Cascade County Growth Policy

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Cascade County Board of Commissioners

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Two years before Montana was granted statehood, T.E. Collins proposed the creation of Cascade County. Collins, a representative at the first legislative assembly held in Virginia City, proposed a bill to the Territorial Congress which would designate a new territorial county. The year was 1887 and Montana was still a territory that President Abraham Lincoln had approved of creating in 1864. Collins' bill proposed taking land from Lewis and Clark, Meagher, and Chouteau counties in order to create this new territorial county. The bill was approved, after many debates, and Cascade County was created. Two years later, in 1889, Montana was granted statehood.

Cascade County is located in north central Montana, east of the continental divide. The topography of the area varies from steep, mountainous terrain in the southern third of the County to rolling plains in the north. Elevations range from peaks over 8000 feet to river valleys near 2700 feet. The County is drained by four major watercourses: the Missouri, Smith and Sun Rivers and Belt Creek. The climate has many "Continental" characteristics with an important exception being the so-called "Chinooks," an occasional warm winter wind from the southwest. Rainfall generally occurs in the spring and summer months.

The first exploration by white men within the present boundaries of Cascade County was made by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in June 1805. The area was soon named for the many falls and cascades which characterize the area near Great Falls, the County Seat.

Organization of the County took place on September 19, 1887, when Cascade County was formed from portions of adjacent Choteau, Lewis and Clark, and Meagher Counties. The year 1887 also marked the first railroad services that connected the area to other parts of the nation. Spur lines were constructed to many mining areas making Great Falls the transportation hub for much of north-central Montana. Steamboats plied their trade from Great Falls to the upper end of the "Gates of the Mountains".

Cascade County is also the site of Montana's first hydroelectric plant. The Black Eagle Plant was built in 1890 in the canyon near Great Falls. Since then, a series of five hydroelectric dams have been constructed on the Falls of the Missouri River within the County.

Both mining and agriculture have played an important role in development of the area. Major mining operations took place in the southeastern part of the County in the Little Belt Mountains, but have since been discontinued. Smelting operations for copper and zinc have played an important part in the economic development of Great Falls. Great Falls is also a regional center for agricultural exchange and supply. Cattle and grain are the primary agricultural products and provide the economic base for the area. Coal mining in Sand Coulee, Stockett, Giffen, Belt and Armington was used for heating, powering trains and smelting.

An additional factor in the development of the area was the addition of Malmstrom Air Force Base and its numerous projects following WWII. Light diversified manufacturing has also been important to growth as well as increased services available to customers.

One could argue that the planning done by Collins and others, in order to create Cascade County, loosely created the first Cascade County Planning Department. Officially, Cascade County Commissioners created the Cascade County Planning Board on November 19, 1973. The first meeting of the Cascade County Planning Board was held on January 22, 1974. While this would seem to indicate that planning within Cascade County has only been around for 30 years, the first organized planning for Cascade County actually began in 1934 with the City of Great Falls Planning Commission. Later, in 1958, a joint City-County Planning Board was operating, but was disbanded due to a Montana State Supreme Court decision in the early 1960's. Under new legislation adopted in 1963 by the State Legislature, Cascade County Commissioners and Great Falls City Commissioners established the City-County Planning Department. This department operated within a jurisdictional area that included the city limits of Great Falls and an area which extended about 4.5 miles in all directions around the city limits at that time. Within 10 years of the establishment of the City-County Planning Department, the Cascade County Commissioners realized the need for planning throughout the rest of the county, and therefore created the Cascade County Planning Department in 1973. The Cascade County Commissioners dissolved the City-County Planning Department in April 2005.

Cascade County was not the first county to realize the need for planning. Other counties were developing planning departments throughout the state in order to guide development in order to solve conflicts that were occurring and prevent future conflicts with land users. In 1975, the newly created Cascade County Planning Department staff began work on the Cascade County Development Plan. The plan was intended to guide and establish land use policies. These policies included designating resource protection areas, preserving prime agricultural soil areas, prohibiting development in flood hazard areas, butte areas, and forest management areas. The plan also was intended to guide citizens on development for residential land uses, commercial land uses, and industrial land uses. The staff started the process in 1975 and through the use of community attitude surveys, citizen advisory committees, public hearings, and citizen comments; the Cascade County Development Plan was written and adopted in 1979. The County Commissioners dissolved the City-County Planning Board in April of 2005.

In 2003, the State of Montana Legislature amended the laws regarding development plans. Through the passing of senate bill 326, all governing bodies (Cascade County Commissioners) which have a current development plan, may be revised following the procedures in Chapter 1, Title 76, Part 6 of the Montana Code Annotated. This new "Growth Policy" must contain all of the required elements outlined in MCA 76-1-103 and be adopted by October 1, 2006. With this new legislation, the Board of County Commissioners requested that the Cascade County Planning Department update the current development plan.

The procedure followed in establishing land use policies and developing the development plan has been centered on a program involving extensive citizen participation. The plan is the product of a process started late in 2005 when the first of the community public hearings were held.

Public hearings were conducted in Monarch, Sun River, Centerville, Cascade, Belt and Great Falls, allowing for public input, ideas, suggestions, etc.

CHAPTER II

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Definitions

Goals and objectives are the principle elements in guiding the planning board. In this context, **a goal** is a broad, generalized expression of a commonly held community value regarding growth, development patterns and quality of life. Goals, as used in this policy, express the primary theme or general intent and direction of the policy. An **objective** is a more narrowly defined and concrete expression of community intent. A goal may contain one or more objectives with each objective responsive to a particular aspect of a broadly stated goal. For example, a goal might be "mitigate development's impact to wildlife and fisheries." A related objective could be "encourage subdivision designs that do not restrict wildlife movement."

A policy is a fairly precise statement of how county government will exercise its authority, responsibility and fiscal resources to achieve a specific goal. Policies are tangible and can be quantitatively measured. Examples of policies related to the goal of "mitigate development's impact to wildlife and fisheries" could include such statements such as "Subdivisions may be designed to mitigate impact on wildlife movement." in county subdivision regulations.

The following goals summarize the citizens' aspiration for their community and have guided the Cascade County Planning Board's development of this policy:

I. **Sustain and strengthen the economic well-being of Cascade County's citizens**
II. **Protect and maintain Cascade County's rural character and the community's historic relationship with natural resource development**
III. **Maintain the agricultural economy**
IV. **Retain the presence of the U.S. military in Cascade County**
V. **Preserve and enhance the rural, friendly and independent lifestyle currently enjoyed by Cascade County's citizens**

This growth policy is designed to help guide community decision-making in its effort to achieve these goals. Under each goal, the planning board has defined a number of objectives to guide the county in its efforts to reach these goals. These objectives are listed below:

I. Goal: Sustain and strengthen the economic well being of Cascade County's citizens.

Objectives:

These primary goals are the same goals listed in the 1982 Cascade County Comprehensive Plan, as well as new additional goals. The planning board believes that these goals continue to provide the best overall direction for county planning.

A. Stimulate the retention of existing businesses and aid in the development of new businesses and industries, especially agriculture, mining, timber harvest, manufacturing/processing, and wholesale and retail businesses.

B. Stabilize Cascade County's tax base by encouraging the sustainable use of its natural resources and by working toward greater economic diversity.

C. Promote the development of cultural resources and tourism to broaden Cascade County's economic base.

D. Support economic development activities throughout central Montana in recognition of Cascade County's interdependency with surrounding employment centers and the needs of citizens for goods, services and other urban amenities available in surrounding communities.

E. Promote the economic self-sufficiency of Cascade County's citizens by furthering the development of locally owned and operated business enterprises.

II. Goal: Protect and maintain Cascade County's rural character and the community's historic relationship with natural resource development.

Objectives:

A. Foster the continuance of agriculture and forestry in recognition of their economic contribution and the intrinsic natural beauty of grazing areas, farmlands and forests.

B. Preserve Cascade County's scenic beauty and conserve its forests, rangelands and streams, with their abundant wildlife and good fisheries.

C. Preserve Cascade County's open space setting by encouraging new development to locate near existing towns and rural settlements and by discouraging poorly designed, land subdivisions and commercial development.

D. Assure clean air, clean water, a healthful environment and good community appearance.

III. Goal: Maintain Agricultural Economy

Objectives:

A. Protect the most productive soil types

B. Continue to protect soils against erosion

C. Protect the floodplain from non-agricultural development

D. Encourage the development of value-added industry in Cascade County

IV. Goal: Retain the presence of the US Military in Cascade County

Objectives:

A. Utilize the federal congressional delegation to retain the current status at a minimum.

B. Encourage the location of additional military missions in Cascade County.

C. Encourage the reactivation of the runway at MAFB for fixed wing operations.

V. Goal: Preserve and enhance the rural, friendly and independent lifestyle currently enjoyed by Cascade County's citizens.

Objectives:

A. Maintain Cascade County's citizen's independent lifestyle and minimize governmental intervention to the extent possible, consistent with the requirements of a continually evolving economy and constantly changing population.

B. Preserve and promote Cascade County's rich cultural heritage, rooted in natural resource development and reflected in its numerous historic sites and archaeological areas.

C. Through the subdivision review process, continue efforts to promote fire prevention measures throughout the county, giving special emphasis to the extreme fire hazards present at the wild land/urban interface.

D. Encourage the continued development of educational programs and facilities, recreational opportunities and spaces and health services for all county residents.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In addition to the broad goals and objectives developed in Chapter Two of this policy, the Planning Board and County Commission have designed specific goals and objectives in the following areas to address current and projected change and growth in the county. The Planning Board and County Commission support growth and development in Cascade County. Such growth and development however, does bring new issues and concerns to long-time county residents as well as new visitors and homeowners. Many of the specific goals and objectives in this chapter deal specifically with the issues and concerns created by the new growth and development in Cascade County.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: Promote and maintain a transportation system that provides safety, efficiency, and is cost effective.

Objectives:

A. New additions to the transportation system should be compatible with the existing road system and coordinated with roads from other jurisdictions.

B. Transportation planning for new developments should support the Cascade County Growth Policy.

C. Review and update county road specifications.

D. Ensure that all new roads be built to county specifications.

E. Encourage provisions for multiple types of transportation (bike trails, etc).

F. Develop and implement road and bridge improvement standards and maintenance schedules. (MDT standards for bridges)

G. Develop a policy and implementation program in cooperation with developers and school districts to provide walks, bridges and pathways for children to improve safety and reduce transportation costs between residential neighborhoods, schools and stores.

H. Develop secondary means of access, where practical, to settlements and subdivisions in order to improve safety and overall traffic circulation.

I. Consider the use of grants, Road Improvement Districts, and Rural Maintenance Districts.

J. Coordinate transportation issues with wildfire and fire protection issues, policies and goals.

WILDFIRE AND FIRE PROTECTION

Goal: **Minimize risk of fire by management and planning, and to permit the effective and efficient suppression of fires in order to protect persons, property and forested areas**.

Objectives:

A. Encourage fire protection measures throughout the county, giving special emphasis to the extreme fire hazards at the wild land/urban interface.

B. Subdivisions should be planned, designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimize the risk of fire. Developers should submit a defensible space plan for each subdivision to the appropriate fire district for its review.

C. Encourage fire resistant construction and the use of sprinkler systems.

D. Promote cooperation with local fire districts and state and federal agencies to develop and provide a wildfire educational program.

E. Promote fire services for all subdivisions.

F. Promote adequate water supply systems.

G. Support adequate ingresses and egresses in all subdivision planning.

H. Promote vegetation policies that reduce fire hazards.

WATER QUALITY

Goal: Protect surface and groundwater quality from pollution.

Objectives

A. Discourage development with on-site wastewater treatment systems in areas having inappropriate soils or high groundwater, as indicated on the revised Cascade County soil maps, to help prevent the contamination of groundwater supplies.

B. Promote education efforts designed to further awareness of waste water system functioning.

C. Require local review of subdivisions to meet Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) regulations.

D. Encourage the formation of rural water districts in developing areas through the following incentives:

> **1.** Help developers secure grants to pay for preliminary engineering work for a community water system;
>
> **2.** Help developers secure funding from the state's Treasure State Endowment Fund Program and/or federal Community Development Block Grants for community water systems;

E. Promote investigation on stream setbacks and ensure that this issue be rewritten with reference to floodplain and subdivision regulations. Recommend floodplain regulations be amended to coincide with state floodplain regulations.

F. Promote grants available to local organizations under section 319 of the Clean Water Act for the reduction of non-point source water pollution.

G. Educate land users on the necessity of obtaining appropriate permits before doing any work to alter streams.

H. Require all construction to be setback from streams, in order to prevent water quality degradation and stream bank erosion.

I. Promote policies that ensure greater setbacks be required for commercial, industrial, and multi-family development because of greater potential for negative impacts.

J. Recommend wetland protection standards be included in subdivision regulations for preserving waterfowl and other wildlife habitat.

WORKING LANDSCAPES

Goal: Foster the continuance of agriculture and forestry in recognition of their economic contribution and the intrinsic natural beauty of grazing areas, farmlands, and forests.

Objectives:

A. Encourage cooperation between new development and agricultural/forestry operations.

B. Educate prospective rural residents of potential conflicts with neighboring farm, ranch, and forestry operations before they build.

C. Require that rural residential developments be properly fenced to keep livestock out and allow free movement along traditional stock driveways.

D. Protect irrigation systems from the adverse impacts of rural residential development.

E. Using the subdivision review process, require rural residential development to comply with the weed district's weed management plans.

F. Encourage open buffers between rural residences and adjoining agricultural lands.

G. Encourage agricultural landowners considering land subdivision to develop the least agriculturally viable portion of their properties.

H. Encourage in-fill development of urban and transitional areas already committed to development where community facilities and services can be provided cost-effectively in order to reduce development pressure on agricultural lands.

I. Promote the adoption and amendment of these objectives into Cascade County Subdivision and Zoning Regulations.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Goal: Mitigate development's impact to wildlife and fisheries.

Objectives:

A. Encourage developers to work with members of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks in the pre-application phase to protect wildlife from negative impacts caused by development.

B. Encourage development to allow wildlife to continue to move through the existing corridors.

C. Support subdivision designs that do not restrict wildlife movement.

D. Seek to educate homeowners by providing educational materials on living with wildlife.

E. Discourage non-agricultural uses in floodplains

F. Protect riverine habitat through regulation

LAND USE

Goal: Protect and maintain Cascade County's rural character, encourage efficient use of land.

Objectives:

A. Preserve the county's open space setting by encouraging cluster development.

B. Revise the county's subdivision regulations by adopting incentives and regulations to promote cluster development, where appropriate and preserve open spaces as provided by 76-3-509, MCA.

C. Encourage cluster development to locate near existing towns and rural, more densely populated settlements and discourage poorly designed, unsafe land subdivisions and unsafe commercial development.

> **1.** Encourage the creation of neighborhood plans in developing areas of the county, which have previously had an environmental assessment completed upon the area, and to provide incentives such as density bonuses.
>
> **2.** Work with landowners within the rural areas to develop neighborhood plans consistent with this Growth Policy.
>
> **3.** Revise the county's subdivision regulations to be consistent with this growth policy.
>
> **4.** Develop a capital improvement plan for roads, sheriff's department, weeds, facilities and other departments. Implement such plan within five years.
> **5.** Coordinate planning and service provision efforts with incorporated cities within the county and with neighboring counties to direct development to existing developing areas.

D. Encourage new development to meet the recreational needs of its residents.

> **1.** Using the subdivision review process, encourage new development to retain access to public lands for the general public use.
>
> **2.** Require new subdivisions to dedicate land or provide a cash donation in lieu of dedication for parks as provided by 76-3-606, MCA.
>
> **3.** Revise the county's subdivision regulations to require that the dedicated parkland be deeded by the developer to a homeowner's association.

4. Revise the county's subdivision regulations by adopting standards for the type and location of dedicated parkland. The following guidelines should be used in developing these standards:

a. Discourage acceptance of slopes, wetlands, and other areas that cannot be developed for active recreation;

b. The proposed park space should be within one-half mile of the majority of the lots to be served;

c. The proposed park space shall be safely accessible by pedestrians coming from lots to be served, but have direct access to a collector street, or otherwise be located where it will not channel traffic into local residential streets; and

d. Where possible, the proposed park should be connected to existing or proposed pedestrian/bicycle trails.

E. Complete an inventory of all subdivision lands accepted as parklands in the county.

F. Encourage use of completed inventory when staff makes recommendations to developers as to whether more parklands are needed in developed areas or whether cash should be accepted in lieu of land.

G. Encourage homeowners' associations to be responsible for improvements and maintenance of dedicated parkland within its subdivision.

H. Encourage homeowners' associations to keep parks and existing equipment well maintained.

I. Using the subdivision review process, develop setbacks from perennial streams and other bodies of water which may be desirable to protect the natural environment and to retain the aesthetics of such natural land and water forms. Such setbacks may be provided for in Subdivision, Floodplain and Zoning Regulations.

J. Using the subdivision review process, coordinate with the Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Cascade county Conservation District to preserve stream banks, prevent erosion and enforce Montana's 310 permit process.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Sustain and strengthen the economic well-being of Cascade County's citizens.

Objectives:

A. Stimulate the retention and expansion of existing businesses, new businesses, value-added businesses, wholesale and retail businesses, and industries including agriculture, mining, manufacturing/processing and forest products.

B. Stabilize and diversify the county's tax base by encouraging the sustainable use of its natural resources.

C. Identify and pursue primary business development that complements existing business, which is compatible with communities, and utilizes available assets. Identify and pursue targeted business development opportunities to include, but not limited to, manufacturing/heavy industry, telecommunications, and youth/social services.
D. Foster and stimulate well-planned entrepreneurship among the county's citizenry.

E. Promote a strong local business environment. Support and strengthen business support mechanisms such as chambers of commerce, development organizations and business roundtable organizations.

F. Improve local trade capture for Cascade County businesses. Promote local shopping as well as well-planned businesses and new businesses.

G. Network with and support other economic development efforts in the region and statewide, in recognition of Cascade County's interdependence with other communities and to leverage available local resources.

H. Encourage the growth of the agricultural economy.

I. Stimulate the growth of the economy by encouraging the use of alternate methods of energy production.

HOUSING ISSUES

Across Montana, a major concern for many residents is the lack of affordable housing. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the average citizen to purchase a new home. Housing is typically deemed affordable if either the monthly rent or mortgage, principle and interest, is no more than 30 percent of a household's monthly income.

The private housing market in portions of Cascade County does not provide adequate affordable housing for low to moderate income. Housing costs have risen faster than incomes during the last decade, contributing to the on-going challenge of securing adequate housing for low to moderate income groups.

The senior citizen population is significant and growing in Cascade County, resulting in an important housing issue. This group has needs that are different from the rest of the population. Resources to meet the housing needs are limited in Cascade County and are a reflection of national trends, as federal funding for housing was substantially reduced during the 1980s.

Goal: Work towards ensuring all residents of Cascade County have an opportunity to obtain safe, sanitary, and affordable housing.

Objectives:

A. Work to maintain an adequate land supply for diversity of all housing opportunities.

B. Consider the locational needs of various types of housing with regard to proximity of employment, and access to transportation and services.

C. Promote dispersal of affordable housing throughout the county.

D. Participate in periodic analyses to determine immediate and long range affordable housing needs.

E. Study and consider innovative housing programs to reduce dependency on subsidized housing.

F. Group homes, foster care facilities, and facilities for other special populations should be equitably distributed throughout the county, yet near daily services.

G. Encourage preservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of existing housing, with special attention to historic structures and historic areas.

H. Encourage compatible mixed-use development.

I. Encourage preservation, rehabilitation, and development of existing housing, with special attention to historic structures and historic houses.

J. Coordinate with Neighborhood Housing Services to develop programs.

CHAPTER III

POPULATION

Data analysis and projections form the basis for almost all major planning decisions as a measure of the size and density of various groups for future facilities and services. Thus, when developing future policies, urban or rural, an understanding of population dynamics is of major importance. Cascade County population data are supplied by the Bureau of Census, Montana Employment Service, Montana Department of Commerce, and supplemented by various additional sources including the Sonoran Institute.

Following the lead of Great Falls, Cascade County has experienced a moderate growth rate in recent years.

Closer analysis of the information indicates that not only is the percentage of the population classified as "rural" decreasing, but more importantly, the actual number of residents is also decreasing. This phenomenon is not surprising, however, following typical past trends towards increasing urbanization, characteristic of most other rural portions of the country. Conversely, some areas of the County, specifically the area south of the City of Great Falls, south of the Town of Cascade and U.S. 89 from Manchester to Simms, are now feeling development pressures, as people are moving out of Great Falls. Many of these residents continue to work and shop in the Great Falls urban area and for census purposes are classified as "rural non-farm". Even though this item shows a decline in the past, current trends indicate that this sector will show an increase in the 2000 census. The major factor in reversing this trend may be due to the increasing subdivision of land and out-migration from the City of Great Falls.

Findings

A) Based on past trends and current factors, rural farm populations will continue to decrease. This will be due mostly to a continuing consolidation of farms.

B) Rural non-farm population will increase due partially to the availability of rural residential lots. The population and influence of the City of Great Falls will result in even greater development pressures on the rural portions of the County.

C) The Montana State Department of Commerce estimates Cascade County's population to increase from 80,357 in the year 2000 to 82,239 in 2025.

D) The population has gotten older since 1990. The median age in 2000 is 36.7 years, up from 32.7 years in 1990.

E) The largest age category is 40 to 44 years old (6,450 people or 8.0% of the total).

F) Total Population in 2000 was 80,357 people, up 3% from 77,691 in 1990.

G) The age group that has grown the fastest, as a share of total, is 45 to 49 years, up 1,468 people. Their share of the total rose by 1.6%.

CASCADE COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS

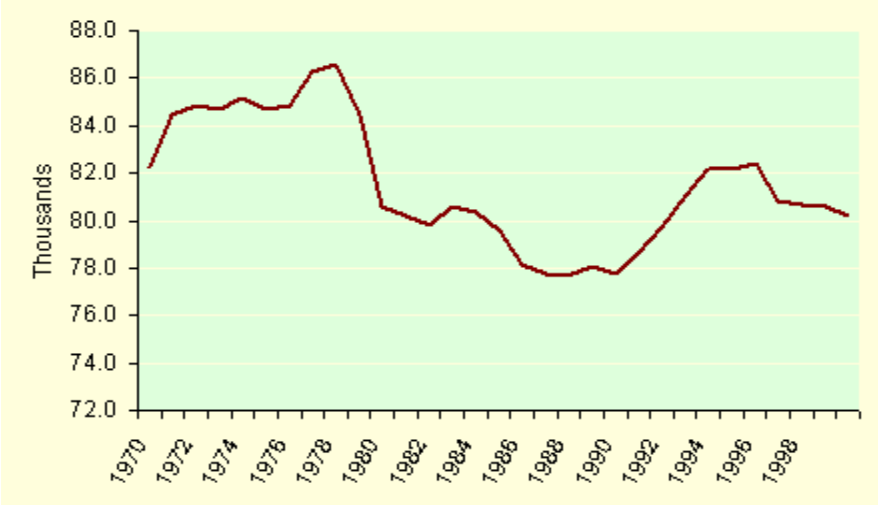
Table 1

YEAR	POPULATION
1990	77,691
2000	80,357
2004	79,849
2005	80,038
2010	79,954
2015	80,313
2020	81,037
2025	82,239

COMPARATIVE POPULATION TRENDS

Table 2

From 1970 to 2000, Cascade County MT declined by 2,062 people, a 3% decline in population.

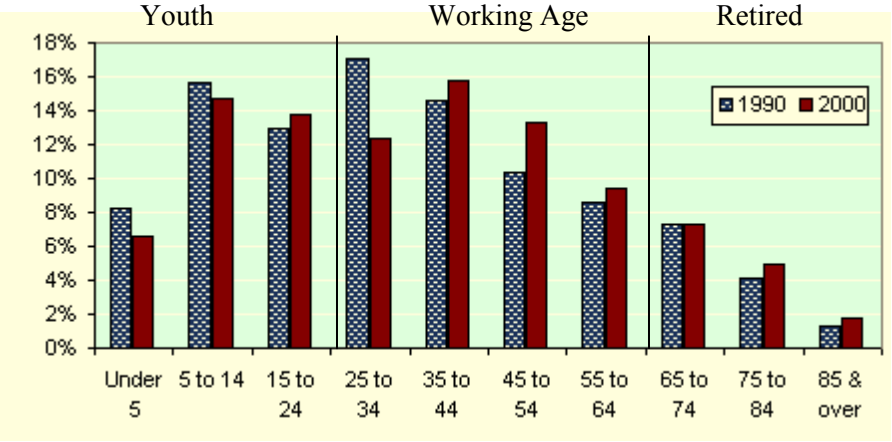


POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS 1970 - 2000

Table 3

City	1970	1980	1990	2000
BELT	656	825	571	633
BLACK EAGLE				914
CASCADE	714	773	729	819
CASCADE COUNTY		80696	77691	80357
FORT SHAW				274
GREAT FALLS	60,091	56,884	55,125	56690
MALMSTROM				4544
NEIHART	109	91	53	91
SUN PRAIRIE				1772
SUN RIVER				131
ULM				764
VAUGHN				701

Table 4
Age Breakout in 2000



- The median age in Cascade County MT is 36.7 years old, compared to 37.5 in the state and 35.3 in the nation.
- In 2000, the baby boom was aged 40-55.

Table 5
Trends

Population by Category in 1990 & 2000

	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	% Chg 1990 - 2000	% Chg per Year 1990 - 2000
Population	77,691		80,357		3%	0.3%
Male	38,295	49%	39,756	49%	4%	0.4%
Female	39,396	51%	40,601	51%	3%	0.3%
Under 20 years	23,529	30%	23,164	29%	-2%	-0.2%
65 years and over	9,838	13%	11,248	14%	14%	1.4%
Median Age			36.7			

- Retirement age category has been stable.

Table 6
Population By Household Type

Population by Household Type in 2000

	County	% of Total	State	% of Total
Total Housing Units	35,225		412,633	
Occupied Housing Units	2,547	92.4%	358,667	86.9%
Vacant Housing Units	2,678	7.6%	53,966	13.1%
For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	443	1.3%	24,213	5.9%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate (%)	1.7%		2.2%	
Rental Vacancy Rate (%)	6.6%		7.6%	
Housing Tenure	**County**	**% of Occ.**	**State**	**% of Occ.**
Occupied Housing Units	32,547		358,667	
Owner-occupied Housing Units	21,134	64.9%	247,723	69.1%
Renter-occupied Housing Units	11,413	35.1%	110,944	30.9%
Avg Household Size - Owner Occupied	2.5		2.6	
Avg Household Size – Renter Occupied	2.2		2.2	

CHAPTER IV

HOUSING

To determine housing trends for Cascade County, information is obtained from the U.S. Census of Housing. In comparing the number of units there were 33,063 ; in 1990, and 35,225 in 2000. About 75 percent of the housing units or 25,250 were located in Great Falls, leaving 9,975 housing units for the balance of Cascade County. The following table outlines to location of Cascade County's housing units.

Table 1 Housing Units Cascade County 2000

City	2000 (Total)	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	For Rent	For Sale Only
BELT	295	193	80	22	1	4
BLACK EAGLE	458	262	156	40	12	5
CASCADE	349	214	109	26	3	4
CASCADE COUNTY	35225	21134	11413	2678	810	355
FORT SHAW	115	81	20	14	2	2
GREAT FALLS	25250	15019	8815	1416	659	208
MALMSTROM	1405	23	1287	95	71	0
NEIHART	164	39	5	120	0	26
SUN PRAIRIE	656	573	53	30	1	14
SUN RIVER	65	40	18	7	0	1
ULM	267	208	46	13	3	4
VAUGHN	287	213	51	23	7	8

Affordability and attainability continue to be a concern for many households in Montana, not just low income families. Attainability considers whether a household is willing to pay up to 30% or more of its income for housing, and whether a household is able to obtain a 10% down payment or a rental deposit.

Clearly, the median home price, and to a lesser degree, fair market rent, have increased much more than median household income, bringing attainability into question. The median home price has increased 43% from 1998 to 2003; the fair market rent has increased 11%, and median household income has increased 5%. The income required to purchase a home has been calculated using the existing median home price, the average interest rate (6.40%), closing costs (3.08% of purchase price), property taxes (.0121 per $1 of value), insurance costs (.0067 per $1 of value for homeowners insurance and .0065 per $1 of value for PMI)10. Utility costs are not included for this analysis. The income required assumes a 10% down payment and 30% ratio of income to principal, interest, insurance and taxes. The down payment percentage and interest rate can change this calculation significantly. While interest rates have been historically low in the recent past, this has not always been the case. The lower interest rates have made homes more attainable for Montanans. Many loans allow a borrower to put down significantly less than 10%; however 10% is used for this calculation.

Table 2 AVERAGE PRICE OF HOUSING IN MONTANA
(MONTANA BOARD OF HOUSING)

County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1998-2003 Change	2002-2003 Change
Beaverhead	97,924	86,129	85,019	96,001	95,174	$112,136	14.5%	17.8%
Big Horn	61,193	93,707	79,920	82,537	112,069	$61,828	1.0%	-44.8%
Blaine	53,800	47,333	65,857	61,258	93,386	$69,263	28.7%	-25.8%
Broadwater	118,025	111,247	103,782	110,882	92,755	$131,978	11.8%	42.3%
Carbon	128,058	110,825	130,108	125,276	128,990	$150,496	17.5%	16.7%
Carter				44,000				
Cascade	104,753	99,526	117,287	120,088	102,278	$125,952	20.2%	23.1%
Chouteau	73,333	91,000	90,083	76,634	65,906	$60,503	-17.5%	-8.2%
Custer	58,238	67,744	63,811	73,118	71,075	$72,181	23.9%	1.6%
Daniels		45,000	108,000	30,000	62,935			-100.0%
Dawson	66,217	59,333	68,809	59,176	59,709	$71,983	8.7%	20.6%
Deer Lodge	72,948	77,983	59,839	63,890	75,053	$61,358	-15.9%	-18.2%
Fallon	58,436	65,900	52,879	59,250	67,923	$42,167	-27.8%	-37.9%
Fergus	70,741	96,205	82,828	78,377	84,335	$97,329	37.6%	15.4%
Flathead	131,493	125,665	179,741	173,653	181,103	$221,856	68.7%	22.5%
Gallatin	145,446	171,597	182,524	163,427	159,833	$202,668	39.3%	26.8%
Garfield		73,000	39,000	80,000		$29,000		
Glacier	75,477	71,876	73,000	76,462	66,229	$107,780	42.8%	62.7%
Golden Valley	57,450	142,900	99,167	27,600	89,717	$74,333	29.4%	-17.1%
Granite	95,758	63,107	64,467	105,643	71,925	$121,500	26.9%	68.9%
Hill	80,786	89,877	91,388	75,094	82,858	$76,889	-4.8%	-7.2%
Jefferson	144,153	144,108	146,345	164,324	146,057	$157,969	9.6%	8.2%
Judith Basin		70,000	31,750	78,833	82,674	$51,000		-38.3%
Lake	117,768	156,097	190,254	161,647	178,631	$217,318	84.5%	21.7%
Lewis & Clark	120,151	168,945	121,619	126,214	130,192	$135,771	13.0%	4.3%
Liberty	86,667	95,000	61,000	48,333	55,614	$49,183	-43.3%	-11.6%
Lincoln	90,351	88,438	88,860	122,811	154,002	$160,648	77.8%	4.3%
Madison	143,030	136,012	88,686	130,098	129,102	$176,951	23.7%	37.1%
McCone		53,500	44,900		51,436	$69,000		34.1%
Meagher		104,833	178,000	100,833	73,630	$69,646		-5.4%
Mineral	90,684	113,729	84,739	91,438	87,344	$114,686	26.5%	31.3%
Missoula	126,952	148,709	147,524	161,498	160,936	$207,276	63.3%	28.8%
Musselshell	51,304	93,198	94,725	111,900	85,537	$94,008	83.2%	9.9%
Park	100,783	115,956	116,818	111,194	127,979	$153,709	52.5%	20.1%
Phillips		66,269	62,300	59,000	68,569	$54,000		-21.2%
Pondera	83,654	70,238	73,400	73,613	74,970	$77,638	-7.2%	3.6%
Powder River				38,250	59,627	$55,000		-7.8%
Powell	73,300	57,028	83,472	90,260	101,430	$95,692	30.5%	-5.7%
Prairie		59,333	32,500		149,517	$63,250		-57.7%
Ravalli	139,600	145,695	139,625	161,335	148,389	$176,193	26.2%	18.7%
Richland	59,167	61,982	70,695	64,754	59,759	$69,748	17.9%	16.7%
Roosevelt	59,717	46,528	71,958	63,129	86,000	$50,833	-14.9%	-40.9%
Rosebud	59,189	58,917	64,041	61,372	68,947	$82,127	38.8%	19.1%
Sanders	99,987	98,018	133,482	118,068	140,260	$142,760	42.8%	1.8%
Sheridan	62,562	127,000		60,000			-100.0%	
Silverbow	77,521	81,114	80,909	77,078	79,130	$100,333	29.4%	26.8%
Stillwater	95,770	114,165	147,994	135,100	123,029	$152,339	59.1%	23.8%
Sweet Grass	96,589	119,569	124,976	140,074	160,939	$110,000	13.9%	-31.7%
Teton	86,587	96,887	79,770	91,611	83,283	$85,262	-1.5%	2.4%
Toole	61,352	66,288	67,070	73,895	61,836	$78,633	28.2%	27.2%
Treasure						$59,000		
Valley	68,938	66,238	62,850	71,489	71,388	$83,406	21.0%	16.8%
Wheatland	48,912	57,500	51,853	69,667	65,812	$125,633	156.9%	90.9%
Wibaux	26,000	55,000		58,000			-100.0%	
Yellowstone	110,498	125,043	125,733	121,067	133,520	$144,806	31.0%	8.5%
MONTANA	109,495	122,914	131,407	140,596	139,439	166,253	51.8%	19.2%
SAMPLE SIZE	5,066	6,533	5,661	8,419	10,656	10,600	109.2%	-0.5%

Table 3 Housing Units by Structure Size 2000

1 Unit Detached	21,850
1 Unit Attached	1,553
2 Units	1,488
3-4 Units	1,872
5-9 Units	1,396
10-19 Units	1,348
20 -49 Units	1,233
50+ Units	894
Mobile Home	3,521
Boat, RV, Van etc	70
Total (including Great Falls)	**35,225**

The U. S. Census Bureau estimates that Cascade County's housing has increased by 0.7 percent through 2003.

Census 2000	35,225
7/1/2000	35,241
7/1/2001	35,310
7/1/2002	35,415
7/1/2003	35,469

Cascade County's housing stock includes some of the oldest homes in the state. The following chart shows that Cascade County has the largest number of houses constructed before 1939.

Table 4 YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT FOR MONTANA 2000 CENSUS

COUNTY	Total Housing Units	1939 or Earlier	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1994	1995-1998	1999 to March 2000
Beaverhead	4,571	903	367	478	558	967	618	198	422	60
Big Horn	4,655	632	361	505	612	1,271	846	157	197	74
Blaine	2,947	699	227	307	293	724	447	94	127	29
Broadwater	2,002	443	95	124	103	509	268	184	148	128
Carbon	5,494	1,711	385	380	412	968	610	293	499	236
Carter	811	238	81	97	78	164	83	33	28	9
Cascade	35,225	6,591	3,072	6,208	6,443	6,600	2,897	1,152	1,653	609
Chouteau	2,776	963	244	388	265	388	240	75	199	14
Custer	5,360	1,604	525	631	536	1,299	399	156	164	46
Daniels	1,154	426	138	193	99	168	75	28	25	2
Dawson	4,168	1,024	353	857	491	898	467	48	22	8
Deer Lodge	4,958	1,860	608	964	458	588	156	111	158	55
Fallon	1,410	302	131	224	186	283	166	47	54	17
Fergus	5,558	1,906	471	785	520	891	453	196	290	46
Flathead	34,773	3,658	2,009	2,885	3,273	7,644	5,934	3,653	4,441	1,276
Gallatin	29,489	3,592	1,159	1,810	2,423	6,505	4,511	3,246	4,522	1,721
Garfield	961	276	59	77	126	184	141	29	54	15
Glacier	5,243	528	491	692	620	1,354	802	393	297	66
Golden Valley	450	181	41	28	52	67	36	13	17	15
Granite	2,074	495	146	239	212	408	246	144	141	43
Hill	7,453	1,359	776	1,432	681	1,835	920	182	208	60
Jefferson	4,199	616	191	208	283	1,231	613	455	477	125
Judith Basin	1,325	460	108	119	123	224	154	73	51	13
Lake	13,605	1,671	688	891	1,642	3,156	2,408	1,408	1,315	426
Lewis & Clark	25,672	4,578	1,175	2,290	2,703	6,451	3,699	1,748	2,413	615
Liberty	1,070	260	100	176	95	229	116	30	60	4
Lincoln	9,319	897	588	945	1,347	2,000	1,525	869	825	323
McCone	1,087	252	113	261	152	171	89	11	30	8
Madison	4,671	923	192	298	325	916	672	558	606	181
Meagher	1,363	393	146	189	142	209	144	58	64	18
Mineral	1,961	202	93	261	220	493	263	164	188	77
Missoula	41,319	5,122	2,377	4,321	5,311	10,038	4,897	3,710	4,283	1,260
Musselshell	2,317	708	219	153	180	486	274	102	152	43
Park	8,247	2,279	595	674	660	1,454	949	603	767	266
Petroleum	292	83	45	19	22	36	33	20	29	5
Philips	2,502	716	160	264	227	628	340	59	100	8
Ponderosa	2,834	623	340	570	316	477	269	110	98	31
Powder River	1,007	170	107	112	116	243	137	57	50	15
Powell	2,930	886	286	357	246	520	302	126	178	29
Prairie	718	325	82	82	52	99	36	15	12	15
Ravalli	15,946	1,910	645	994	1,007	3,806	2,519	2,090	2,249	726
Richland	4,557	962	387	618	526	1,039	658	153	108	106
Roosevelt	4,044	723	379	572	463	824	678	191	151	63
Rosebud	3,912	539	221	212	327	1,262	937	220	154	40
Sanders	5,271	736	356	561	558	1,189	822	401	491	157
Sheridan	2,167	674	211	332	233	367	259	22	49	20
Silverbow	16,176	6,556	1,504	2,094	1,373	2,384	907	452	780	126
Stillwater	3,947	729	349	371	326	723	567	270	463	149
Sweet Grass	1,860	578	95	162	190	327	172	110	152	74
Teton	2,910	787	476	349	256	442	244	145	151	60
Toole	2,300	522	316	455	269	356	217	78	68	19
Treasure	422	143	57	33	34	66	60	5	17	7
Valley	4,847	984	330	1,391	1,033	560	380	52	75	42
Wheatland	1,154	460	120	174	83	159	100	13	35	10
Wibaux	587	208	54	75	47	84	70	13	23	13
Yellowstone	54,563	5,219	4,037	8,943	6,423	13,376	8,495	2,927	3,801	1,342
Montana	412,633	72,285	28,881	48,830	45,751	89,740	54,320	27,750	34,131	10,945

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC CONDITION

Economic studies have two purposes. The first is to provide information about the local economy that will assist in arriving at a series of policies and goals, which form a basis for making decisions. The second is technical in that it provides a quantitative estimate (or estimates) of future employment. This section will attempt to present a systematic investigation and interpretation of inventory and analysis of past and present economic conditions of Cascade County and the Triangle Area, thus establishing a basis for policies and goals. To establish this base, extensive use will be made of data supplied by the State's Department of Commerce

The information contained in this section should be helpful in providing an understanding of the forces involved in the local economy. Overall, it provides a quantitative picture of employment and population dynamics.

The past and future population of an area is closely linked to its economic growth – Cascade County is no exception. It follows, then, that it is very important that people and governmental decision makers know what to expect in terms of economic conditions (specifically employment) and numbers of people in order to plan rationally for the future of an area. Traditionally, all major decisions have been based on projected employment and population, which in turn provide the local government with the necessary tools to make sound decisions regarding land use, transportation and public facilities and services. Energy, or the shortage and cost of energy will play an important role in the future of both Great Falls and Cascade County. This vicinity is fortunate in the fact that there is virtually unlimited supply of electricity, both produced locally and imported through the electrical network. Cascade County is not as fortunate in the area of transportation, in that the area is off the major transportation routes and is a great distance from major marketing centers,

The economy of Great Falls and thus Cascade County is tied closely to two primary economic sectors: military spending and agricultural production. By their very nature, these two sectors produce a kind of "up and down" economy. The local economy relies heavily on agricultural production and serves a large agricultural trade area for retailing and wholesaling, as well as providing trade, health, and financial services. The other facet, military spending, has fluctuated widely in recent years and continues to do so, most recently with the modernization of the missile site facilities by Boeing Inc.

A. AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

The importance of agriculture to the economy of Great Falls cannot be over emphasized. This impact is not limited to only Cascade County's agricultural industry, but also to the contributions of the remaining counties comprising the "Golden Triangle"; namely Chouteau, Teton, Hill, Liberty, Toole, Glacier, Blaine and Pondera. Both grain and livestock production and related industries and services provide significant sources of employment in all of these counties.

FINDINGS

1. **Grain Production** - Grain crops produced in Cascade County include corn, wheat, oats, and barley. The short growing season of 130 days (average), low temperatures and dry atmosphere make wheat and barley the most favorable cash crops. Oats and corn are produced mainly for on the farm consumption with the surplus marketed locally. The most productive grain growing acreage has been cultivated for many years using alternative fallowing and cropping techniques. In recent years, the prevailing trends have been (1) toward larger farm units with fewer employees and more machinery and (2) placing land in the Conservation Reserve Program. In addition, less crop rotation is being employed. The average size of the farm unit in the Triangle Area grew from 1,842 acres in 1967, to 1,985 acres in 1972. Table 5 shows the change in farm size and the number of farms in the Triangle Area in 1997 and 2002, the most recent statistics available.

2. **Livestock Production** - When discussing employment in the livestock industry in Cascade County and the Triangle Area, it is possible to ignore all livestock products except cattle, since the raising of sheep, swine, and poultry products is overshadowed by the production of beef. In the western portion of the Great Falls trade area, there are extensive cattle operations. Cattle production has generally been decreasing with outputs fluctuating along with beef and grain prices. There is ample capacity in the area for increased production in range cattle and feedlot operations. At the present time there are no major meat packing plants in the Great Falls area. Future operation patterns for the beef industry will continue to be dependent on beef and grain price fluctuations. Moderate decreases in agricultural employment and in population in the Golden Triangle agricultural area are anticipated. The conversion of agricultural land to other uses will probably cause a decline in agricultural employment at a slightly faster rate in Cascade County than in surrounding areas.

3. Farm size will show a moderate increase with the number of farms decreasing, also at a moderate rate.

4. Because the prevailing trend has been toward larger farm units with fewer employees and more machinery, on-the-farm employment in the agricultural sector will decrease slightly. However, in the event of increased production, those businesses providing goods and services to the farm operator might show a corresponding increase in employment.

Table 6

FARM SIZE – NUMBER OF FARMS

County	1997		2002	
	Number of Farms	Average Farm Size	Number of Farms	Average Farm Size
Blaine	598	3721	588	3846
Cascade	1050	1400	1037	1339
Chouteau	819	2744	787	2924
Glacier	493	3293	472	3486
Hill	791	2152	836	2164
Liberty	303	3078	297	3048
Pondera	536	1703	525	1731
Teton	625	1808	700	1758
Toole	424	2590	405	2686
Average Farm Size		2388		2558

B. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

Government employment includes those persons directly employed by city, county, state or federal government agencies. Malmstrom Air Force Base and School District #1, two of the largest employers in Cascade County, both fall in this category.

FINDINGS

1. Malmstrom Air Force Base - It is estimated that Malmstrom Air Force Base provided 52 percent of the governmental jobs in Cascade County in 2005 by employing 3699 military personnel and 2014 civilians, including contractors. In 1972 there were 6,090 military personnel and 1,068 civilians employed.

   The current ICBM system located within the Malmstrom missile field is expected to remain an important function in the nation's defense; however, predicting future levels of military expenditures and employment is nearly impossible. Current Plans call for a force reduction of 50 missiles within the US strategic forces in the coming months. At this point in time, no decision has been made as to which of the three remaining missile bases will lose one of its squadrons.

   The loss of both civilian and military jobs at Malmstrom since 1972 is the result of the loss of all fixed wing flying missions from the base. The BRAC process in 1996 closed the runway and it remains closed today. Recently completed engineering studies confirm the runway's condition as very good and it could be reopened should a flying mission be found for Malmstrom. The runway at MAFB is one of the community's largest untapped resources.

2. Non-Military Government Employment - Government employment in Cascade County has been relatively stable over the past several years. School District #1 in 2005 is the largest employer, employing about 1,655 persons.

3. The majority of government employment primarily benefits the City of Great Falls.

   a. Fluctuation in military strength and spending will have direct effect on the County Planning Board's jurisdictional area.

   b. Indirect effects may be in the form of development pressures due to shortage and high cost of housing in and around the Great Falls metropolitan area.

C. UTILITIES – COMMUNICATION – TRANSPORTATION

There is little indication that any major changes in employment will take place either in communications or energy related utilities. Great Falls hosts regional offices of Northwestern Energy Company employing a substantial number of people. Employment growth in these two areas is expected to be less than proportional increases in population, due to increased utilization of present facilities and automation. There are also no anticipated major changes in employment by Energy West or any other employers in this sector.

D. TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYMENT

There have been significant decreases in employment in the transportation sector, specifically in the area of mergers and bankruptcies in the airline industry and rail transportation caused by the merger of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe railways. Since this merger, Great Falls is no longer on the main line for rail traffic to either the South or Midwest and West Coast. This has resulted in the closure of two wholesaling firms. Reasons cited were increased shipping time and thus the necessity of maintaining much larger inventories. At this time, further decreases in railroad employment are not anticipated. Increased employment, on a small scale, may be possible.

FINDINGS

1. Both trucking freight and airfreight have shown some increases in employment. Airfreight employment has increased in excess of 25%. Increased wholesale business, agribusiness and Canadian markets have benefited truckers. These two sectors show a fairly stable growth rate and moderate increases can be expected.

2. There is no apparent reason to expect any significant changes in these sectors.

3. Present employment is stable and should increase slightly in the future.

E. CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT

Of all the employment sectors, construction employment has traditionally been the most radically fluctuating variable in the local economy. The prime reason contributing to these fluctuations has been the area of military spending. 2006 may be classified as an "up" period for construction employment on all three strong points-military, homebuilding and road construction area activities.

FINDINGS

1. Home building and housing starts have increased significantly. This is in response partially to the slight housing shortage in Great Falls and the surrounding metropolitan area, with expansion occurring mostly in a southwesterly direction. Remodeling of a large number of older homes in Great Falls has also been noted.

2. Highway construction employment is also up at this time, as the re-construction on Interstate 15 in and around Great Falls. It is not known at this time how long the project will take or how many people will be employed.

F. MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT

FINDINGS

1. Agricultural Products
    a. Cascade County has two large flour milling operations, a malting barley plant, a pasta producing plant and a feed producing operation that collectively employ about 300 persons. This sector represents a fairly stable economic base and, while dependent somewhat on agricultural prices, should provide about the same employment through 2020. Numerous other agricultural projects, such as dairy products, are also produced in Cascade County. These products are primarily marketed and consumed locally. Employment levels will depend upon future population growth.

G. WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE EMPLOYMENT

With the exception of grocers, most Great Falls retailers serve a large agricultural trade area. General merchandise stores, automotive and related businesses and apparel stores and specialty shops serve significant portions of Fergus, Judith Basin, and Meagher Counties as well as Alberta and to a lesser extent, Saskatchewan, Canada. In recent years, Great Falls trade area has expanded toward the north including Canada, while losing some trade area to the Southeast and Northeast to Billings and Havre.

Throughout the Triangle Area, most retail and service establishments primarily serve the needs of local communities. The majority of the retail establishments are comprised of general stores (including groceries) service stations, restaurants, bars, and lumber and hardware suppliers. Farm implement and auto dealers operate on a significant scale.

Increased wholesale and retail employment will result as residential subdivisions such as Sun Prairie Estates and Sun Prairie Village are developed. The increasing urbanization will create a demand for local convenience and service-oriented businesses.

H. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND CONSTRAINTS:

Agriculture and Agricultural Products

According to the latest figures available from Montana Agricultural Statistics, published in October 2005, Cascade County ranked 8th in the state in cash receipts for all agricultural products (7th for livestock and products and 9th for crops). Further breakdowns for crop productions show the County ranked 4th in the production of winter wheat, 17th in durum wheat, 9th in barley, and 6th in all wheat. A closer look at livestock production shows that farmers in the County produced 70,000 cattle and calves; 8,000 sheep and lambs; 16,300 hogs and pigs in 2005.

The number of farm units has remained essentially the same from 1,033 in 1960 to 1037 in 2002. Although this trend is expected to continue, due at least in part to the fact that over half of the farm operators are over 45 years of age, the rate of farm consolidations should not be as rapid. As these operators retire, it is likely that neighbors will buy them out, tending to generally increase farm size.

Even though Cascade County's agricultural output is overshadowed by other counties (mostly to the north and east) and the dominance by the City of Great Falls, the importance of agriculture in the County's economy should not be understated.

Cascade County also has several large grain processing operations which mill flour and produce livestock feed. Numerous dairy products are also manufactured locally, mostly for market in Great Falls and vicinity.

FINDINGS

1. The "family farm" is Cascade County's predominate form of agricultural operation.

2. Subdivision and development will decrease the total amount of land devoted to agriculture.

3. Farm size, technology, and capital have increased as agricultural employment has decreased.

4. The trend toward farm consolidations is slowing. Recent studies suggest the return after taxes of a 1,200 acre and a 1,500 acre wheat farm to be about the same per acre.

5. There appears to be sufficient capital for present farming units to increase their size of operation.

6. There appears to be economic justification for a meat processing plant in the County.

7. Production of agricultural products is very sensitive to prices, markets, and consumer demand.

H. CONSTRAINTS TO AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURAL MANUFACTURING

The lack of an adequate slaughter facility.

1. High cost of transporting agricultural products to out-of-state markets – limited to local markets.

2. Competition from larger agricultural firms.

3. Relatively high labor costs.

4. Strict federal inspection and safety requirements.

5. The late maturing date of crops often puts the local farmer at a disadvantage when marketing these goods.

6. The distance from major population and market centers and the resulting high transportation and fuel costs.

7. Inflation:

    a) The farmer and rancher often cannot pass on cost increases to the processor, wholesale, retailer, or consumer.

    b) Inflation encourages the investor to look at land as a hedge against the loss in value of money, being interested in land not for agriculture but as a commodity that retains and increases its value. Continued inflation will result in competition between the investor and the farmer for the available land supply.

I. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND CONSTRAINTS: MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing includes those activities involved in the fabrication and production of metal, fiberglass products, grain food products, vegetable oils, oil refining, concrete or other stone products or dairy products. The majority of the County's manufacturing is centered in and around Great Falls. General economic health of these operations is good at this time, but is to some degree dependent on the support of the local military payroll. Most are agri-business oriented and depend on the state of the agricultural segment of the economy.

FINDINGS

CONSTRAINTS TO MANUFACTURING

1) The distance to large market centers, compounded by high transportation costs.

2) Great Falls is not located on any major east-west trade routes.

3) Since no mining or actual smelting (only refining) takes place in Cascade County, all raw materials must be shipped both in and out.

4) Cut-back of Canadian natural gas. However, these shortages may not be as severe as predicted, as new Montana gas fields are presently being developed.

5) The population of Cascade County, generally speaking is a small market.

6) The lack of a major university or component of the university system coupled with a lack of available skilled labor.

7) The local trade area has not expanded to the east or south, with establishments in Billings and Havre making substantial in-roads into the Great Falls trade area.

8) Inventory levels and unavailability of items.

9) Low density population and distances between towns and markets.

10) Severe winter weather can occasionally impair some types of manufacturing.

J. POLICIES

1. Commercial and manufacturing uses should be encouraged, if such uses do not adversely affect agriculture and are located around and in existing rural communities.

2. Every effort should be made to protect and maintain farming units, because the family farm is important in the economy of Cascade County.

3. Efforts should be made to work or to deal with, by whatever means feasible, the economic constraints discussed in this section.

4. Efforts should be made to discourage commercial strip development along major thoroughfares.

5. Efforts should be made to stabilize and develop employment and economic activity.

6. Environmental as well as economic perspectives should be considered in any future development.

7. Efforts should be made to attract non-transportation sensitive industry to Cascade County.

8. Utilization of locally produced agricultural products and raw materials should be encouraged.

9. Increase the efficiency of transportation serving Cascade County.

10. Aggressively develop, protect, and enhance the agricultural economy of Cascade County.

11. Encourage future development to locate on non-productive or marginally productive agricultural land.

12. Minimize, to the greatest degree possible, the adverse social and environmental impacts of development and encourage beneficial effects of orderly growth.

13. Seek to attract industry from other areas to locate in Cascade County courage efficient economic development.

14. Encourage economic activities to locate in those areas most economically, socially and environmentally appropriate, as determined by the County Planning Board and other public agencies.

15. Given the importance of Malmstrom AFB to the economic vitality of the region, the potential reduction in Minuteman forces and the potential value of future flying missions at MAFB, it is vital for Cascade County to actively pursue the reopening of the MAFB runway. These efforts should include, but are not limited to, protecting the runway's Accident Potential Zones, as described in the 1994 Malmstrom AFB AICUZ Study, from encroachment by any non-compatible land uses.

CHAPTER VI

PUBLIC FACILITIES – LOCAL SERVICES

Cascade County: Solid Waste Disposal

Cascade County operates 40 cubic yard roll-off containers located near Vaughn, Cascade, Hardy Creek, and Armington, midway between Monarch and Neihart and near Stockett.

The Cascade County Solid Waste Disposal District provides disposal services to all residents within the County living outside the incorporated towns of Cascade, Belt, Neihart, and Great Falls, which are not included in the Solid Waste District. All residents within the District boundaries may utilize any of the Cascade County Solid Waste Disposal sites.

The City-County Health Department administers the Cascade County Junk Vehicle Disposal Program. The Cascade County Junk Vehicle Graveyard site, located 1½ miles south of 10th Avenue South and ½ mile west of 13th Street South, was opened in May 1974. Residents of Cascade County may bring junked vehicles to the graveyard site at no cost, upon request, and the junk vehicles will be picked up by the Health Department at no charge. A signed release form or title must be obtained by the Health Department on each vehicle before it can be picked up. County personnel are involved in enforcement of Montana Junk Vehicle Disposal Law with regards to licensing and shielding of wrecking facilities and removal or shielding of Junk vehicles on private property. Once 200 or more junk vehicles are located in the Cascade County Junk Vehicle Graveyard the County notifies the State Department of Health and Environmental Sciences' Solid Waste Management Bureau and requests that the State advertise for a contractor to crush and remove the junk vehicles. Once crushed, the vehicles are transported to various steel mills outside of Montana where the cars are shredded and recycled.

Findings

A) The Cascade County Solid Waste Disposal District includes the entire County excluding the four incorporated towns: Belt, Cascade, Great Falls, and Neihart.

B) County operated container sites are open seasonable hours. Call 454-6950.

C) The Great Falls landfill is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the summer and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the winter.

D) The Cascade County Solid Waste Disposal District provides no garbage collection services. However, there is one private garbage collection firm licensed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) who provides collection services to residents who contract with them.

E) The container sites are maintained by Solid Waste District personnel.

Water Supply

With the exception of Belt, Cascade, Sun Prairie, Simms, Stockett and Vaughn, all rural Cascade County communities discharge sewage effluent into the ground. The result is that with increasing water consumption, mostly by dishwashers, garbage disposals and automatic washers the amount of effluent being discharged is increasing. As the demand for water increases, the source of the pollution also increases. Therefore, in order to grow and prosper, a community must develop an adequate supply of potable water for domestic, commercial and fire protection uses.

Findings

A) Neihart - All rural communities except Neihart, obtain their water from groundwater sources. Neihart's water supply is from O'Brien Creek. This source of water will accommodate all anticipated growth in the town of Neihart, although favorable springs do exist in the vicinity.

B) Belt - The surface bedrock, which is composed of the Kootenai Formation and Jurassic Age rock, have the potential to produce 125 gallons per minute (GPM) from shallow wells. The present water supply is from two wells, each 414 feet deep in the Madison Limestone formation and pumping at 500 gpm.

C) Cascade - Wells are in alluvium deposited by the Missouri River to depths of 20 to 100 feet. Aquifers are reported at depths of 20 to 25 feet in sand, 26 to 35 feet in clay/gravel and 50 to 100 feet in sand and gravel. One well yields 200 GPM without lowering a static 12-foot water level.

D) Fort Shaw - Wells in Fort Shaw show yields of 15 to 30 GPM at depths of 10 to 30 feet. Also located in Fort Shaw and the surrounding area is the Two Buttes Water User's Association. which could possibly be expanded to include the town site.

E) Monarch - Wells in the Monarch area are drilled into Mississippian-Devonian Age bedrock and produces 1 to 50 GPM from depths of 10 to 250 feet. One appropriation for three wells each 8 feet deep has been filed claiming 4,200 GPM in “sand and gravel”.

F) Sand Coulee - Wells drilled 200 to 300 feet deep into the Kootenai Formation yield 10 to 50 GPM.

G) Simms - Yields from sand and gravel aquifers 30 feet deep are 10 to 120 GPM per well. The aquifers are thin, making them limited as producers. There is one appropriation claiming 250 GPM from a 27 foot well.

H) Stockett - The Stockett Water Supply Company is currently using a well 830 feet deep in the Madison Limestone formation, producing at a reported rate of 50 gpm.

I) Sun River - Since Sun River is also in the floodplain, well characteristics are the same as in Fort Shaw.

J) Tracy - Wells here have been drilled into alluvium deposited by Sand Coulee Creek as Kootenai Formation. Yields range from 12 to 15 GPM at depths of 47 to 187 feet.

K) Ulm - Yields reported in this area are from 5 to 20 GPM at depths of 10 to 200 feet. One appropriation is for 500 GPM from a well 182 feet deep.

L) Vaughn - Wells in the Vaughn area have been drilled in sand and silt to depths of 130 feet into water-bearing gravel. Some wells are under artesian pressure and yield 20 to 30 GPM. One well pumps 100 GPM with a drawdown of 7 feet yields vary 20 to 100 GPM.

M) At present, sources of water throughout the County are good and are expected to continue to be relied on in the future. All are expected to provide sufficient quantities of water for all anticipated growth.

N) Sun Prairie Village Has water and sewer systems of its own. Water comes from wells and the water system is near capacity.

Recommended Actions

1) The existing 4-inch line at Stockett should be replaced by a 6-inch line to meet future needs. Additional storage and sources should also be constructed.

2) A community water system should be developed at Ulm as ground water pollution may pose health risks in the future.

3) Due to the advanced age of the water system at Vaughn, the old system should be completely refurbished. To provide adequate fire protection, additional storage facilities should be constructed.

4) Fort Shaw, Simms, and Monarch should develop community water systems. Fort Shaw could possibly combine or incorporate the present Two Buttes System.

Sewer Services

Other than the City of Great Falls, there are only six community sewer systems in Cascade County. These are in the communities of Simms, Belt, Cascade, Sun Prairie, Vaughn and Stockett. All other communities use separate systems which discharge effluent directly into the ground. In recent years, the amount of effluent being discharged into the ground has increased as a result of modern plumbing and increasing numbers of people. Nearly all rural housing now has plumbing facilities, so the amount of pollutants added to the surface and ground water will also increase, compounding an all ready serious problem.

Findings

A) Thus far, the basic sanitary sewer treatment method for communities has been in the form of lagoons. There is no reason to believe lagoon systems will not suffice in the future. Lagoons meet the minimum requirements of the State Board of Health and have the advantage of lower initial and maintenance costs than mechanical treatment plants.

B) The sewer systems for Cascade and Belt are operating satisfactorily at the present time and may be exceeding initial design expectations. In fact, for Cascade, only one cell of a two cell lagoon has been placed in operation, indicating that considerable reserve capacity is available. If in the future either of these communities exceeds the total projected flow by 20% or more, consideration should be given to expanding the present treatment facilities by constructing an additional lagoon or by increasing the capacity of existing facilities by the addition of aeration equipment.

Recommended Actions

1) An engineering and feasibility study should be undertaken to determine a means of supplying sewer service to Monarch and Neihart.

2) Other communities in Cascade County should install sewer systems when and if such an action becomes feasible.

3) Cascade County should establish a department of public works to operate and maintain public community water and sewer systems.

Police Protection

The Cascade County Sheriff's Department and town marshals protect the County outside of Great Falls. At this time, Cascade County employs thirty deputy sheriffs. The town marshals are not employed by the County, but work directly for incorporated municipalities. These deputies and marshals carry out all normal law enforcement duties as well as coordinate search and rescue operations.

Findings

A) Two deputies serve Stockett, Sand Coulee, Tracy, and Centerville areas.

B) One deputy is in Cascade.

C) Two deputies serve the vicinity of Simms, Fort Shaw, Sun River, and Vaughn.

D) One deputy is assigned to Belt.

E) One deputy lives between Monarch and Neihart.

F) One deputy lives south of Armington.

G) The remaining deputies serve as necessary throughout the County, and reside in or near Great Falls.

H) In addition to the County Deputy Sheriffs, the town of Cascade employs two City Marshals.

Fire Protection

Rural Cascade County has a volunteer fire protection system that is trained and equipped for fire protection. The County has been broken into eleven fire districts with the fire stations located in the larger communities. Fire related services are often extended across fire district boundaries of the County.

Findings

A) The mobility or movement of people greatly affects the manpower available to the various volunteer fire departments.

B) Additional information on rural fire departments can be obtained from the Cascade County office of Disaster and Emergency Services (DES).

Recommended Actions

1) All major subdivisions should be reviewed by the Rural Fire District prior to approval by the Planning Board.

2) The subdivider should be made aware and should provide information concerning fire protection prior to preliminary plat approval.

School Districts

Cascade County operates and maintains eleven elementary school districts outside of Great Falls. The elementary school districts are:

No. 29 – Belt
No. 3 – Cascade District
No. 5 – Centerville
No. 95 – Deep Creek
No. 55 – Sun River Valley
No. 85 – Ulm
No. 74 – Vaughn

Four of the elementary schools are located on Hutterite Colonies:

No. (5) – Big Stone Colony
No. (55) – Cascade Colony
No. (85) – Fairhaven Colony
No. (29) – Pleasant Valley Colony

There are four high school districts (outside of Great Falls):

B– Cascade – made up of school districts (3-85-95)
C – Centerville – made up of school districts (5)
D – Belt – made up of school districts (10-29-35-96)
F – Sun River Valley – made up of school districts (6, 74, and 97)

The maps on the following pages illustrate the Rural Fire District boundaries and the School District boundaries.

Findings

Elementary Schools:

A) Vaughn

Vaughn School will accommodate approximately 250 students; the present enrollment is 85.

C) Sun River Valley
Sun River Valley Elementary School capacity is approximately 175 students with the present enrollment of 175.

D) Cascade
The elementary school at Cascade has an enrollment of 238 students.

E) Centerville
Present enrollment at Centerville is 161.

F)) Belt
The elementary school at Belt has a present enrollment of 180 students and has a capacity of about 300.

G) Ulm
The elementary school at Ulm has 84 students enrolled and a capacity of approximately 140.

J) Deep Creek
The Deep Creek School's enrollment is 2 students with a potential capacity of approximately 15.

High Schools:

A) Sun River Valley High School
There are 123 students attending high school at Simms. The school has capacity for about 300 students.

B) Cascade High School
The present enrollment at Cascade is 143 students.

C) Centerville High School
The present enrollment at Centerville is 91 students
D) Belt High School

Belt High School has a capacity of about 220 students with a present enrollment of 110.

Local Services Policies

1) Develop an overall facilities program and plan.

2) Develop a program to encourage more efficient use of the County's water resources.

3) With respect to water supply and facilities:

   a) Prohibit development where water is not available in sufficient quantities to support development.

   b) Encourage efficient use of the water resources.

   c) Insure water used for agriculture is given top priority.

4) Establish a monitoring system to keep abreast of the changing trends in land use in Cascade County and investigate the possible impacts on the environmental, social and economic aspects.

5) Develop and upgrade sewer facilities as needed in Cascade County.

6) Promote adequate fire protection for rural Cascade County.

(7) Using the subdivision review process, discourage development in areas where it is not economical for the county to provide services such as road maintenance, school bus service, fire, police protection, or snowplowing. Persons purchasing land in these areas should be informed, in writing, to the fact that some services may not be provided by the county.

(8) Facilitate the appropriate development and maintenance of roads, public utilities, and community facilities.

RECREATION AND TOURIST TRADE

With more leisure time brought about by shorter workweeks, longer paid vacations, holidays, and increasing disposable incomes, the average person is spending more money on recreational activities. In Cascade County indoor spectator activities rank first in the use of recreational time, but is followed closely by outdoor recreation and home related activities such as gardening. The months of May and July were cited as those which outdoor recreation activities were engaged in most frequently, while the greatest amounts of leisure time available was May and February.

Outdoor recreation activities normally reach a peak in late spring or early summer. During the months of December, January and February, all other leisure-time activities out-ranked outdoor pursuits. Nonresidents were the predominant users of outdoor recreation facilities, mostly related to travel to and from Glacier Park. The length of stay varies but day use is practically negligible.

When the various recreational activities in which residents engage were compared with those indicated as most preferred, a fair correlation was found. Driving for pleasure was found to be the most popular leisure past time in both participation and preference. Other activities that rank close to this activity include sightseeing, fishing, hunting, and camping. Fishing is the most popular water-related activity all year, although its popularity does drop slightly in the spring and fall.

Natural areas are considered the most preferable type of recreation area by local residents, followed closely by developed campgrounds and picnic facilities. The proximity of Glacier Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness area reflects this preference.

As stated earlier, nonresidents were the most apt to make use of local recreation facilities. Most are not visiting Cascade County but are merely passing through to some other attraction (such as Glacier Park). The vast majority of the area's tourist economy is repeat business, being families or groups from other parts of Montana or Canada returning once or twice a year. The major attractions to this group are shopping, night life and the annual state fair.

Findings

A) Outside of the National Forests, there are few camping or picnicking areas.

B) Fishing access is limited mostly to the southwestern portion of the County along the Missouri River.

C) Given the popularity of hunting, the private landowner often suffers trespass and damage.

D) There is a lack of recreation facilities in or near the smaller communities.

Policy

Encourage recreation and tourism, especially in the areas that will have minimal impact on agriculture.

CIRCULATION - TRANSPORTATION

The criterion used to classify highways and roads is by the level of use they perform. The highest level of highway use is the primary highway. These are characteristically the ones used for the longest trip lengths and have the heaviest travel densities, serving most large urban areas. This system is an interconnected network of continuous routes without any dead-ends. The integral components of this classification are the interstate highway system and state highways.

Secondary highways, the next level of the highway/road use classification, link cities and towns not connected by primary highways and are spaced so that all developed areas are within a reasonable distance of a primary highway.

The next category in the highway/road-use classification, are the light-duty roads. These are hard or improved surface roads that provide use primarily for local residents. The speeds and travel lengths are less than those of the higher use roads or highways. The light-duty roads serve as the most important travel generators in the County, such as trips to and from retail and wholesale trade centers, and schools. The light-duty roads are spaced at intervals consistent with population density and provide relatively short service travel distances and large land access.

The last categories of use are the unimproved roads and trails. These are mainly used or owned by individuals for their special needs, such as farmers to have access to their fields or ranchers to

have access to their grazing land. In this County, trails may also be in the National Forest Land for the maintenance and management of the forests.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) provides freight service to Cascade County. BNSF's rails extend northwest from Laurel to Shelby. BNSF also maintains trackage from Great Falls to Choteau. East-west service follows U.S. Highway 2 along the Hi-line. Since the 1972 merger of the Great Northern, Northern Pacific and Chicago, Burlington and Quincy lines, Great Falls is no longer on the mainline between the south, the Midwest and the west coast. This, in turn, has resulted in an increase of two to four days in shipping time from the West Coast and one to three days from the Midwest. Railroad transportation is by far the most important type of transportation, as the vast majority of bulk and agricultural products are moved in this manner.

A large percentage of the large, bulk incoming manufactured products and lumber are moved by rail as well.

Findings

Air Transportation

Great Falls International Airport, the transportation hub for north central Montana, located in Great Falls, is a commercial service airport serving Great Falls and the surrounding community.

The Airport Complex encompasses approximately 2,045 acres of land. Presently the complex includes the airfield, terminal, general aviation, commercial and noncommercial activities, airport and airline maintenance and support facilities and a new fire station. Also included on the airport is the Montana Air National Guard, which maintains and operates F-16 fighter aircraft.

Great Falls is served by Delta, Horizon, Northwest and Big Sky Airlines. The airport incorporates three sets of runways: Runways 3-21, 16-34, and 7-25. Runways 3-21 and 16-34 are designated as air carrier runways, with runway 7-25 being used only for general aviation. Runway 03 has a precision instrument landing system (ILS) approach, making it possible for aircraft to land during inclement weather. Runways 03-21 and 16-34 also have precision instrument markings, and 7-25 has basic runway markings. All runway surfaces are asphalt, and runway 3-21 is built to accommodate any aircraft in the world. The airport has four jet aircraft gate positions, and three commuter gates. Gate 1 and 3 can accommodate all types of commercial aircraft (B 737 - B 747), and Gate 2 and 4 will accommodate only narrow bodied aircraft (B 737, 727, DC-9, MD-80).

Great Falls Automated Flight Service Stations (AFSS) is on the Great Falls International Airport and is one of sixty-one FAA automated flight service stations scattered across the United States. Flight service specialists provide preflight and in-flight weather briefings to pilots of all civil and military aircraft and process flight plans, as well as providing emergency services and relaying clearances.

The airport is served by Sky-West, Northwest, Big Sky, United Express, and Horizon airlines. Flights go to Helena, Billings, Kalispell, NS Spokane, as well as to the hub cities of Salt Lake City Seattle and Minneapolis. The airport also serves as one of the primary cargo transportation hubs in the northwest. FedEx opened a 78,000-square foot facility north of the airport terminal in

August 2000. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection provides clearance for international flights and cargo.

There are two fixed base operators who provide fuel and aircraft maintenance and repair.

A planned upgrade in 2006 will bring the main runway to Category III status, which allows aircraft to land during low-visibility weather.

Bus Transportation

One carrier provides national and regional parcel and passenger service.

Rail Transportation

There is at present no passenger rail service to Cascade County. All other services, including reciprocal switching, are available in the Great Falls area.

Truck Transportation

Approximately thirty interstate carriers serve Great Falls providing a wide spectrum of service to and from everywhere in the United States and Canada. Second-day arrival is available to Denver, Salt Lake, and Seattle.

Automobile Transportation

Approximately 104,000 passenger automobiles and trucks are registered in the county. These travel on approximately 1,700 miles of County maintained roads, which are the secondary highways and light-duty roads, and approximately 375 miles of State maintained highways, which are primary highways including Interstate 15 and its frontage roads.

Policy

Cascade County should develop a feasibility plan for energy and energy shortages, as it relates to the following:

1) A study of the existing road systems and transportation routes.

2) Consideration concerning the efficient use and conservation of existing energy resources.

3) Encouraging the development of alternative energy resources, if not socially or environmentally detrimental.

CHAPTER VII

NATURAL RESOURCES

The comprehensive plan for Cascade County has been developed in two sections and represents both the natural and the cultural environments. The natural environment deals with the natural setting for the social and economic activities that are covered in the cultural environment section of this document.

Cascade County has been broken into nine landscape units, each representing a particular combination of soils, geology, topography, hydrology, and biology. The landscape units therefore provide a simplified framework for development and conservation policies that apply basically to the same landscape unit throughout the county. These designations and the policy recommendations attached to each unit have been useful in establishing performance standards and other land use controls. As stated earlier, the landscape unit concept reflects a set of characteristics that constitute a natural process. Therefore, the environmental policies are established to reflect the overall natural process of a landscape unit and the specific resource limitations as well.

The landscape units, which were developed for Cascade County, are:

Rivers, Streams, Lakes and Reservoirs

Lakes, streams, reservoirs, and rivers include water bodies either flowing or standing for all or most of the year. Included in this landscape unit are those lands immediately adjacent to water bodies which directly influence the physical, biological, and chemical properties of the water.

Alluvial Lowlands (Al)

Nearly level plains occupying valley floors, which resulted from the depositions of alluvial material by rivers and streams. The major conspicuous feature of this landscape unit is the floodplain.

Lowland Terraces (Lt)

Nearly level to gently undulating or sloping valley floors, generally forming a transition from alluvial lowlands to the somewhat higher benches.

Benches (B)

Nearly level to gently undulating or sloping topographical surfaces that comprised former valley floors.

Dissected Benches (Bd)

Moderately undulating to rolling benches characterized by relatively shallow, complex dissecting drainage ways.

Rough Breaks (Rb)

Rough, broken land dominated by numerous steep drainage channels and coulees up to 300 feet deep, and in the case of the Smith River Canyon, up to 1000 feet deep. This unit is also made up of steep, broken bluffs and escarpments separating benches from lower terraces and valley floors.

Uplands (Up)

Rolling to steep terrain, generally from 4000 to 6000 feet in elevation, sloping upward to the base of the mountains in the southwestern and southeastern portions of the county and often deeply dissected by drainage ways.

Mountains (Mt)

Generally forested, mountainous terrain in the southern portions of the county.

Buttes (Bu)

This unit is characterized by gradually steepening sides culminating in nearly vertical cliffs marking the edge of a relatively flat, rocky cap comprised of the remains of an intrusive, igneous sill. These buttes can be up to 1000 feet from base to top, and the largest has a surface area of over three square miles.

For each landscape unit, the following information is provided:

Definition of the landscape unit.

Extent and description of that landscape unit in the county.

The slope, geology, soils, vegetation, and land use characteristics.

An example area.

Development policies for that particular landscape unit.

Actions to implement the development policies.

The maps on the following pages show the Landscape Units and the Units in Cross Sections. These maps are as accurate as possible at this scale and there should be no question to which landscape unit a particular parcel belongs. In cases where there is some question, an on-site inspection may be required to make a determination. Given the description provided in this section, the reader should have little difficulty placing a site in the appropriate landscape unit designation.

RIVERS, STREAMS, LAKES, AND RESERVOIRS

Lakes, reservoirs, and rivers include water bodies either flowing or standing for all or most of the year. Included in this landscape unit are those lands immediately adjacent to water bodies that directly influence the physical, biological and chemical properties of the water.

Extent and Description

This landscape unit represents the major drainages and their tributaries. The dominant drainage is the Missouri, which traverses the County from the southwest to the northeast. Included are the Missouri River's tributaries; the Sun, Smith and Dearborn Rivers and their respective tributaries; Sand Coulee and Belt Creek and their tributaries. Many lakes and reservoirs are spread throughout the county.

Vegetation

The natural vegetation is associated with that of the alluvial lowlands landscape unit: Native cottonwood, willow, chokecherry, serviceberry, native grasses and shrubs, such as slough grass, wild barley, sage, rushes and sedges.

Wildlife

Cascade County's waters support abundant wildlife and fish, providing water as well for many species. Portions of the Missouri River and the Smith River are considered "high value", or "critical" for use by whitetail and mule deer, otter, pheasant, osprey, antelope, and sharp tail grouse as well as small non-game animals such as raccoons and skunks. Waterfowl includes ducks and gulls. Blackbirds, magpies, and other birds also make extensive use of this landscape unit.

Geologic Hazards

The major hazard inherent to this landscape unit is flooding. Extensive flooding has occurred on the lower Sun River and along Belt and Sand Coulee Creeks.

Geology

Belt Creek and smith River flow through areas primarily composed (geologically) of alluvium of Quaternary age (3 million years before present) and is composed chiefly of sand, silt, and clay, with gravel lenses common. The alluvial material has been eroded from the local landscape. The gravel lenses are composed of moderately well sorted, sub rounded material. Within the lowlands are many cutoff stream meanders, which can be seen very graphically from the Proctor Hill road, Section 23 in Township 19 North, Range 2 East, Montana Prime Meridian.

The Sun River flows on brown Cretaceous Age sandstone laid down 70 to 80 million years ago. The strata is virtually horizontal, the position it was deposited, not being involved in the uplift of the Rocky Mountains.

Sand Coulee Creek flows on the Jurassic Age Ellis Formation, having eroded its way through the over-laying strata. The Ellis Formation is characteristically sandstone and conglomerate with a limestone base.

The Missouri River flows primarily on Quaternary Period (three million years old and younger) alluvium, dune sands and glacial lake deposits that have gradually filled the valley bottom. In the southwestern portions of the county, the Missouri River cut through the mountains forming the deep canyons characteristic of the area.

Example Area Location:

The "Big Bend" area approximately six miles south of Great Falls.

Policy

Since the rivers, lakes, streams and reservoirs are the highest priority landscape unit in terms of agriculture, aesthetics, wildlife habitat and recreation, development of water systems for domestic and agricultural uses should be subject to review by the Cascade County Soil Conservation District and should be in compliance with Montana's Stream Bank Preservation Act (SB310)

ALLUVIAL LOWLANDS

The alluvial lowlands are the plains and bottomlands occupying valley floors, which are the result of disposition of material by water. The floodplain is the major distinguishing feature of this landscape unit.

Extent and Description

The alluvial lowlands represent the land bordering the major drainages and their tributaries. The areas included are the lowland areas of the Missouri, Dearborn, Sun and Smith Rivers and Belt and Sand Coulee Creeks.

Vegetation

A large percentage of vegetation in the alluvial lowlands is cultivated, resulting in the elimination of most of the natural vegetation. Some cottonwood, willow, chokecherry, slough grass, rush, sedge and sage can be found.

Wildlife

Excellent habitats for big game are found in the lowlands. Both whitetail and mule deer make year-round use of these areas, while antelope sometimes winter there. Game birds include pheasant, sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge, and a few ducks. Otter and raccoon also make use of the lowlands.

Geologic Hazards

Geologic hazards in the alluvial lowlands include flooding, high ground water and stream bank erosion. Flooding has occurred along all of the major drainages sometimes resulting in much property damage. Seasonal high groundwater can present some problems with respect to septic systems. Stream-bank erosion is where streams and rivers frequently meander.

Geology

The geology varies slightly throughout the county, but the majority of this landscape unit is composed of sands, silt, and clay eroded from the local landscape or deposited by glacial lakes. Most areas display relatively flat landscapes with many cut-off stream meanders marking previous riverbeds. Gravel lenses, composed mostly of sub rounded, moderately well sorted material, are also found in the lowlands. Most sediment is believed to be of the early Quaternary Period (three million years old) and follow the riverbeds and the adjacent floodplains. Dune sands, the result of wind erosion, have formed on much of the lowlands and many are presently active.

Soils

Soils vary from one area to the next but are mostly included in the following associations:

The Absher-Nobe Association

Found chiefly in the Ulm vicinity, these soils are characterized by deep, very slowly permeable, saline-alkaline clays. The Absher soils usually occur on slightly elevated areas between barren spots of Nobe soils. The deep, well drained, alkaline soils have a loam-my surface soil two to four inches thick over dense, very slowly permeable clay soils. The slow permeability of the Absher soils limits their suitability for septic tank filter fields.

The Straw-Glendive-River Association

These soils are mainly deep, well drained, dark colored loams and sandy loams. There are some shallow, very gravelly soils in narrow bands on the floodplains adjacent to streams. Ponding and flooding hazards limit the use of this association's soils for building sites.

The Yetull-Lichen-Korchea Association

This association is found on the nearly level to undulating terraces and floodplains and is commonly found along the Missouri River between Ulm and Great Falls. These soils are mainly deep, well-drained loamy sands.

The Fergus-Twin Creek Association

This association is found on the nearly level floodplains and gently sloping fan terraces along Sand Coulee Creek and on Johnson Flats. Narrow bands of wet and saline soils occur along Sand Coulee Creek.

The Harlem-Havre Association

This association is characterized by nearly level, light colored, deep, well drained, and moderately well drained on the floodplains and low terraces. This association is most commonly found along the Sun River.

Example Area Location

Johnson Flats, southeast of Great Falls

Policies

Low-density activities, such as agriculture, shall be preferred uses of the alluvial lowlands landscape unit.

Subdivision of land for purposes other than agriculture will be discouraged, and will not be allowed in known or designated floodplains.

Soils that are prone to high groundwater are recommended for agricultural uses only.

LOWLAND TERRACES

This landscape unit represents those areas that form a transition from the alluvial lowlands to the somewhat higher benches and dissected benches. These terraces are nearly level to gently undulating or sloping to the valley floors. In most cases they represent previous valley bottoms or floodplains.

Extent and Description

In terms of land area, this landscape unit occupies only a limited portion of the county, along the Missouri and Sun Rivers. Elevations vary between 3,400 and 3,800 feet.

Vegetation

A large majority of this landscape unit is cultivated and the natural vegetation removed. The predominate natural vegetation is short grass types; blue gamma, thread leaf sedge, western wheatgrass and blue bunch wheatgrass.

Wildlife

The wildlife that occupies this landscape unit are: whitetail and mule deer, antelope, pheasant, grouse, and partridge. A variety of small non-game animals can also be found.

Geological Hazards

The major geologic hazards are mainly water and wind erosion. A relatively high average wind velocity has caused "blow-outs" and some sand dune formation. Some soils have high clay content which can cause some problems with construction and septic tank drain fields.

Geology

Since the majority of the lowland terraces have formed from the subsequent down cutting by rivers and were at one time original or earlier valley floors, the geology of this unit will not be discussed here.

Soils

Soils associations found in the alluvial lowlands are very similar to those of this landscape unit.

Example Area Location

Ulm Flats, southwest of Ulm.

Policies

Since the existing land use of the lowland terraces landscape unit is predominately agricultural, special consideration should be given for this use.

Topography and slope should be considered heavily in the placement of roads and structures.

Any subdivision of land should be in a form suited to the natural lay of the land.

BENCHES AND DISSECTED BENCHES

The benches are made up of relatively flat or gently sloping topographic surfaces and are generally considered to be former valley floors. Subsequent erosion by streams and rivers has caused these areas to stand higher than the present valley floors. Some benches in Cascade County have been dissected by erosion resulting in somewhat shallow, relatively complex drainage patterns. For the Cascade County Growth Policy both landscape units are combined.

Extent and Description

This landscape covers most of the northern half of the county and comprises the majority of the important wheat producing areas of the county. Benches flank a major portion of the lower Smith River drainage. The benches divide the Missouri and lower Sun River watersheds and include most of the area to the north of Great Falls and east to the foothills of the Highwood Mountains. To the south of Great Falls the benches are dissected by many drainages forming many coulees and extending to the foothills of the Little Belt Mountains.

Vegetation

Cultivation accounts for much of the vegetation in this landscape unit. Dry-land farming, hay lands and grazing are the primary uses and alteration of the natural vegetation is the result. Native vegetation includes mostly grasses such as western wheatgrass, blue gamma grass and blue bunch wheatgrass.

Wildlife

Big game that can be found on the benches are antelope, mule deer and occasionally whitetail deer. Game birds include pheasant, partridge and grouse, all making extensive use of these areas for feeding and nesting grounds. A variety of small animals can also be found.

Geologic Hazards

The major geologic hazards inherent to these landscape units include water and wind erosion.

Geology

The geology varies throughout the county. Beginning to the north and northwest of Great Falls, the benches are composed of a thick Sequence of sedimentary rocks known as the Colorado Shale. This formation is composed of dark-gray shales and siltstones with many sand units. These sediments were deposited when this area was covered by a large shallow sea and are still nearly horizontal, having not been involved in the main uplift of the Rocky Mountains. This area was also influenced by continental glaciations, the source of many of the soils found here.

The benches to the west, southwest, south and east of the City of Great Falls are composed of two major formations. The first, the Blackleaf Formation, is often referred to as the Colorado Shales and displays the same basic characteristics as was discussed previously. The other, the Kootenai Formation, is composed of alternating sandstone. The sandstone of this formation store and transmit fairly large quantities of groundwater. The Kootenai overlays the Morrison Formation which outcrops along most of the major drainages where the Kootenai has eroded away. In the upper Morrison there are extensive bituminous coal beds.

Other deposits, which can be found associated with this landscape unit, include dune sands and terrace deposits. The sands are believed to be from nearby formations or glacial lake deposits which have been eroded by wind. Terrace gravel is composed of well rounded, poorly sorted pebbles and cobbles which are believed to have been deposited during the Quaternary Ice Ages about three million years old. These presently are important sources of gravel.

Soils

There are many soils associations that make up this landscape unit. Almost all the soils can be placed in two general categories:

Loamy sands or sand loams 30 to 50 inches deep.

Nearly level, light colored, calcareous, silty soils on glacial plains or over shale.

Example Area Location:

Swede Bench, northwest of Eden in south-central Cascade County.

Policies

Since the existing land use of the benches and dissected benches landscape unit is predominately agriculture, special consideration should be given to protect this use.

Any development or change in the use of the land should be in a form suited to the natural lay of the land.

Since a wide variability of limitations exists, extensive on-site evaluations should be made before any proposed action is taken.

ROUGH BREAKS

This landscape unit is made up of numerous steep sided drainage channels and is used to describe areas that are locally known as coulees.

Extent and Description

This landscape unit is found frequently throughout the county, and is generally associated with the many small drainages and tributaries. This unit occurs most frequently in the central portion of the county in the Smith River, Eden, Sand Coulee Creek areas.

Vegetation

The predominate vegetation is mostly short grass types such as blue gamma, thread leaf sedge, and other wheat grasses. Often, various types of dense brush are common.

Wildlife

Wildlife, which inhabits these areas, are mule and whitetail deer, antelope, pheasant, partridge and grouse. Numerous small non-game animals also make extensive use of the coulees.

Geologic Hazards

Geologic Hazards include soil creep, slumping and landslides. The generally steep slopes are a serious limitation for building sites as well as being a major potential erosion area whenever the vegetation is removed.

Geology

The geology of this landscape unit corresponds closely to the benches landscape unit. In many cases, erosion has formed the coulees, cut from the higher bench lands.

Soils

The major soil association is the Rough Broken Land Association which is characterized by steep and very steep, shallow to deep soils on landscapes dissected by deep drainages.

Slope

The slope is variable but generally is steep.

Example Area Location

Ming Coulee near Eden.

Policies

Since limitations vary from one area to the next in the rough breaks landscape unit, extensive on-site inspection and evaluation should be made prior to any proposed action.

The rough breaks landscape unit represents land which is marginal when considered for agricultural uses and carefully planned subdivision of these areas should not be ruled out.

UPLANDS

This landscape unit represents the areas that are the transition between the benches and the mountains, and are sometimes referred to as "foothills".

Extent and Description

The Uplands extend in a band across the southern portion of Cascade County. The slope is generally steeper than those characteristics of the benches, but not as steep as slopes associated with the mountains. Steep rounded hills, sloping upward toward the mountains, set the dominate feature of this landscape unit.

Vegetation

Vegetation is similar to that found on the benches, but a higher percentage remains as native grasses. Trees are common and the dominant grasses include western wheatgrass, bluegrass, and blue bunch wheatgrass as well as numerous shrubs and forbs.

Wildlife

Wildlife, like the vegetation is also very similar to wildlife found on the benches. Big game consists primarily of mule and whitetail deer, and antelope. These areas are sometimes used as winter range for elk. Game birds include grouse, Hungarian partridge and pheasant.

Geologic Hazards

Geologic Hazards include faults and landslides. Erosion is evident in some areas and could potentially be hazardous.

Earthquake faults can be found in some areas in the southern part of Cascade County. The Carter Ranch Fault, southeast of Cascade is one of the largest.

Landslides are common on the steeper slopes, as well as slumping and soil creep, at times of high rainfall.

Geology

Deposits in this landscape unit are similar to the bench landscape unit, but are more inconsistent in sizes and exposures. The Kootenai Formation is the oldest formation in the unit being of the Lower Cretaceous Period (100 million years old). It is composed of highly colored siltstone, sandstone, and limestone.

The Blackleaf formation including the Flood, Taft Hill and Bootlegger members is also found in this unit. Exposures are scattered and inconsistent but are of varying shades of sandstone, siltstone and shale, which were probably deposited when the area was at the shores of an inland sea. The Marias River Formation, another black sandstone-shale formation is also evident in this landscape unit. Alluvium colluviums composed of sand, silt, clay and basalt (lava) fragments are another important feature of this landscape unit. Exposures often are found at the edge of the foothills unit, near the uplands landscape unit. Thickness of these deposits is often as much as 50 feet. Faults and folding have played an important part in the geology of this area. Three minor faults and one major fault can be found in this area. The Carter Ranch Fault is a reverse fault in the Disturbed Belt caused by north-south compression stresses of two tectonic plates.

The Carter Ranch Fold is another result of the stresses along with several other forces, which have gradually caused deformation of the strata beds.

Soils

The Hanson-Sheege-Woosley association is the most important in this district. These soils are primarily black, stony loam and loam soils more than 20 inches deep to limestone bedrock. Hanson soils have a black loam or very stony loam surface layer and nearly white, strongly calcareous, very stony loam subsoils. The slope and coarse fragments connected with these soils provide some limits to its suitability for certain purposes.

Sheege soils are similar to Hanson soils, but the depth to bedrock is less than 20 inches. Steepness and depth to bedrock are severely limited for most uses.

Woosley soils are made of black, silt loam surface layers and dark loam, silty clay loam subsoils that are calcareous below depths of 20 to 24 inches. Depth to bedrock and slope limit some uses. These soils are used for non-irrigated small grain and hay on the sloping and rolling topography. Grazing and woodland form the uses on other areas.

Absorkee-Loberg-Blythe-Rough broken land association is of minor importance and is discussed in greater detail in the sedimentary terrace landscape unit. The Hilger-Castner-Perma Rock outcrop association is also of minor importance and is discussed in the igneous upland landscape unit.

Slope

Variable, up to 25 percent or more.

Example Area Location:

Harris Mountain

Policies

Grazing and other agricultural activities should be utilized to the fullest, in the uplands landscape unit.

If any development takes place, extensive on-site evaluations should be made. Criteria weighed should be:

a) Soils limitation.
b) Ground and surface water.
c) Geologic hazards.
d) Slope.
e) Adverse effect on wildlife habitat.
f) Visual impact.
g) Effects on recreational uses and access.

Land-use controls should be based on the aforementioned criteria and agricultural use should be given top priority.

MOUNTAINS

This landscape unit is composed of three different geologic types of materials: sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic bedrock.

Sedimentary mountains are those areas over 5,000 feet in elevation and underlain by rock strata formed from loose sediments such as sand, mud or gravel deposited on the earth's surface. Sandstone, shale and limestone are some of the common results of this rock forming process.

Igneous mountains are those areas underlain by materials of volcanic origin and over 5,000 feet in elevation.

Metamorphic mountains include those areas geologically altered by volcanic or other activity. Metamorphic or metamorphism implies a pronounced change effected by heat and pressure

resulting in a more compact, highly crystalline condition. The lower parameter for this landscape unit is also the 5,000-foot contour interval.

Extent and Description

Sedimentary mountains occupy nearly all of the area with the exception of several igneous intrusive and metamorphic uplands. High erosion rates have caused the area to become very rugged limiting land use in the area to grazing and lumbering. Nearly the entire area is owned by the Federal Government and is included in Lewis and Clark National Forest.

The igneous mountains landscape unit represents four major areas in Cascade County. Three of these areas, Thunder Mountain, Barber Mountain and Long Mountain-Neihart Baldy Mountain are found in the southeastern part of the county. The fourth area is found south of Cascade in the southwestern portion of the county. The igneous mountains are generally very steep and rugged and have poor soils. Many fragmented rocks are common in the area. High resistance to erosion and weathering has left them at higher elevations than surrounding areas.

The metamorphic mountains are found principally in the Monarch-Neihart area. The formations consist mainly of gneiss and schist and are immediately adjacent to the igneous intrusive body forming Long Mountain and Neihart Baldy Mountain. The area is very rough and broken with deep erosion canyons throughout. Soils are generally shallow and vegetation consists of forests and underbrush. Steep topography is associated with the area although no major peaks or mountains are evident.

Vegetation

Vegetation in the area is dominant by forest, much of which is a commercial value. Three types of coniferous trees are of merchantable quality. They include Yellow Pine, Lodgepole Pine, and Douglas Fir which are 160 years old or more. Forests in various stages of reproduction also exist. Lodgepole Pine and Douglas Fir of pole size or smaller are listed as being under reproduction due to former lumbering activities or forest fires. Areas under reproduction can be found scattered throughout this unit.
Non-marketable protection forests also exist in the area. They are composed of sub-alpine varieties of coniferous trees and are very sparse. Engelmann spruce is the predominate tree in this type of forest.

Other vegetation, which can be found, includes non-coniferous trees such as quaking aspen and willows. They are often found in protected gulches near springs. Brush is also important vegetation in the region. Many of the lower mountain slopes are covered with ferns, shrubs, juniper, rabbit brush and some dwarf yellow pine.

Shrubs and upland sedges occupy open mountain parks, which are scattered through the area. Grasses that also occupy the mountain parks include mountain timothy and redtop grasses. These grasses are the dominant vegetation, which is used for summer graze lands. Nutrition is not as high as those grasses at lower elevations and sheep seem to find it more palatable than cattle.

Many burned areas also exist in the planning area. Re-growth of vegetation in these areas has started with many grasses and shrubs. Burned areas are scattered through the area with large fires having occurred in the northeastern corner of the planning area.

Wildlife

Big game animals found in this landscape unit include: elk, mule and whitetail deer, Rocky Mountain Goat and Rocky Mountain Sheep. Bear, of the brown bear variety is the only other major big game animal in the area.

Small game such as coyotes, raccoons, skunks, rabbits, marmots and woodchucks inhabit the area along with many others.

Grouse is the most important game bird species but is accompanied by eagles, hawks, owls, and numerous other smaller birds.

Geologic Hazards

The only geologic hazards are those inherent to any mountainous, steeply, sloping terrain. Rock slides and talus slopes are common with some areas showing some instability in the form in soil creep and slumping.

Geology

The Little Belt Mountains are the eroded remains of a broad domal uplift caused by laccolithic intrusions of the Tertiary Period (30 million years ago). Around the northern borders of these mountains the sedimentary beds are steeply inclined toward the north and west. Angle of incline (dip) decreases with increasing distance from the uplifted area.

The Monarch-Neihart Planning Area is located at the northern edge of the Little Belt Mountains and is composed of a series of the more isolated intrusive domes which are the northern extremes of the main domal uplift. These isolated domes have formed the irregular more prominent mountain peaks and ridges of the area composed of igneous rock.

The sedimentary beds, which form the sedimentary uplands in the region, were probably developed by numerous inland seas, which deposited several series of sandstone, shales and limestone. Included in these sedimentary series are rocks of the Mississippian Period (275 million years ago), Devonian Period (325 million years ago), and Cambrian Period (550 million years ago). Another series of sedimentary rocks of the Precambrian Era (600 million years ago to 3000 million years ago) follows.

Age of the sedimentary beds gets older with increasing distance east until the igneous intrusive bodies, which formed Long Mountain, are encountered. East of this mountain the ages reverse with rock formations becoming younger to the southeast. This reversal may be caused by the erosion of the uplifted dome formed by the igneous intrusion. Younger beds were eroded from the dome exposing the older beds that had been elevated. This has left a series of nearly concentric rings about the intrusive bodies of varying ages.

Metamorphic formations were probably formed after intense heat and pressure from the igneous intrusive, changing their composition from sedimentary sandstone, shales, and limestone to metamorphic association which would be the Whitmore-Sheege-Rock outcrop association which is a very steep, deep, stony soil. The black soils would be strongly calcareous and generally less than 20 inches to limestone bedrock. Numerous outcrops of limestone are also present. Major limitations of this association would be its steepness and dryness.

The central parts including Hoover Creek and the central part of Belt Creek is an area of steep smooth slopes. Soils hold good moisture content but are of poor quality. Much Lodgepole Pine is found in this area. Depth to metamorphic bedrock would be quite shallow.

The southern parts including the area occupying the bench-like divide between the Smith River and Belt Creek drainages are the most productive soils in the area. The terrain in the area is quite smooth and soils consist of clay pans, which are slowly permeable. The area is considered the most manageable ground and used extensively for prime grazing land and lumbering. Numerous clear cuts can be found in these areas.

Slope

Slopes vary greatly in this area and may range up to 90 percent.

Example Area Location:

Long Mountain and Neihart Baldy Mountain.

Policies

The primary land use in the mountains landscape unit should be left as domestic grazing, however, summer homes should be allowed with the following stipulations:

a) Approved by the county planning board, board of county commissioners, and the city-county health department.

b) When warranted, because of terrain conditions, investigations for slope suitability conducted by a professional engineer or geologist should precede any subdivision of land. Farm and ranch construction should be exempt from any review.

c) Deeds and covenants should state the county has no obligations to provide services, such as school bus service, snow plowing or road maintenance until deem economically feasible by the board of county commissioners, except in areas where these services presently exist.

Timber harvest should be allowed, however, proper ecological measures should be taken.

All development including the subdivision of land, with the exception of agricultural uses, should be proceeded with an environmental impact statement as outlined in Cascade County's subdivision regulations.

Private lands used primarily for recreation purposes should be controlled by the local landowner(s).

BUTTES

Buttes are conspicuous hills with steep or precipitous sides that are most visible north and west of Cascade. Differential erosion has caused the more resistant capped buttes to stand above the surrounding landscape.

Extent and Description

Buttes are one of the more unusual landscape features of the area. They are found extensively northwest of the Missouri River in the foothills and benches landscape units. Elevation is usually 300 feet to 1,000 feet higher than the surrounding land. Notable buttes are Cascade Butte, Lionhead Butte, Haystack Butte, Johnson Butte, Belt Butte and Comer's Butte.

Vegetation

Vegetation is scarce due to the absence of soils in the landscape unit. Native grasses, cactus and sage inhabit the tops of these landforms.
Wildlife

Little wildlife is known to exist on the buttes. Eagles can be found on some of the inaccessible buttes but little habitation is known otherwise.

Geologic Hazards

Hazardous conditions in the buttes landscape units are mainly landslides caused by breakdown of the formation from natural processes. Square Butte in the Sun River Valley Planning District has a large landslide on its south face. This particular slide is believed to have been caused by moisture in an extremely wet year, which provided lubrication.

Geology

Within Cascade County a number of unusual formations called buttes, exist. Geologically the buttes, especially those in western Cascade County, are igneous or intrusive igneous bodies. Moltan magma (or lava) from the Three Sisters area was transported through dikes and deposited in layers over a sandstone base. Resistance to erosion has left these igneous bodies standing as hogbacks and buttes, and accounts for their prominence above the adjoining landscape.

Soils

Mucet-Sangrey-Rock outcrop soils are generally less than 20 inches deep to igneous bedrock. Mucet soils are dark colored, well drained, and free of lime. They have gravelly loam surface layers and gravelly loam subsoils underlain by igneous bedrock. Depth to bedrock and steepness limit the suitability of this soil for most uses.

The Rock outcrops are barren igneous rock in irregular shapes. The Mucet-Sangrey-Rock outcrop association is used mainly for grazing and woodland. Non-irrigated hay and grain crops are grown on Sangrey and other deep soils found on terraces and fans.

Slope

Relatively gently sloping tops with steeply sloping sides up to 90 percent near the crest.

Example Area Location:

Cascade Butte in Township 18 North, Range 1 West
Birdtail Butte in Section 2, Township 18 North, Range 3 West
Haystack Butte in Section 1, Township 18 North, Range 3 West.

Policies

Primary land use should be left as grazing in the buttes landscape unit.

The buttes should remain undeveloped to protect the natural beauty of this landscape unit.

CHAPTER VIII

POLICY AND GOAL IMPLEMENTATION

Method of Implementation

The background facts, analysis and policies of the cultural and natural environments presented in the previous section provide a basis for the establishment of land use patterns and regulations. These development patterns and regulations together have the effect of implementing the policies and goals of those sections, while creating and implementing a general plan of development in Cascade County. This method of implementation is simple and straight-forward. It takes into account the concerns expressed by the rural citizens of Cascade County by controlling the impacts of the more intense developments that may occur and protecting certain resources.

The following development patterns are designated, established or allowed as part of Cascade County's Growth Policy and Regulations:

- Resource Protection Areas
- Prohibitive Development Areas
- Conditional Development Areas

The development pattern of these areas and the rest of Cascade County require that developments meet certain standards and requirements. This is accomplished by defining and classifying the existing development types, then outlining the applicable standards, conditions and procedural review requirements for each type of development. The types of development that are defined and classified are as follows:

- Subdivision Development
- Commercial Development
- Industrial Development
- Floodplain Development
- Conditional Development Area Development

For each type of development the requirements and review procedures are outlined. This approach tailor-makes the regulations for a particular development type and reduces the red-tape and processing time for a developer. This is a land management plan for development. Development can occur if sound planning principles are involved.

Resource Protection Areas Designation and Establishment

The following resource protection areas are hereby established as part of the Cascade County Growth Policy:

Prime Agricultural Soils
Forest Cover

The locations and boundaries of these resource protection areas are set forth on their respective maps, and said maps are hereby made a part of the Development Plan. Reproductions at a smaller scale than the original appear in Figures 1, 2 and 3. The originals shall be kept on file in the Cascade County Planning Board Office. These maps are generalized representations of these protection areas. Developers, county planners and expert professionals would engage in on-site determinations of the exact boundaries of these resource protection areas. The Soil Conservation Service will resolve any disputes as to soil classification delineation. The Forest Service will resolve any disputes as to forest cover delineation.

Prime Agricultural Soils Areas

The prime agriculture soils resource preservation areas are intended to contain those soil areas where it is necessary and desirable, (because of their high quality, availability of water, and/or highly productive agricultural and grazing capability), to preserve, promote, maintain and enhance the use of such areas for agricultural purposes and to protect such land from encroachment by non-agricultural uses, structures or activities.

Therefore, the prime agricultural soil preservation areas of Cascade County are those areas where the soils have been classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), according to the NRCS definition of prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance.

Forest Cover Areas

The forest cover resource preservation areas are intended to contain those coniferous and deciduous tree-areas where it is necessary and desirable, (because this vegetation prevents wind and water erosion, slope instability, and rapid run-off; absorbs air pollutants, contaminates and noise; permits high rainfall infiltration to the water table; provides for a diversified environment for many kinds of animals and plants necessary for wildlife maintenance; and, inherently contains a high wildfire hazard), to preserve, promote, maintain and enhance the use of such areas for forest cover environmental purposes and to protect such land from encroachment by non-forest cover uses, structures or activities.

Therefore, the forest cover preservation areas of Cascade County are those areas where the coniferous and deciduous trees display a canopy or crown cover of fifteen percent (15%) or more.

The maps on the following pages show the Agricultural Land Use, the Prime Agricultural Soil Protection Area and the Forest Cover Protection Areas.

PROHIBITIVE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

The following prohibitive development areas are hereby established as part of the Cascade County Growth Policy:

Flood Hazard Evaluation Areas

Butte Areas

Military Runway Accident Potential Zones

Forest Management Areas

The locations and boundaries of these prohibitive development areas are set forth on a map, and said map is hereby made a part of the Development Plan. A small-scale reproduction of the original appears in Figure 16. The original shall be kept on file in the Cascade County Planning Board Office. This map is a representation of these areas. Developers, county planners and expert professionals would engage in on-site determinations of the exact boundaries of prohibitive development areas.

Flood Hazard Evaluation Areas

The flood hazard evaluation prohibitive development areas are intended to contain those potential floodplains where it is necessary and desirable, (because of the safety hazards from floods; the financial burdens imposed upon the county through rescue and relief efforts, caused by the occupancy or use of such areas subject to periodic flooding; the potential loss of life, property damage and losses or risks associated with flood conditions; and, the potential loss of the location, character and extent of natural drainage courses), to regulate and prohibit any non-agricultural or non-open space uses, structures or activities.

Therefore, the flood hazard evaluation restrictive development areas of Cascade County are those areas adjoining a watercourse or drain way, which would be covered by the floodwater of a flood of one-hundred (100) year frequency, as delineated on the Floodway Boundary Maps issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Cascade County Floodplain Administrator is responsible for the regulation of said floodplain.

Butte Areas

The butte prohibitive development areas are intended to contain those buttes where it is necessary and desirable, (because of their unique inherent geological and historical esthetic character; the extreme costs that would arise both to developers and the county in providing road access, water, sewer and other necessary services; the risks and costs involved with the inherent steep slopes; and, the erosion problems of development in shallow soils), to regulate and prohibit any non-agricultural or non- open space uses, structures or activities.

Therefore, the butte prohibitive development areas of Cascade County are those butte-areas that are characterized by gradually steepening sides culminating in nearby vertical cliffs marking the edge of a relatively flat, rocky cap.

Military Runway Accident Potential Zones

The Military Runway Accident Potential Zones are safety zones designated at both ends of runways which support or may support military fixed wing operations. Within Cascade County, runways having a military APZ include the Great Falls International Airport and Malmstrom Air Force Base. Given the economic impact of the military operations currently residing in the Great Falls area, the potential economic impact of additional flying missions as well as the noise issues and the public hazard created should non-compatible development occur within an APZ which becomes active, future development in these areas is to be governed by the compatible land use policies specified in the 1994 Malmstrom AFB AICUZ Study.

Forest Management Areas

The forest management areas are federal lands contained within the jurisdictional area of the U.S. Forest Service. While these federal lands are not subject to local planning guidelines, it is recognized that Forest Service Management Plans can have a significant impact on adjacent non-federal land. The Cascade County Planning Board will review all draft management proposals submitted by the Forest Service and determine their compatibility with the goals and policies of this plan. The forest management areas of the National Forest of Cascade County, which have been delineated using State and Federal forest maps, must comply with the U.S. Forest Service management guidelines.

The map on the following page shows the Prohibitive Development Areas.

SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Subdivision development must receive Subdivision Approval from the Board of County Commissioners after a subdivision review process. The review process is outlined in the County's Subdivision Regulations.

Subdivisions must meet the standards and conditions outlined in those regulations *and* the following standards of the Cascade County Growth Policy:

Resource Protection Areas Standard

If a parcel larger than forty (40) acres is proposed to be subdivided and that parcel is determined to have twenty-five percent (25%) or more area coverage of either of the Resource Protection Areas (Prime Agricultural Soils or Forest Cover Areas), then subdivision approval shall only be granted by the Board of Cascade County Commissioners when it makes findings that the subdivision will not significantly reduce the defined Resource Protection Area's functions, or if all of the following criterion are complied with:

a) The applicant can realize a reasonable return on the fair market value of his land only by devoting the resource protection areas to uses that will significantly reduce their defined area functions.

b) The applicant has no other land reasonably suited for the subdivision.

c) The subdivision has been designed to minimize the reduction of the Resource Protection Area's functions.

d) The subdivision must not significantly interfere with or jeopardize the continuation of agriculture or forestry on adjoining lands or significantly reduce their functions.

Prohibitive Development Areas Standard

If the parcel that is proposed to be subdivided is determined to have any portion in a Flood Hazard Evaluation or Butte Prohibitive Development Area, that portion shall not be subdivided for any non-agricultural or non-open space uses, structures or activities.

CHAPTER IX

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (76-1-601 (2) (f) M.C.A.

The Cascade County Growth Policy is required by state statute to include an implementation strategy that includes the following:

(i) a timetable for implementing the growth policy:

Since Cascade County has an adopted comprehensive plan, the comprehensive plan will be revised by including the elements required by the growth policy statute as information becomes available.

(ii) a list of conditions that will lead to a revision of the growth policy. The following conditions will lead to a revision of the growth policy:

a) mandates dictated by changes in state laws..
b) the relocation of a major employer to Cascade County that has 100 or more employees.

(iii) a timetable for reviewing the growth policy at least once every 5 years and revising the policy if necessary.

The Cascade County Growth Policy will be reviewed by the Cascade County Planning Board at their annual meeting each year. At that meeting the Planning Director will present any recommendations for revisions to the growth policy.

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

The Cascade County Growth Policy sets the goals and objectives of the community. This section provides a list of financial, statutory and program resources, which are available to local governments and community organizations, as they strive to undertake activities in support of realizing their vision for the future.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FINANCING

Local Mechanisms for Debt Financing

Political subdivisions can make use of various kinds of debt financing to meet their infrastructure needs. These include general obligation bonds, special improvement district bonds and revenue bonds. Debt financing enables local governments to finance major infrastructure projects using future revenue from special assessments, user fees, and other forms of revenue. Cities and counties incur various administrative costs in conjunction with issuing bonds. These costs include the retention of legal counsel and financial consultants, the establishment of reserve funds and the preparation of the prospectus and various required documents. These bonds provide tax-free interest earnings to purchasers and are therefore subject to detailed scrutiny under both state and federal law. The citations in the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) are listed below, for each type of bond described.

General Obligation Bonds 7-7-4201, MCA allows local governments to issue general obligation bonds (GO Bonds). GO bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the local government and must be approved by the voters in an election. They are typically payable from ad valorem taxes (taxes based on the value of property), and are expressed in mills.

Revenue Bonds

Under 7-7-4401, MCA, a city or town may issue revenue bonds to finance any project or activity authorized. Revenue bonds are retired through the payment of earnings including user fees incurred by a public enterprise. Revenue bonds have no claim on the city's taxable resources, unless specified (through a special guarantee, for example). Bonds may be issued in the form of general obligation bonds, revenue bonds or a combination.

Special District Financing

Cities and counties may use the creation of special districts to pay for a variety of costs.

Special Improvement Districts

Section 7-12-4102, MCA authorizes the creation of special improvement districts (SID's). The city or town council has the power to create SID's designating them by number. The property owners in the proposed district can also initiate the creation of a SID. Although not required, property owners within the proposed district will often submit a petition to the City or Town Council requesting that the district be created.

Before any formal action is taken, cost estimates are prepared and include a range of costs, which might be anticipated in association with undertaking the proposed construction or maintenance. Once the project has been defined and cost estimates prepared, the Council passes a, "Resolution of Intent" to create the district. The resolution informs the property owners of the size of the district, the nature of the improvements, the project engineer, cost estimates method of assessment and duration. The affected property owners are given due notice of the intent to create the district and opportunity to protest.

If less than 50% of those property owners protest, the municipality may proceed with the creation of the SID. Cities may use SID's to finance a number of improvements including:

- to protect the safety of the public from open ditches carrying water;
- to purchase or build municipal swimming pools and other recreational facilities:
- to grade, pave and undertake other street improvements;
- to acquire, construct, or reconstruct sidewalks, crosswalks, culverts, bridges, gutters, curbs, steps, parking and planting;
- to acquire, construct, or reconstruct sewers, ditches, drains, conduits and channels, for sanitary and/or drainage purposes, with outlets, cesspools, manholes, catch basins, flush tanks, septic tanks, connecting sewers, ditches, drains, conduits, channels and other appurtenances;

- to acquire, construct, or reconstruct waterworks, water mains and extensions of water mains, pipes hydrants, hose connections for irrigating purposes; and for a variety of other infrastructure improvements.

The county governing body may order and create special improvement districts covering projects abutting the city limits and include properties outside the city where the special improvement district abuts and benefits that property. Property owners within the proposed district boundaries outside the city may not be included in the SID if 40% of those property owners protest the creation of the SID.

Lighting Special Improvement Districts

Under 7-12-4301, MCA, the governing body of any city or town is authorized to create special lighting district on any street or streets or public highway for the purpose of lighting them, assess costs and collect costs by special assessment against the property.

Park Maintenance Districts

Under the provisions outlined in Section 7-12-4001, MCA a city or town, upon petition of 10% or more of the qualified electors of a proposed park maintenance district, or upon a resolution of intent adopted by the governing body, may submit to the electors of the proposed district the creation of a park maintenance district. The district may be created for the purposes of, but not limited to:

- moving,
- irrigation,
- turf repair,
- recreation facilities
- equipment maintenance,
- tree trimming,
- tree replacement,
- tree removal
- the removal of other debris.

Other Local Mechanisms

Capital Improvement Fund

Under Section 7-6-4134, MCA, a municipal government may establish a capital improvement fund in an amount not to exceed 10% allowed under Section 7-6-4452 MCA, which enables the levying of up to 65 mills for general purposes. Funds may be used for the replacement, improvement, and acquisition of property, facilities, or equipment, if a capital improvement program has been formally adopted by resolution of the city or town governing body.

Sewer and Water Depreciation Schedules

Governments are authorized to incorporate replacement and depreciation into water and sewer user fees under Section 7-13-4307, MCA.

Resort Tax - In order to rectify the inequities experienced by Montana resort communities, which must provide services not only for seasonal tourists but also for residents, the 1985 Montana Legislature passed the local option resort tax. (Section 7-6-4461 through Section 7-6-4469, MCA). Communities wishing to take advantage of the Resort Tax must meet the following criteria:

- the population of the incorporated community is less than 5,500;
- the area derives the primary portion of its economic well-being related to current employment from businesses catering to the recreational and personal needs of persons traveling to or through the area for purposes not related to their income production, and demonstrated by an economic analysis of the proposed area using specific methodology that analyzes income, property income, government transfer payments and employment data.
- the area had been designated by the Montana Department of Commerce as a resort area (The Department of Commerce does not conduct the required economic analysis. The candidate area is responsible for securing the professional analysis.)

The local electorate imposes, amends or repeals the resort tax. The rate may not exceed 3% and taxes collected may be used for any local government activity, undertaking or administrative service, including the costs resulting from the imposition of the tax. Bonds may be issued; the debt to be serviced by resort tax receipts.

Contact: Montana Department of Commerce, Helena (406) 444-4214.

State and Federal Mechanisms

Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP)

This is a state-funded program, administered by the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC). It is designed to assist communities in financing capital improvements to public facilities including drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sanitary or storm sewer systems, solid waste disposal and separation systems and bridges and is authorized under Section 90-6-701 through 710, MCA. Funds are derived from the Montana coal severance tax and made available to local governments as matching grants, loans and grant/loan combinations. TSEP can also make deferred loans to local governments for preliminary engineering study costs. However, the local government must repay the loan whether or not they succeed in obtaining financing for the construction phase of the project. Funds may not be used for annual operation and maintenance; the purchase of non-permanent furnishings; for refinancing existing debt, except when required in conjunction with the financing of a new TSEP project; or costs incurred prior to the grant award.

Generally, grant awards cannot exceed $500,000 and the municipality must provide at least a 50 percent match, which can include other grant funds. One of the most critical issues that a municipality must address is the ability to commit other funding sources to the project. TSEP grant funds are intended to keep projects reasonably affordable. As stated above, there are a number of ways in which local governments can provide matching funds for projects. In addition to local sources, municipalities should evaluate other potential outside grant and loan sources. A thorough analysis of the feasibility of using these various funding mechanisms is a critical

component in developing a proposal to TSEP and to other grant programs as well. Applications are evaluated based upon the applicant's ability to borrow funds or otherwise finance the project without the use of TSEP funds.

Eligible applicants include incorporated cities and towns, counties, consolidated governments and municipality or multi-county water, sewer, or solid waste districts.

Municipalities may form partnerships with other eligible applicants to provide the most appropriate and cost effective solution. Such partnerships would be particularly useful for bridge projects, which often involve a number of jurisdictions.

Project proposals are submitted to the MDOC every two years. Applications are due in May in the year proceeding the legislative year. MDOC staff reviews the proposals in a two step process. The first step ranks project applications based on program criteria. In the second stage of review, applications are evaluated based upon the applicant's ability to borrow funds or otherwise finance the project without the use of TSEP funds. This evaluation is based on the premise that applicants should receive grant funds only to the extent that they cannot afford to finance their projects without TSEP funds.

It is clear that the municipality should evaluate the feasibility of using all other available funding sources as a preliminary step to seeking TSEP funding. The Governor reviews the information prepared by the MDOC staff and submits recommendations to the Legislature, which makes the final decision on funding awards.

Contact: TSEP staff in Helena (406) 444-3757 or write to the Treasure State Endowment Program, Montana Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 200501, 1424 Ninth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0501.

Montana State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF)

The SRF provides loans for water pollution control systems, wastewater systems and non-point source control projects. Eligible applicants include counties, municipalities, other legally authorized public bodies, water/sewer districts and authorized tribal organizations. Planning funds are also available.

Funds are made available in the form of loans for 100% of project costs. There is no local matching requirement. Loans must be repaid over a period of 20 years or less. Applications may be submitted at any time in a continuous cycle.

Contact: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Helena (406) 444-5322.

Renewable Resources Grant and Loan Program

This program provides loans and grants for water and wastewater projects including feasibility, construction, and rehabilitation; and for other renewable resource related projects. Eligible applicants include local governments, water and sewer districts, irrigation districts, conservation districts, school districts, state agencies and private entities.

Up to $100,000 is available for grants and up to $200,000 for grant/loan combinations. Loans are limited by the ability of the borrower to repay. No local match is required, but local-matching funds can improve a project's ranking. Applications are due on May 15 on even numbered years.

Contact: Montana Department of Natural Resources in Helena, (406) 444-6668.

Water and Waste Water Disposal Loans and Grants (U.S. Rural Economic and Community Development Agency)

This program provides grants and loans for the construction, repair and expansion of water and wastewater systems.

Projects may receive up to 75% of total project costs in grants and no maximum for loans. Applications may be submitted any time in a continuous cycle.

Contact: RECD in Bozeman, (406) 585-2520.

The Montana Intercap Program

The Montana Intercap programs are administered by the Montana Board of Investments and provide loans to local governments for a variety of public projects. Up to $500,000 can be made available for each project. The program provides loans at a variable rate plus a one percent loan origination fee on loans over one year and for a term of five or ten years depending on the borrower's legal authority. Short-term loans of less than a year are also available. Interest and principal payments are due biannually (February 15 and August 15 of each year). Loans may be pre-paid without penalty with a 30 day notice. Types of financing include installment purchase loans, general fund loans, general obligation bonds, and revenue bonds. Gas tax revenues may not be used to service debt. Projects that will use special improvement district payments to cover the annual debt are limited to a total loan of $300,000. Intercap funds may be used in association with other grant and loan programs as well as local sources.

Intercap loans can also be used to cover preliminary engineering costs. Preliminary engineering studies are those, which are conducted by a professional consulting, engineer. Funds may not be used for studies conducted by municipality personnel. Many funding programs require preliminary engineering studies for funding applications. Intercap loan funds can offer a municipality a reasonable alternative for financing these engineering studies.

Monies are continuously available and applications are accepted at any time. Contact: The Montana Board of Investments at (406) 444-0001 or in writing at 555 Fuller Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Public Facilities Community Development Block Grants - Montana Department of Commerce

Montana's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a federally-funded competitive grant program designed to help communities of less than 50,000, and is aimed at benefiting low and moderate income persons. Grants are administered by the Montana

Department of Commerce (MDOC) and awarded in three categories including economic development, housing and community revitalization, and public facilities.

CDBG grant awards for public facilities projects may not exceed $400,000 and are most often used in combination with other federal, state or local funds to make public improvements. The program requires that applicants provide at least 25 percent local match.

Eligible applicants are limited to general-purpose local governments, cities and towns with less than 50,000 people, and counties. Municipalities may apply for a project, which will include activities within the jurisdiction of an incorporated city or town if the proposed activity will benefit all municipality residents.

Each CDBG project proposal must demonstrate that at least 51 percent of the project's principal beneficiaries will be low and moderate-income persons.

Applications for public facilities funding are submitted to the MDOC in May of each year.

Information regarding applications and application deadlines is available by contacting the Department (see below). Applicants should initially review potential projects with the MDOC staff to determine their eligibility under program guidelines. Proposed projects must be selected through a community-wide needs assessment which incorporates a strong public participation component.

Contact: The Community Development office of the Montana Department of Commerce at (406) 444-2488 or write to the Community Development Block Grant Program, Montana Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 200501, 1424 Ninth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0501.

Public Works Program - Economic Development Administration

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The purpose of the Public Works Program is to assist communities with the funding of public works and development facilities that contribute to the creation or retention of private sector jobs and to the alleviation of unemployment and under-employment. Such assistance is designed to help communities achieve lasting improvement by stabilizing and diversifying local economies, and improving local living conditions and the economic environment of the area.

Grants are awarded up to a participation level of 80 percent but the average EDA grant covers approximately 50 percent of project costs.
Acceptable sources of match include cash, local general obligation or revenue bonds; Community Development Block Grants, TSEP grants and loans, entitlement funds, Rural Development loans; and other public and private financing, including donations.

Projects must result in private sector job and business development in order to be considered for funding. Eligible applicants under this program include any state, or political subdivision thereof, Indian tribe (and other U.S. political entities), private or public nonprofit organization or association representing any redevelopment area if the project is within and EDA-designated redevelopment area.

Redevelopment areas, other than those designated under the Public Works Impact Program must have a current EDA-approved Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) in place.

Applications are accepted on an annual-open cycle. The program does not set specific project funding limits.

Contact: Montana Economic Development Representative at (406) 441-1175 or write to the Economic Development Administration, P.O. Box 10074, Federal Building, Helena, MT 59626 for more specific information.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Funds

In case of emergencies that affect infrastructure, the federal government provides relief through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

FEMA dollars are for unanticipated needs that result from disasters and emergencies and are typically not included in a municipality's financial planning process.

FEMA personnel are dispatched to the site of the disaster and are responsible for addressing all elements of repair or replacement as required. They assess the damage, hire the necessary professional consultants, prepare engineering analyses, bid projects and manage contracts.

Contact the FEMA regional office in Denver, Colorado. Telephone (303) 235-4830. Address: Federal Emergency Management Agency, Denver Federal Center, Building 710, P.O. Box 52267, Denver, CO 80225.

State and Federal Mechanisms

Community Development Block Grants for Economic Development

Montana's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a federally-funded competitive grant program designed to help communities of less than 50,000, and is aimed at benefiting low and moderate income persons. Grants are administered by the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) and awarded in three categories including economic development, housing and community revitalization, and public facilities. Eligible applicants for economic development awards are local governments, which in turn lend funds to for-profit businesses that agree to create jobs for low and moderate-income persons.
The maximum funding for economic development is $400,000 per local government in a program year. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis depending on available funding. The applicant business must prepare a business plan and meet certain thresholds, including providing a 1-to-1 dollar match.

Contact: Montana Department of Commerce, Helena, (406) 444-1759.

HOUSING FINANCING

State and Federal Mechanisms

Montana Department of Commerce Programs

Community Development Block Grants CDBG

Montana Department of Commerce

Montana's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a federally-funded competitive grant program designed to help communities of less than 50,000, and is aimed at benefiting low and moderate income persons. Grants are administered by the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) and awarded in three categories:

- economic development,
- housing revitalization
- community revitalization,
- public facilities.

Eligible activities include:

- rehabilitation of substandard housing.
- supporting the construction of new permanent, long-term affordable housing for low and moderate-income families, when a local nonprofit organization sponsors the project.
- acquiring, clearing, or rehabilitating sites or structures for use or for resale for new housing.
- converting existing nonresidential structures for residential use home buyer assistance for low and moderate-income persons.
- demolition of vacant, deteriorated housing units with the intent of making the site available for new housing construction.
- providing site improvements or public facilities to publicly-owned land or land owned by a nonprofit organization to be used or sold for new housing complementary community revitalization activities such as clean up campaign, removal of dilapidated, vacant buildings, improving or constructing sidewalks, streets, street lighting, or neighborhood parks or playgrounds.

CDBG grant awards for housing projects may not exceed $500,000 and have no matching requirements. Eligible applicants are limited to general-purpose local governments - cities and towns with less than 50,000 people and counties. Local governments may apply on behalf of private businesses, private nonprofit corporations or special purpose governmental agencies.

Each CDBG project proposal must demonstrate that at least 51 percent of the project's principal beneficiaries will be low and moderate-income persons.

Program allocations are made annually.

Contact: The Montana CDBG staff, Helena, (406) 444-2488.

Montana Board of Housing (MBOH)
The MBOH administers a number of programs listed below:

Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program

This program provides a tax credit to owners of qualifying rental housing which meets certain low-income occupancy and rent limitation requirements. Eligible applicants include governmental entities, non-profit entities and for profit developers.

Multifamily Risk Sharing Program and the Multifamily General Obligation Program

These programs provide permanent mortgage financing for affordable rental housing which meets certain low-income occupancy and rent limitation requirements. Eligible applicants include governmental entities, non-profit entities and for profit developers.

Single Family Set-A-Side Program

The MBOH has loan prepayments that it can use to purchase FHA insured or VA and RD guaranteed mortgage loans for affordable homes.

Innovative techniques in planning, construction, and building design are encouraged. Eligible applicants include government entities, non-profit entities and for profit developers.

Contact: MBOH, Helena (406) 444-4688.

Montana Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)

The HOME program was created by the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 to expand the supply of decent and affordable housing for low and very-low income Montanan's. Eligible activities include acquisition, new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation; tenant based rental assistance, homebuyer assistance and transitional housing and Single Room Occupancy units. Eligible applicants include units of local governments and Community Housing Development Organizations.

Contact: Montana Department of Commerce - Home Investment Partnerships Program, Helena, (406) 444-9774.

US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development Programs

Following is a list of Rural Development Housing Programs.

Housing Preservation Grants

Housing Preservation Grants are partnered with Housing Authorities and/or public bodies for the purpose of rehabilitating single or multi-family units, which are, occupied by very low to low income rural persons.

Rural Rental Housing 515 Program

This program provides eligible low and very low-income persons with economically designed and constructed rental facilities suited to their living requirements.

Farm Labor Housing 514 & 516 Program

This program provides loans and grants to finance construction of on and off-site housing for farm laborers and their families.

Section 538 -Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program

This program is aimed at those rural residents with low to moderate incomes that are not being served under the 515 program. Eligible applicants include nonprofit corporations, public bodies, and for-profit organizations.

Community Facilities Loan and Grant Programs

These programs assist local governments, nonprofit corporations, and Indian Tribes finance essential facilities such as assisted living centers and group homes.
Contact: USDA Rural Development - Rural Housing Service, Bozeman, (406) 585-2565.

HERITAGE, RECREATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

Local Mechanisms

Property Tax Abatement Program

In 1989, Montana established a property tax abatement program for the restoration, rehabilitation, and expansion of certified residential and commercial properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or located in a National Register District. For up to five years following completion of the construction, the property may receive tax abatement up to a total of 100 percent of taxes due to the increased value of the property. The tax abatement is only for mills levied for local government and school districts. Local governments establish their own tax abatement program.

Two-mill levy for Museums

Under 7-16-2205, MCA, Montana law permits a county government to levy up to two mills for any museum, facility for the arts or collection of exhibits. Funds can be used for operations, capital improvements, and program development.

Contact: The Montana Arts Council, Helena, (406) 444-6514.

State and Federal Mechanisms

Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program

Travel Montana provides grants to tourism-related non-profit groups for construction and rehabilitation of tourism and recreation attractions and historic sites; purchasing new and/or existing tourism and recreation attractions and historic sites; or artifacts and equipment purchased for a specific tourism project operation. Applications are due August 1st of each year.

Contact: Travel Montana, Helena (406) 444-2654.

Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP)

The Montana Department of Transportation makes funds available for projects under the National Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act. The Act provides for 10 percent of all surface transportation funds to be used for enhancement projects including historic preservation. Funds are awarded through local governments on a per capita basis.

Contact: Montana Department of Transportation, Helena, (406) 444-6201.

Resource Indemnity Trust

The Montana Department of Natural Resources makes grants from mining severance taxes to historic preservation projects that emphasize renewable resource management and community development. Contact: The Department of Natural Resources (406) 444-6700.

Historic Preservation Programs

Federal Tax Credits for Historic Preservation

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 permits a building owner or long term lessee to elect a 20 percent tax credit on qualified rehabilitation expenditures incurred after January 1, 1987 in connection with a certified rehabilitation. A tax credit provides the property owner with a reduction on his or her federal income tax due. In order to be eligible for the credit, buildings must be used for income producing purposes including industrial, commercial or rental residential uses. The building must be listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places, be a part of a National Register district or be under consideration in a pending nomination.

Contact: The State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, (406) 444-7715.

Certified Local Government Program
The 1980 amendments to the national Historic Preservation Act established the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. The CLG program's purpose is to expand the existing Federal-State preservation partnership to include local governments and citizens.

In order to qualify for CLG status, the City of Great Falls and the Board of Cascade County Commissioners established a nine-member Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC) to advise local governments on matters of preservation and to insure that historic preservation is considered at all levels of city and County Planning and is incorporated in projects throughout the area.

The Historic Preservation Office maintains an inventory of National Register listed properties in Cascade county and a wide range of technical preservation information. Educational programs are available for organizations.

Contact: Great Falls/Cascade County Historic Preservation Office (406) 455-8435.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Trust provides funding for historic preservation projects through a variety of loan and grant programs.

Contact: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Mountain/Plains Regional Office, 910 16th Street, Suite 1100, Denver, CO 80202, (30) 623-1504.

Montana Cultural Trust

A portion of the interest earned in the investment of the coal tax revenue is available for projects in the arts and historic preservation for operations, capital, special projects and endowment development. Applications are reviewed during the summer prior to each Montana Legislative session.

Contact: The Montana Arts Council in Helena at (406) 444-6514 or the Montana Historical Society (406) 444-2694.

Montana Arts Council

Administers grant funds (in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts - NEA) for cultural resources planning and to sponsor activities and events. The NEA also supports projects in the field of art and architecture and provides support in the activities of local art agencies.

Contact: The Montana Arts Council in Helena, (406) 444-6514.

Montana Committee for the Humanities

The Montana Committee for the Humanities provides funding for historic and prehistoric surveys, for public forums on a variety of issues, for research, and oral history. The Committee also makes funds available for special speakers and conferences. Program activities must involve a humanist, which often fosters cooperative partnerships between communities and local colleges and universities.

Contact: The Montana Committee for the Humanities, Missoula (406) 243-6022.

Private Foundation Grants

Private foundation grants are available to non-profit organizations and local governments (in some cases) for projects, which advance community cultural, historic and heritage resources. A variety of publications and on-line resources provide information on individual foundation programs.

PLANNING ASSISTANCE

State and Federal Mechanisms

Planning assistance for engineering costs and other consulting fees associated with capital improvements project is available through the capital facilities grants programs mentioned in above. In addition, other types of planning funds are available from a variety of sources including the following entities:

The Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The Economic Development Administration provides funds for technical assistance and planning grants for projects, which result in the creation of new employment. Planning grants usually average about $25,000 and require a small cash match.

Contact: EDA Office, Federal Building, Helena, MT (406) 449-5074.

CDBG - Technical Assistance Matching Grants
Montana Department of Commerce provides planning grants of up to $20,000 for affordable housing, capital improvements planning, growth policies and economic development planning.

Contact: Montana Department of Commerce, Helena, MT (406) 444-2488.

Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle

Community Lending Services, provides planning grants of up to $10,000 for affordable housing, economic development and neighborhood revitalization.
Contact: The Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle, 1501 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101 (206) 340-8737.

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CHAPTER X

TIMETABLE AND REVIEW PROCESS

At least once every five years after adoption, the Cascade County Planning Board will review the Cascade County Growth Policy to determine if revisions are necessary, as required by 76-1-601 (2)(f) MCA. The basis for such determination whether to revise the Cascade County Growth Policy will include an assessment of the following issues:

- Changes in the legal framework regarding the Cascade County Growth Policy or its implementation;
- Significant changes in existing trends and conditions or projected trends;
- Changes in the circumstances upon which the goals and objectives are based;
- Changes in community goals;
- Plausibility and ability of the county to achieve stated goals and policies;
- Completion of implementation strategies;
- Deviation from implementation strategies;
- Public input suggesting the need to make changes; and
- Knowledge of specific and identifiable amendments that would improve the Cascade County's Growth Policy's usefulness, so that it better serves the public.

CHAPTER XI

REVIEW CRITERIA UNDER SECTION 76-3-608 (3) (a) MCA.

Under the provisions outlined in Section 76-1-601 (2) (i) MCA, growth policies must include a discussion regarding how governing bodies will define the criteria in Section 76-3-608 (3) (a). The basis upon which the local governing body makes a decision to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove a subdivision is whether the preliminary plat, environmental assessment, hearing and planning board recommendations or additional information demonstrates that development of the subdivision meets the requirements as set forth in Section 76-3 608, MCA. The statute requires that governing bodies must issue "findings of fact" that weigh the effect on the following criteria:

- Agriculture
- Agricultural Water Facilities
- Local Services Natural Environment
- Wildlife
- Wildlife habitat
- Public Health and Safety

Cascade County will evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in Section76-3-608 (3) (a).

Subdivision review will include written findings of fact as to whether or not the proposed subdivision will have an impact the six criteria outlined by statute.

Definitions

Section 76-1-601 requires Cascade County to include definitions of the criteria outlined in Section 76-3-608(3)(a).

Agriculture

1. All aspects of farming, including the cultivation and tillage of the soil.
2. Dairying
3. The production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities, including commodities defined as agricultural commodities in the Federal Agricultural Marketing Act [12 U.S.C. 1141j (g).
4. The raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry
5. Any practices including forestry or lumbering operations performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with farming operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.
6. Agricultural and food product includes a horticultural, viticultural, dairy, livestock, poultry, bee, other farm or garden product, fish or fishery product and other foods.

Agricultural Water User Facilities.

Those facilities, natural or man-made which provide water for agricultural land as defined in 15-7-202, M.C.A., or which provide water for the production of agricultural products as defined in 15-1-101, M.C.A., including but not limited to canals, ditches, pipes and head gates.

Local Services

Those commonly accepted functions associated with the responsibilities of local governmental entities. Includes any and all services that local government entities are authorized to provide.

Natural Environment

The natural phenomena, land, air flora, fauna and water existing in a given area. The physical conditions which exist within a given geographical area, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, soils, and objects of historical or aesthetic significance.

Wildlife

Living things that are neither human nor domesticated.

Wildlife Habitat

A place frequented by wildlife or an area where wildlife naturally live or grow.

Public Health and Safety

A condition of optimal well-being, free from danger, risk, or injury for a community at large, or for all people, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.

The Board of Cascade County Commissioners will exempt subdivisions from the "primary" review criteria described in Section 76-3-608 (3) (a), M.C.A. if all of the following conditions are met:

1) The subdivision is adjacent to the corporate limits of the City of Great Falls;
2) The proposed subdivision will be served by municipal services from the City of Great Falls;
3) The services will be financed by the developer or a special improvement district is created to finance those services;
4) The proposed subdivision will be annexed into the City of Great Falls prior to filing the final subdivision plat;
5) The proposed subdivision will be zoned and assigned to a Ward at the time of annexation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED SUBDIVISIONS

Cascade County will conduct all public hearings in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, Title 76, Chapter 3 Montana Codes Annotated.

CHAPTER XII

CITY – COUNTY COOPERATION

The Montana Growth Policy Statute (76-1-601, MCA) requires governing bodies include in their growth policies, a statement of how governing bodies will coordinate and cooperate with other jurisdictions on growth policies.

On April 26, 2005, the Board of Cascade County Commissioners moved to dissolve the Great Falls City-County Planning Board. This resulted in the formation of a the Great Falls City Planning Board with jurisdictional responsibility in the Great Falls city limits and the Cascade County Planning board with jurisdictional responsibility for the remainder of the county, except Belt, Cascade and Neihart.

The Cascade County Planning Board will continue to work closely with the City of Great Falls and Belt, Cascade and Neihart to cooperate and coordinate the local planning and economic development efforts. Interlocal agreements with the incorporated cities and towns within Cascade County may be adopted to expedite cooperation between said government entities.