

COLLINS PLANNING ASSOCIATES

Collins Consultants recently reviewed and submitted comments on the Draft Flathead County Growth Policy. The comments fall into two general categories:

1. Criticism of the baseline research of existing land uses in Flathead County.
2. Criticism of a lack of more detailed, comprehensive planning (including regulatory fixes) covering a variety of complex issues.

For the most part, staff agrees with the criticisms and appreciates Collins' review of the document. However, staff feels that Collins failed to appreciate the intent of the document. While it is accurate that the draft lacks extensive, detailed, site and topic-specific plans, the document was never intended to incorporate all aspects at the time of adoption. Instead, the intent of the document is to create a planning framework, setting the stage for future detailed plans that will be appended to the growth policy. By calling for individual studies, plans and regulatory techniques to be developed over time, while providing immediate conceptual guidance on a large, county-wide scale, the document establishes a realistic agenda for growth management in Flathead County. The following is a list of plans that are to be developed over time:

- **Neighborhood Plans**
- **Cooperative Agreements**
- **Open Space Plan**
- **Affordable Housing Plan**
- **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
- **Transportation Plan**
- **Water Quality/ Flathead Basin Management Plan**
- **Wastewater Management Plan**
- **Development Predictability Maps**
- **Special Policy Areas**

The list represents plans that will require meaningful, detailed focus on specific topics and issues. A single, county-wide document that allocated the necessary focus to each topic would take many years to create and would make public participation burdensome. A comprehensive framework document allows for prioritization of projects and allows time for meaningful public dialogue on individual issues.