

Montana Smart Growth Coalition's
Smart Growth Endorsement Criteria for
Rural Development

(Adopted 5/27/08)

True smart growth can only take place in and around existing towns, but MSGC recognizes that rural development will take place so we have developed an endorsement criteria to define and support rural development that protects the things that define Montana – open lands, wildlife, and waters.

MSGC will not endorse rural developments with more than a total of 25 lots/units (i.e., in all phases of the development), any development above 25 lots/units will be judged as a new townsite using MSGC’s urban/suburban endorsement criteria as long as criteria 2, 3, 12, 16, and 17 below are also included in that review.

Please rate the development from zero to five. Give the development zero if it does not meet the criteria in any way and five (or more if higher points are noted in the body of the criteria) if it meets the criteria perfectly. Projects will not be rated for criteria that do not apply to the project because the project is too small - MSGC will make the determination of which criteria do not apply to the project. MSGC will not endorse a gated community.

	Criteria	Score
1	The project has or will place conservation easements on 95% of property being developed (20 points), 85% (15 points), 75% (10 points), no points for below 75% - or an equivalent amount of land has been protected through a transfer of development rights	
2	All structures are set back at least 500 feet from rivers and at least 150 feet from streams and lakes and maintain at least 100 foot vegetated buffers on the waterside (15 points)	
3	All critical and important wildlife habitat and travel corridors as identified by the County or the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks are protected in perpetuity and all structures are set back at least 300 feet from critical and important wildlife habitat and travel corridors (15 points)	
4	A) Development is clustered away from prime agricultural lands, stream and river sides, wetlands, and critical or important wildlife habitats. A single cluster of homes (10 points), two clusters of homes (5 points); or, B) Projects that are not clustered must have a density of less than 1 home per 640 acres (10 points) or 1 home per 160 acres (5 points) - no points will be given under this criteria for higher densities. Building envelopes for	

	each home site are required qualify for these points.	
5	Streets integrate safe and comfortable sidewalks and/or pathways throughout the developed areas of the property	
6	Open space abuts open space on neighboring properties (10 points)	
7	The development uses centralized sewer systems (10 points) or septic systems that keep all mixing zones on the property (5 points), no points if mixing zones cross property lines	
8	The development uses centralized water systems or has acquired adequate senior water rights to ensure that in stream flows will not be adversely impacted as the result of the development's surface or ground water developments or diversions (10 points). A development using 35-gallon-per-minute-exempt-wells will have 1 point subtracted per exempt well	
9	The buildings are designed and use sustainable, energy efficient materials, appliances, design, and/or orientation and lighting is dark skies compliant	
10	Street trees, sidewalks, front porches, and front doors dominate the streetscape, not garage doors and driveways	
11	Cul-de-sacs are avoided except where absolutely necessary due to natural conditions. Any cul-de-acs should be connected through with a ped/bike path "shortcut"	
12	For all structures located entirely or partially within an area designated as moderate, high, or high to severe on the fuel/fire hazard map, fuels have been mitigated prior to construction in accordance with a plan for fuel reduction, defensible space, and construction prepared in accordance with the standards found on line at www.firewise.org . Any development with buildings proposed in high, or high to severe fuel/fire hazard areas will have 5 points subtracted for each building	
13	Roadways are narrow (e.g., 29 feet from curb to curb for local residential streets)	
14	Developers have attempted to meet with neighborhood and have made a good faith effort to address the reasonable concerns of neighbors	
15	The development includes wildlife protection conditions or covenants that at a minimum include requiring wildlife friendly fencing and wildlife-proof garbage containers	
16	Continued traditional public access in order to reach public lands near site, if it has been allowed before.	
17	The development paves roads leading to the development and addresses and/or pays for any increase in on-site and off-site services and infrastructure needed to serve the development	
	TOTAL SCORE	

Additional points:

MSGC staff are responsible for deciding if additional points shall be awarded to projects and the number of points to be awarded. Additional points may be awarded for:

- 1-10 additional points may be awarded for unique or historic design of the development and its structure. In order to receive additional points for design, the design of the development shall enhance the community's character and may include traditional neighborhood design and/or innovative or historic features.

Total possible points – 130

Points needed to get an endorsement – 100

MSGC's Smart Growth Endorsement Process

Endorsement is a two-stage process involving a preliminary and a final endorsement. Developers who meet with MSGC staff earlier in the process are more likely to receive endorsement and by applying for endorsement the developer agrees to meet with MSGC staff to discuss the proposal at a time and location that is convenient for both parties.

Conditions of Preliminary Endorsement:

- Preliminary Endorsement may be made by MSGC staff before the development proposal is submitted for consideration to the governing body or its designated agent.
- MSGC will consult with its member groups in the locale where the development proposal is located regarding the proposal. MSGC may not endorse a project if any of those member groups are opposed to the project or to the endorsement.
- If a proposal receives enough points and meets the conditions spelled out in this endorsement process then the project may receive a preliminary endorsement. If a proposal receives a preliminary endorsement then MSGC will write a letter to the governing body or its designated agent stating MSGC's endorsement of the project and explaining the endorsement process.
- The developer must sign a contract as part of the preliminary endorsement process stating that he/she will not and may not use MSGC's preliminary endorsement as part of any marketing for the project.

Conditions of Final Endorsement:

- MSGC may make a final endorsement of the project after final approval of the project has been made by the governing body, after infrastructure has been built, and after at least 1/3 of the project has been built out.
- Final endorsement must be approved by MSGC's board.
- Upon receiving final endorsement of a project the developer may use MSGC's endorsement for marketing purposes.

- MSGC may award final endorsement for projects that had not previously received preliminary endorsement.

*MSGC reserves the right to withhold, withdraw, or deny an endorsement for any reason including but not limited to changes are made to the project during the public process that would have otherwise have resulted in the project not being endorsed in the first place.