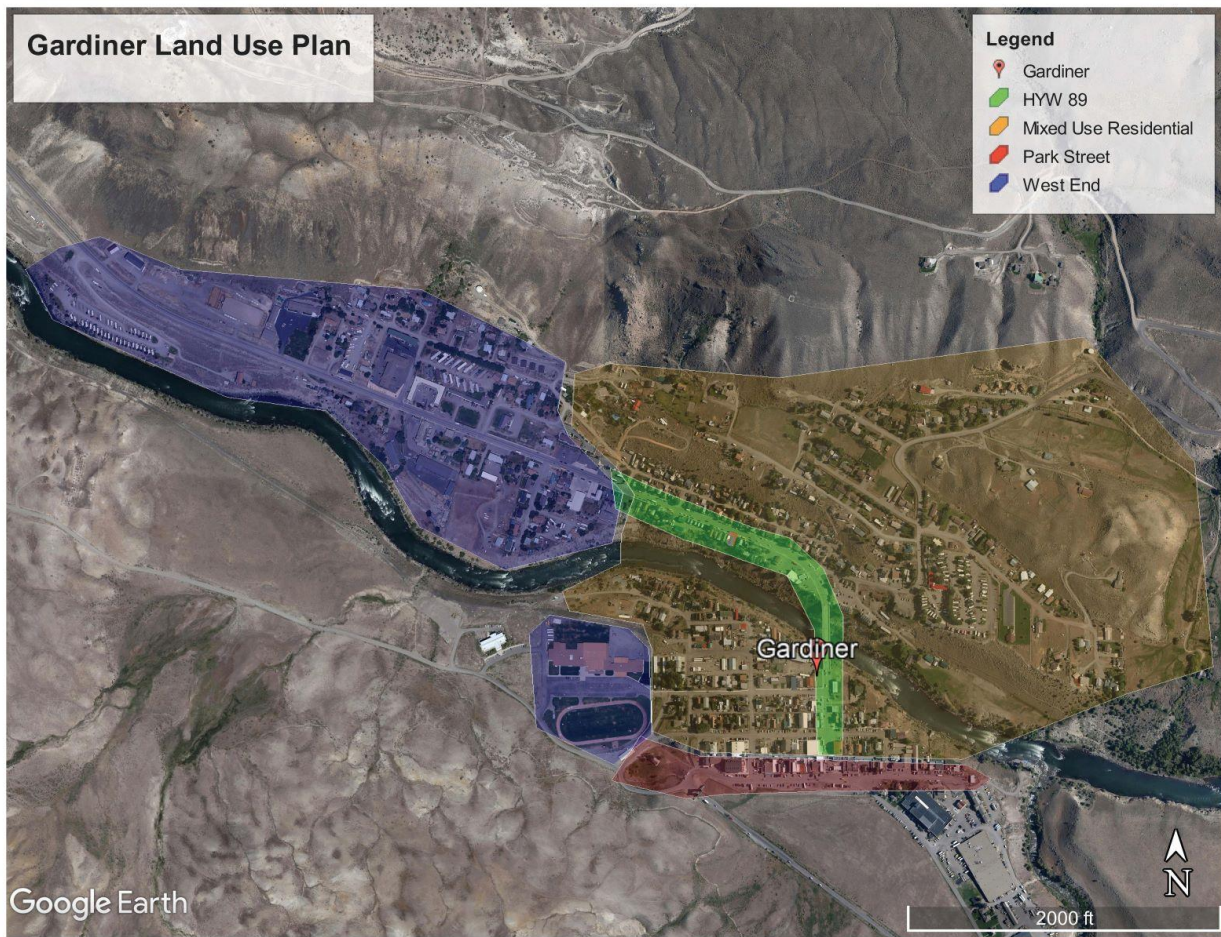
The land use designations do not have distinct boundaries and **do not** present specific ordinances or standards. Instead, they can be used as a guide to how the community might adopt guidelines and standards as recommendations for managing growth in the future.

Planning areas encompass the town itself, its infrastructure and those other areas that have a direct effect on the future vision and ability to achieve goals. This broad definition might make it necessary to create more than one area within the main planning area of Gardiner, identifying different uses and describing how each contributes differently to community goals. For example, the desired future condition for Gardiner is affected by different functions such as retail, commercial, and residential that are tied together, as well as visual quality including scale and form such as building heights, setbacks, lighting types, vehicular and pedestrian circulation design.

## Examples of Future Land Use Designation

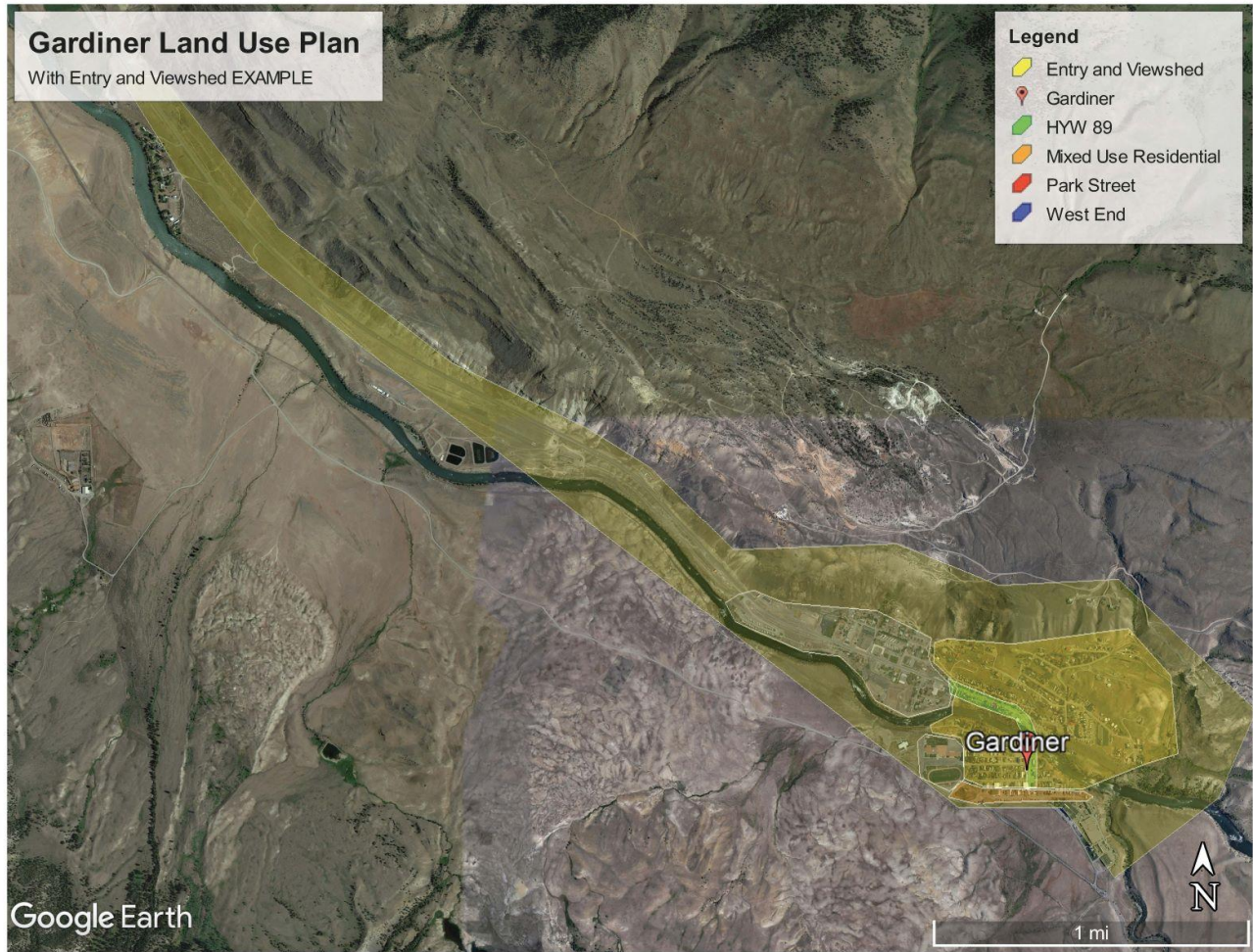
*Note: Designations at this time are ideas and examples only to encourage community discussion. Planning boundaries, specific land designations, and their descriptions will be determined with community input.*

**Map 1:** The main Gardiner planning area focuses on the built town bounded by the water and sewer district. Within this boundary we call “Gardiner” there may need to be a recognition of a desire to support different functions, infrastructure and appearances that help the town manage further growth.



*Map 2:* In addition, objectives supporting future viewshed integrity could encompass those areas that are visible from the town, from Highway 89, and from the Jardine Road. These areas could be recognized as important to the town's character.





### 1) THE EAST END - Mixed Use/Residential

*Note: This large area of Gardiner could be a land use designation encouraging and supporting residential use?*

The majority of Gardiner is residential and with the great demand for housing, priority would be given to development of additional residential uses in these areas. The community would develop desired conditions for these neighborhoods and guidance that helps support that condition. For example: To help with housing affordability and to accommodate the diverse demand for different housing types, size and value, a variety of housing choices could be encouraged as well as infrastructure that supports and protects residential neighborhoods. Neighborhoods might include acceptable non-residential uses such as buildings of worship, bed and breakfast facilities as well as small businesses. There might be guidance for size and scale in the residential neighborhoods supporting the traditional rustic, small town ambiance.

## **2) PARK STREET - Historic**

*Note: Park Street is a unique historic street and could have its own land use designation?*

Park Street was one of the first defined streets in Gardiner and faces south into Yellowstone National Park. The Park boundary lies along the sidewalk. This historic street is bounded by the “Triangle”, itself a cultural landscape, named for the traffic circulation pattern between Gardiner, Yellowstone’s North Entrance Station and the original entrance to the Park through the Roosevelt Arch.

Park Street has public green space on either end with Arch Park, a public park and picnic area on the west end, and Confluence Park on the east end. Park Street presents the face of Gardiner to visitors leaving Yellowstone and remains one of Gardiner’s main tourist areas with restaurants, retail and visitor services. It has always been primarily commercial with buildings very close to each other competing for the limited space.

Though it has changed dramatically over time Park Street still presents the ambiance of a small western frontier town butted up to a grand natural resource. Future change and development could retain its original scale, layout and function and the face and connection it presents to Yellowstone.

## **3) SCOTT AND SECOND STREET CORRIDOR - Your Introduction to Our Town**

*Note: Highway 89 through town is the face that all travelers see and connects one side of Gardiner to the other.*

US Highway 89 South passes through the middle of Gardiner and is traveled by most who enter or leave Yellowstone from the north. The highway corridor is the forefront to what visitors see of our town, presenting the first, and maybe only, impressions. Because of easy access and a face to the busiest thoroughfare this street saw the first growth of Gardiner north of the river and has remained a mix of small businesses and residences. Building setbacks allow for a wider more prominent street than the rest of town and also provide a pedestrian route from businesses to neighborhoods and across the only bridge over the Yellowstone River, linking the north side of Gardiner to the south side. However, the street is somewhat disjointed and does not create any visual consistency that could help unify the two sides of Gardiner as one. It could have continued or repeated elements that make it more its own unique Gardiner experience.

## **4) THE WEST END - Residential/Commercial**

*Note: This area could allow for bigger buildings with less emphasis on character and more appropriate for commercial uses while still having some guidance supporting a sense of place and safe circulation.*

This area of Gardiner has seen significant change in recent years. Previously open land, large hotels now dominate the entry experience to town for travelers from the north. Many of these buildings have little character or appearance that suggests they belong in Gardiner. Though commercial use is appropriate here it could still provide a sense of place; an experience that



suggests this is Gardiner, a rustic, western pioneer town in a natural setting. As the area provides for many visitors unfamiliar with Gardiner, it needs safe pedestrian routes for the public to walk to and from destinations and safe clear vehicular circulation. Specific infrastructure and property design such as surface water drainage should be respectful of neighbors as well as overall community needs.

## **5) GARDINER'S VIEWSHED - Overall Impression**

*Note: The entry approach and surrounding landscape is intrinsically related to the Gardiner experience and could be included with visual quality guidance with such things as sign and lighting ordinances?*

Winding south from Paradise Valley Highway 89 passes through Yankee Jim Canyon hugging the Yellowstone River. The canyon then widens to reveal a semi-arid natural grassland valley flanked on either side by mountains, including the tallest in Yellowstone's northern range, Electric Peak. Agricultural land and scattered residences present a rural setting. A few miles out of Gardiner the Roosevelt Arch can be seen and the small town emerges, set modestly at the end of the open valley.

Development along this route and throughout the viewshed has always been mixed use of residences and businesses. In general, the viewshed is free of billboards, sprawling parking areas and bright lights. It is the forefront to what visitors see and presents first impressions of Gardiner as a small town in a natural setting.

In 2019 the town's automobile repair shop was moved from Gardiner proper to the Highway 89 road corridor. A repair shop and convenience store were added to the operation.

## CHAPTER THREE: GARDINER PROFILE

This chapter provides a summary of the existing characteristics of the town of Gardiner.

### OVERVIEW

The town of Gardiner sits in a wide glaciated valley at the junction of the Yellowstone and Gardner rivers where they leave Yellowstone National Park. The Yellowstone Park boundary follows the sidewalk on Park Street on Gardiner's southern side while the Gallatin National Forest surrounds the town on all other sides. The deep channel of the Yellowstone River slices the town into two distinct halves. The northern half abuts steep slopes and the southern half is surrounded by rolling dry grassland. Both sides steepen to forested slopes and peaks above tree line. The total land area is approximately 5.8 square miles.

Gardiner is the gateway community for the north entrance to Yellowstone National Park. The north entrance to Yellowstone is the Park's only year-round entrance and provides access to the towns of Silvergate and Cooke City, Montana. Gardiner's economy is largely tourism-driven by visitors whose primary destination is Yellowstone. The public lands surrounding Gardiner additionally draw hunters, fishers, hikers, rafters and other outdoor enthusiasts.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

*Gardiner's early history is summarized from the "Gardiner's Historic Resources 2013-Jared Infanger". For more detailed information please reference this [document](#).*

Archeological evidence found within the boundaries of Gardiner suggests that early hunters preyed on abundant wildlife as far back as 11,000 years ago. [Native Americans](#) continued living and traveling within the greater Yellowstone ecosystem until government policies and conflicts with Euro-Americans resulted in the forced removal of the indigenous tribes to reservations.

In the 1830's a mountain man, contracted to the American Fur Company, traveled up the Yellowstone River. Johnson Gardner settled in a canyon where a tributary emptied into the Yellowstone River. The area became known as "Gardner's Hole". As the fur trade diminished, the exploration for gold grew in the Yellowstone region. Discoveries of gold in Idaho and Montana territories in the 1860s attracted many prospectors.

The prospectors' stories of a peculiar landscape filled with hot springs and geysers led to government supported expeditions to explore the area. The Hayden Expedition's report, combined with the photographs of William Henry Jackson and the paintings of Thomas Moran, helped convince Congress to set aside Yellowstone as the world's first national

park. This designation would forever shape the development of the lands surrounding the Park. Within a decade of the Park's creation, the small settlement of Gardiner, at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Gardner Rivers, would take shape.

Almost all writers describing early Gardiner saw it as undeveloped and ramshackle. The town, centered on Park Street, had been built one-sided due to uncertainty as to where the Park boundary was. Traveler F.B. stated in 1884 that "Gardiner's City" was the same as many other hamlets he had seen—"a characteristic frontier town, with a motley collection of shanties, saloons, log houses and dirty canvas tents." Early structures were very basic and had been built close together to maximize business opportunity. Many of the original buildings perished in a series of fires in the latter half of the 1880s.



Gardiner as it looked circa 1887; the buildings consist of log and wood-framed buildings with some featuring false-front style consistent with many towns of the American West during the late nineteenth century. Photo courtesy of US National Archives "Gardiner Park Co., Montana, Looking North East, 1887."

In the early 1900's, as the Northern Pacific Railroad wound its way across the west, a spur line was built from Livingston to transport visitors to Yellowstone. The spur line reached the town of Cinnabar in 1883. It was extended and reached Gardiner in 1902. Visitors disembarked the train, boarded a stagecoach and were driven through the iconic Roosevelt Arch into Yellowstone. The Roosevelt Arch was built in 1903 and is now a National Historic Landmark.

Gardiner took advantage of being at the end of the rail line and started to provide amenities for park visitors. Stores and saloons were built particularly along Park Street.

The first automobiles entered Yellowstone in 1915 and gradually Gardiner shifted to car-based transportation and associated services. The National Park Service, established in 1916, consolidated all the concessioners providing park tours into the Yellowstone Transportation Company. When the Company's Mammoth warehouse burned down in 1925 it was re-built in Gardiner.

As visitation to Yellowstone continued to grow, particularly by those arriving by automobile, traffic in Gardiner increased; roads and river crossings were improved; and the town grew on the north side of the river. New motels, automobile repair shops and service stations were constructed along the highway.

In 1972 property owners along Highway 89 South sold the front ten feet of their property to the Federal Highways Administration to facilitate the widening of the highway. Businesses continued to develop along the highway corridor north of the river. A fire on July 14th, 2020 destroyed several historic buildings which housed businesses including two bars, a restaurant and a raft company. Employee housing was also destroyed.



Gardiner looking North circa 1914. The freight spurs are visible as well as the footbridge connecting Scott's addition with Gardiner. Photo courtesy Yellowstone. National Park Archives: YELL 37086





## POPULATION, INCOME, HOUSING PRICE

**Population:** <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/gardiner-mt-population> (Data will be forthcoming from the [2020 Census](#)).

- 2010: 875
- 2014: 1,229
- 2018: 971 (estimate) An increase of approximately 11% from the 2010 census.
- 2021: 879 (estimate)



### Income:

- \$62,191 Average household income.
- \$51,694 Median household income
- 13.24% poverty rate.

### Housing Price:

- \$327,300 Median house value (2019)
  - “From December 2019 to December 2020, single-family home median sales prices in Park County rose 40.1% from \$282,753 to \$396,000, while median year-to-date sales prices for single-family homes by June 2021 were up to \$425,250, a 31% increase from the year-to-date the prior year.” (Park County Housing Needs Assessment, September 2021, p. 24)
- \$989/month Median rental price (2 bedroom)

### Demographics: (Source: American Community Survey)

- Median Age: 43.1 years (Females: 42.7; Males: 43.4)
  - White: 95.78%
  - Two or more races: 2.99%
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.93%
  - Native American: 0.31%
  - Black or African American: 0.00%
  - Asian: 0.00%
  - Other races: 0.00%

## ECONOMY AND SERVICES

Gardiner’s economy is largely based on tourism. Motels, restaurants, bars, gift shops, RV parks, recreation outfitters, etc. are among the town’s largest employers. The Gardiner Market-serving both tourists and residents- is one of the largest employers in town. Additional businesses include art galleries, laundromats, vacation rentals and service/repair stations, a propane distributor, a computer/internet provider, bank, pharmacy and garbage collection provider.

While the headquarters for Yellowstone National Park is five miles to the south in Mammoth, Wyoming, a contingent of National Park employees are based in Gardiner. The Gardiner Ranger District for the Custer Gallatin National Forest staffs a ranger station in Gardiner. Xanterra/Yellowstone Park Lodges, the largest Yellowstone Park concessionaire, houses its primary service center in Gardiner. Additionally, the K-12 Gardiner public school employs approximately 30 staff.

The Gateway Hose Company provides a volunteer-staffed fire and ambulance service. The Gardiner Water and Sewer district provides water and sewer service to district residents.

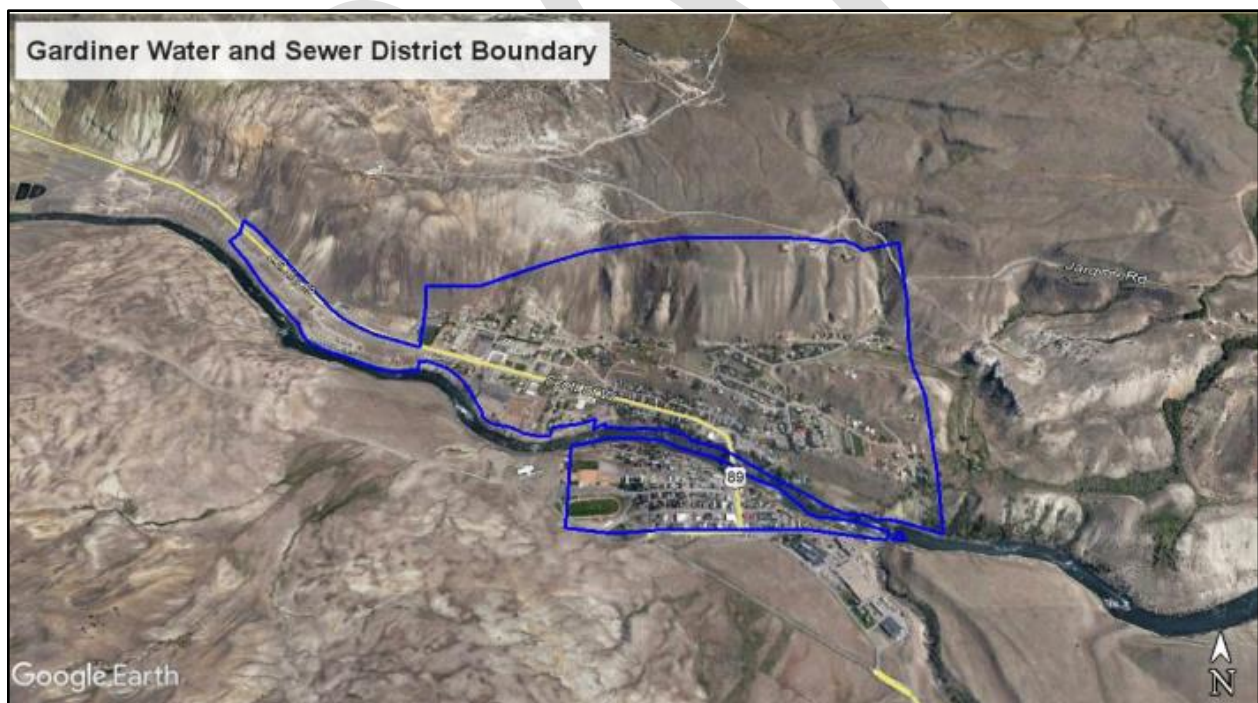
## OPERATING SYSTEM

Because Gardiner is unincorporated, functions that a municipality normally performs are quite decentralized. Gardiner's "operating system" encompasses both infrastructure and services. The Gardiner school, roads and road maintenance, water and sewer services, law enforcement, fire and ambulance, health and human services, and garbage disposal and recycling are all parts of Gardiner's operating system.

These functions are performed by a variety of entities including the Park County Sheriff's Office, Park County Health, Roads and Sanitation Departments and individual taxing districts. The following summary describes these operating system functions – who carries them out and how they are funded. The summary also includes functions which benefit all county residents.

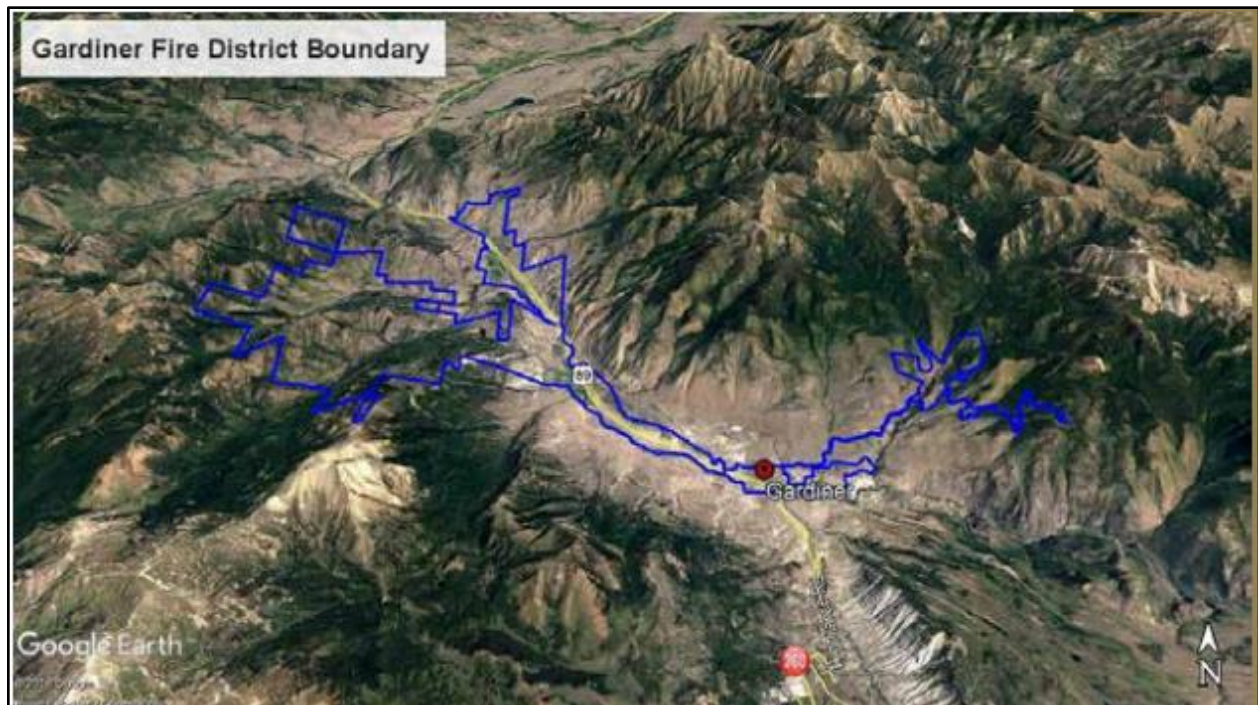
### Gardiner Sewer and Water District

The Gardiner Water and Sewer District is funded by water and sewer users through monthly bills. This funding supports the system's operations and some capital expenditures. The Water and Sewer District is a crucial component of the community's operating system. In addition to treating business and household wastewater and providing clean water for residents and visitors, it is a necessary component of any solution to Gardiner's housing challenges. The District currently services 430 households and businesses within the District, the boundary of which is shown below.



## Gardiner Fire District

The Gateway Hose Company provides fire service within the Gardiner Fire District. The Company is an all-volunteer fire and ambulance service that provides structural and wildland fire response, vehicle extrication and ambulance service to Livingston.



## Gardiner Resort Tax District

The Gardiner Resort Tax District has become an important part of the Gardiner operating system. The intent of the resort tax in Montana is to allow communities with small populations but relatively high numbers of visitors to support community development and offset the costs those visitors bring. Gardiner, with a population of less than 900 people, hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year resulting in a significant impact on local infrastructure.

Qualified electors approved the Gardiner Resort Area and a three-percent tax on April 8, 2014. Resort taxes are collected by tourism related businesses from June 1 to September 30. Funds are distributed annually for town infrastructure, visitor services, property tax relief, community services, and cultural grants. The tax went up to four-percent in 2020. (See [www.gardinerresorttax.com](http://www.gardinerresorttax.com).)





## Gardiner Public School District

The Gardiner School District boundary runs from Point of Rocks about 20 miles north of Gardiner to Jardine to the boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Enrollment also includes approximately thirty K-12 students who reside in Yellowstone at park headquarters in Mammoth, Wyoming. In addition, about thirty out-of-district students are enrolled in Gardiner Public Schools.

- **Gardiner Public Schools:** Gardiner Public School has consistently been ranked as one of Montana's top schools. Recently US News and World Report rated Gardiner as the number two school in Montana. The school is a crucial part of Gardiner serving as a community center and a source of identity and deserved pride.
  - The school district budget has been significantly reduced in the past few years due to a drop in enrollment and State of Montana budget amendments. Simultaneously the school faces the pressing needs of aging and failing infrastructure. Gardiner Schools have established a partnership with the North Yellowstone Education Foundation. NYEF was created to add important capacity to the school district in light of these budget shortfalls.
  - Gardiner Public School's enrollment has been on the decline for the past decade, dropping by about 33% in the past ten years. K-12 enrollment in 2009 was 255 students. K-12 enrollment for 2021 is projected to be 147 students.
  - The loss in school enrollment is largely due to Gardiner's housing challenges. Families who might desire to send their kids to this high-performing school struggle to find housing that is suitable and affordable. Indeed, there is a dire shortage of housing at any price level. More and more families are choosing to

move down-valley where housing is cheaper. Parents then have the choice to send their children to the Livingston School District or to request out-of-district status in the Gardiner School District. There are currently approximately 30 students categorized as out-of-district students enrolled in the Gardiner School.

- The Gardiner School District serves as the school of record for around 30 students who live at Yellowstone Park headquarters in Mammoth, Wyoming. These students are funded through the Powell School District in Wyoming.
- Out of the present school staff of thirty, eight staff members are eligible to retire in the next five years and another seven in 6-10 years. The school district will need to hire at least ten of those fifteen positions. If Gardiner's housing market does not expand and become more affordable the school district will continue to struggle to attract needed staff.



## Other Public Services

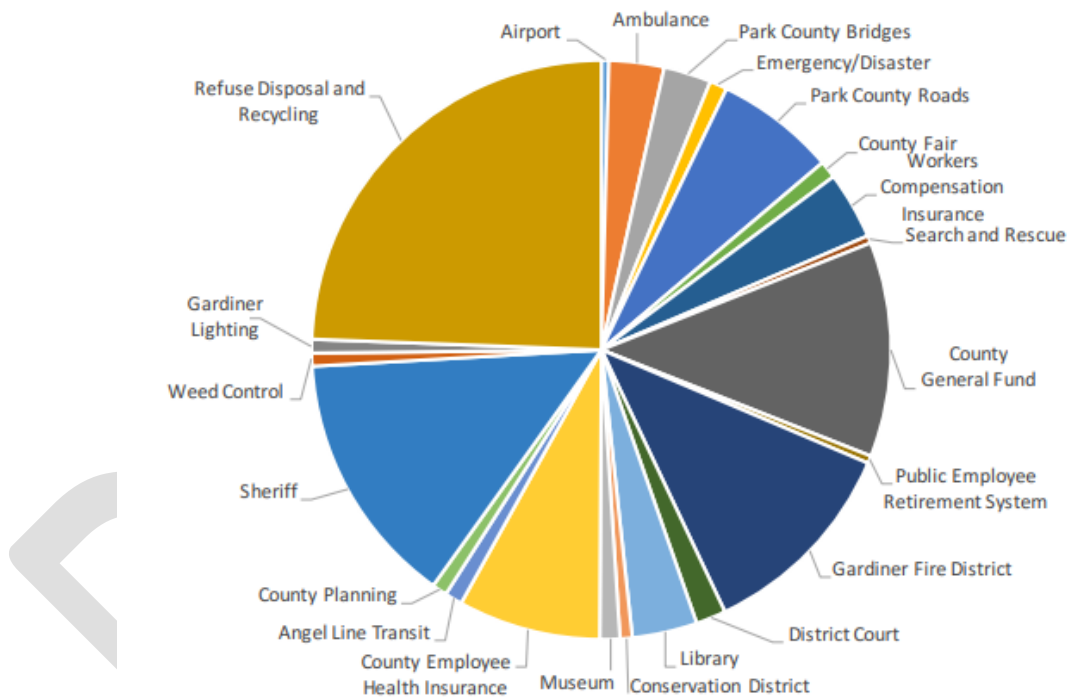
While the above captures much of Gardiner's operating system, a wide array of community services, not funded by taxes, are performed by non-profit organizations, businesses and volunteers. Nonprofits in the education, environment, human services and arts sectors provide valuable community service. Many businesses donate staff time and dollars to support community initiatives. Gardiner is extremely fortunate to have an extraordinary cadre of citizens with a deep commitment to the community who offer their time, skills, and dollars to make it a better place. The following are some of the volunteer organizations in Gardiner:



- Greater Gardiner Community Council
- Gardiner Chamber of Commerce
- North Yellowstone Education Foundation
- Electric Peak Arts Council
- Bear Creek Council
- Gardiner Investment Cooperative
- Gardiner A Successful Community
- Gardiner Food Pantry
- Gardiner Resort Tax Board

The following graphic shows the distribution of non-school-related property tax dollars:

- **Services Paid through Non-School Property Taxes:**



- **Refuse Disposal and Recycling (\$175/year):** This tax is paid by households belonging to Refuse District #1 (all of Park County properties except Livingston). Garbage disposal and recycling services are provided through these funds, which represent nearly 25% of non-school property taxes. Gardiner residents are responsible for transporting their garbage and recycling to the greenbox site which has an enclosed compactor unit and recycling services. Residents can deliver garbage to the site themselves or pay a private sector entity. The refuse is then trucked to the City of Livingston's Transfer Station, and eventually to the High Plains Landfill in Great Falls.

- **Park County Sheriff (\$102/year):** The Park County Sheriff's Office patrols Gardiner and the surrounding area. It typically is able to devote one deputy to Gardiner during the day and one at night. In the summer it supplies some foot patrol for the community. The Sheriff's Office also coordinates emergency and disaster response with the Gateway Hose Company. According to Sheriff Bichler, the Office would prefer to have a resident deputy in Gardiner but the lack of housing makes it unlikely.
- **County General Fund (\$86/year):** Activities funded by the general budget include: ■ Public Health, which includes sanitarian activities and the promotion of public health. ■ Park County Justice Court. ■ Park County Clerk and Recorder. ■ County Administration, Grants Administration, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Rural Addressing. ■ Supervisor of Schools. ■ County Auditor, County Treasurer, County Coroner, and County Attorney. ■ Courthouse building maintenance. ■ A percentage of Montana State University Extension staff salaries.
- **Gardiner Fire District/Gateway Hose Company (\$83/year):** The Gateway Hose Company provides service within the Gardiner fire district. The Company is an all-volunteer fire and ambulance service that provides structural and wildland fire response, vehicle extrication and ambulance service to Livingston. The Company has 22 volunteers and responds to 26-30 fires and 70-90 ambulance calls a year. It has two ambulances, two structural engines, a wildland fire unit and two support vehicles.
- **Park County Road Maintenance (\$48/year):** This tax is paid by all county property owners outside of the incorporated towns of Livingston and Clyde Park. The Park County Road Department has a facility in Gardiner that includes a road grader, plow truck and water truck. The county grades gravel streets, patches potholes, provides sign maintenance and plows snow.
- **Workers Compensation Insurance (\$27/year):** This tax funds workers compensation insurance for Park County employees.
- **Livingston/Park County Library (\$26/year):** The Public Library, located in Livingston, is open to all Park County residents.
- **Ambulance (\$22/year):** Gardiner ambulance service is provided by the Gateway Hose Company. It provides free ambulance service to Livingston.
- **Park County Bridge Maintenance (\$19/year):** This is a countywide tax that all residents pay, including residents of Livingston and Clyde Park, for maintenance of the county's bridges.

- **District Court (\$12/year):** This is a countywide tax that all residents pay, including residents of Livingston and Clyde Park, for expenses related to the Clerk of Court. The Clerk of Court provides marriage licenses, passports, child support records, and assists District Court judges by providing case management of District Court records.
- **Yellowstone Gateway Museum (\$8/year):** The Museum, located in Livingston, is open to all Park County residents.
- **Angel Line Transit (\$7/year):** Angel Line Transportation provides service to people in Park County who are senior citizens, disabled people of all ages, and people under 60 who are assisting Senior Citizens or disabled persons. Angel Line transports people for a variety of purposes, including medical appointments, recreation, shopping, and work. Its hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm.
- **Emergency/Disaster (\$7/year):** The Park County Office of Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating and supporting the county's readiness for emergencies and disasters in order to preserve lives, protect property and build resilient communities.
- **County Fairgrounds and Parks (\$7/year):** This tax funds the operations and maintenance of the Park County Fairgrounds and county parks. The Parks Department maintains the lawn, bathroom and other facilities and removes garbage from Arch Park in Gardiner.
- **County Planning (\$6/year):** This tax supports the Park County Planning Department and its activities. The Park County Planning Department provides services for unincorporated areas only.
- **Weed Control (\$5/year):** The Park County Weed District oversees and acts as a resource for noxious weed management throughout Park County. The Park County Weed District offers noxious weed management education and advice, site visits, assistance developing noxious weed management plans, noxious weed-free forage inspection and certification and other services.
- **Gardiner Lighting District (\$5/year):** Street lighting in Gardiner is funded by the Gardiner Lighting District and maintained by Northwestern Energy. The Montana Department of Transportation provides lighting along Highway 89.
- **Park County Conservation District (\$5/year):** The Park Conservation District guides Park County in the conservation and management of soil, water, cropland, grazing lands, weeds, and small acreages. The District provides

leadership in conservation planning, technical assistance, education resources, and resource management tools.

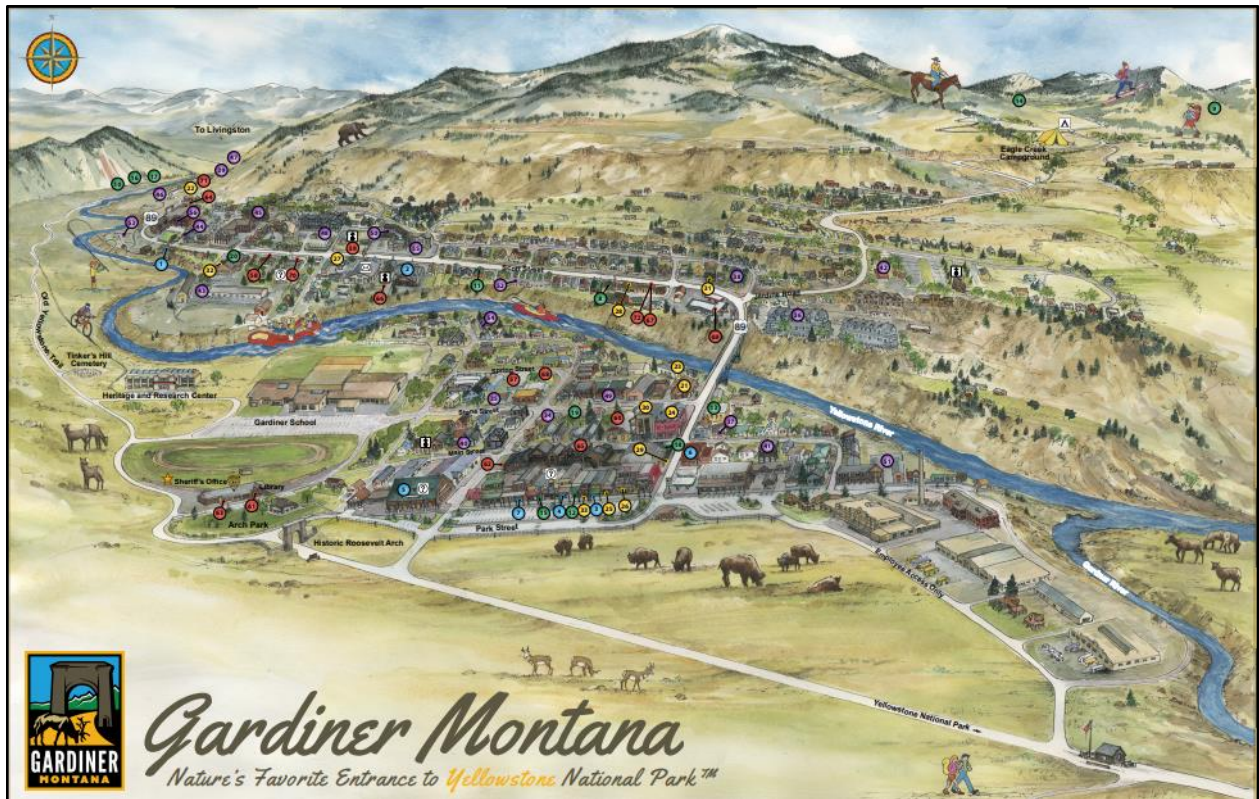
- **Airport (\$3/year):** This county-wide levy supports the Gardiner and Livingston airports, neither of which serve commercial traffic.
- **Statewide Public Employee Retirement System (\$3/year):** The dollars from this tax goes into a statewide system in which state and local employees participate and receive retirement benefits.
- **Search and Rescue (\$3/year):** The Park County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue program consists of volunteer citizens who train for and respond to a variety of incidents within the county. Park County Search and Rescue is organized and maintained by the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff's deputies oversee volunteer functions and act as incident commanders. Volunteer SAR coordinators organize and track training and assist incident commanders with planning and implementing searches and rescues.

## LAND USE

The town of Gardiner includes houses for full-time residents and seasonal employees. Many of the long-term rental units have been converted to short-term vacation rentals. In recent years many of the owner-occupied residences have been sold and converted to vacation rentals.

Greater Gardiner businesses include many shops and galleries; one bank; one grocery store; two service stations; two convenience stores; 10 restaurants and bars; 13 recreational outfitters (raft companies, fly fishing shop, guide services, Yellowstone Forever); 22 motels and lodges and an unknown but growing number of vacation rentals.

Also occupying Gardiner's limited land space are three churches; a food pantry; three utility companies (Gardiner Water & Sewer District, Amerigas, and Story Distributing); the Gardiner Community Library; the Gardiner Community Center; two laundromats; a chiropractor; a massage therapist; a physical therapist; the Gateway Hose Company and the Gardiner rodeo grounds. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service has a ranger office in Gardiner. The Park County Sheriff's Department rents office space three miles out of town. The Gardiner Airport and a county refuse site are similarly located on the outskirts of the town proper.





## SHOP

- 1 Elk River Art Studio, Gallery & Lodging, 406-848-9449  
Blue Bison Art, 406-223-2751
- 2 Gardiner Market, 406-848-7524
- 3 Gardiner Pharmacy/Yellowstone Perk, 406-848-9430
- 4 Kellen's Montana Saddlery, 406-848-7776
- 5 Yellowstone Forever, 406-848-2400  
Yellowstone General Stores, 406-586-7593
- 6 Yellowstone Gifts and Sweets, 406-848-7011
- 7 Yellowstone Wild the Gallery, 406-240-6968

## PLAY

- Adventure Yellowstone Inc., 406-585-9041  
Big Wild Adventures, 406-823-0337  
Cooke City Montana Museum, 406-838-2203
- 8 Flying Pig Camp Store & Rafting, 406-848-7510
- 9 Hell's A-Roar! Outfitters, 406-848-7578  
In Our Nature Guiding Service, 406-579-3838
- 10 Montana Guide Service, 406-848-7265
- 11 Montana Whitewater Rafting & Zipline, 406-848-7398
- 12 Paradise Adventure Company, 888-722-6505
- 13 Parks' Fly Shop, 406-848-7314  
Rockin' HK Outfitters, 406-333-4933
- 14 Specimen Creek Outfitters, 406-848-9164  
Touring Wonderland Yellowstone Photography Tours, 406-579-7372  
Wild Bear Adventures, 303-907-9773
- 15 Wild West Rafting, 406-848-2252
- 16 Wilderness Connection, 406-848-7862  
Yellowstone Dreamin' Adventures, 406-224-1599  
Yellowstone Guide, 424-333-4682  
Yellowstone Hiking Guides, 406-848-1144
- 17 Yellowstone Hot Springs, 833-977-7464  
Yellowstone Insight, 406-640-1164
- 18 Yellowstone Raft Company, 406-848-7777  
Yellowstone Roughriders, 406-559-0969
- 19 Yellowstone Safari Company & Yellowstone Llamas, 406-586-1155
- 20 Yellowstone Vacations, 406-848-5171  
Yellowstone Wild, LLC, 406-224-0001  
Yellowstone's Wild World, 406-641-0931  
Yellowstone Wildlife Adventures, 307-699-0495  
Yellowstone Wolf Tracker, 406-223-6634  
Yellowstone Wonders, 406-224-3561

## EAT

- 21 Cowboy's Lodge & Grill, 406-848-9175  
Follow Yer' Nose BBQ, 406-224-2847
- 22 Grizzly Grille, 406-404-9278
- 23 Iron Horse Bar & Grill, 406-848-7888
- 24 KBar Pizza, 406-848-9995
- 25 Red's Blue Goose Saloon, 406-848-7434
- 26 Rosie's Bistro & Rosie's Pizza, 406-580-0966
- 27 The Corral, 406-848-7627
- 28 Tumbleweed Bookstore & Café, 406-848-2225
- 29 Two Bit Saloon & Grill, 406-848-7743  
Wildflower Bakery & Café, 406-224-2847
- 30 Wonderland Café & Lodge, 406-223-1914
- 31 Yellowstone Grill, 406-848-9433
- 32 Yellowstone Mine & Rusty Rail, 406-848-7336
- 33 Yellowstone Pizza Company, 406-848-9991

## STAY

- 34 406 Lodge & Cabins, 406-848-9956
- 35 A Stone's Throw, 406-223-1419  
A Sunny Slope Lodge, 406-223-7939
- 36 Absaroka Lodge, 406-848-7414  
B Bar Ranch, 406-848-7729  
Cabin by the River, 406-223-2593  
Chico Hot Springs Resort & Day Spa, 406-333-4933  
Crescent at Yellowstone, 406-838-2108  
Diamond Bar Heart Guest Cabin, 406-848-2388
- 37 Gardiner Guest House B&B, 406-848-9414
- 38 Hillcrest Cottages, 406-848-7353  
Jardine Retreat, 406-220-2201  
Johnstad's Bed & Breakfast and Log Cabin, 406-333-9003
- 39 Little Trail Creek Cabins, 406-223-8595  
Log Cabin Café - Danu's House of the Silver Forest, 406-838-2367

- McDonald Ranch Lodge & Cabins, 406-224-1589  
Mountain Home-Montana Vacation Rentals, 406-586-4589  
Murray Hotel, 406-222-1350
- 40 North Entrance Vacation Rentals, 406-223-2593  
North Yellowstone Lodge, 406-223-5265  
Paradise Gateway B & B and Vacation Homes, 406-333-4063
- 41 Park Hotel, 406-223-7007  
Reedfly Farm, 206-228-5448  
Rockin' Y Vacation Rentals, 406-223-3150
- 42 Rocky Mountain RV Park & Cabins, 406-848-7251  
Sage Lodge, 855-400-0505  
Smith Family Ranch, 406-848-7477
- 43 The Ridgeline Hotel at Yellowstone, 406-848-7311
- 44 The Roosevelt Hotel Yellowstone, 406-848-5130
- 45 Travelodge Gardiner at Yellowstone Park North Entrance, 406-848-7520
- 46 Upriver Cabin, 406-640-9000
- 47 Yellowstone Basin Inn, 406-848-7080
- 48 Yellowstone Big Rock Inn, 406-848-9435
- 49 Yellowstone Condos & Suites, 406-262-0880  
Yellowstone Destinations, 406-848-9911
- 50 Yellowstone Gateway Inn, 406-848-7100  
Yellowstone National Park Lodges, 307-344-7311  
Yellowstone Park Riverfront Cabins, 406-570-4500
- 51 Yellowstone River Motel, 406-848-7303  
Yellowstone Riverbend Cabin, 406-449-0222
- 52 Yellowstone Riverside Cottages, 406-848-7719
- 53 Yellowstone RV Park & Campground, 406-848-7496
- 54 Yellowstone Suites Bed & Breakfast, 406-848-7937
- 55 Yellowstone Super 8, 406-848-7401
- 56 Yellowstone Village Inn, 406-848-7417

## SERVICES

- Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Foundation, 406-425-1944  
Amerigas, 406-848-7271
- Amazing Temps, 406-600-8254  
Bank of the Rockies, 406-333-9009  
Bear Creek Council, 406-248-1154  
Bear Hearing Solutions, 406-333-2547  
Big Bear Stampede Foundation Inc.  
Childcare Connections, 406-587-7786  
Electric Peak Arts Council  
ERA Landmark Western Land, 406-586-1321
- 58 First Interstate Bank, 406-848-7474
- 59 Gardiner Baptist Church, 406-223-4478
- 60 Gardiner Community Center, 406-848-1883
- 61 Gardiner Community Library, 406-848-7835
- 62 Gardiner Food Pantry, 307-344-9006  
Gardiner Mammoth FM Association  
Gardiner Park County Water & Sewer, 406-848-7734
- 64 Gateway Hose Company, 406-848-7350  
Greater Yellowstone Coalition, 406-586-1593  
Hepburn Electric LLC, 406-641-0172  
House of Clean Inc., 800-223-5082  
Industrial Towel & Cover Supply, 406-222-1131  
Jon Ellen Snyder - Realtor, 406-223-8700  
Lehrkind's Coca Cola Bottling Co., 406-586-2029  
Livingston Enterprise, 406-222-2000  
Livingston Healthcare, 406-222-3541  
Lori Hamilton - Realtor, 406-223-1079  
Medcor at Yellowstone, 307-344-7965  
Meridian Trust Federal Credit Union, 307-344-7974  
MSU Park County Extension, 406-222-4156
- 65 North Entrance Wash Tub, 406-848-9870  
North Yellowstone Education Foundation, 406-223-6859  
Northwestern Energy, 406-582-4637
- 66 St. Williams Catholic Church, 406-222-1393  
Stofford Animal Shelter, 406-222-2111  
Stone Gate Chiropractic LLC, 406-425-2421
- 68 Story Distributing, 406-848-7710  
Teton Backcountry Rentals, 307-828-1885
- 69 Town Station Conoco, 406-848-7742  
Upper Yellowstone Roundup Association  
US Forest Service - Gardiner Ranger District, 406-848-7375
- 71 Yellowstone Dino Lube & Repair, 406-848-9401  
Yellowstone International Arts Festival, 406-579-6414  
Yellowstone Media Design, 406-848-2210  
Yellowstone Park Service Stations, 406-848-7333
- 72 Zondra Skertich-LMT, Massage Therapy, 406-220-2201

## Local Jurisdictions with Interagency Coordination

As the original gateway community to Yellowstone National Park, Gardiner has a unique collaboration with the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. The shared boundaries between Gardiner and Yellowstone National Park sometimes blur in location and use.

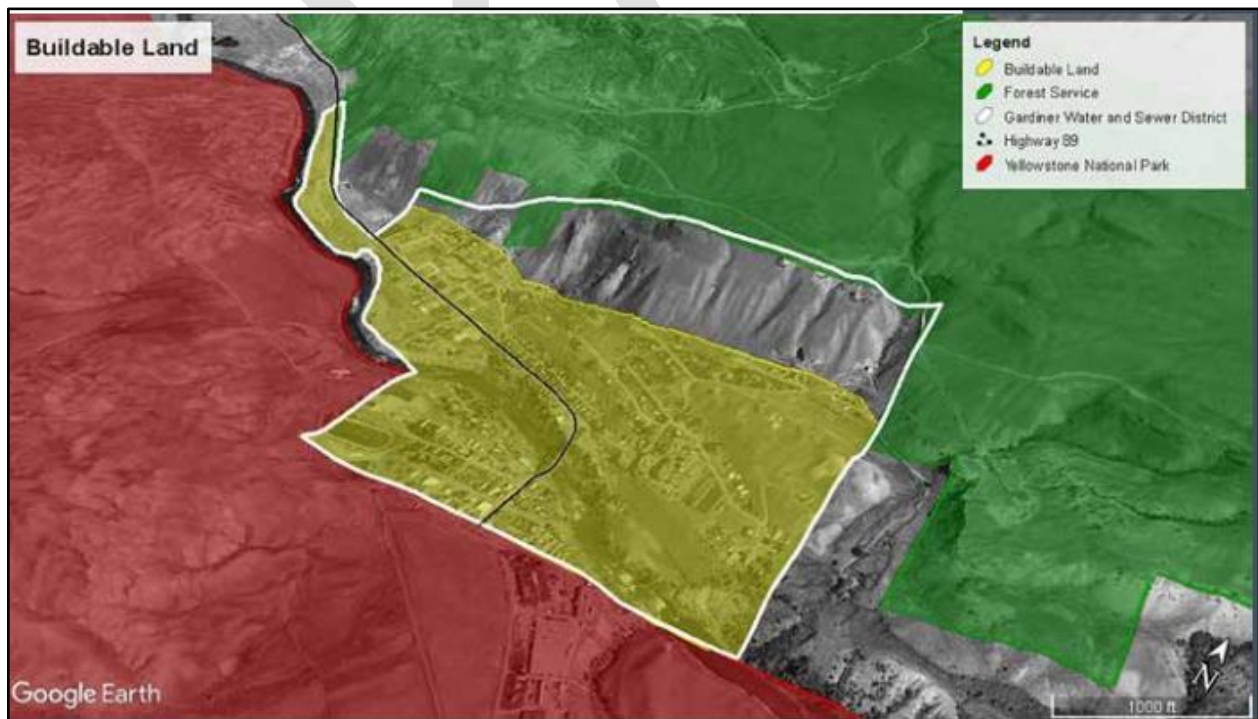
Arch Park is approximately two thirds on Park County land and one third within Yellowstone. This park was created when the railroad depot was replaced in the 1950's. Gardiner's Park Street, sometimes referred to as Front Street, is surprisingly within the Yellowstone Park boundary. Yellowstone's Heritage and Resource Center is on Park land purchased from failed homesteads.

Confluence Park at the east end of Park Street was created during the Gateway Project from 2014 to 2016. This small park is within Park County and provides put-in access for commercial and private boaters on this stretch of the Yellowstone River.

Additionally, a small "pocket park" on Scott Street was created during the Gateway Project and is maintained by the Greater Gardiner Community Council. This property along with Highway 89 through the middle of town is under the Montana Department of Transportation jurisdiction.

## Buildable Land

Gardiner is surrounded by federal land and steep slopes limiting its outward future growth. The area within the white boundary below is the Gardiner-Park County Water and Sewer District. Yellowstone National Park is shown in red and United States Forest Service land is in green. Potentially buildable areas are shown in yellow.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

Gardiner sits at 5260 feet above sea level in a broad glaciated valley at the confluence of the Gardiner and Yellowstone Rivers. The land is dry grassland more resembling the Great Plains than the Rocky Mountains. This fragile landscape rises to better developed soils and predominantly Douglas fir forest on both sides of the valley--all part of a habitat known as Yellowstone's Northern Range. The Northern Range extends northwest into Paradise Valley and east through the north part of Yellowstone National Park and the Lamar Valley.

This important wildlife area is considered part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). The GYE-at 34,375 square miles- is the largest remaining contiguous ecosystem in the lower 48 states and one of the largest temperate-zone ecosystems on Earth. The Yellowstone River, bisecting Gardiner, is the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states. Together with its many small tributaries it is an incredible natural resource in this semi-arid environment.

The natural resources that surround Gardiner offer great scenery and support abundant and diverse wildlife. These natural resources support a huge diversity of outdoor activities including wildlife watching and photography, research, hunting, fishing, recreational boating, hiking, skiing and horseback riding.

Winter brings snow and below freezing temperatures to the mountains surrounding Gardiner and results in the seasonal migration of elk and bison to graze at lower elevations. Some of these animals are infected with brucellosis-a livestock disease transmitted by contact with infected ungulate fetal tissue. The conservation of wild bison is a heated and complex issue surrounding Gardiner.

Climate change is already measurable in Yellowstone's Northern Range. Warmer temperatures are reducing snowpack and changing stream flow, reducing greenness and increasing the season for possible wildfires. Warming temperatures additionally increase the number of pests, disease and invasive species. Spruce budworm and pine bark beetle outbreaks are affecting forests and invasive species are steadily changing the lower elevation vegetation.

Non-native species have increased substantially over the past few years in the native habitat surrounding Gardiner and populations continue to spread. Invasive species such as Russian thistle (aka tumbleweed), houndstongue, horary, desert alyssum and knapweed profoundly affect the entire ecosystem, changing grazing opportunity and increasing vulnerability to wildfires.

The Gardiner area has a diverse geologic history. Sedimentary deposits, glacial deposits, metamorphic rocks, volcanic intrusions and hydrothermal features have led to geologic exploration and exploitation. The remnants of past travertine and basalt quarries, coal and gold mining as well as geo-thermal exploitation are evident in the greater Gardiner area. Current efforts to mine for gold in the Crevice Mountain area above Gardiner are on-going and are a source of concern for many local residents.





Jon Catton

## HOUSING TRENDS

Housing prices and availability, whether for rental or purchase, are determined by the supply and demand of housing. Gardiner's housing market has seen supply outstripped by demand, especially in the past decade.

- **Housing Supply:** The number of homes available for residents (long-term housing) is shrinking due to seasonal use and short-term vacation rentals. As stated in the Human Resources Development Council Housing Needs Assessment, "construction from 2000 to 2010 kept pace with population increases, but it cannot keep pace with the conversion of units to seasonal use".
  - Some residents have expressed concern that commercial uses are replacing homes once used as residences. It may be that the return on investment for commercial use is greater than that of residential use.
  - Additionally, the supply of rental housing is insufficient relative to demand. Recent community surveys and conversations with rental unit owners confirm this.
  - Land on which to build new housing is scarce. Gardiner is largely surrounded by federal land and steep slopes, both of which are unbuildable. Land suitable for building exists within Gardiner but it is not known at this time if owners of that land would be willing to develop it or sell it for development.
  - Higher density urban housing, affordable to low and moderate-income residents, requires central water and sewer as opposed to individual wells and septic



systems. Although Gardiner has a modern central water and sewer system, the system's geographic extent is currently limited.

- New housing will likely require upgrades in road infrastructure further increasing development costs.
- Because Gardiner is not an incorporated town it cannot pass ordinances addressing the conversion of long-term rental housing to short-term vacation rentals or commercial uses.

- **Housing Demand**

- At the same time the long-term housing stock appears to be shrinking, demand has increased. Growing visitation at Yellowstone National Park means more employment, which leads to greater housing demand.
- Gardiner, like many communities with significant tourism economies, has fewer average persons per house--1.44 vs Livingston's 1.88. More houses are required for the same number of people.
- As noted in the HRDC Housing Needs Assessment, "Seasonal and vacation populations create a higher demand for rental housing that is often not based on the economic conditions present in the community". What does this mean?
- Even when housing is available, a significant housing affordability gap exists in Gardiner. Upwards of 50 percent of Gardiner households cannot afford current median rental prices and home sale prices.

- **The Availability and Cost of Land**

- Given that supply, along with demand, determines the availability and affordability of housing, it is crucial that the Gardiner housing stock grows.
- Land on which to build that housing must be available. Surrounded by federal land and steep slopes and limited by the extent of its urban infrastructure, Gardiner has an extremely confined area for new housing.
- Some parts within the yellow area (see Buildable Land map) do not contain structures and could theoretically be developed for housing at the urban densities required for affordable housing.
- For the purposes of this report urban densities are greater than 1 home per acre; but for the sake of affordability must be considerably greater than that. This analysis considered contiguous areas that are currently without structures and:
  - Are at least one-half acre in size.
  - Do not contain slopes steeper than 10-percent grade.

- Areas within the boundary of the Gardiner Water and Sewer District. (For areas outside of the district, densities would be limited to less than one home per acre due to the need for individual wells and septic systems. Construction in these areas would not be consistent with affordable housing.)
- The total acreage of lands meeting the criteria above equals roughly 25 acres. Assuming that homes (both single-family and multi-family) could be built on these 25 acres, and at an average of 10 homes per acre, 250 homes could be constructed.
- That is probably many more units than are needed to balance supply with demand at this time. It should be stressed, however, that it is not known whether any of these parcels would be available for sale to the private sector or non-profits for building homes. The purpose of this analysis is merely to quantify the amount of land that could potentially be available for home construction.

See Appendix B, Gardiner Area Housing Action Plan 2015, for a detailed housing action plan developed by the Greater Gardiner Community Council in partnership with Park County Extension and HRDC IX.