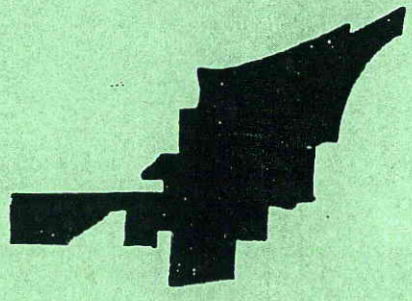
COLUMBIA FALLS
PLANNING JURISDICTION



MASTER PLAN
YEAR 2000

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY-COUNTY MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED BY:

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
Resolution #761
August 8, 1984

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FLATHEAD COUNTY
Resolution #519A
August 28, 1984

PREPARED BY:

Flathead Regional Development Office
723 Fifth Avenue East
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Supercedes Columbia Falls Planning Area Comprehensive Plan
Adopted By:
City of Columbia Falls, July 19, 1976
Flathead County, March 7, 1978

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1. THE PLAN

INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING

Planning is the process for achieving desired objectives. Planning deals with the future. Because the future is where we will spend the rest of our lives, it is important that people be involved in planning. In terms of community planning, the planning process consists of setting viable goals for the future based on projected needs and potentials of the area, preparing plans and policies for meeting these goals, and then implementing the plans and policies to achieve the desired results.

The community is the product of the action and will of its people and, therefore, the development and implementation of its plan should have active participation and support of the citizenry. No plan, however well it is conceived, is of any use unless put into practice. Therefore, the success of planning is to a great extent dependent upon the degree of plan implementation efforts and adherence to the plan in making public and private decisions.

THE PLAN

Long Range Development Plans are usually prepared to guide a community's development and growth over a period of 15 to 20 years. The plan should, therefore, take into consideration the projected and perceived changes and direct these changes to occur in a desired manner. The future changes are usually projected based on past trends and current situations. However, it is impossible to foresee all the changes that will occur during the next 15 to 20 years. For this reason alone, the developed plans should be reviewed and updated periodically.

Long range development plans for cities, counties, or regions are known by many different titles such as Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Development Plan, and Long Range Plan. In the Montana Statutes such a Plan is called a "Master Plan" and is described in Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6 of the Montana Codes. The State Statutes require the planning board to prepare such a plan for its entire planning jurisdictional area. The Statutes outline the contents and considerations that may be included in the plan. The Statutes further require that after adoption of the plan, the City Council and County Commissioners shall be guided and give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the plan.

Past Efforts

The continuous planning efforts in the community of Columbia Falls are representative of the desire, will and concern of its citizens to make the community a better place to live and work. The first master plan for the Columbia Falls area was prepared in 1963. In 1974, a major countywide planning effort was undertaken culminating in an updated Columbia Falls City-County Plan adopted by the City in 1976 and by Flathead County in 1978. Based on this

plan, in 1979, the City expanded its zoning jurisdiction area up to one mile outside the city limits, as prescribed by state law, in order to provide for orderly and coordinated development around the city as well.

A number of new considerations and recent changes led the Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board, in 1983, to conclude that the 1978 plan needed to be reviewed and revised. Several such concerns included the fact that (i) the prevailing plan did not address transportation, public facilities or housing aspects of community planning; (ii) the re-routing of U.S. Highway 2, a major tourist route, through the community may have significant impacts which were not previously foreseen; and (iii) the plan did not include the Major Streets and Highway Plan completed in 1982 and Extension of Services Plan completed in 1983. Thereupon, the Countywide Administrative Board, upon a request from the Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board, directed the planning staff to assist the planning board in developing an updated version of the plan.

Planning Area

This plan is developed for the entire planning jurisdiction area of the Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board. This includes all lands within the City Limits of Columbia Falls and up to approximately 4.5 miles outside the City Limits towards the north, east and south. The irregularly shaped western boundary of the planning jurisdiction is the common boundary with the Whitefish City-County Planning Board and was mutually established by the two planning boards. The 4.5 mile planning limit and the mutually established western boundary are provided for in the Montana Statutes. (Figures 1A and 1B)

PLANNING PROCESS

Planning usually involves a process comprised of many steps. The steps pursued in developing the Columbia Falls Master Plan, are as follows:

1. Compile information about the socio-economic and physical conditions of the area and critically evaluate such information to establish the community's needs, potentials and trends.

2. Make population, economic, land use and traffic projections taking into consideration past trends and anticipated future changes, and thereupon estimate community's needs up to the year 2000.

3. Establish the community's quantitative and qualitative goals and objectives to be accomplished through the plan by applying planning criteria.

4. Develop the community's development and growth concepts taking into consideration prevailing trends, growth stimulants and growth deterrents within and around the community.

5. Prepare rational, efficient and balanced plans to meet the community's projected needs in terms of land use, transportation, public facilities, parks and open spaces, housing and public services.

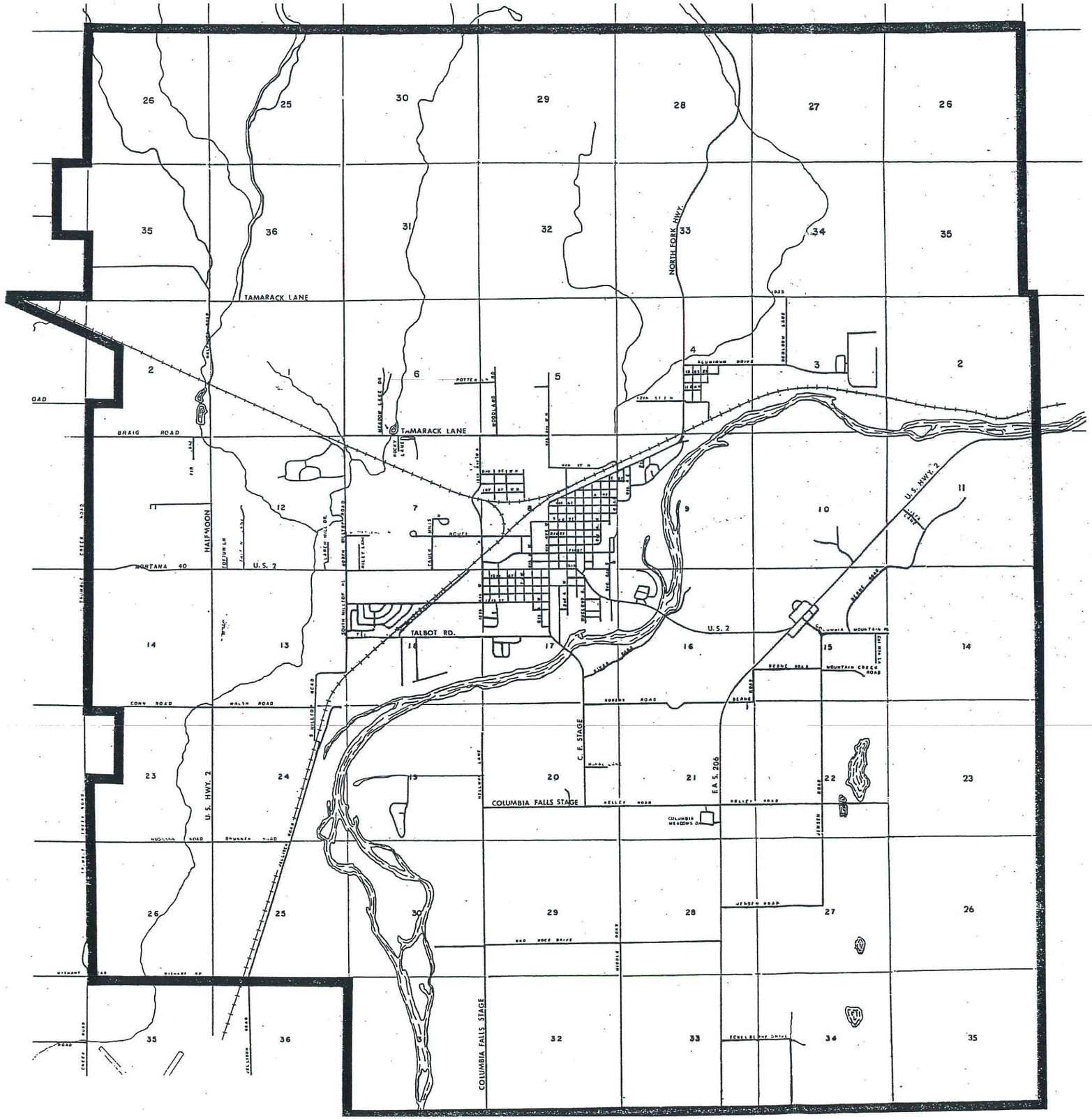
6. Integrate the developed specific plans into a Master Plan setting development guidelines and land use patterns for the future.

7. Recommend policies and means for implementing the Plan.

The plan represents the will of the community and should be used as a "basis" in framing policies, and making decisions by the public bodies, and as a guide in making sound investments by the private sector. The plan is intended for the whole community and, therefore, its implementation should be the responsibility of the entire citizenry.

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION

FIGURE 1A



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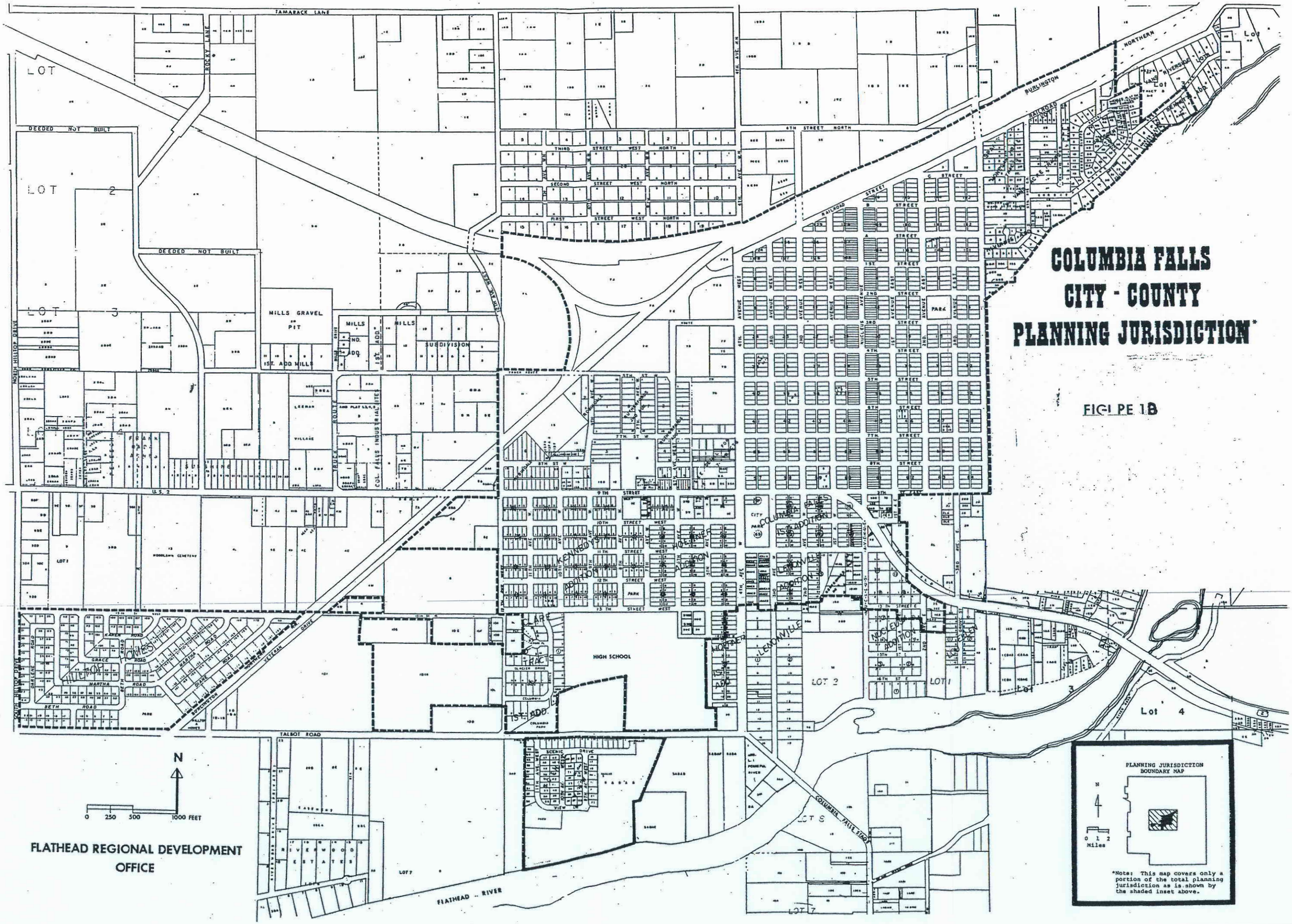
FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION*

FIGURE 1B



2. LOCATIONAL POTENTIALS

Within a regional setting, communities are interrelated to one another in regard to services, trade and activities, and usually compete with one another to gain areas of influence outside their corporate limits. The size and type of a community and its location in the regional transportation network has direct bearing on the size of the community's area of influence and the degree of influence of that community in the region. In order to develop a viable plan it is, therefore, essential to evaluate these interrelations with other communities and areas within the region and address the overall development needs and potentials of this area.

THE COMMUNITY

The City of Columbia Falls, located in the northeastern portion of Flathead County, has a 1980 population of 3,112 and encompasses an area of 825 acres (1.3 square miles) within its corporate limits. The total planning jurisdiction as previously described consists of approximately 45 square miles. The City is bounded by the Flathead River to the east and south and by Burlington Northern railroad tracks to the north. These factors somewhat restrict the urban growth in these three directions and consequently the City's physical growth has been primarily towards the west. The City is located on generally flat land.

U.S. Highway 2, which was formerly Montana Highway 40, passes in an east-west direction through the mid-section of the community. This route bisects the community with development having occurred about equally on both sides of it. The City was originally laid and has subsequently developed on a grid iron pattern; streets laid in an east-west direction and avenues in the north-south direction. The central business district is located in the eastern portion of the community, north of U.S. Highway 2. Due to the continuous westward growth, the downtown is somewhat unbalanced in terms of central location in the community. Because of this situation and the increasing traffic on U.S. Highway 2, strip commercial development has been occurring along U.S. Highway 2, almost as a linear extension of the central business district.

The economic base of the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction has been predominantly in the lumber and metal industries, although some trends toward diversification of the economy are emerging.

Origin and Evolution

An evaluation of the origin and evolution of the community should provide an understanding of the cultural values of the community and its historical development trends.

As most of the land in Montana was owned or inhabited by the Indians at one time, so was the land of the Columbia Falls townsite. With the westward expansion of the railroad, it was speculated that the site of the present

community would become an important railroad center. This speculation prompted a group of residents from Butte to purchase land for the future townsite at a price of $5,000 to $6,000 from LaFrombois, an Indian woman. The site selected was north and west of the Flathead River and south of the present Burlington Northern Railway. The original town was laid out in the 1890's with Nucleus Avenue forming the "main street" and commercial district. Residential areas flanked both sides of Nucleus Avenue between Fourth Avenue West and Fourth Avenue East. Industry was to be located primarily along the river in the southern and eastern sections of the town. A park site was established south of Ninth Street and north of the River. South of Riverside Park and east of Fourth Avenue West was located the Steamboat Landing. Moving northward along the river bank a flour mill and elevator, lath and shingle mill, saw mill, Great Northern Lumber Yard, sash factory, canal and water power site were all envisioned (Figure 2, following page).

The community was initially known as Columbia. This name was derived from the idea that the head waters of the Columbia River system were at the very head of the Flathead River. The name was later changed to Columbia Falls to stop mail mix up between Columbia and Columbus, because of the similarity in names.

The town initially developed as a trade and transportation related settlement. It's significance as a trading center grew in the 1890's when it became a shipping point for grains between Grand Forks, North Dakota and Spokane, Washington. It also became a transport center serving as an access point to the North Fork for shipping logs south to Somers, via the Flathead River. Additionally, limited coal mining was undertaken in the area and this was used to supply the trains. Columbia Falls also served as a way station for travelers journeying West and South.

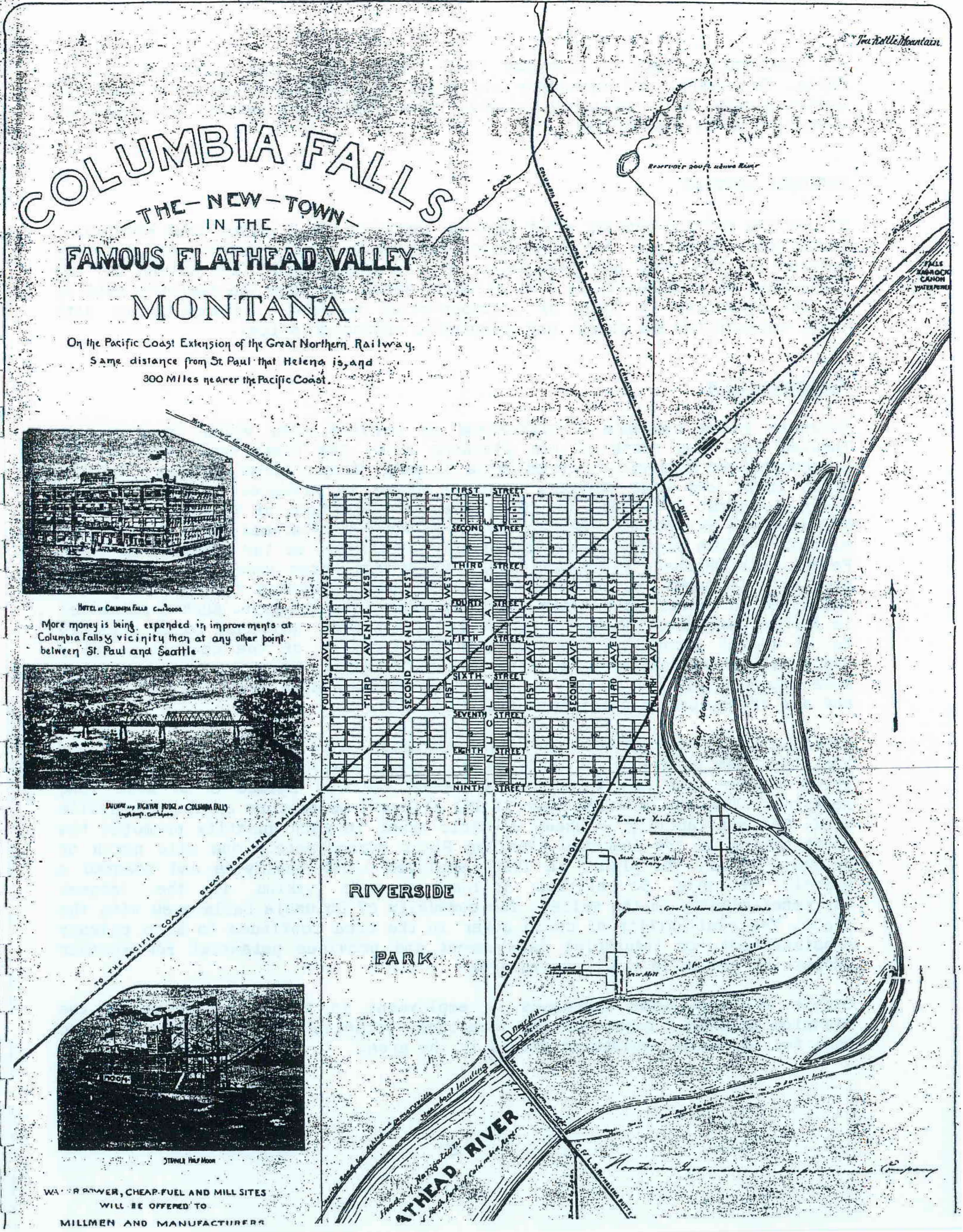
The boom town growth of the City was to be short-lived, as a series of events shifted growth and importance to other areas of the County. Kalispell was narrowly chosen, by popular vote, over Columbia Falls for the county seat in 1894. The growing community of Whitefish was chosen as the railroad division point, thus ending speculation and hope on that issue. Road construction and the emergence of truck travel diminished the use of the Flathead River as a transportation route and decreased Columbia Falls' role as a trade center. Kalispell became the County's governmental and trade center while Whitefish became the focal point for railroad activities. The City of Columbia Falls finally incorporated in 1909, but from the year 1910 through 1940 it was to experience a stagnant growth rate, neither increasing or decreasing.

However, over the past forty years, the community has again experienced real growth. This was caused by the beginning of construction of the Hungry Horse Dam in 1946, followed by the location of the Anaconda Aluminum Company in 1955 and by the location and operation of five lumber mills in the area. The late 1970's brought temporary, but dramatic growth in the area as improvements were made to the aluminum plant beginning in 1977. In response to this growth, the Columbia Falls area realized the start, expansion or remodeling of some 35 small businesses during 1979 and 1980.

The economic bad times of the early 1980's somewhat slowed the community's growth. However, the continuous economic recovery and re-routing of U.S. Highway 2 through the community are expected to revitalize the local economy as more tourists will be traveling through the community. Further, intensive

FIGURE 2

NORTHERN INTERNATIONAL IMPROVEMENT COMPANY TOWN PROMOTER'S PLAN - 1890's



oil explorations are in progress in the North Fork area north of Columbia Falls. Successful oil discovery may bring a significant economic boom and sudden growth in the area and Columbia Falls, being the nearest municipality, should be greatly benefited.

REGIONAL SETTING

Cities are service centers which provide services for a larger area known as a hinterland. Therefore, the development potentials of a community are directly related to the area and population of the hinterland. The extent of the hinterland of a community is also directly dependent upon the regional setting of the community in terms of transportation networks, interrelations with other communities and areas, and geographic characteristics.

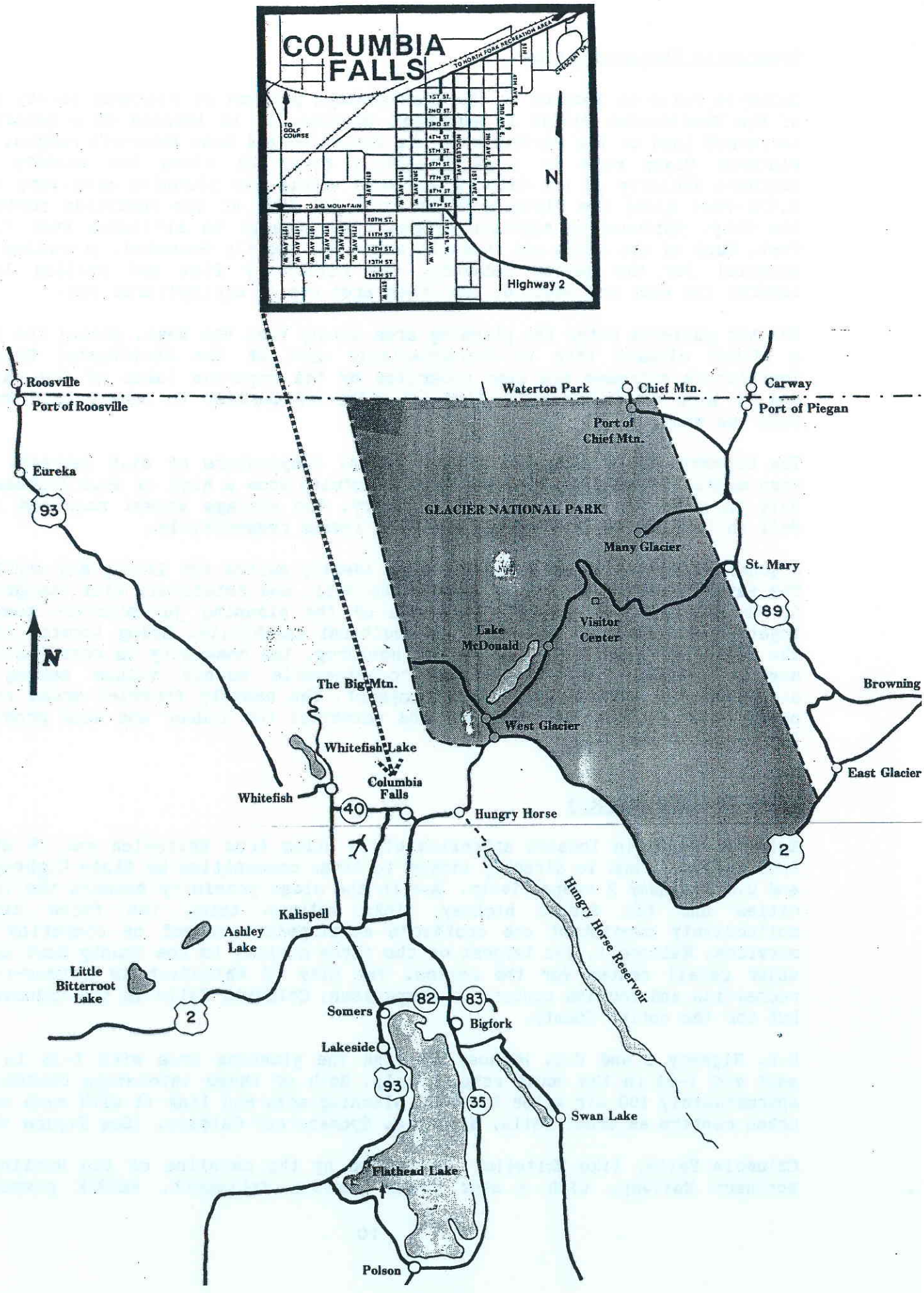
The Hinterland

Columbia Falls commands a hinterland or service area which is primarily located east and north of the planning area. The hinterland includes the unincorporated communities of Columbia Heights, Hungry Horse, Martin City, the North Fork, and West Glacier. Columbia Falls is situated approximately 17 miles southwest of Glacier National Park, 15 miles west of Whitefish Lake and Big Mountain Ski Resort area, and 26 miles north of Flathead Lake. The eastern vicinity of the planning area is primarily comprised of the Flathead National Forest, Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, and Hungry Horse Reservoir. This close proximity to major recreational and scenic areas provides the community with unlimited potential for tourism and recreational development. Such a potential is further enhanced because of a 9 hole golf course (proposed to be expanded to 18 holes) located in the northwestern vicinity of the community and a "water-slide" recreational facility east of the City. Both of these major man-made recreational facilities are approximately one mile from the City Limits and are of regional significance (see Figure 3).

Columbia Falls is located only seven air miles from Hungry Horse Dam, a 564 foot high dam completed in 1953. When it was completed, it was the nation's third highest and fourth largest concrete dam and backed a 34 mile long reservoir. The dam provides four 71,250 kilowatt generators on the Bonneville grid. The availability of cheap electric power in such quantity promoted the construction of the Anaconda Aluminum Plant approximately one mile north of Columbia Falls. The plant, in 1980, employed 1,350 employees and boasted a payroll of over 30 million dollars a year making it the largest business/industry in the valley. The community of Columbia Falls grew with the plant. The availability of cheap power in the area continues to be a primary consideration for industrial development and provides potential for further industrial growth in the planning area.

Stable and continuous increases in employment in basic industries in the planning area as a result of its locational potentials also provides a sound base for non-basic employment growth in the area.

FIGURE 3


COLUMBIA FALLS
TO NORTH FORK RECREATION AREA
TO GOLF COURSE
TO BIG MOUNTAIN
Highway 2
N
Roosville
Port of Roosville
Eureka
93
Waterton Park
Chief Mtn.
Carway
Port of Piegan
Port of Chief Mtn.
GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
Many Glacier
St. Mary
89
Visitor Center
Lake McDonald
Browning
The Big Mtn.
West Glacier
Whitefish Lake
Columbia Falls
Whitefish
40
Hungry Horse
East Glacier
2
Hungry Horse Reservoir
Kalispell
Ashley Lake
Little Bitterroot Lake
82
83
Somers
Bigfork
Lakeside
93
35
Swan Lake
Flathead Lake
Polson

Geographic Characteristics

Columbia Falls is located in the northeastern portion of Flathead County west of the Continental Divide in northwest Montana. It is located on a generally terrained land at the foothills of the Whitefish and Swan Mountain ranges. The Flathead River runs in a southwesterly direction along the eastern and southern vicinity of the City. Elevations within the planning area vary from 2,970 feet along the Flathead River to 3,400 feet at the foothills north of the City. Surrounding mountain ranges rise steeply to altitudes over 7,000 feet. Much of the hills and foothill areas are heavily forested, providing raw material for the lumber industry. The relatively flat and rolling lands towards the east and south of the urban area are in agricultural use.

Weather patterns enter the planning area mainly from the West, giving the area a milder climate than is characteristic east of the Continental Divide. Temperature extremes are also moderated by the numerous lakes of the valley and by high mountains which form an effective barrier to severe cold waves from the east.

The Columbia Falls area has a mean annual temperature of 41.8 degrees. The mean monthly temperatures in the area fluctuate from a high of 64.3 degrees in July to a low of 19.1 degrees in January. The average annual rain and snow fall in the area is 16.3 inches and 66.5 inches respectively.

A generally mild climate makes the area ideally suited for living and working. The favorable climate, highly productive soil, and relatively flat topography in the western and southern portions of the planning jurisdiction combine together to create an excellent agricultural capability. Being located along the riverfront with mountains in the backdrop, the community is considered to have a pleasant environment and considerable scenic values making it attractive for tourist-related development. The heavily forested areas north of the City provide the incentive and potential for lumber and wood products industries in the area.

Transportation Network

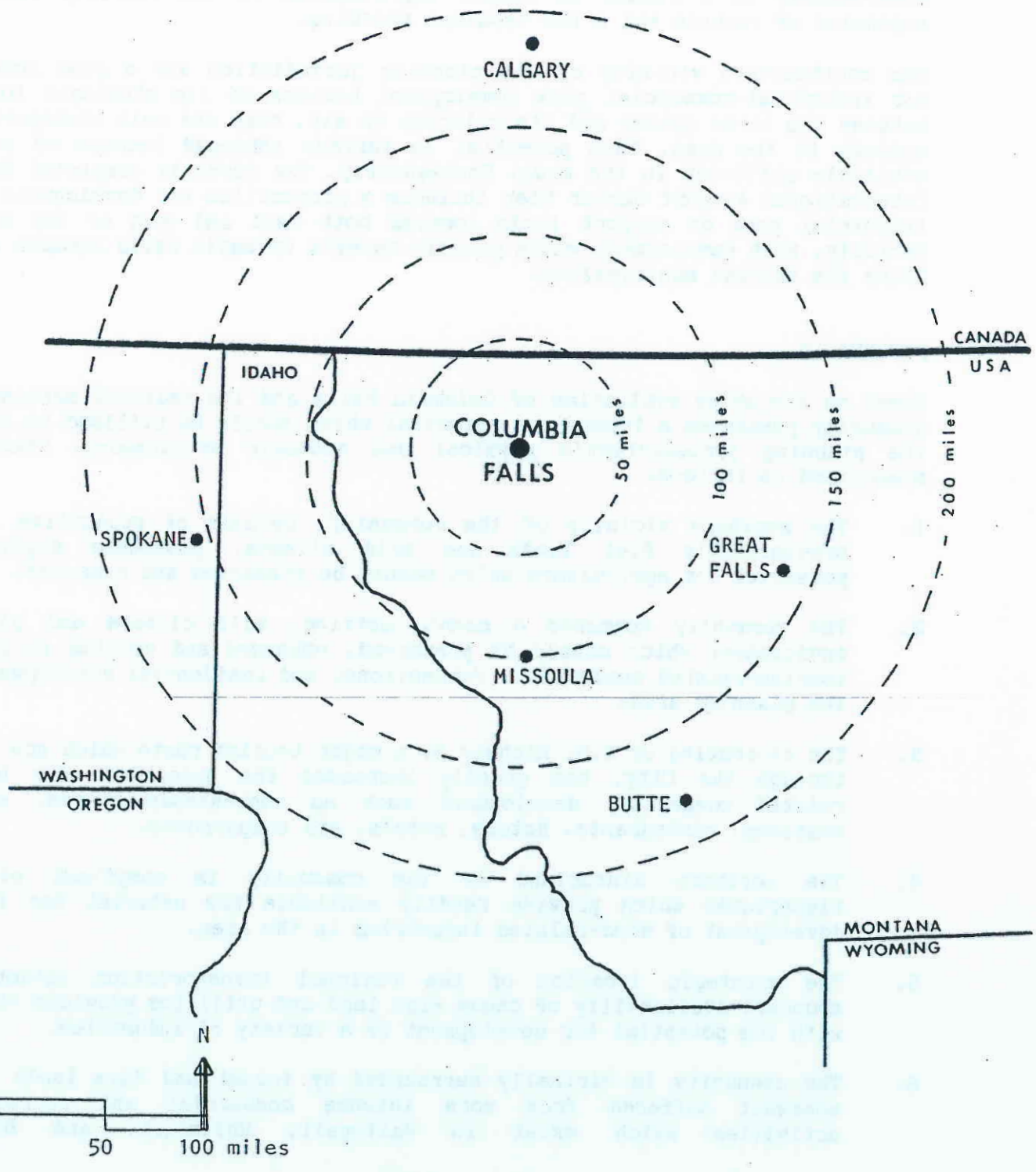
Columbia Falls is located approximately 8 miles from Whitefish and 15 miles from Kalispell and is directly linked to these communities by State Highway 40 and U.S. Highway 2 respectively. Due to the close proximity between the three cities and the direct highway links between them, the three cities collectively supplement one another's development instead of competing for services. Kalispell, the largest of the three cities, is the County Seat and a major retail center for the region. The City of Whitefish is a year-round recreation and tourism center. In comparison, Columbia Falls is the industrial hub for the entire County.

U.S. Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 93 link the planning area with I-15 in the east and I-90 in the south respectively. Both of these interstate routes are approximately 100 air miles from the planning area and link it with such major urban centers as Great Falls, Missoula, Spokane and Calgary. (See Figure 4)

Columbia Falls, like Whitefish, is served by the mainline of the Burlington Northern Railway, with a spur track serving Kalispell. AMTRAK passenger

FIGURE 4

REGIONAL SETTING



FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

railroad service is available at Whitefish and provides direct access from such major urban centers as Seattle, Spokane, and Chicago.

In terms of air transportation, the City of Columbia Falls is located approximately 6 miles northeast of Glacier International Airport. This provides the planning area with direct air transportation linkage with Spokane, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver and Calgary in addition to linkage with all the major cities in Montana. Air traffic at the airport has increased considerably as a result of recent improvements to the facility including expansion of runways and a new terminal building.

The southwestern vicinity of the planning jurisdiction has a good potential for industrial-commercial park development because of its strategic location between the three cities and its relation to air, road and rail transportation systems in the area. This potential is further enhanced because of readily available utilities in the area. Consequently, the recently completed Glacier International Airport Master Plan includes a proposition for development of an industrial park on airport lands located both east and west of the airport facility. Such development would greatly benefit Columbia Falls because of its being the nearest municipality.

POTENTIALS

Based on the above evaluation of Columbia Falls and its regional setting, the community possesses a tremendous potential which should be utilized to enhance the planning jurisdiction's physical and economic development. These are summarized as follows:

1. The southern vicinity of the community, because of productive soils, predominantly flat lands and mild climate, possesses significant potential for agriculture which should be preserved and enhanced.

2. The community commands a scenic setting, mild climate and pleasant environment which should be preserved, enhanced and availed to promote tourism-related commercial, recreational and residential developments in the planning area.

3. The re-routing of U.S. Highway 2, a major tourist route which now passes through the City, has greatly increased the potentials for highway related commercial development such as convenience stores, service stations, restaurants, hotels, motels, and campgrounds.

4. The northern hinterland of the community is comprised of vast timberlands which provide readily available raw material for further development of wood-related industries in the area.

5. The strategic location of the regional transportation network and abundant availability of cheap flat land and utilities provides the area with the potential for development of a variety of industries.

6. The community is virtually surrounded by forest and farm lands and is somewhat buffered from more intense commercial and recreational activities which exist in Kalispell, Whitefish, and Bigfork.

Nevertheless, the community serves as a retail and service center for its immediate vicinity and northeastern hinterland which includes the unincorporated communities of Coram, Martin City, Hungry Horse, West Glacier, Columbia Heights, and the North Fork Valley. The community should be developed to provide for commercial, educational and personal services for these areas in addition to adequately serving its own citizenry.

7. The northern and northeastern vicinity of the community provides for such nature-related recreational facilities as hunting, fishing, camping and hiking. Columbia Falls being the nearest municipality can greatly benefit by providing tourist related facilities and developing man-made recreational facilities to supplement natural recreational resources. The recently developed waterslide complex and proposed expansion of the golf course with a 600-unit recreational home development were initiated primarily on the basis of this development potential.

Thus, the community possesses substantial potential for expansion of industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational and tourism related developments. The expansion of these developments in the planning jurisdiction would provide the desired enhancement and diversification of the community's economic base, instead of its dependence on one or two major industries.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any development must allow for the limitations of the environment. This is true when planning for an urban environment with a full range of utilities or a countryside dependant upon individual water supplies and waste disposal systems. If the community is interested in preventing stream pollution, maintaining high utility and low maintenance of streets, avoiding flood damage, the destruction of landscape amenities and the premature deterioration of buildings, then the value of the balance of nature must be respected. Three major environmental factors considered to be most crucial in their impact upon future development in the planning jurisdiction have been chosen for in-depth analysis: soils, slope, and floodplain.

SOILS

Soil forms the very foundation for all construction and development. Therefore, information about soil types is invaluable in helping identify limitations for various uses such as residences, roads, on-site sewage disposal systems, etc. If properly followed, soils information can save many costly mistakes in construction and aid in preventing surface and ground water pollution. The most reliable soils information available is contained in the 1960 Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey for the upper Flathead Valley. This study encompasses a majority of the planning jurisdiction except the north and northeast areas above Tamarack Lane and the North Fork Highway.

The Environmental Concerns Map, Figure 5, identifies areas in the planning jurisdiction which contain two or more severe limitations which would indicate areas undesirable to develop and, if developed, areas which would contain substantial extra engineering, design, and construction costs. Soil categories reviewed include:

1. Residential development with public sewage disposal, less than three stories high with basements. Limitations would include shrink-swell behavior, seasonal high water table, flood hazard, slope, depth to bedrock, amount of stone and salinity.

2. Roads and parking areas including construction and maintenance. Limitations include high water table, flood hazard, frost heave potential, amount of stone, slope, depth to rock and load bearing capacities.

3. On-site sewage disposal facilities (septic tanks, etc.). Limitations include permeability, depth to bedrock, high seasonal water table, slope, flood hazard and amount of stone.

There are three general areas within the planning jurisdiction where soil limitations will have a major effect on the type of development proposed. The most critical area is located on either side of the Flathead River throughout the planning jurisdiction. This area is plagued with high ground water and flooding, making it unsuitable for any type of structured development. The

second area of concern lies north of Highway 2 in the northwest corner of the planning jurisdiction. This area is generally unsuitable for on-site sewage disposal facilities, but if a public sewer system were installed or extended, the area would be otherwise suitable for development. The final area of concern includes the steep bank areas adjacent to the rivers and on the east side of the jurisdiction where Columbia and Teakettle Mountains rise up.

SLOPE

How the land lays affects almost every aspect of development. Land can be too flat for some uses and too steep for others. Slope is one of the controlling factors in the design of streets, storm drainage facilities, sewer and water lines, lot orientation and density. Problems that usually occur because of slope can be grouped under three headings:

Grade: Slopes that are too steep or too gentle for a particular land use and, therefore, must be changed by cut and fill if development is to occur.

Erosion: Slopes with steep inclines, light vegetative cover and loose soil material and thus conducive to loss of soil by erosion.

Failure: Slopes that are composed of weak, steeply inclined materials which have low bearing (weight-supporting) capacity and are prone to mass movements such as mud flows, creep and slides.

It is difficult to be specific about slope limitations because of the amount of site design and engineering which may or may not be incorporated into a particular land use. Generally, though, 0-10% slopes are well suited for most development activity, 11-20% slopes are still suitable for some types of development, but engineering constraints and problems are much more prevalent and slopes beyond 20% consistently exhibit one or more problems of grade, erosion or failure. Any development in this range should be closely scrutinized.

In general steep slopes do not appear to be a major constraint to development in the immediate future. Most of the steep areas in and around the urban and suburban fringes of Columbia Falls occur along the river or stream banks. The entire east portion of the planning jurisdiction from the base of Columbia and Teakettle Mountains east is undevelopable, but this area is well beyond any development pressure. The northern portion of the planning jurisdiction beyond Tamarack Road contains moderately sloping lands, but this area is also beyond any development pressure. Figure 5 presents the slope information for the planning jurisdiction.

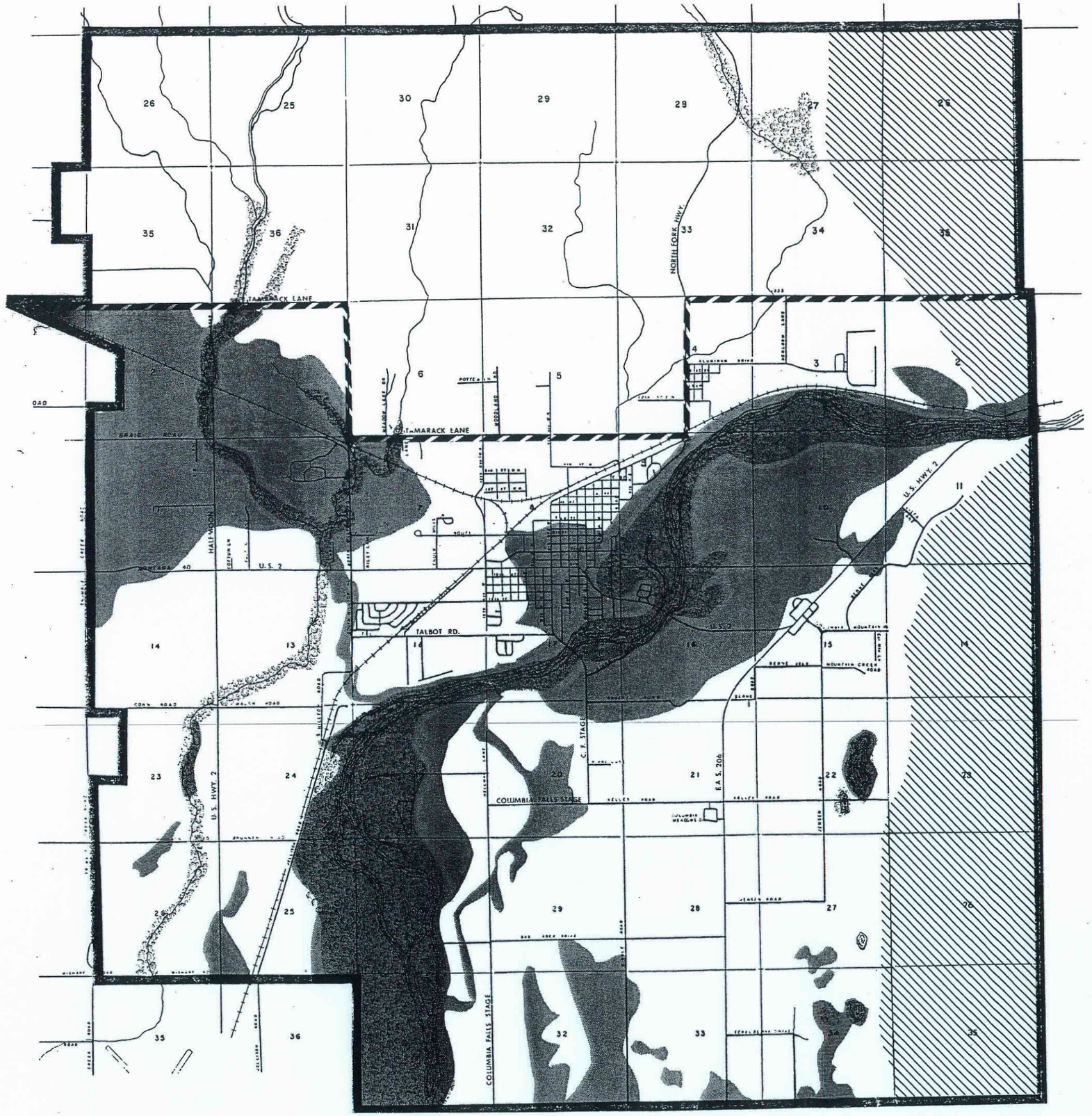
FLOODPLAIN

The Flathead River brought life to the early City of Columbia Falls by providing cheap power, a transportation route, and a steady supply of water for industrial and domestic consumption. Yet, periodic flooding by it and the rivers in the planning jurisdiction has been responsible for untold damage and destruction making it one of the most critical restraints to development.

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

FIGURE 5



KEY

- Slopes Greater Than 20%
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Two or More Severe Soil Constraints
- Northern Limits of Detailed Study - 1960 Soil Survey

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FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Major floods have been recorded in 1894, 1926, 1933, 1948, 1964 and 1975. In recent years considerable efforts have been exerted by the Federal Emergency Management Administration to define the flood prone areas within all of Flathead County as part of the National Flood Insurance Program. The major yardstick used to measure the flood prone areas is the 100 year floodplain which defines an area covered by a flood of such intensity that it would, on average occur only once every 100 years or, more precisely, a flood that has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year.

Flood prone areas are visually described by Figure 5. As expected, the lowlands encompassing a considerable amount of land on both sides of the Flathead River and small areas along Trumbull Creek are in flood prone areas. It is recommended that no permanent structures be constructed, and where possible, no filling be done in the 100 year floodplain. The reasons for this are obvious. Structures built in the floodplain will almost assuredly experience flood damage or be cut off from outside access during high water. Also, structures or fill in the floodplain will adversely affect the free flow of floodwaters and reduce the area for flood waters to go causing the water to flood higher upstream.

As a safeguard for future development both the City and County are administering the National Flood Insurance Program. The City building department is responsible for the Columbia Falls program and administers it as part of the building permit process within the City and the one mile extra-territorial area. The County administers the same program in the remaining area of the planning jurisdiction through the Flathead Regional Development Office.

SUMMARY

The cumulative severe limitations of poor soils, steep slopes and floodplain area coincide with each other and present a definite pattern of areas not suitable for economical development. The potential growth area for Columbia Falls lies in an axis running northeast-southwest parallel to the Flathead River. The major area of constraint northwest of the City would accommodate urban scale development if the area were served by a public sewer and water system. In this case either a homeowners system or extension of the City's utilities would be appropriate to address the problems.

There is a large area south and east of the Flathead River which displays very few environmental limitations to development, but other factors limit growth in this area. Transportation routes across the Flathead River are limited and in the case of the Red Bridge, woefully inadequate. Extension of the City services south across the river would also be prohibitively expensive. Finally, this area is rich productive farm land and designated by the Soil Conservation service as being of local importance and thus valuable to Flathead County as agricultural lands.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Communities are intended to provide for the needs of their inhabitants. Therefore, the physical development and size of a community is directly proportionate to its population size. The future physical needs for a community are projected by making population projections for the planning period, usually 20 years or so, and then apply planning standards.

The methodologies for making population projections involve analyzing past trends and projecting them into the future after making adjustments for anticipated variables. Economic conditions of the area are one of such variables which have significant bearing on future population trends in the area.

PAST POPULATION TRENDS

The City of Columbia Falls originated in 1894 and was incorporated in 1909. Until 1940, the community's population growth remained somewhat stagnant because of a lack of any established economic base. The earlier speculation of its becoming a major railroad terminal, and later anticipation of the vicinity becoming a major coal mining area never materialized.

However, the City experienced a major population boom during the years between 1940 and 1960. This was a result of first the construction of the Hungry Horse Dam completed in 1946, and then the construction of the Anaconda Aluminum Plant, completed in 1955. Both of these construction projects drew a migration of workers in from other areas. During this period, the area also developed as a major lumber industry center with the start of operation of five major lumber mills. Consequently, Columbia Falls population grew from 637 in 1940 to 1,232 in 1950 and 2,132 in 1960. This represented a growth rate of 93 percent and 73 percent for each decade. In comparison, the Flathead County population grew by 29 percent and 4 percent and the State of Montana population grew by 6 percent and 14 percent during the same periods.

This sudden, steep population increase during 1940-1960 found the community unprepared to cope with such growth. The housing and public facilities were lacking and many people employed in the Columbia Falls area sought housing in Kalispell and Whitefish. This trend has been continuing.

Communities are a part of a larger region. In order to evaluate population trends of a community, it is essential to analyze them in relation to the population fluctuations within this larger region.

Table 1 provides a comparative view of population trends of Columbia Falls, Flathead County, and the State of Montana. During this forty year period, the population of Columbia Falls grew at an average annual rate of 4.1 percent. In comparison, the populations of Flathead County and the State of Montana grew at an average annual rate of 2.1 and 0.9 percent only. The higher population growth rate of Columbia Falls is indicative of in-migration reflecting the progressive character of the community and its increasing industrial growth.

TABLE 1
POPULATION TRENDS
COLUMBIA FALLS, COUNTY, STATE
1940-1980

AREA	1980		1970		1960		1950		1940
	Pop.	% Change 70-80	Pop.	% Change 60-70	Pop.	% Change 50-60	Pop.	% Change 40-50	Pop.
Columbia Falls	3,112	17	2,652	24	2,132	73	1,232	93	637
Flathead Cty	51,966	32	39,460	20	32,965	4	31,495	29	24,271
Montana State	786,690	13	694,409	3	674,767	14	591,024	6	559,456

Source: U.S. Census 1940-1980.

During the last two decades (1960-1980), the County population has been increasing at an average annual growth rate of 2.6 percent in comparison to 2.0 percent per year in Columbia Falls. This higher growth rate in the County is primarily due to the somewhat recent trend of intensive suburban growth in Flathead County. This trend has been particularly evident in the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction because of the inadequacies within the City resulting from sudden population growth during the previous two decades.

In 1940, the cumulative population of the three incorporated cities in Flathead County accounted for 47 percent of the total population of the County in comparison to only 34 percent in 1980. This is indicative of the massive suburbanizations and land speculations occurring in the rural areas of the County because of its recreational potentials. Since 1940, Columbia Falls has remained the fastest growing of the three incorporated communities in the County. Table 2 provides a comparison of the average annual growth rate of Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish.

TABLE 2
COMPARATIVE GROWTH RATE
COLUMBIA FALLS, WHITEFISH, KALISPELL
1940-1980

City	Average Annual Growth Rate				
	1940-50	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1940-80
Columbia Falls	9.3%	7.3%	2.40%	1.70%	4.14%
Kalispell	1.8%	0.4%	0.40%	0.10%	0.55%
Whitefish	3.3%	-1.5%	1.30%	1.00%	0.41%

Source: U.S. Census 1940-1980.

Since 1940, Columbia Falls has been growing at an average annual growth rate of 4.14 percent in comparison to only 0.55 percent for Kalispell and 0.41

percent for Whitefish. During 1970-1980, the City of Columbia Falls grew by 17 percent which is well within the optimum growth rate of 10-20 percent for communities. Such a growth rate is considered as healthy and manageable.

During the period of 1940-1960, the primary growth of the community had been in the employment of basic industries. This created a substantial demand for non-basic industries and non-basic employment, resulting in continuous population growth at a healthy rate of 2 percent per year during the sixties and seventies. Generally, every job in basic industry results in about 1.5 non-basic jobs.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS:

The analysis and understanding of population characteristics are critical factors utilized in making population projections for an area. Such factors include the male-female ratio, age group structure, and household and ethnical composition of the population.

Male-Female Ratio:

The Male-Female ratio is a significant factor in analyzing the migration and work force in the planning jurisdiction. The male-female ratio is almost equal within the City of Columbia Falls. This is very similar to the population characteristics of Flathead County and the State of Montana. The 1980 census shows 49.1 percent of the City's population is male and 50.9 percent is female. Likewise, the male-female ratio in the County and the State are 49.7 to 50.3 and 49.9 to 50.1 percent respectively. The fact that there are almost an equal number of males and females in the community is a favorable characteristic. The male-female ratio in Columbia Falls has moved towards an equal ratio since 1970, when only 48.5 percent of the population were males.

Age Structure:

The evaluation of the age structure composition of the population is an essential ingredient for making population projections. It establishes the work force in the community and the extent of need of specific public facilities such as schools, parks, medicare and public transportation. Not only is it important to analyze the age structure of the population at a particular time, but also to evaluate fluctuations within the various age groups over a period of time.

The age structure of Columbia Falls for the years 1970 and 1980 are described in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

In 1980 approximately 9.5 percent of the population in Columbia Falls was of pre-school age, 20 percent was of school age, 62.3 percent was of working age and 8.2 percent was of retirement age. In comparison, Flathead County in 1980 had 8.2 percent pre-school age, 21.3 percent school age, 59.8 percent working age and 10.7 percent retirement age. Therefore, Columbia Falls has a greater proportion of its population in the work force and fewer school age and retired residents as compared to that in the region.

TABLE 3
AGE STRUCTURE
CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
1970

Age Group	Males		Females		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 - 4	131	4.9	138	5.2	269	10.1
5 - 14	326	12.3	355	13.4	481	25.7
15 - 24	180	6.8	229	8.6	409	15.4
25 - 34	172	6.5	180	6.8	352	13.3
35 - 44	150	5.7	152	5.7	302	11.4
45 - 54	146	5.5	145	5.5	291	11.0
55 - 64	102	3.8	86	3.2	188	7.0
65 - 74	44	1.7	46	1.7	90	3.4
75 +	34	1.3	36	1.4	70	2.7

Source: U.S. Census 1970.

TABLE 4
AGE STRUCTURE
CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
1980

Age Group	Males		Females		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 - 4	143	4.6	151	4.9	294	9.5
5 - 14	295	9.5	265	8.5	560	18.0
15 - 24	259	8.3	288	9.3	547	17.6
25 - 34	261	8.4	273	8.8	534	17.2
35 - 44	176	5.7	191	6.1	367	11.8
45 - 54	162	5.2	141	4.5	303	9.7
55 - 64	121	3.9	130	4.2	251	8.1
65 - 74	73	2.3	93	2.9	166	5.3
75 +	37	1.2	53	1.7	90	2.9
TOTAL	1,527	49.1	1,585	50.9	3,112	100.0

Source: U.S. Census, 1980.

In 1970, the City of Columbia Falls had 10.1 percent of its population in pre-school age, 27.0 percent in school age, 56.8 percent in working age and 6.1 percent in retirement age. Thus, during the decennial period of 1970-1980, the work force as a percentage of the total population has increased from 56.8 to 62.3, in Columbia Falls. The larger proportion of wage earning population is considered a favorable characteristic of the community and is indicative of an in-migration occurring in the community.

Another interesting characteristic is that, in 1980, the age group 5-14 years constituted only 18 percent of the total population in comparison to 25.7 percent in 1970. This is a national phenomenon and is attributable to the aging of the baby boom generation born in the 1950's and early 1960's and the

relative declining birth rates thereafter. This trend of declining family size is expected to continue for some years before stabilizing. This trend has direct bearing on the schools enrollment in the area.

The population age structure of Columbia Falls is characteristic of an industrial oriented community. The comparatively smaller proportion of retirement age people in the community suggests that Columbia Falls does not serve as a retirement community and, to some extent, people on retiring move to areas outside the City. This trend is further substantiated by the fact that in 1980 the median age in Columbia Falls was comparatively lower than both the County and the State. (Table 5)

TABLE 5
MEDIAN AGE
COLUMBIA FALLS, COUNTY, STATE
1980

Area	Median Age
Columbia Falls	27.7 years
Flathead County	29.7 years
Montana State	29.0 years

Source: U.S. Census, 1980

Household Size:

Columbia Falls has been following the national trend of continuously decreasing household size, declining from 3.36 persons per family in 1970 to 2.83 persons per family in 1980. This represents a 16 percent decrease in family size between 1970-1980. However, the average household size in Columbia Falls continues to be larger than that in Flathead County and Montana. (Table 6)

TABLE 6
HOUSEHOLD SIZES
COLUMBIA FALLS, COUNTY AND STATE
1970-1980

Area	Average Household Size		% Change
	1970	1980	1970-1980
Columbia Falls	3.36	2.83	-16
Flathead County	3.22	2.73	-15
Montana	3.04	2.70	-11

Source: U.S. Census, 1970 and 1980.

The decline in average household size is attributable to a growing number of single parents, decline in birth rate and an increasing number of single-

person households. The reasons for the average household size in Columbia Falls being continuously higher than that in Flathead County and the State of Montana may be attributed to the fact that (i) Columbia Falls has fewer elderly people who usually comprise a large number of single households, and (ii) Columbia Falls has a larger proportion of population in child bearing age groups and, therefore, families with children are more prevalent.

The declining household size in Columbia Falls is expected to continue during the next two decades or so until it reaches a size of approximately 2.6 persons. The decline in household size is expected to result in an increase in demand for housing.

Ethnical Composition:

The ethnical composition of a community has a significant effect on social and cultural environments that prevail in a community. The population of Columbia Falls is predominantly white. The number of minorities in the City has risen from 17 in 1970 to 33 in 1980. The increase is attributable to migration from nearby Indian reservations because of better employment opportunities in Columbia Falls and vicinity during the seventies. The racial composition of Columbia Falls is shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7
RACIAL COMPOSITION
COLUMBIA FALLS
1970, 1980

Race	1970		1980	
	# of People	% of Pop.	# of People	% of Pop.
White	2,635	99.4	3,079	98.9
American Indian	14	0.5	33	1.1
Others	3	0.1	-	-
TOTAL	2,652	100.0	3,112	100.0

Source: U.S. Census 1970 and 1980.

Based on the above information, the population of Columbia Falls is primarily homogeneous in character and the proportion of non-white population in the community is negligible.

ECONOMIC PROFILE:

Migration to and from an area is indirectly proportional to the employment opportunities available in the area. It is, therefore, important to analyze employment patterns, trends and potentials of an area and project them in the future.

Employment:

The employment pattern and trends for Columbia Falls are shown in Table 8. While this table only addresses the residents of Columbia Falls, it is fairly reflective of the population in the entire planning jurisdiction. Employment is usually discussed in terms of basic and non-basic industry. Basic industry or basic employment involves the export of products or services to areas outside the planning area. Basic industry or basic employment in the community establishes its economic base. Manufacturing, transportation, agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining represent basic employment. All other categories formulate non-basic employment. In 1970, Columbia Falls had 475 persons employed in basic industry and 373 persons in non-basic. Usually every basic job results in 1.5 to 2.0 non-basic jobs in the community. The unusually higher portion of basic employment in 1970 was because of sudden massive development of the manufacturing industries in the area during the sixties.

TABLE 8
EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS
COLUMBIA FALLS
1970, 1980

Employment Category	1970		1980	
	# of Emps.	% of Work Force	# of Emps.	% of Work Force
Construction	42	4.9	77	5.9
Manufacturing	424	50.0	461	35.5
Transportation	10	1.2	14	1.1
Communications and Other Public Utilities	23	2.7	32	2.5
Wholesale and Retail Trades	138	16.3	192	14.8
Finance, Insurance, Business & Repair Services	28	3.3	63	4.9
Professional & Related Services	127	15.0	252	19.4
Public Administration (Govt.)	15	1.8	39	3.0
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, Mining, Entertainment, & Recreation	41	4.8	167	12.9
Total (Employed)	848	100.0	1,297	100.0
Labor Force	875		1,457	
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.3%		11%	

Source: U.S. Census 1970, 1980

The community growth during the seventies was primarily in the non-basic sector to meet the demand caused by the upsurge in basic goods during the preceding decade. In 1980, the community had 642 people employed in basic industries and 655 employed in non-basic industry. This represents both a healthy increase of 38% in basic employment and a continued gross deficiency in terms of non-basic or service industry employment although some of this deficiency is met by the availability of such services in the nearby communities of Kalispell and Whitefish.

The major manufacturing industries in the Columbia Falls planning jurisdiction are the lumber and wood products industry and the primary metal industry. Derivative industries which represent a vital part of the Columbia Falls area economy include wholesale and retail trade, services, finance, and government. In addition, Columbia Falls is the headquarters of the Glacier View Forest Service District which services the North Fork area of the Flathead National Forest.

Agriculture is an important basic industry in Flathead County, but it is not the major source of employment in the Columbia Falls area. However, it is significant in the southern vicinity of Columbia Falls because of the high productivity of soils in that location.

The close proximity to Glacier National Park, scenic mountainous setting and recent re-routing of U.S. Highway 2 through Columbia Falls have significantly increased the community's potential for recreational and tourism related development. The potential of the community should be fully utilized to diversify and enhance the economy of the area.

Economic Outlook and Projections:

Migrations within regions usually occur from areas with low family incomes towards areas with higher average incomes. As per the 1980 census, the mean family income in Columbia Falls was $20,768, compared to $20,671 for Flathead County and $20,659 for the State. The comparatively higher wages in Columbia Falls should further promote in-migration.

The major industries in the planning jurisdiction, both aluminum and wood products, experienced setbacks in the early eighties because of the nationwide recession. These industries have now more or less bounced back from the setback and are expected to continue to progress in the future, although at a slower pace.

Although the employment growth between 1970-80 was primarily in the non-basic sector, it had not been enough to achieve the desire basic to non-basic ratio of 1 to 1.5. During the period of 1970-1980, the basic employment in Columbia Falls has grown by about 38 percent. The basic employment growth during the next two decades is anticipated to be at a slower rate of about 6 percent per decade primarily because of technological improvements in industries which would require a smaller work force and a slower industrial growth than that in the past. Based on this anticipation, the basic employment in Columbia Falls by the year 2000 would be approximately 720. This represents an increase of approximately 78 in basic jobs in the community. This increase is primarily expected to be in lumber and wood products industries and in the tourism industry.

Based on the general rule of ratios between basic and non-basic employment of 1 to 1.5, the total number of non-basic jobs in the year 2000 is projected to be 1,080. This represents an increase of 415 in the non-basic sector over a 20 year period. The new jobs in non-basic or supporting sector would be in employment categories of current deficiency.

The employment categories with deficient employment in Columbia Falls are determined by making a comparison of prevailing employment ratios in different employment categories between Columbia Falls, Flathead County and Montana as shown in Table 9. Underemployment exists in construction, transportation, retail and wholesale trade and finance and insurance sectors. Therefore, the majority of the projected increase in non-basic jobs should be in these sections.

TABLE 9
EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS
COLUMBIA FALLS, COUNTY, STATE
1980

Employment Category	Columbia Falls		Flathead County		Montana	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Construction	77	5.9	1,473	7.3	23,035	7.0
Manufacturing	461	35.5	3,537	17.5	24,286	7.4
Transportation	14	1.1	1,048	5.2	18,550	5.7
Communications & Public Utilities	32	2.5	673	3.3	10,867	3.3
Wholesale & Retail Trade	192	14.8	4,583	22.7	73,862	22.5
Finance, Insurance & Repair Service	63	4.9	1,668	8.3	26,182	8.0
Professional & Related Services	252	19.4	3,775	18.7	71,057	21.6
Public Administration & Govt.	39	3.0	862	4.2	21,976	6.7
Agricultural, Mining, Entertainment, & Recreation	167	12.9	2,556	12.7	58,501	17.8
TOTAL	1,297	100.0	20,168	100.0	328,316	100.0
% Population Employed	41.6		38.8		41.7	
% Labor Force Unemployed	11.0		14.3		8.3	

Source: U.S. Census, 1980

POPULATION PROJECTIONS:

Population projections should be made to provide the tools for estimating future needs of the community. Such projections are dependent upon a number of variables such as economic trends, fertility, mortality and migration. It is almost impossible to exactly forecast these variables for any particular area. Therefore, the projected numbers should be considered as estimated guides and not as actual head counts. Three different methods have been applied towards making population projections for Columbia Falls and its planning jurisdiction. The results of these methods have been compared to derive the best estimates.

Statistical Method:

This method is based on past population fluctuation trends which are assumed to continue to occur during the next two decades. The population changes for Columbia Falls over the last 40 years were evaluated and then projections were made for the next 20 years by applying the statistical methods of linear regression.

By applying this method, the population of Columbia Falls is projected to be 3,864 by the year 1990 and 4,500 by the year 2000.

Proportionate Method:

This method involves projecting the population of a larger region, for which detailed information is available, and it is assumed that the population of the planning jurisdiction shall change in the same proportion as in the larger region.

The Montana Department of Administration in 1981 made population projections for Flathead County by applying a complex computer model. The Department projected the County population to be 58,500 in the year 1990 and 65,500 in the year 2000. In 1980, Columbia Falls' population was approximately 6 percent of the County's population. Assuming the City's population will continue to be the same proportion through the planning period, Columbia Falls population should be in the vicinity of 3,520 in 1990 and 3,930 in the year 2000.

Economic Base Method:

In addition to the natural population growth and migration factors, this method also takes into consideration the area's economy and the fluctuations in the economic base and employment which have direct bearing on the future population.

The basic employment in Columbia Falls, as discussed previously, is anticipated to grow at an approximate rate of 6 percent per decade. Based on this assumption, the basic employment in the City should be approximately 680 in the year 1990 and 720 in the year 2000. The corresponding non-basic employment, based on a 1:1.5 ratio, should be 1,020 in the year 1990 and 1,080

in the year 2000. Thus, the total employment in the City would be approximately 1,700 and 1,800 in the years 1990 and 2000 respectively.

The ratio of employed people to total population in Columbia Falls is 1:2.4 based on the 1980 census. This ratio is anticipated to decline to 1:2.3 during the eighties and the nineties as a higher number of persons per family are expected to be working. Based on these considerations, the City's population should be 3,910 in the year 1990 and 4,140 in the year 2000.

The population projections by different methods are summarized in Table 10. Taking the average of projections by various methods, the population of Columbia Falls is projected to be approximately 3,765 in the year 1990 and 4,190 in the year 2000.

TABLE 10
COLUMBIA FALLS POPULATION PROJECTIONS
1980-2000

Method	Population		
	1980	1990	2000
Statistical Method	3,112	3,864	4,501
Proportionate Method	3,112	3,520	3,930
Economic Base Method	3,112	3,910	4,140

Source: Flathead Regional Development Office

Information pertaining to past population fluctuations in suburban areas of Columbia Falls is not available and, therefore, the proportionate method is applied to make population projections for the entire planning jurisdiction, which includes the City and areas of approximately 4.5 miles outside the City limits.

Through census information and field surveys, the total population of the planning jurisdiction was estimated to be 7,070 in 1980. Of this 3,112 or 44 percent of the population lived within the City and 3,958 or 56 percent lived in suburban areas.

The population of the planning jurisdiction area accounted for 13.6 percent of the County's population in 1980. The County's population is projected to grow 12.5 percent by 1990 and an additional 11.9 percent by the year 2000. Assuming that the planning area population will grow approximately in the same proportion as that of the County, the planning area population is projected to be 7,950 in 1990 and 8,900 in the year 2000.

The population trends and projections for the City of Columbia Falls, the planning jurisdiction area and Flathead County are shown in Table 11 below. These population projections are utilized in the following chapters to estimate the future needs of the City and surrounding planning jurisdiction.

TABLE 11
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING AREA:
POPULATION PROJECTIONS
1980-2000

Area	Population Projections					
	2000		1990		1980	
	Pop.	%Change	Pop.	%Change	Pop.	%Change
Columbia Falls	4,190	11.3	3,765	21.0	3,112	17.0
Planning Jurisdiction	8,900	12.0	7,950	12.5	7,070	-
Flathead County	65,500	12.0	58,500	12.5	51,966	32.0

Source: F.R.D.O., 1984. & U.S. Census, 1980.

5. LAND USE

How land is used reflects the entire spectrum of human activity, the existing governmental laws and policies and the unique characteristics of the land. The land use element of the Plan portrays the physical development of a community and the interrelationship between commercial, industrial, residential and public uses. In short, it describes the working and living areas of the community. Past and present trends and the relationships between the various uses in the community are analyzed. At the same time the physical potentials and constraints of the land are considered. The ultimate goal of the land use plan is to achieve a balance among the various land uses with respect to unique characteristics of the land.

EXISTING LAND USE

Every community has its own unique past which has strongly influenced how it has developed. In the case of Columbia Falls, the major forces have been the railroad, the lumber industry, the Hungry Horse Dam and the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant. Every community also has unique physical features which have served to channel or direct community growth. Physical features can act as a positive inducement or as a barrier in the path of development. Major constraints which have shaped growth have been the railroad rights-of-way to the north and west and the Flathead River to the east and south. Major opportunities likewise have been the broad flat lands above the Flathead River and the scenic vistas offered by the Flathead River and the forest lands and mountains to the north and east.

A land use survey of the Planning Jurisdiction was conducted in November of 1982 to provide a clearer picture of these growth and development patterns in and around Columbia Falls. The various types of land uses that make up the overall picture were grouped together into nine (9) categories to provide a better understanding of their relationship. These categories are defined below.

Land Use Categories:

Single Family - Single Family house

Mobile Home - Factory built home not meeting uniform building code.

Multi-Family - Multi-family housing including duplex and larger.

Commercial - General, highway and neighborhood commercial sales service, office and professional uses.

Industrial, Utilities, Railroad - Heavy and light manufacturing, processing and storage, gravel pits, saw dust dumps, power stations, railroad rights-of-way.

Streets - Public streets and alleys.

Parks and Open Space - Public and private park sites, fishing accesses, golf course, etc.

Agriculture/Timber - Agricultural lands and timbered areas including forest service lands not used for recreation.

These survey results are presented in two separate formats. First, all areas within the incorporated limits of Columbia Falls are presented for an in-depth analysis of the community. Information is then also presented for the planning jurisdiction as a whole including both the city and the rural areas. (See Tables 12 and 13.)

The City of Columbia Falls contains 825 acres of land. The vast majority of this land, 86%, is developed into fairly compact urban uses while the remaining 122 acres is vacant. The bulk of this vacant land is found in three closely related places all within the southwest corner of the City. This includes the Hilltop Homes subdivision, Dallas 5 subdivision and the school property at Twelfth and Talbot.

The development of lands within the City is fairly compact with streets and single family housing accounting for two-thirds of the developed area. Unfortunately, just beyond the City limits leap frog developments of strip highway commercial, heavy industrial activity and scattered housing have occurred in a haphazard fashion creating future barriers to organized municipal growth as well as creating substantial tax disparities. As can be seen from Table 13 the amount of developed land in the planning jurisdiction, as well as the amount of actual development, dwarfs the City of Columbia Falls. There are 34,270 acres in the entire jurisdiction of which 7,014 acres are partially or completely developed. This development constitutes 10 times the amount of development within the City and accounts for 20% of the land area of the jurisdiction. Below is an analysis of specific land uses for the City and entire Planning Jurisdiction which will bring into focus the specific patterns touched on above.

Summary and Analysis:

Residential:

Residential uses within the City of Columbia Falls occupy one third of the developed land area (261 acres). In the overall Planning Jurisdiction, almost one-half of the developed land (3,851 acres) is devoted to residential uses. It is easy to see that one of the main functions of a community is to provide living space for its residents. It is also evident that with almost 14 times more residentially developed land occurring in the rural portion of the Planning Jurisdiction, there is considerable pressure for a rural lifestyle. Development within the community is fairly compact with an average density of one-fifth acre per family. Conversely, in the rural portion of the planning jurisdiction residential development is extremely haphazard with densities averaging three acres per family. This represents a dramatic difference in lot sizes and a correspondingly large consumption of land. One component contributing to larger lot sizes in the rural area are the health requirements for on-site sewer and water facilities which typically mandate a minimum lot size of 1/2 - 1 acre. Multiple other factors range from a homeowner's personal desire to "get away from it all" or "own a piece of the country" to developers

TABLE 12
EXISTING LAND USE
CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
1982

Use	Acres	% of Developed Area	% of Total Area
Single Family Residence	205	29.2	24.9
Multi-Family	14	2.0	1.7
Mobile Homes	9	1.3	1.5
Commercial	28	4.0	3.4
Industrial Utilities, Railroad	63	9.0	7.6
Streets	255	36.2	30.9
Public and Quasi-Public	104	14.8	12.6
Parks and Recreation	25	3.5	3.0
TOTAL DEVELOPED	703	100.0	85.6
Surface Water	0	-	0
Agriculture/Timber	0	-	0
Open or Vacant	122	-	14.4
CITY TOTAL	825	-	100.0

Source: Windshield Survey, F.R.D.O. 11/82

TABLE 13
EXISTING LAND USE
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING JURISDICTION
1982

Use	Acres	% of Developed Area	% of Total Area
Single Family Residence	3,314	47.3	9.7
Multi-Family	23	0.3	0.1
Mobile Homes	514	7.3	1.5
Commercial	154	2.2	0.4
Industrial Utilities, Railroad	1,193	17.0	3.5
Streets	999	14.2	2.9
Public and Quasi-Public	401	5.7	1.2
Parks and Recreation	416	6.0	1.2
TOTAL DEVELOPED	7,014	100.0	20.5
Surface Water	760	-	2.2
Agriculture/Timber	23,731	-	69.2
Open or Vacant	2,765	-	8.1
PLANNING AREA TOTAL	34,270	-	100.0

Source: Windshield Survey, FRDO 11/82

problems associated with the limitations of building on rough, rolling or timbered land with limited building sites to speculators selling large tracts trying to avoid the subdivision and platting laws.

Suburban developments (2 units or less per acre typically without public sewer or water) are scattered throughout the rural Planning Jurisdiction in a somewhat haphazard fashion. Development north of the Burlington Northern tracks is being spurred by the Meadow Lakes Golf Course and the associated 600 lot subdivision recently approved and scheduled to be served by City sewer. Development west of town is occurring along North Hilltop Road, Half Moon Road and in an area bounded by Walsh, Bruner, and LaSalle roads and the Flathead River. South of town, major developments are located at Kokanee Bend, the intersection of Kelly Road and Old Highway 2 and in the River Road - Columbia Falls Stage-Rogers Road area. To the east lies the Columbia Heights development and to the northeast, a well developed area is bounded by the North Fork Road and Aluminum Drive. Throughout the rural portion of the Planning Jurisdiction there still remains many vacant developable lots within approved rural subdivisions as many subdivisions are only partially filled. There are also a large number of isolated lot splits currently undeveloped.

Urban residential housing (2-7 units per acre) is found primarily within the City of Columbia Falls where the higher densities can be served by municipal sewer and water facilities. Established single family housing is located on either side of Nucleus between Fourth Avenue West and Fourth Avenue East and extending further east along Railroad Street. Single family housing is also located south of the commercial strip on Ninth Street (Highway 2) between Twelfth Avenue East and Nucleus. New residential housing is occurring south of Talbot and in the Hilltop Homes Addition west of Veterans Drive with the recent platting of two large subdivisions. Ample room for new construction still remains in this area as over 200 lots are vacant.

Mobile home development in the City is limited to only two small mobile home parks. In direct comparison, the rural planning area contains five widely scattered mobile home parks and a substantial number of mobile homes on individual lots mixed throughout the entire area. To further illustrate this disparity only 9 acres of land are devoted to mobile homes in the City compared to 514 acres in the entire planning jurisdiction.

The relative lack of mobile home parks in the City where adequate public sewer and water exists to address the higher density development and the complete lack of mobile homes on individual lots is an interesting point to consider. It appears to reflect the City's restrictive past policies concerning mobile home placement. These policies have contributed greatly to the expansive mobile home development in the rural planning area.

Multi-family housing including duplexes and greater is almost entirely located within the City and encompasses only 2% of the developed area. In the rural planning area, discounting several duplexes, multi-family housing is non-existent. This disparity is not the result of local policies or regulations as is the case with mobile home housing. On the contrary, within the City they reflect a lack of market demand for multi-family housing and apartment living. In the rural area it is much more a factor of on-site sewage disposal limitations.

Commercial:

The amount and type of commercial land uses in a community and how they are located reflect the vitality and viability of the area. Columbia Falls appears to have a healthy commercial center and potential for a bright future with the re-routing of Highway 2 through the City. There are approximately 28 acres of commercial uses (4%) within Columbia Falls. The bulk of this is concentrated in the central business district which lies along the length of Nucleus Avenue. A pattern of new commercial expansion is occurring along Highway 2 on either side of Nucleus Avenue within the City and there is pressure for additional expansion, primarily to take advantage of the increased traffic due to the redesignation of U.S. Highway 2 through the City.

In the rural planning jurisdiction there is an additional 126 acres of commercial land for a total of 154 acres. The bulk of this activity is located in 3 areas and consists of highway and tourist oriented uses. There is a scattering of commercial uses at the Highway 2 - 206 intersection east of the City and along Highway 2 from the railroad tracks to Hilltop Road and at the Highway 2 - 40 intersection west of the City. In general, this development is very haphazard strip development. All three areas will be experiencing additional pressure for highway and tourist related activities. The Highway 2 - 206 intersection in particular should see demand for additional uses complimenting the recently completed waterslide facility. It is extremely important that the trend of highway strip development along Highway 2 be contained within its present boundaries with Hilltop on the west and Fourth Avenue East on the east. There is adequate commercial land now available along Highway 2 for the foreseeable 20 year planning period. Allowing additional strip commercial development will only serve to confuse orderly land development, promote the mixing of incompatible use, and contribute to highway blight.

Industrial:

Columbia Falls has the reputation of being the industrial hub of Flathead County. Within the entire Planning Jurisdiction almost 1,200 acres representing 17% of the development area is devoted to industrial uses, particularly the 3 lumber mills of Stoltz, Plum Creek and Superior and the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant. Unfortunately, of all industrial land, including railroad rights-of-way, only 63 acres representing approximately 5% of this development is located within the City Limits of Columbia Falls. Of all major employers mentioned above, only a portion of the Plum Creek operation is inside the City. Consequently, while the local employment is high, the contributing tax base to the City is extremely low.

All the above mentioned lumber mills are located adjacent to railroad rights-of-way. Stoltz Lumber northwest of the City and Superior Lumber northeast of the City are fairly well isolated and buffered from adjoining uses. On the other hand Plum Creek is located in the heart of the urban area and is directly adjacent to residential uses and a school. When considering the additional industrial traffic, noise, etc. this is an unfortunate situation. Columbia Falls Aluminum, the largest industrial employer in the County, is located northeast of the City and is well screened from any nearby uses. In addition to these major employers there are several small, scattered, often

poorly located, industrial uses occurring south on LaSalle, on Half Moon Road, and at the Highway 2 - 206 intersection.

Public and Semi-Public:

Public and semi-public uses account for a significant share of the City's developed land - 104 acres totaling 14.8%. Within the City the major facilities include the three schools, City Hall, the city shops and a scattering of churches and private lodges. Within the rural planning jurisdiction, an additional 300 acres are in this category. The bulk of this acreage is located in the three cemeteries and the Montana Veterans Home, all located adjacent to the west side of the City.

Streets:

Streets and public rights-of-way are often mistakenly taken for granted when discussing the overall development picture of a community. Yet in many communities they constitute one of the largest land uses. In Columbia Falls it is the largest land use accounting for 36.21% of the developed area of the City consuming 255 acres. In the overall planning jurisdiction approximately 1,000 acres is devoted to streets accounting for 14% of all development.

Parks and Recreation:

Within the City only 25 acres of land are in parks. These few acres are distributed between several small parks situated predominately on the east and south side of the City. In the overall planning jurisdiction, however, there are 416 acres of park lands accounting for 6% of the developed land. The majority of this additional park land is situated within the Meadow Lakes Golf Club. Other park sites include the fishing access at the Highway 2 bridge on the Flathead River, the Kokanee Bend fishing access southwest of the City and in several small homeowners parks scattered throughout the rural area.

Comparison to Standards:

It is very useful in analyzing the land uses in a particular community to compare them to national averages of communities of similar size (2,500 - 10,000). This review will help point out any imbalances or irregularities that might exist within Columbia Falls. The typical community has 37% of its developed land in residential uses. This is slightly higher than the City of Columbia Falls where just over 32% of the City is developed in single family, multi-family and mobile home uses. The amount of land in commercial uses at 4% is very close to the national average of 4.5%. The amount of land in the remaining categories are not typical and indicate several negative trends. Industrial lands at 9% within the City is under the 12% average typically found. This is extremely surprising when considering the fact that Columbia Falls is the industrial hub of the County. It is also very distressing as industrial lands are a major component of the community tax structure. Again, the answer lies in the development pattern of the major industrial uses outside of the City limits. Public, semi-public and park lands are well above the 14.5% average and represent 18.2% of the City development. This is also less than favorable from a revenue standpoint as these uses are traditionally tax exempt. Finally, with 36% of the land in streets and public rights-of-way in Columbia Falls, this category is also above the average of 32%. It should

be pointed out that the 32% average figure is also well above the optimum figure of approximately 25%. There are three major concerns with having large amounts of land in streets. First, streets are publicly owned and generate no taxes. Second more land in streets means more potential maintenance costs and a drain of local revenues. Third, excessive land in streets is aesthetically undesirable.

In summary, the lack of substantial industrial lands within the City necessary for a healthy tax base, coupled with the excessive amount of non-tax paying properties with the public, semi-public, parks and streets categories, create an extremely unfavorable situation, and could create serious financial problems if disparities continue.

LAND USE PROJECTIONS

Methodology:

Land use projections of an area are intended to show the anticipated land use requirements for development occurring through the year 2000. Projections are made for each of six land use categories: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Streets, Parks, and Public Area. Projections are made by taking the projected population, establishing a proposed land use density in terms of people per acre and applying this information to the land use standards above. An additional 10% is added to each category to allow somewhat for consumer choice, vacancies and partially completed developments, etc. Population projections for the year 2000 found in Table 11 (page 30) show an increase of approximately 1,800 people in the planning jurisdiction. Family sizes are anticipated to continue to decline to an average family size of 2.6 persons. Current development densities of 1/5 acre per family in the City and 3 acre lots in the rural areas providing an average density of 1.6 acres per unit will also continue to shrink. Future average lot sizes are projected to be 1/2 acre in the overall planning jurisdiction with 1/5 acre densities in the City and 1 acre lot density averages in the rural areas. This is based on the increasing cost of land, national trends, and land use goals proposed by this plan calling for more compact development.

LAND USE STANDARDS

Land use standards are used to make sound rational projections for various types of land uses that will accommodate the community's projected growth. The standards used in the planning process vary only slightly from the national averages used above in analyzing the existing land use for Columbia Falls. These averages were compiled for communities of 2,500-10,000 in population and reflect current conditions. In establishing future land use standards, adjustments were made so these averages reflect the conditions, trends, and future land use goals specifically of Columbia Falls. These standards and future land use needs are portrayed on Table 14. The Columbia Falls Standards anticipate a slightly higher proportion of residential, commercial, and industrial uses and a substantial reduction in the amount of new streets to be constructed.

TABLE 14
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING JURISDICTION
LAND USE PROJECTIONS
2000

Use	Planning Standard	Add. Land For Yr. 2000-Acres	Proposed Yr 2000 Total Developed Land		1982 Current Developed Land	
	%	Acres	Acres	%	Acres	%
Resident	44	500	4,351	53.4	3,851	54.9
Commer	6	70	224	2.7	154	2.2
Indus	14	160	1,353	16.6	1,193	17.0
Streets	24	275	1,274	15.6	999	14.2
Parks	8	90	506	6.2	416	6.0
Public	4	45	446	5.5	401	5.7
TOTAL	100%	1,140 Ac.	8,154 Ac.	100.0%	7,014 Ac.	100.0%

Source: FRDO 1983

LAND USE PLAN

The land use plan section presents the projected land use needs and the future land use maps for the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction and encompasses the recommended guidelines for future growth. The City of Columbia Falls and the surrounding planning area are projected to require an additional 1,140 acres of land by the year 2000. This would be a 16% increase in the amount of developed land in the planning area and would reflect a slightly more dense development pattern increasing from the present 1.04 people per developed acre to 1.11 people per developed acre.

The Master Plan Map (refer to Figures 9A and 9B pages 66A and 66B) serves as the graphic presentation of the projected land uses for the year 2000. More importantly this map serves as a guide to the physical development of the planning area. The map displays residential, commercial, industrial, public and quasi-public, and park uses in relation to each other and the community and is based on anticipated population growth, projected land use needs, traffic circulation, public utilities and natural constraints such as soils, topography, and slope.

Residential:

Suburban Residential: Single family detached housing. Densities are typically 2 units or less per acre. Generally public sewer and water facilities are not available.

Urban Residential: Single family detached housing with densities of 2-7 units per acre serviced by public sewer and water facilities.

Multi-family: Residential uses where densities exceed 7 units per acre. Housing is typically duplex or larger attached with units serviced by public sewer and water facilities.

It is anticipated that the planning jurisdiction will increase by 850-900 housing units during the planning period. To accommodate this increase, approximately 500 acres of land will be necessary. Based on population projections there is almost a 60-40 split between the percentage of growth expected within the City Limits (urban) and the percentage outside the City Limits (suburban). As indicated above, urban residential development is expected to continue at a rate of 5 units per acre while suburban development will be expected to occur at average densities of one unit per acre. Consequently, actual urban residential land requirements would be in the neighborhood of 75-100 acres and suburban land requirements would be 350-400 acres.

It is important, at this point to stress that the Plan does not envision the need nor the likelihood of the subdivision and development of 500 acres of additional land in and around the community. There are a minimum of 750 vacant developable residentially platted lots in the rural planning jurisdiction and within the City there are over 200 vacant lots in two recently approved subdivisions alone. Many factors including personal preference will enter into where new residential construction will occur, but approximately one-half of all future residential growth is expected to occur in already platted and semi-improved subdivisions.

Suburban residential development is located adjacent to the urban core and is an expansion of the existing suburban development. A majority of this growth will be seen north of the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks, west of Hilltop Road, southeast of the City between Walsh, Bruner, Highway 2 and the railroad and east of Columbia Heights. This development will gradually become urban in nature upon the establishment of City water and sewer services. Urban density development is located primarily within the City limits where sewer and water facilities are readily accessible. Major growth is expected to the south along Talbot and to the west along South Hilltop Road.

Multi-family housing will increase in popularity in the coming years as the purchase price of housing continues to rise. From an overall perspective though, it will still play a small role in the housing picture. It is estimated that multi-family housing will require 20-30 acres of total projected residential land use needs. Due to the lack of public sewer or water systems in the rural area, the vast majority of high density development will continue to occur within the City Limits. Primarily, multi-family areas are located between lower density neighborhoods and higher intensity uses to act partially as a buffer and partially as a transition zone.

Due to the affordability and the increasing quality of construction, manufactured housing will play an increasingly important role in the future growth of Columbia Falls. Individual units on private lots will continue to locate in the suburban areas and should be encouraged to locate within the City Limits as well as in urban residential areas. Well designed manufactured

housing parks should also be provided for within the higher density neighborhoods which have access to municipal sewer and water services, open space, and an improved street system.

Commercial:

General Commercial: Compact retail sales and service as well as general and professional office uses typically found in a central business district. Off-site localized parking and pedestrian access are major components.

Highway Commercial: Compact groups of commercial uses which require and cater to the automobile for customer contact. Uses are typically located along major thoroughfares and include motels, auto service and repair centers, restaurants, car and truck dealerships, etc.

Neighborhood Commercial: Commercial service area typically not exceeding two acres in size located within and surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Uses cater specifically to the immediate convenience needs of the residents of the neighborhood (radius of 1/2 mile) and should be adequately designed to be compatible to adjoining neighborhood residential uses.

Commercial land use needs are projected to increase by 70 acres in the planning jurisdiction. This is a 45% increase. There are two reasons for this growth. First, Columbia Falls currently has only one-half of the average expected commercial area for a city of its size and this does not consider the geographically large service area around the City and to the north. A considerable amount of this potential trade does go to Kalispell, but trends could change as gasoline and transportation prices continue to rise and as the area continues to grow. Second, with the re-routing of Highway 2 through the City, Columbia Falls will be the closest full-service incorporated community before Glacier National Park. Tourist and highway related commercial activities should benefit tremendously.

Commercial development is distributed in three general areas. The general commercial area is contained along the major transportation routes in the urban core area - Nucleus Avenue and U.S. Highway 2. The limits of commercial activity are set at Hilltop Road, Third Avenue East and Railroad Street in order to prevent excessive strip development. Highway related commercial is placed at the two major external intersections of the City, U.S. Highway 2 - LaSalle - Highway 40 and U.S. Highway 2 - Montana 206. There are also three small neighborhood commercial areas projected which are intended to provide neighborhood oriented commercial services in the outlying areas of the City.

Industry:

Light Industrial: Light manufacturing, processing, storage warehousing, distribution and commercial uses. Typically industrial activity would not emit smoke, gases, or excessive noise. Direct ingress-egress into residential neighborhoods would be avoided. Such uses would serve as a buffer between more intensive heavy industrial uses and uses of less

intensity. Screening would be required where adjacent to residential areas.

Heavy Industrial: Manufacturing, processing, fabricating, warehousing storage, distribution. Areas should be of sufficient size to allow for future growth and expansion without unduly infringing or impacting adjacent uses.

The major attributes that gave rise to industrial growth in Columbia Falls, i.e. the abundance of power, closeness to timber, wide expanses of flat land and good transportation access are still true today. Consequently, industry will continue to be a major land use in the planning jurisdiction and will require an additional 160 acres for expansion and growth.

Industrial development is proposed in areas already industrialized, with some expansion to accommodate industrially owned, but not utilized lands. Industrial designations at the U.S. Highway 2 - LaSalle - Montana Highway 40 Intersection recognize an existing zoned area (on the west side), and an exiting gravel pit (on the east side). It is intended that this area and a similar area adjacent to Columbia Heights on Highway 2 on the east side of the City be primarily light industrial catering to clean well-designed uses. It is extremely important that special attention is paid to both these areas in terms of landscaping, aesthetics and design as both areas serve as major entrances to the greater Columbia Falls area.

Streets:

Streets: All publicly dedicated streets and rights-of-way.

Streets must be extended to serve new and expanding areas. An additional 275 acres of streets will be required to meet the growing needs of the area by the year 2000. This figure should be construed as the maximum amount as some development will expand on existing sites and additional development will occur along already established streets due to infill.

Public/Semi-Public:

Public/Semi-public: Areas intended to be used principally for a public purpose by a city, school district, the County, the State or any other public agency or a church, lodge, club or other non-profit organization, but excluding parklands.

Projected land uses for this category are small showing a need of only 45 additional acres. The majority of this land will be consumed by the expansion of existing uses such as schools, cemeteries, the sewer plant, churches and government buildings.

Public and quasi-public areas recognize existing uses within the area and their potential expansion. The sewage treatment plant is currently undergoing expansion. Proposals are made for: an additional elementary school site North of U.S. Highway 2 and West of the Burlington Northern tracks, a linkage of public and Veteran's cemeteries on Talbot Road, a slight expansion of City

governmental space downtown and a fire substation to serve the northern area of residential development.

Park/Open Space:

> Parks/Open Space: Areas devoted principally to public recreation and leisure activities. Areas may be publicly or privately owned.

Based on accepted planning standards, parklands and open space in the planning jurisdiction should increase by 90 acres to meet the needs of the growing population. Even with this additional acreage the overall planning jurisdiction will continue to be deficient.

Parks and open spaces are significantly expanded in order to increase and take advantage of the attractiveness of the Columbia Falls area. Two major park sites are proposed along the Flathead River. One site is located east of the City and is proposed as a community park for picnics, recreation and city-wide events. The other site, located at Kokanee Bend, is proposed as an expansion of the existing fishing access into a regional park site. The two parks are linked by open space pedestrian and bicycle paths along the river. A third park is proposed at the north end of North Hilltop. This area contains surface waters which could be utilized for recreation or aesthetic purposes. In addition, it would lie adjacent to the proposed elementary school and multi-family development. The park would link the golf course through open space and pathways. The final park proposal lies on the northeast side of town along Cedar Creek. This park could serve the recreational needs of the growing residential population in that area.

Agriculture/Silviculture:

> Agriculture/Silviculture: Areas devoted to the raising and harvesting of crops; feeding, breeding, and management of livestock; dairying; horticulture; and the growing and harvesting of timber.

The conservation of agricultural and silvicultural areas is proposed through the managed development of the above land uses as shown on the Master Plan. Timbered lands lie basically in the north half of the planning area. Agricultural lands lie to the south and west of the City.

6. HOUSING

Shelter is one of man's basic needs. The quality and quantity of housing is a major yardstick in judging the livability of a community. There must be a range of housing to meet the individual tastes and desires of people in different age and economic groups.

CURRENT HOUSING STOCK:

Growth Rates:

The housing supply boomed in the City of Columbia Falls during the decade of the 1970's. The number of housing units within the City grew at the exceptionally high rate of 38.5% increasing from 845 units to 1,170 units (refer to Table 15). This was over twice the population growth rate of 17%. At the same time the number of vacant units only increased by 5 units and the overall vacancy rate actually declined to a healthy rate of just over 5%. This phenomenon can be explained by looking at two trends. First, as discussed in Table 6, the average family size in Columbia Falls decreased in size by 16% from a 1970 level of 3.36 to a 1980 level of 2.83. This means that if the City's population were stable over the past decade, housing units would still have had to increase by 16% to keep pace with the larger number of smaller families. The City's population actually grew 17% during the decade, hence the exceptionally high rate of new housing.

The number of housing units within Flathead County has also experienced a tremendous growth rate during the 1970's increasing at a rate of almost 561% for the decade. This substantial growth rate and the fact that it is so much higher than the City of Columbia Falls, can also be explained by looking at the same two trends above. First, the trend toward smaller families is a national trend and is occurring in the County as well as the City and, secondly, and most importantly, the growth rate of the County was almost double that of Columbia Falls during the same period.

TABLE 15
HOUSING TENURE AND VACANCY
COLUMBIA FALLS AND FLATHEAD COUNTY
1970-1980

	Columbia Falls					Flathead County				
	1970		1980		%	1970		1980		%
Tenure	#	%	#	%	Change	#	%	#	%	Change
Owner	536	63.4	729	62.3	36.0	8,967	67.5	13,904	67.1	55.1
Renter	252	29.8	379	32.4	50.4	3,338	25.1	4,886	23.6	46.4
Vacant	57	6.8	62	5.3	8.7	974	7.4	1,917	9.3	96.8
TOTALS	845	100.0	1,170	100.0	38.5	13,279	100.0	20,707	100.0	55.6

Source: U.S.Census.

Tenure and Vacancy Rates:

Traditionally in smaller communities homeowners will greatly outnumber renters. In the case of Columbia Falls there were almost twice as many homeowners as renters in 1980 (refer to Table 15). Over the past decade, though this has been slowly changing as indicated by a surprisingly high 50% growth rate over the decade in rental units as compared to a less substantial 36% growth rate for owner occupied units. There appears to be two reasons for the gradual increase in rental units in the City. First, the elderly population is increasing and there is a tendency for elderly people to move out of the old family home in search of a smaller house or apartment where maintenance and upkeep is less and the smaller size is desirable. Second and more important is the trend toward more and more families being forced out of the housing market because of high costs and renting remains the only option.

Flathead County, as would be expected exhibited a slightly higher percentage of homeowners in 1980. Part of this is due to the lack of multi-family apartment complexes locating in the rural areas where public sewer and water services are not available.

The vacancy rates for the City and County do show a wide disparity in 1980. Approximately 5% is considered a very healthy vacancy rate as it usually provides an adequate choice in terms of price and location to meet the demands of the market. Columbia Falls' vacancy rate declined over the past decade to a very healthy 5.3%. Contrastingly, the rate for all Flathead County continued to rise to just over 9% representing over 1,900 vacant units, almost double the 1970 figure. This is extremely unhealthy and indicates a market that is glutted.

Housing Types:

Single family housing is by far the predominate housing type in Columbia Falls as shown by Table 16. The 1980 Census showed 72% of the housing stock to be single family with 23% in multi-family units and only 4% in manufactured homes. There has been a noticeable shift away from the dominance of the single family house during the 1970's. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of single family homes increased only 27% compared to the overall City housing growth rate of 39%. At the same time, the number of both multi-family units and mobile homes almost doubled. These are reflections of a changing housing market and the increasing cost of the single family detached housing making it a less affordable option.

The proportionate types of housing for Columbia Falls discussed above vary greatly from both the County and the State. (Refer to Table 17) Columbia Falls has proportionately higher numbers of single family and multi-family housing units than either the County or State. At the same time, Columbia Falls proportionately has only 1/4 and 1/3 of the manufactured housing in the County and State respectively. The manufactured home issue appears to be at the heart of this discrepancy. Only two small manufactured home parks have located within the City. Manufactured homes on individual lots are almost non-existent due to the past City policy. As a result of this, those families who are not able to afford a detached single family home do not have the option of renting or owning a manufactured home inside the City. Consequently, there has been both a larger demand for multi-family units in the City and for manufactured

homes outside the City limits to address the needs. As reported in the Land Use Section, within the rural planning jurisdiction, there are 505 acres of land devoted to all types of manufactured housing versus nine acres in the City. In terms of units, there are eight times as many manufactured homes in the rural portion of the planning jurisdiction than there are in the City.

TABLE 16
HOUSING TYPES IN COLUMBIA FALLS
1970 AND 1980

Housing Type	1970		1980		%
	#	%	#	%	Change
Single Family	669	79.2	847	72.4	26.6
Multi-Family	149	17.6	270	23.1	81.2
Mobile Home	27	3.2	53	4.5	96.3
TOTALS	845	100.0	1,170	100.0	38.5

Source: U. S. Census 1970

TABLE 17
PROPORTIONATE HOUSING TYPE
COLUMBIA FALLS, FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA
1980

Housing Type	Columbia Falls	Flathead County	Montana
Single Family	72.4%	67.6%	66.3%
Multi-Family	23.1%	14.4%	20.8%
Manufactured Housing	4.5%	18.0%	12.9%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census

Housing Age:

The age of the community's housing stock is important as it gives an indication of the quality and life expectancy of the current stock. The housing stock in Columbia Falls is relatively new with construction uniformly spread over the previous decades as shown by Table 18. This reflects the rapid steady growth that the City has experienced in past decades. As can be expected in a growing community, one quarter of the housing stock was built since 1970. This also reflects the substantial housing growth as a result of the shrinking family size. Only 17% of the housing is pre-1940 construction, a generally accepted date denoting aged housing having a greater tendency to show problems of wear, deterioration or dilapidation. Aged housing is not a major problem in Columbia Falls.

TABLE 18
AGE OF HOUSING
COLUMBIA FALLS
1980

Year Structure Built	Number of Units	Percentage (%)
1970-1979	277	24.3
1960-1969	230	20.1
1950-1959	228	19.9
1940-1949	208	18.2
Pre-1940	201	17.5

Source: U.S. Census, 1980.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

The current housing supply and choice within the City of Columbia Falls appears to be adequate and stable. The present vacancy rate is slightly above the 5 percent target with 62 vacant units. The current housing appears to be balanced between single and multi-unit housing. Multi-family housing is actually higher than would normally be expected at 23%, but this is due somewhat to the presence of the elderly public housing units recently constructed. Manufactured housing on the other hand is critically low within the City. This is due to the limited number of manufactured home parks developed within the City Limits and the total absence of manufactured homes on individual lots. This situation is reversed in the rural planning area where there are eight times as many manufactured homes (estimated at 18% of all housing in the planning area) and the number of multi-family units number less than a dozen. Aged housing is also not a major factor in the community with only 17.5% of all housing built before 1940. It is anticipated that .2% of all housing in the community will drop out of the housing supply yearly due to dilapidation, age, lack of maintenance, etc. This is a rate of 2% per decade. A majority of this housing will be of the pre-1940 stock as well as older manufactured homes which tend to have a shorter life cycle than a stick built house.

HOUSING PROJECTIONS:

Housing Standards:

Housing standards are used as a basis to ascertain whether sufficient housing choice and supply exists today. They are also used as a basis for projecting future housing needs. Vacancy rate is the standard most used to measure the degree of balance between supply and demand. An acceptable vacancy rate of 5% is necessary to ensure both adequate supply and choice of location, price, and type of housing. While there is no typical community and various communities have their own specific needs, a housing supply ratio of 60% single family, 20% multi-family and 20% manufactured home housing is an accepted standard. Larger communities have a greater percentage of multi-family housing. Small communities tend to have a higher percentage of single family housing.

Housing dilapidation is also an important standard. Every year a community loses housing due to age, dilapidation, abandonment, fire, conversion, etc. These must be replaced to ensure a stable housing supply. In the case of Columbia Falls .2% of the housing stock is projected to be lost every year over the next two decades. This equates to 2% per decade.

Methodology:

The methodology for projecting the future housing needs of Columbia Falls and the Planning Jurisdiction is based on anticipated population growth, established vacancy rates and the replacement of dilapidated housing. Housing supply is the total number of housing units available in an area and consists of the total number of occupied units, plus vacant units. For 1980 the U.S. Census was consulted. For the years 1990 and 2000 housing supply is defined as the projected number of housing units needed to house the projected population based on a family size of 2.75, plus vacant units based on a vacancy rate of 5%. Replacement of dilapidated structures is set at 2% of the preceding decade's housing supply and indicates the amount of new housing necessary to replace the dilapidated, demolished, or abandon housing units lost to the community. New housing is the total housing units that must be added to the housing supply to accommodate the additional population influx as well as replace dilapidated units.

Housing Projections:

Housing projections are based on current trends and reasonable and accepted standards, but they are just projections. They should be used as a bench mark and a guide, not as a rigid statistic. Unforeseen changes in the community may radically affect their accuracy. Tables 19 and 20 portray housing projections for the next two decades and indicate a growing housing market for both the City and the entire planning jurisdiction. The housing supply is projected to increase by 17.7% and 12.9% respectively for the years 1990 and 2000 in the planning jurisdiction. By the year 2000 the housing supply should increase by slightly over 850 units. When considering the additional units which must be built to replace units lost, dilapidated etc., approximately 980 new housing units will be necessary to house the anticipated population in the year 2000.

TABLE 19
HOUSING PROJECTIONS
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING JURISDICTION
1980-2000

Year	Housing Supply	% Increase	Occupied Housing	Vacant Housing	Housing Lost (%)	New Units To Maintain Supply
1980	2,633	-	2,498	135	-	-
1990	3,100	17.7	2,945	150[1]	53	520[2]
2000	3,500	12.9	3,325	175[1]	60	460[2]

[1] 5% of housing supply.

[2] Total new housing units to address housing supply increase and housing units lost over past decade.

Source: U.S. Census 1980, Flathead Regional Development Office 1-84.

TABLE 20
HOUSING PROJECTIONS
COLUMBIA FALLS
1980-2000

Year	Housing Units Supply	% Increase	Occupied Housing	Vacant Housing	Housing Lost (%)	New Units To Maintain Supply
1980	1,170	-	1,108	62	-	-
1990	1,466	25.3	1,393	73[1]	25	321[2]
2000	1,691	15.3	1,607	85[1]	30	255[2]

[1] 5% of housing supply.

[2] Total housing to address housing supply increase and housing units lost over the decade.

Source: U.S. Census, 1980; Flathead Regional Development Office, 1-84.

The City of Columbia Falls will experience an increase of nearly 525 housing units (45% increase) through the year 2000, but 560-580 units will be necessary to maintain the projected housing level and replace those housing units lost to the housing supply.

The current housing supply within the overall planning jurisdiction, when compared to the housing standards, shows an oversupply of single family units and a resulting lack of multi-family units. This trend is envisioned to change as the single family detached house becomes increasingly expensive and economically out of the reach of a greater percent of the population. As shown on Table 21, the new units constructed per decade will gradually reflect this trend reaching the optimum standard by the year 2000.

TABLE 21
HOUSING PROJECTIONS BY TYPE
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING AREA
1980-2000

	1980		Projections					
			1990			2000		
	Existing Units		New Units		Units Lost During Previous Decade	New Units		Units Lost During Previous Decade
	#	%	#	%		#	%	
Single Family	1,879	71	340	65	-	280	60	-
Multi Family	280	11	80	15	-	90	20	-
Manufactured Homes	474	18	100	20	-	90	20	-
TOTAL	2,633	100	520	100	-53	460	100	-60
Housing Supply	1980 = 2,633		1990 = 3,100			2000 = 3,500		

Source: U.S. Census, 1980; Flathead Regional Development Office

HOUSING PLAN:

The housing plan is that element of the Master Plan that addresses both present and future housing needs of a community. It analyzes the current housing stock and gives direction for the future growth of the housing supply. Housing projections have already been made for both the City and the overall planning jurisdiction depicting the amount and type of new housing anticipated for the next two decades. The plan will build on these projections.

Single family housing will continue to be the most popular housing choice for the next 20 years. Upwards of 620 new single family homes representing 60% of the new housing stock is anticipated by the year 2000. Several trends must be anticipated and planned for. The cost of single family detached housing will be the greatest constraint to this housing type. Lot sizes both inside the City, where public sewer and water are available, and outside the City, where they are not, will generally be smaller to compensate for rising land costs and to reduce overall housing costs. Housing units themselves will be smaller sacrificing space for increased efficiency and reduced cost. Finally, the City and County should constantly review their public improvement standards to insure that adequate, but not excessive, public improvements are being recommended for residential development.

Unfortunately, conventional stick built housing will continue to economically exceed the reach of many potential new homeowners. Manufactured homes on individual lots meeting all the placement requirements of conventional housing and bearing the HUD seal should be allowed to locate within the City of Columbia Falls so as to provide homeowners with an economical housing alternative. Manufactured housing in the rural portion of the planning jurisdiction is proportionately well represented. In the City, it is almost non-existent. In addition to manufactured housing on individual lots, manufactured home park development is recommended for expansion within the

City. The existing two parks are small, inadequate and reminiscent of early trailer courts. There is a need for quality manufactured home park development which incorporate good site design, convenient and interesting layout, paved roads, developed recreation sites, laundry facilities and landscaping. Such housing would fulfill a need and be an asset to both the tenants and the City. Approximately 190 new manufactured homes are projected by the year 2000 representing 20% of all new housing. The great majority of these units are recommended for location in Columbia Falls.

Multi-family housing must be planned and provided for addressing the needs of both owner occupied and rental accommodations. The popularity of attached housing will continue and increase because of economic necessity, personal preference, and changing life styles. Multi-family housing will continue to be located almost exclusively within the city limits due to the availability of public sewer and water facilities. Ideally, rental multi-family housing should be located near the central business district or have other commercial access. Proximity to public open space and direct access to an improved local street offering adequate access to collector or arterial streets are both desirable. For owner-occupied attached housing, proximity to a commercial area and open space is not nearly as important as good site design, interesting and economical layouts, and clustering of units to provide open space on-site. The number of multi-family units will continue to increase to where 20% of all new housing in the year 2000 is attached duplexes and larger.

7. TRANSPORTATION

In order for a city to be vital, active and prosperous, there must be an effective system for the movement of people and goods to, from and within the City. In Columbia Falls, highways and intra-city streets make up the principal components of the movement system. These transportation networks in and around the community play a significant role in its development and thus form an essential element of the Master Plan. The development of the transportation plan, therefore, involves an analysis of the present system to identify deficiencies, needs and potentials. From this analysis, and based upon the anticipated future growth, the plan should provide safe and convenient accessibility to all areas of the community.

STREET CLASSIFICATION:

Streets and highways are grouped together and defined according to the type and level of service they are intended to provide. Characteristics include the volume of traffic they carry, the speed of the traffic and their destination and service area. Within the planning jurisdiction three types of streets are defined.

Arterial Streets: A major street with moderate to fast speeds, high volume, designed to provide access to the regional transportation system and move traffic through the City, or from one general area of the City to another. Arterials may have limited access and are located approximately one mile apart.

Collector Streets: Intermediate streets which collect local traffic from neighborhoods and transfer the traffic to the arterial system. Collectors are located approximately 1/4 mile apart.

Local Streets: Minor streets intended to serve individual sites, building or lots. Local streets either feed into collectors or provide destination access off of collectors.

EXISTING STREET SYSTEM:

The Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction contains three (3) major arterial traffic routes: U.S. Highway 2, Montana Highway 40 and County 206 (Old Highway 2). These highways form the network that connects Columbia Falls to the rest of Flathead County and provides direct access to Whitefish, Kalispell and Glacier National Park. The redesignation of LaSalle and of Old Highway 40 from the LaSalle intersection east to Highway 2 occurred in 1982. This change has significantly altered traffic patterns in the planning jurisdiction as all tourist and cross State traffic, which formerly by-passed Columbia Falls, is now re-routed directly through the City. Reconstruction of Highway 2 from the LaSalle intersection east to Columbia Heights into a 4-lane highway will be a major asset to the community in that it will greatly improve the flow of traffic. The improvements will also change the character of the adjacent land uses and attract additional local traffic due to the improved travel surface.

The trade off that the community must face for the improved road and associated increased traffic is a situation where the city will be split north-south by a major arterial which will inhibit north-south movement of local vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

The street system of Columbia Falls is generally laid out in a grid pattern oriented north-south (avenues) and east-west (streets). New subdivisions in the peripheral areas are utilizing curvilinear street designs and streets are designated as roads or drives regardless of street direction.

Existing Concerns: The greatest single barrier to a free-flowing circulation pattern in Columbia Falls is the Burlington Northern Railroad system. The railroad rights-of-way form the western and northern boundaries of the City and have served not only as a barrier to free expansion, but also tend to sever and isolate parts of the planning jurisdiction. There are eight railroad crossings between the North Fork Highway and South Hilltop Road. Only one, the North Fork Highway, is above grade. The rest are at grade. In the event of a train derailment or presence of an extremely long train, free-flowing traffic and emergency vehicle services are blocked. Compounding the problem, the majority of at grade crossings are less than adequate. Site problems exist at the Talbot intersection. The Twelfth Avenue - Plum Creek Intersection is hazardous due to Plum Creek operations, road failure, and rough crossing. The crossings at Second Avenue West and Fourth Avenue East are also rough and have less than adequate approaches.

The second greatest barrier to a free-flowing traffic circulation in the City is the Flathead River forming the eastern and southern boundaries of the City. Only two bridges span the river currently. The Highway 2 bridge is adequate, but the Red Bridge on Columbia Falls Stage Road is a one-lane limited load bridge which has an exceedingly hazardous restricted site-distances at both approaches and on the bridge.

A series of similar site distance problems plague other street intersections in the community, namely the Twelfth Street intersections on Talbot, Highway 2 and at Plum Creek; the Hilltop-Highway 2 intersection and the sharp corner on the west end of Tamarack Lane. All of the above problem areas are located on the major street system and deserves immediate attention.

A final problem facing the City is the chronic lack of paved, well maintained streets. As of 1983, 13.6 linear miles of the City's street system was paved, yet 30% totaling 5.6 miles were in gravel or dirt surface condition. The unpaved streets cause an increase in dust levels and have been targeted as contributors to the area's air quality problems for many years. The unpaved roads, which also require maintenance, are a deterrent to smooth traffic flow and contribute to additional vehicle wear for the traveling public.

Traffic Counts: Traffic counts have been recorded at ten locations in the planning jurisdiction since 1974. This data shown on Table 22 gives a clear picture of changes in traffic movement in past years and identifies the major traffic routes in the community.

TABLE 22
AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC COUNTS
ARTERIAL STREETS - COLUMBIA FALLS
1974, 1980, 1983

Location	ADT 1974	ADT 1980	ADT 1983	% Change 1974-1983
1. South of U.S. 2-Montana 40 Intersection	3,053	3,840*	4,370	43%
2. West of U.S. 2-Montana 40 Intersection	-	3,550*	3,830	-
3. East of U.S. 2-Montana 40 Intersection	4,791	5,800*	7,170	50%
4. U.S. 2 at West City Limits	6,606	7,670	10,840	64%
5. U.S. 2 at East City Limits	3,687	5,240	8,150	121%
6. West of U.S. 2-County 206 Intersection	2,694	4,365	5,580	107%
7. North of U.S. 2-County 206 Intersection	2,400	3,650	4,190	75%
8. South of U.S. 2-County 206 Intersection	2,204	2,734	2,860	30%
9. Railroad Street-North Fork Highway at City Limits	3,055	3,100	3,040	0
10. North Fork Road 1 mile north of Aluminum Plan	-	680*	980	-

* 1981 Counts
Source: Montana State Highway Department, 1984.

Highway 2 is the major traffic mover in the planning jurisdiction. Major traffic increases were recorded at all the measuring sites on this highway over the nine year period (from 1974-1983), but the largest increases appear to occur along the redesignated portion of Highway 2 between County 206 and Montana 40. In other words, the greatest traffic increases passed through the middle of the City of Columbia Falls. Traffic shifted from using old Highway 2 south (present County 206) on the east side of Columbia Falls in favor of LaSalle - Ninth Street route (new Highway 2). A prime example of this shift can be seen at the Highway 2 - 206 intersection. Traffic north of this intersection on Highway 2 increased 75% during the nine year period. Traffic volumes south on Old Highway 2 increased only 30%, while traffic volumes west on new Highway 2 increased 107%. Similar increases of 121% and 64% were noted at the east and west City limits also.

Three obvious reasons for the traffic volume shifts are the improvements to LaSalle Road, the redesignation and re-routing of Highway 2, and community growth, including major improvements to Glacier Park International Airport.

Interestingly, traffic volumes north of Columbia Falls on the North Fork Highway saw little increase. Traffic volumes at the City limits were constant during the nine year measuring period. The major destination or traffic generator at this point would be the Arco Aluminum Plant. There was a major

expansion at the plant in 1977, but the depressed economy of the early 1980's kept employment lower than normal.

Street Standards:

Street standards are essential in the process of developing an adequate traffic circulation system. Street standards include both Functional Classification and Design Capacity.

Functional Street Classification: The quality of service which City Streets and rural roads provide depends on their primary purpose and how well they were designed to meet this purpose. In the planning jurisdiction, arterial, collector and local streets are classified by their functions. Table 23 presents a summary of their characteristics.

TABLE 23
STREET STANDARDS
COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING JURISDICTION

Type of Street	Function and Features	Spacing	R.O.W.	Pavement Width	Desirable Max. Grades	Speed
Arterial	Usually forms boundaries for neighborhoods. Signals where needed; stop signs on side streets.	3/4 - 1 mile	80'-120'	40'-80'	8%	35-55 mph
Collector	Main interior streets. Conducts traffic from local streets to arterial streets. Stop signs on side streets.	1/4-1/2 mile	60'-80'	No Parking-24' Parking: 20' Travel Surface 10' Parking	8%-12% 12% Grade 500' Max.	30 mph
Local	Local service streets provides access to adjacent land. Non-conducive to to through traffic.	At Blocks	50'-60'	No Parking 24' Parking: 20' Travel Surface 8' Parking Lanes	11%	25 mph

Traffic Capacity Restraints: To ensure adequate capacity for collector and arterial streets, it is important to avoid or eliminate constraints to a free-flowing traffic system. Potential conflicts are often created by the location

and design or lack of design of certain land uses along traffic routes. Below is a list of traffic and land use conflicts which should be avoided:

- Insufficient number of moving lanes,
- Insufficient pavement width (for design speed),
- Insufficient turning lanes,
- Too many entrance and exit points,
- Too many stopping points,
- Uncoordinated signalization,
- Incompatible traffic mix,
- Inadequate surface maintenance,
- Intensive use of abutting property,
- Inadequate land use setbacks which could cause:
  - Inadequate off-street parking,
  - Restricted sight distance,
  - Improper placement of signs, and
  - Congestion,
- On-site Parking,
- Direct street access, and
- Inadequate pedestrian crossing

TRANSPORTATION PLAN:

The objective of the Transportation Plan is to promote balanced development and growth in Columbia Falls and its planning jurisdiction. This plan should also provide safe and convenient accessibility to public and quasi-public facilities and it should ease traffic congestion. The plan for streets in the urban growth area addresses only the extension of development of collector and arterial streets into areas leaving the option of locating local streets to the developer in order to provide flexibility. An attempt is made in the plan to achieve maximum efficiency with only minimum development of new streets.

The major street extension plan evolves around a ring arterial system. A ring is proposed around the urban core of the City. This ring would link north, south, east and westbound traffic with U.S. Highway 2 bisecting the City and the ring. The reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 coupled with the recent reconstruction of Nucleus Avenue will provide two major routes in Columbia Falls, both in good physical shape and of adequate capacity. (See Figure 9A and 9B pages 66A and 66B)

Arterial Streets:

The ring arterial system should allow for movement of regional and industrial traffic around the City, thus by-passing high-density areas and residential neighborhoods. It also provides quick and easy accessibility between various parts of the City and promotes the harmonic development of all areas. Please refer to Figures 9A and 9B (pages 66A and 66B) for a visual presentation of the plan.

The following arterial streets shown in Figures 9A and 9B (pages 66A and 66B) are proposed to serve development in the service area.

South Hilltop Road northwards from Talbot Road to U.S. Highway 2
A new arterial extending southward from Tamarack Lane along Rocky Lane, crossing the BN Railroad right-of-way via a proposed elevated overpass, then continuing generally south to U.S. Highway 2.
Tamarack Lane
Extend Tamarack Lane northeastwards to join the North Fork Highway
North Fork Highway
Talbot Road
Fourth Avenue West
Railroad Street from Fourth Avenue West to the North Fork Highway
Nucleus Avenue

COLLECTOR STREETS:

The ring arterial system is internally linked by a collector system which provides traffic circulation throughout the northern and southern sections of the City. It also provides circulation within areas constrained by physical barriers such as the railroad tracks, U.S.Highway 2 and the Flathead River. The collector system in the central core area provides a loop connecting the Central Business District, City Hall and the Junior High School.

The following collector streets shown in Figures 9A and 9B (pages 66A and 66B) are proposed to link the arterial system.

Walsh Road from the intersection of U.S. Highway 2 to South Hilltop Road and the intersection of South Hilltop Road and Talbot Road.
Thirteenth Street from South Hilltop Road eastwards to Nucleus Avenue
A loop consisting of Riverwood Drive and its extension in a northeasterly direction to Talbot Road
Extend Twelfth Avenue West southwards to the above-mentioned loop
River road between Columbia Falls Stage Road and U.S. Highway 2
Columbia Falls Stage Road
Veterans Drive between Talbot Road and U.S. Highway 2
A street to be constructed approximately 1,500 feet to the east of South Hilltop Road between Highway 2 and Thirteenth Street
North Hilltop Road between U.S. Highway 2 and the south Dawn Drive intersection
Homestead Drive to Truck Route and onto the intersection of Truck Route and Fourth Avenue West
Twelfth Avenue West between Talbot Road and the Truck Route
From the south end of Rocky Lane in a southeasterly direction to Second Street West North
Second Avenue West to be extended northwards to proposed eastward extension of Tamarack Lane
Second Street West North to be extended eastwards to Second Avenue West
Fourth Street between Fourth Avenue West and First Avenue East
Sixth Street between Fourth Avenue West and First Avenue East
First Avenue East between Fourth and Sixth Streets

8. COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The demand for more and greater community facilities and services increases as an urban area expands, populations grow, old facilities become outmoded, living standards change and public expectations rise. The availability of community facilities and services consequently has a great bearing on the quality of living in the area and this influences the potential for future development.

POLICE PROTECTION

The Columbia Falls Police Department presently has a staff of seven policemen and five dispatchers of which three are full-time and two part-time. The Department has approximately 2,500 square feet of floor space, three jail cells, a detention capacity of six and operates two patrol cars. Calls are handled by 24-hour dispatch and the department is financed through the General Fund.

The present service area of the Columbia Falls Police Department is the City limits, although there is an Interlocal Agreement between the City and County for the Police Department to provide emergency law enforcement and dispatch services to Flathead County. Under this agreement, the Columbia Falls Police Department will respond to requests for assistance within one mile of the Columbia Falls City Limits. This range may be extended to three miles in specific cases. However, if the Columbia Falls Police Department is engaged in its own service or is limited to one person or one patrol car on duty, the Department will not cover beyond the City limits. At the present time, the maximum response time in the service area is two minutes.

Based on the 1980 census, the City has an officer to population ration of 2.3 officers per thousand population. Acceptable ratios of police officers to population are usually set at 2.5 to 2.7 officers per thousand population served. Consequently, the City appears to be slightly understaffed.

Although no absolute population or density figure exists for establishing service areas for law enforcement, as a rough guide, a density of up to 25 persons per acre should have a police area of between 5,000 and 10,000 acres and with population densities of above 25 persons per acre that area should be between 2,000 and 5,000 acres. The City of Columbia Falls encompassed approximately 825 acres in 1983 with a density of approximately 3.8 people per acre. The total acreage of the future urban service area is approximately 4,025 acres with a density of around 2.6 people per acre.

Planning Recommendations:

The City is slightly understaffed in terms of police officers. During the 20-year planning period, up to three additional officers should be added as the community population grows.

No additional police substation will be necessary during the planning period, but in cases where a patrol car is on one side of the railroad

tracks and a call for help is on the other side, access across the tracks will continue to be a problem.

FIRE PROTECTION

Columbia Falls and the adjacent planning area are served by the Columbia Falls Volunteer Fire Department located adjacent to the City Hall in a building constructed in 1974. Mutual aid agreements exist between the City of Columbia Falls and adjacent fire departments. A fire substation (Badrock Canyon Volunteer Fire Department) is located in the intersection of Kelly Road and County 206.

The Columbia Falls Fire Department has 28 volunteers. Equipment includes a 1,250 gpm pumper truck, two 750 gpm pumper trucks, one 4,000 gallon tanker truck, one utility van and a Quick Attack Pickup which has a 300 gallon tank and pumper. The pickup is designed for brush fires and responding to auto accidents in the service area. There is a private fire line in the dispatch center and the department is financed through property taxes.

Response time for fire calls are an important consideration in fire protection. The maximum response time is approximately ten minutes with a fire rating of Class Five within the City and Class Eight within the remainder of the present service area. For a City the size of Columbia Falls, such response time should not exceed two to three minutes (a two to three mile radius from the fire station). Currently, all areas within the City limits are within the two to three mile radius of the station, however, the rural portions of the fire district do not meet the response time.

Present manpower consists totally of volunteers, therefore, an additional substation is not presently needed, because in case of fire, response time includes travel time from home or place of employment to either the fire hall or the scene of the fire, which would differ for each individual.

Planning Recommendations:

When Columbia Falls becomes a second class City, it will require a partially-paid department.

Development north of the City is occurring in heavily wooded areas and access is hampered by the Burlington Northern Tracks. As the City expands in this direction, an additional substation will be needed there. A central location would be the Tamarack Lane/Meadow Lake Estates area.

The volunteer fire department uses equipment provided by the rural fire district. When the City acquires a partially paid fire department and when a substation is constructed north of the City, additional fire-fighting equipment must be purchased.

SEWER SYSTEM

A sewer system is a network of drains and sewers used to collect the liquid waste of a City for subsequent treatment and disposal. While no specific guidelines exist, it is a general practice to consider the installation of sewerage when land is developed into less than one acre lots. Prior to 1970, homes were served by individual septic tank absorption systems or cesspools. The existing sanitary sewer was constructed in 1969-1970 in conjunction with the construction of the existing wastewater treatment plant which is located in the extreme southwestern corner of the service area along an arm of the Flathead river. Several structural and operational problems led to many plant modifications and frequent bypassing of raw sewage was necessary since 1970. As a result, in November, 1982, construction was begun on a new sewer plan in the same location. It was completed in late 1983.

The new treatment plant includes secondary treatment by the extended aeration process and subsequent discharge of the treated effluent to the main stem of the Flathead River. Sludge handling facilities involves aerobic digestion and subsurface injection.

The upgraded plant now has a capacity of 1.25 mgd. Present average daily flow is .25 mgd with peak flows reaching .75 mgd. When peak flows reach the present capacity level of 1.25 mgd, the plant is designed to be expanded to treat 2.5 mdg. At present rates, a population of 5,200 could be served by the existing plant. This is roughly 2,000 more people than are using the plant today. The entire planning jurisdiction is projected to increase by only 1,900 people through the year 2000 and a portion of these people will not be in the immediate service area of the system. In conclusion, the present system will serve the needs of the community beyond the present 20 year planning period.

The Columbia Falls Sewer System in past years has not served residences outside the City limits. In 1983, the City broke with this policy and agreed to extend services to the Meadow Lake Estates Subdivision north of Tamarack. As a condition, all property owners outside the City limits hooking up to the system must sign a waiver of right to protest should the City petition to annex their property in the future.

The existing sewer collection and associated lift stations within the City are in good condition and have adequate capacity to handle future growth in the areas that they now serve. However, as areas just outside the present service area become more densely developed, some existing lines and lift stations may have to be upgraded to handle additional loads. The design of new sewer collector systems for Columbia Falls should conform to the "Ten State Standards" used by the State of Montana and the "Standards for Public Improvements" for the City of Columbia Falls.

<u>Planning Recommendation:</u>

The sewer system extension plan, Figure 6, indicates the proposed sewer main extensions which will service those areas where new development is anticipated or proposed. The plan does not address the installation of local lines as this will be contingent upon local neighborhood design.

WATER SYSTEM:

Clean water is a basic requirement for public health. The value of a good public water system becomes increasingly important as population densities grow and the old standby, the private well, faces increasing odds of being contaminated from nearby septic tanks and cesspools. Therefore, the goal of this element is to insure that as areas of increased density develop, they be served by public water.

The City of Columbia Falls operates a municipal water system which serves the entire City of approximately 1,200 metered residences. The City has a policy of only providing water to areas within the City or upon annexation to the City. The one exception to this policy is the Plum Creek Operation which also is the only major industrial user of municipal water in Columbia Falls.

The Columbia Falls water system uses both a surface water reservoir and deep wells to supply water to the City. The Cedar Creek Reservoir was constructed in 1917 and is located two miles north of the City. The City is capable of obtaining up to four million gallons per day from the reservoir, however, it has rights to only .36 mgd on a yearly basis. There are also three wells located in the eastern portion of the City in the vicinity of Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue East. These wells are all located in a gravel floodplain acquifer and pump river water. Only one well is currently operational. (Figure 7)

Present water use including residential, industrial, commercial, school use and system loss, is estimated at 300 gallons per capita per day (gpcd). The water quality of Cedar Creek Reservoir limits its use during periods of runoff since chlorination is the only form of treatment provided. Well water is pumped directly to the distribution system, therefore, making water quality dependent on the quality of the Flathead River. Based on current usage, the maximum population that could be served by the existing supply is approximately 7,900.

A public water system should be able to supply water flows to meet both the fire protection needs as well as the household, commercial and industrial demands of the City. The distribution system must be able to deliver water in sufficient quantity to each customer at all times. Ideally, the most desirable system is a perfect grid layout with supply and storage strategically located to equalize pressure during periods of heavy usage. In this way, water is fed from at least two directions to a point of drawoff, thus eliminating storage of stagnant water in dead-ends. This also helps to equalize pressures to all points along a particular line and minimizes the number of users who have to be cut off during line repairs.

The City's distribution system is in good condition in terms of maintenance, service area and interlooping lines except for about 6,000 feet of aged 2 and 4 inch mains located south of Ninth Street, predominately in the Fourth Avenue area. These lines are scattered intermittently throughout the older part of the City, some forming dead end lines, others connecting between larger lines forming substandard loops.

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION

SEWER MAIN EXTENSION PLAN

FIGURE 6

KEY

- Sewer Mains 10" or Larger
- Sewer Mains – 8"
- Existing Lift Stations
- Proposed Mains 10" or Large
- Existing City Limits

Note: Lines 6"-8" which are not main collectors are not shown.

FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

SEWER PLANT

PLANNING JURISDICTION BOUNDARY MAP

*Note: This map covers only a portion of the total planning jurisdiction as is shown by the shaded inset above.

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION*

WATER MAIN EXTENSION PLAN

FIGURE 7

Cedar Creek Reservoir 2 miles north

KEY

- Existing Water Mains 10" or Larger
- Proposed Water Mains
- Pump Stations
- Existing City Limits

N

0 250 500 1000 FEET

FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

PLANNING JURISDICTION BOUNDARY MAP

N

0 1 2 Miles

*Note: This map covers only a portion of the total planning jurisdiction as is shown by the shaded inset above.

Plan Recommendations:

Water supply is adequate to meet the needs of the City beyond the twenty year planning framework. Water quality is a major issue and the City should consider either additional treatment facilities in the future or else a new source of water such as a deep well.

All water system improvements should be designed in accordance with the "Standards for Public Improvements for the City of Columbia Falls," the "Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences Standards" and the "American Water Works Association Requirements and Standards."

An ongoing replacement program should be undertaken to replace the 6,000 feet of substandard water lines in the City.

Figure 7 presents the Water Extension Plan for the City. This map indicates recommended water main extensions to address future growth as it occurs. The proposals are conceptual and detailed engineering studies will be necessary to determine specific locations.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The citizens of Columbia Falls have access to vast areas of some of the most scenic open space and best hunting and fishing in the nation. The City is within an hours drive of Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Flathead Lake and the list goes on. Despite all these recreational opportunities in the outlying areas, the City must focus its attention on providing adequate recreation in the immediate urban area. Within urban areas, parks are generally grouped into three categories:

Neighborhood Parks	Minimum size of five acres serving a population of 2,000-3,000 serving an area of 1/4 to 1/2 mile radius.
Community Parks	Minimum size of 15 acres serving a population of 5,000 - 7,000 with a service area of 1/2 to 1 1/2 mile radius.
Regional Parks	Minimum size of 25 acres serving a population of 8,000 - 10,000 located within 1/2 hour driving time of user.

A typical community should provide its residents access to the hierarchy of park facilities mentioned above. Within the City of Columbia Falls there are seven parks situated on 25 acres of land. These parks provide, in addition to open space, one public swimming pool (in need of repairs) and four public tennis courts. The rural planning jurisdiction offers one nine-hole golf course with club house and river access for boating, fishing and swimming at the U.S. Highway 2 Bridge, and the Montana Fish and Game access at Kokanee Bend. (See Figure 8)

Existing park sites in Columbia Falls are limited and poorly maintained. From the standpoint of size, all the sites would be classified as neighborhood parks or smaller (less than five acres). No community or regional park sites are available either in the City or in the planning area. In addition, most of the sites are located in the eastern core area. Growing areas to the north and southwest are both deficient in developed sites. Another recreational deficiency is the under utilization of the Flathead River, a natural scenic and recreation area passing through town. Further development of its recreational potential can enhance the beauty and attractiveness of the Columbia Falls area.

Plan Recommendations:

Development of a major community park adjacent to and east of the urban core located in the floodplain.

Expansion of the Kokanee Bend access into a regional recreational park utilizing otherwise undevelopable floodplain areas.

Connection of both parks by bicycle pathways and pedestrian ways along open space on both sides of the river.

Creation of a community park north of the City on Cedar Creek just west of the ARCO Aluminum Plant access road. The park would utilize a potential flood/marsh area.

SCHOOLS

The Columbia Falls School District covers the largest area in Flathead County. Within the Planning Jurisdiction in the City are elementary facilities (grades K-6), a junior high school (grades 7-8) and a high school (grades 9-12). (Figure 8)

The main elementary building, constructed in 1952 and expanded in 1955, is in good condition. This building provides 19 primary grade classrooms for grades 2-4. Located directly behind the main elementary building is the West Annex, housing grades 5 and 6. The West View School, located on Twelfth Avenue South, services kindergarten and first grade. Total enrollment during the 1982-1983 school year was 931 for grades K-6. This total placed the elementary buildings at capacity levels.

The junior high section of the elementary complex was built in 1940 and remains in fair condition. The building provides 18 classrooms for grades 7 and 8 and had enrollment of 365 for the 1982-1983 school year. This enrollment level is at capacity.

The Columbia Falls High School was built in 1959 and is in good condition. The enrollment (grades 9-12), for the 1982-1983 school year was 750, exceeding the school's capacity of 600. The school has been operating above capacity (average 200 over), for the past decade. Enrollment over the past five years has been declining.

Children located over three miles from school are required by state law to have bus service. Due to the large area covered by the Columbia Falls School District, approximately 49% of the students are bused. The District currently operates 21 buses.

The teacher/pupil ratio averages approximately 23 students for every teacher in the district.

The ideal population to be served by an elementary facility is 3,000-5,000 people, a junior high school should serve a maximum population of 13,000-16,000 and a senior high school should serve a population of 20,000-24,000. The current population of the Planning Jurisdiction is slightly above 7,000 and during the twenty year planning period, it is projected to rise to just under 9,000 people. Based on projected populations, it is not necessary to consider providing another junior or senior high school facility, but there does appear to be a need for an additional elementary school.

Plan Recommendation:

> The Columbia Falls school system has been operating at or over capacity during the past decade. Declining enrollments have eased the situation somewhat during recent years. However, as population continues to rise during the next two decades, pressures will again increase for additional space. The School District building committee is involved in an on-going review of capacity problems. Current efforts are focused on redesign of existing areas, looking for more efficient use of space. No plans exist for new building construction. The plan recommends a future elementary site north of the present City on Hilltop Road to serve the expanding population in this area.

OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES

City Hall: The Anaconda Company donated its' company employees' building to the City in 1972. Constructed in 1956, the building is in good condition. The structure houses, in its 17,500 square feet of floor space, the City government, the City Police Department, Justice Court and the County Library, Columbia Falls Branch. Located adjacent to City Hall is the Fire Department.

Library: The County Library system operates a branch library in the Columbia Falls City Hall complex under a 20-year lease with the City. The facility was remodeled in 1971. the branch contains 12,000 to 15,000 volumes and provides various facilities and services for children and the handicapped.

Health Facilities: The City of Columbia Falls does not have a hospital. However, hospital facilities are located in Whitefish (North Valley Hospital), a distance of eight miles, and in Kalispell (Kalispell Regional Hospital), a distance of 15 miles.

Montana Veteran's Home: The Montana Veteran's Home is a facility intended to serve veterans in Montana. A recent expansion program completed in early 1984 increased the capacity of the facility to 150. There are rooms for 65 nursing patients and 85 domicile resident rooms.

Cemeteries: Two public cemeteries are located in Columbia Falls. In addition a private Veteran's Cemetery is also provided.

Summary: All major facilities above should be adequate to meet future needs. Expansion of the City Hall complex to include the entire block it now partially occupies may be necessary in the future as the City grows. (Figure 8)

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION* COMMUNITY FACILITIES

FIGURE 8

Key

1. City Hall/Library/Fire/Police
2. City Shop
3. Cemetery
4. Chamber of Commerce
5. Schools - existing
6. Schools - proposed
7. Parks/Open Space - existing
8. Parks/Open Space - proposed
9. Private Parks
10. MT Veterans Home
11. City Sewer Plant
12. Golf Course

PLANNING JURISDICTION BOUNDARY MAP

N

0 1 2 Miles

*Note: This map covers only a portion of the total planning jurisdiction as is shown by the shaded inset above.

N

0 250 500 1000 FEET

FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

9. MASTER PLAN

THE MASTER PLAN

The Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction will be experiencing gradual steady growth over the next 20 years. The Master Plan reflects this and provides a framework to accommodate a total population of approximately 8,900 persons, an increase of 1,800 new residents. The goals and standards utilized in developing this Plan are discussed in depth in the previous chapters. In this respect the plan is a composite of the Land Use, Housing, Transportation and Community Facilities and Utilities Plans. The Master Plan Map as illustrated by Figure 16 is a summation of all these separate plans and embodies the following concepts:

The Master Plan anticipates and directs growth within the planning jurisdiction through the year 2000.

Environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains and difficult soil areas are preserved through the coordination of Land Use, Transportation and Community Facilities.

The ring arterial and collector street system is directly related to land use patterns and growth areas.

Access to all community facilities and commercial areas is provided by the arterial/collector system. Schools and parks are linked to residential areas.

Industrial development is located with convenient access to major transportation routes yet buffered from residential uses.

Park and open space development and expansion is keyed to provide access from all residential neighborhoods for present and future developments.

The Master Plan Map (Figures 9A & 9B) will serve as a visual policy guide and provide the physical framework for the growth of Columbia Falls and its planning area. The map must not be used in isolation though. The map is the summation of the entire plan and yet without the goals, objectives and insight of the entire plan, the map becomes shallow, inflexible and difficult to interpret properly. To be effective, the entire Master Plan document must be read, understood and used.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THE MASTER PLAN MAP FIGURES 9A AND 9B

Suburban Residential: Single family detached housing, densities less than two (2) units per acre and normally not serviced by public sewer or water.

Urban Residential: Single family detached housing with densities of 2-7 units per acre serviced by public sewer and water facilities.

Multi-family: Residential uses where densities exceed seven (7) units per acre. Housing is typically duplex or larger attached with units serviced by public sewer and water facilities.

General Commercial: Compact retail sales and service as well as general and professional office uses typically found in a central business district. Off-site localized parking and pedestrian access are major components.

Highway Commercial: Compact groups of commercial uses which require and cater to the automobile for customer contact. Uses are typically located along major thoroughfares and include motels, auto service and repair centers, restaurants, car and truck dealerships, etc.

Neighborhood Commercial: Commercial service area typically not exceeding two acres in size located within and surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Uses cater specifically to the immediate convenience needs of the residents of the neighborhood (radius of 1/2 mile) and should be adequately designed to be compatible to adjoining neighborhood residential uses.

Light Industrial: Light manufacturing, processing, storage warehousing, distribution and commercial uses. Typically industrial activity would not emit smoke, gases, or excessive noise. Direct ingress-egress into residential neighborhoods would be avoided. Such uses would serve as a buffer between more intensive heavy industrial uses and uses of less intensity. Screening would be required where adjacent to residential areas.

Heavy Industrial: Manufacturing, processing, fabricating, warehousing storage, distribution. Areas should be of sufficient size to allow for future growth and expansion without unduly infringing or impacting adjacent uses.

Parks/Open Space: Areas devoted principally to public recreation and leisure activities. Areas may be publicly or privately owned.

Public/Semi-Public: Areas to be used primarily for public purposes by a city, school district, the County, the State or other public agency or a church, lodge, club or other non-profit organization (excludes parks).

Agriculture/Silviculture: Areas devoted to the raising and harvesting of crops; management of livestock; dairying; horticulture; and the growing and harvesting of timber. These areas encompass all the uncolored areas of Map 9A beyond designated development.

Arterial Streets: A major street with moderate to fast speeds, high volume, designed to provide access to the regional transportation system and move traffic through the City, or from one area of the City to another. Arterials may have limited access and are located approximately one mile apart.

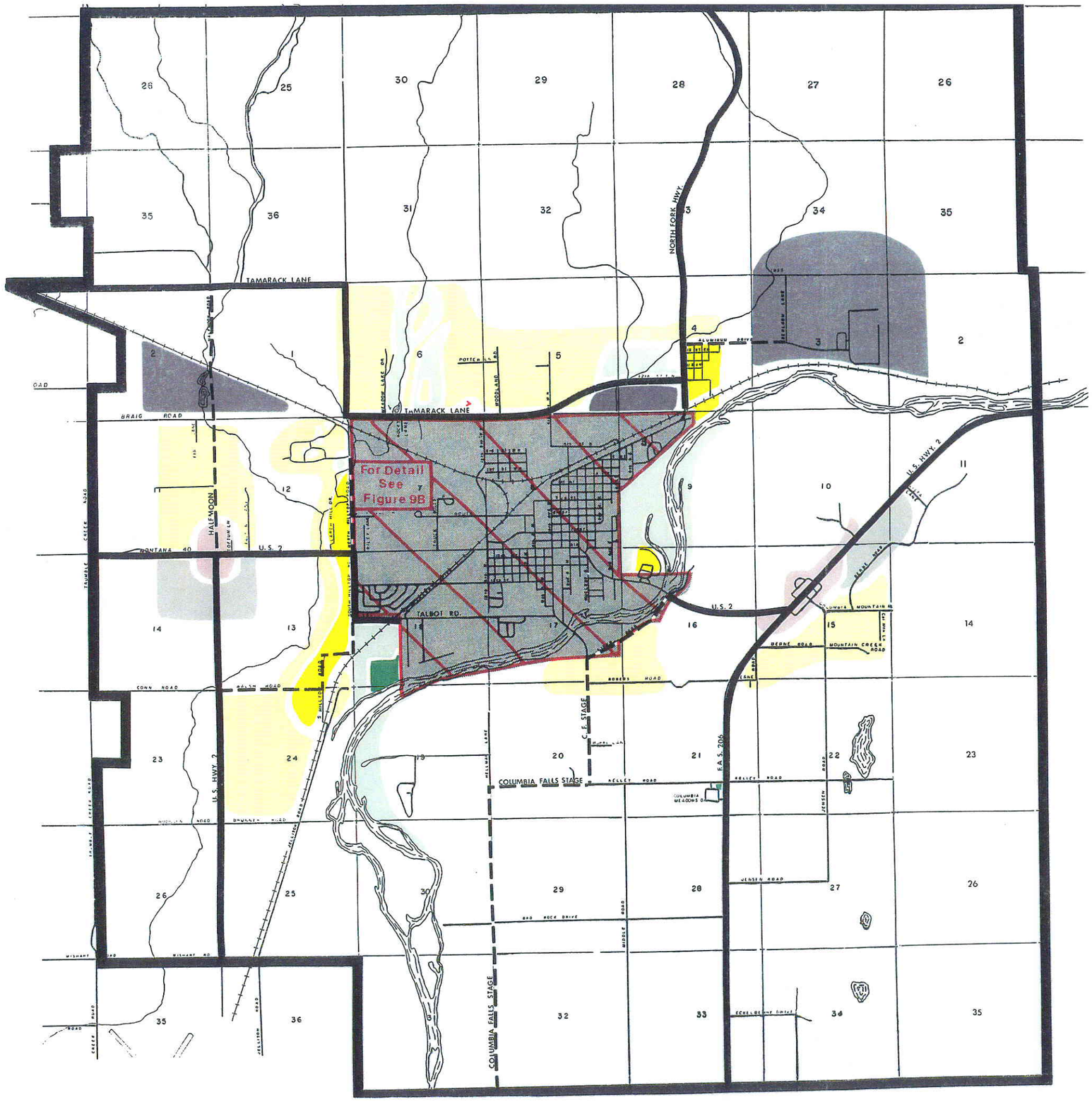
Collector Streets: Intermediate streets which collect local traffic from neighborhoods and transfer the traffic to the arterial system. Collectors are located approximately 1/4 mile apart.

Local Streets: Minor streets intended to serve individual sites, buildings or lots. Local streets either feed into collectors or provide destination access off of collectors.

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION

MASTER PLAN MAP

FIGURE 9A



KEY

- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- URBAN RESIDENTIAL
- MULTI-FAMILY
- NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- PARK/OPEN SPACE
- PUBLIC - SEMI/PUBLIC
- ARTERIAL STREET
- COLLECTOR STREET

N

0 1000 2500 5000 FEET

FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

F GURE 9B

COLUMBIA FALLS CITY - COUNTY PLANNING JURISDICTION* MASTER PLAN MAP

KEY

- SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL
- URBAN RESIDENTIAL
- MULTI-FAMILY
- NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
- LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- PARK/OPEN SPACE
- PUBLIC - SEMI/PUBLIC
- ARTERIAL STREET
- COLLECTOR STREET

N

0 250 500 1000 FEET

FLATHEAD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

PLANNING JURISDICTION BOUNDARY MAP

0 1 2 Miles

*Note: This map covers only a portion of the total planning jurisdiction as is shown by the shaded inset above.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives form the very cornerstone of the Master Plan. Goals as written in a plan are the hopes, needs, and values of the people. They are positive, long range and provide a picture of what the community should strive to be in the next 20 years. Goal statements, therefore, form the direction in which the people of the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction wish to move in the future. Objectives are much more specific. They are short range in nature and form the basic steps to achieve a specific goal.

In developing the City-County Master Plan a single goal statement has been developed for each of six broad areas: environment, economy, land use, housing, transportation and public facilities and utilities. For each goal statement presented a series of objectives have been developed to help accomplish the goal.

ENVIRONMENT:

1. MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF AIR, WATER, OPEN SPACES, AND AESTHETIC VALUES OF THE COLUMBIA FALLS PLANNING JURISDICTION.

   a. Preserve and protect sensitive natural and wildlife habitats where conflicts with development cannot be mitigated.

   b. Protect human life and property and reduce public and private expenditures resulting from development of environmentally sensitive or critical areas, i.e. floodplains, drainage ways, excessive slopes.

   c. Administer and monitor the Federal Flood Insurance Program.

   d. Maintain the 100 year floodplain, where appropriate, in a natural state, as parkland, wildlife habitat, or limited agriculture.

   e. Institute soil erosion requirements as part of the overall development review process.

   f. Monitor all developments for adverse effects on natural drainage ways.

   g. Identify and conserve prime farm land (Classifications 1 - 4).

   h. Maintain a balance in the need for commercial identification, signage and advertising with the need to protect public safety and to maintain an attractive appearance in the community.

ECONOMY:

2. A WELL BALANCED ECONOMY TO PROVIDE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND AN EXPANDING TAX BASE.

a. Promote and attract all types of industry.

b. Encourage in-city business to remain and expand.

c. Support the expansion and diversification of existing industry.

d. Encourage equal opportunity for employment, business advancement, and business development for those segments of the population which have historically not fully participated.

e. Institute measures to take advantage of the tourist industry in the region.

LAND USE:

3. THE MOST EFFICIENT USE OF LAND PROVIDING ADEQUATE AREAS FOR ALL FORESEEABLE USES.

a. Discourage the development of new strip commercial areas and focus future activity into those areas already developed so as to strengthen and concentrate the commercial areas.

b. Encourage growth of the central business district as an integral part of the community structure.

c. Protect industrial, commercial, and residential areas from incompatible encroachments and avoid mixed land uses unless handled as part of a unified Planned Unit Development.

d. Provide for the expansion of existing industrial sites and establish new sites at locations which have immediate access potential to rail and highway.

e. Accommodate a substantial amount of new growth through the development of vacant developable land within the established city.

HOUSING:

4. DIVERSITY IN THE TYPE, DENSITY AND LOCATION OF HOUSING WITHIN THE PLANNING AREA IN ORDER TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE AFFORDABLE LEVEL OF SAFE SANITARY HOUSING.

a. Provide for and coordinate programs to prevent the deterioration of existing structures.

b. Promote conservation and rehabilitation of housing.

c. Encourage a range of housing types including apartments and manufactured homes to meet the needs of all income groups in the Planning Jurisdiction.

d. Encourage planned residential neighborhoods which address the recreational needs of its residents, ready access to neighborhood

commercial services, and adequate community facilities and utilities.

TRANSPORTATION:

5. A BALANCED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PROVIDING ALL RESIDENTS WITH EFFICIENT MOBILITY.

   a. Improve the safety of existing railroad crossings.

   b. Encourage the development of an inter-city bus transportation system.

   c. Initiate a street-improvements program.

   d. Establish a ring arterial street classification system to improve travel through the City and within the City connecting the major employment areas, the central business district, public facilities, and residential neighborhoods.

   e. Designate arterial streets which will provide for traffic movement within and around the community and providing access to and from the surrounding area.

   f. Designate collector streets designed to move traffic within segments of the community and funnel traffic to and from arterial streets.

   g. Designate local streets which will provide service within neighborhoods and provide access to collectors.

   h. The intersections of Larch Hill and North Hilltop Roads with U.S. Highway 2 are potentially hazardous due to limited site distance for west bound traffic. Modifications to these intersections including turning lanes should be analyzed to improve the situation.

PUBLIC FACILITIES:

6. EFFICIENT AND ECONOMICAL SERVICES FOR CURRENT RESIDENTS AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE RESIDENTS.

   a. Encourage development in areas with already established water and sewer systems.

   b. Require adequate treatment of industrial waste and avoid storing or locating industrial waste in areas of high groundwater without taking necessary precautions to avoid groundwater contamination.

   c. Avoid development in areas of high groundwater until central sewer and water systems are available.

d. Coordinate sewer, water and street planning and development with the land development process.

e. Institute a capital improvements program so as to program in advance the upgrading and expansion of existing facilities.

f. Provide an optimum variety of recreational opportunities.

g. Identify and preserve historic sites and structures.

h. Provide additional improved public access to Flathead River for recreational purposes.

i. Develop tot lots and neighborhood parks in conjunction with the School District.

j. Emphasize the recreational needs of the residents of the City and Planning area and leave the development of tourist oriented facilities to private, state and federal agencies.

k. Set procedures for accepting park lands, cash gifts, and cash-in-lieu of land.

l. Identify the needs of the mobility handicapped and incorporate these needs into planning and construction of all public improvements and facilities.

10. IMPLEMENTATION

Planning is a long-range process. The development and adoption of a Master Plan is only the beginning. The actual implementation of the plan is on-going, difficult and complex. Too often plans are adopted and placed upon a shelf, to be ignored or referred to only in casual passing. It is as if, by magic, that this plan will someday be achieved. A Master Plan is, by definition, a vision of the future. By adopting a plan, local government is saying, that is what we would like our community to look like in twenty years. In order to achieve that goal a strategy must be devised. The purpose of preparing implementation tools and programs is to develop the strategy.

Implementation of a Master Plan cannot be accomplished by any single tool or program alone. It requires that integration of many approaches, at many different levels. The following tools and programs are suggested as a framework from which to begin the implementation strategy.

ZONING

Zoning is based on the Master Plan. The Plan establishes future development patterns, i.e., residential, commercial and industrial, but as discussed earlier, the Plan is only advisory. It does not have the force of law. Zoning is one of many tools that is used to enforce these long-range development patterns. A zoning ordinance is adopted by a city or county based on the plan recommendations. Zoning regulates three general items. Most importantly, it regulates the particular uses that may occur on a particular piece of property by establishing various zoning districts. Zoning also regulates the maximum height of buildings primarily to ensure adequate fire protection and also to avoid shadowing or blocking of views. Finally, zoning sets standards for how a structure is located on a parcel of land including front, rear and sideyard setbacks, minimum lot sizes, and lot coverages.

The City of Columbia Falls has zoning authority over all land within the City plus one mile outside the City. The County has jurisdiction beyond this point, but has failed to enact comprehensive zoning regulations. Within the City, the City zoning ordinance is enforced. In the one-mile extra-territorial jurisdiction the City has adopted a separate set of regulations. Beyond this point, only three (3) isolated areas are zoned within the planning jurisdiction.

Recommendations:

1. The City should administer only one uniform zoning ordinance. The current zoning ordinance in the extra-territorial zone should be replaced by the City Zoning Ordinance.

2. The City Zoning Code is dated and in serious need of review and updating.

3. The rural lands in the planning jurisdiction outside of the municipal zoning jurisdiction should be zoned by the County based on the Columbia Falls Master Plan.

4. The zoning map should be amended to conform to the Master Plan.

5. The City should routinely extend the one mile extra-territorial zoning boundary as annexations occur.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:

In contrast to zoning which establishes what a piece of land can be developed into, subdivision regulations govern how a piece of land will be developed. Subdivision regulations provide for the legal recording of the division of land and regulate the conversion of raw land into building lots. Within the regulations standards are set for street design, storm water drainage, placement of sewer and water lines, site design including lot and block layout and parkland and public use dedications. Subdivision regulations are an extremely important tool in implementing the Master Plan because when a particular piece of land is being developed, these regulations ensure that:

1. The major street plan is consulted and, if arterial or collector streets are proposed for the area to be developed, they must be incorporated into the development.

2. The major utilities plan is consulted and, if major sewer and water lines are proposed to be extended through the development, they must be included.

3. If any public sites, i.e., school, fire substation, park, etc. are identified on the Master Plan to be located within a development, the public agency responsible should be involved and a specific site should be either dedicated, purchased outright, or an alternate site be chosen.

The City of Columbia Falls administers the 1975 Flathead County Subdivision Regulations and is responsible for all lands within the City limits. The County enforces the 1984 County Subdivision Regulations in the remainder of the Planning Jurisdiction.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

1. It is recommended that a set of Municipal Subdivision Regulations, which addresses predominately urban development be adopted to replace the County Regulations, now enforced by the City.

BUILDING CODES:

Building codes apply only to new construction (including structural repairs and remodeling) and set minimum standards for plumbing, electrical wiring, construction techniques and materials, etc. Building codes are not developed at the local level. Instead cities adopt one of several national building codes developed and updated by national code committees.

Columbia Falls administers the Uniform Building Code within the City Limits and the one mile extra-territorial zone. Beyond this area there is no building code enforcement by the City. The State does require that a state electrical permit be secured for all construction and that all residential projects of five-plex or larger and all commercial and industrial projects require a state building permit as well in that area beyond the city jurisdiction.

The building code insures that those structures allowed by the zoning ordinance are properly constructed. The building code becomes the major enforcement mechanism for the zoning code because, if a permit is requested for a use that does not comply with the zoning, the permit is denied.

Recommendation:

1. The City may by State Statute extend the building code authority up to 4 1/2 miles beyond the City limits. Columbia Falls should extend their building code authority up to the planning jurisdiction boundary to ensure quality construction in the rural areas.

HOUSING CODES:

Housing codes set minimum health and safety standards for all existing housing within a City. Housing codes address minimum lighting and ventilation standards for all rooms and halls, the condition and number of electrical fixtures and outlets, the general maintenance and condition of floors, ceilings, roof, foundations, windows, chimney, doors and porches and require all housing units to have a kitchen with running water, bathroom access and an adequate heating system. In summary, housing codes insure that housing units are kept in a decent, safe and sanitary condition. This helps to ensure that the quality of residential neighborhoods will be maintained. Cities adopt one of several national housing code models which are kept updated by national code committees. Columbia Falls, to date, has not adopted such a code.

Recommendation:

1. The City should adopt a housing code to specifically address the housing conditions of rental properties to ensure both that the renting public is protected and to maintain decent, safe and sanitary neighborhoods.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

A capital improvements plan is simply a community's decision as to what public facilities (capital improvements) to provide where, when, and at what cost. The community's Master Plan gives direction and recommendations as to where growth should occur in the community. The Capital Improvement Plan is a budgeting tool to make sure there is enough money to support the community growth. Capital improvements are generally considered to be major one-time expenditures a community makes for public facilities. For example, a new well, a water storage tank, sewer plant expansion, water and sewer mains, parks acquisition and development, new streets, fire equipment, etc.

A traditional capital improvements plan is established for a six-year period. The City analyzes and projects the capital improvements which must be made during this time period. Realistic costs for these improvements are established. These needs and cost projections are then incorporated into the regular community budget process. The first year project proposals are part of the community's annual budget. The remaining five years of proposals constitute the plan and they are just that - proposals.

Currently, the City of Columbia Falls does prepare a Capital Improvements Program. The advantages of preparing a program are many. Advanced programming of needed community facilities will help the City in avoiding costly mistakes. The fiscal analysis process that is necessary to prepare a program forces the City into sound financial management practice and will help guide the City in making annual budget decisions. Finally, identification of anticipated future construction may encourage the selection of needed land well in advance of actual construction, thus permitting acquisition at lower costs.

Recommendation:

1. Continue implementation of Capital Improvement Plan.

FEDERAL/STATE GRANT PROGRAMS:

Acquisition of needed public facilities and utilities as identified in the Master Plan can be assisted financially through state and federal grant and loan programs. Eligible activities under various programs include sewer and water facilities, streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, land acquisition for public facilities, park acquisition and development, rehabilitation of private and rental housing units, loans to private businesses for new location or expansion of existing facilities, etc. Grants vary from 100% to 50% matched by 50% local money. Some programs require that a majority of the benefit goes to lower income individuals or that a certain number of jobs are created. Some programs have no such requirements.

Recommendation:

1. Investigate various programs and seek assistance in pursuing viable programs that offer realistic and necessary assistance.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION:

Intergovernmental cooperation between the City of Columbia Falls and Flathead County should be encouraged for joint development, operation and maintenance of programs and projects that serve both entities. Such cooperation and efforts are desired to achieve improved efficiency, better facilities and economical operation and maintenance.

Recommendations:

Areas to maintain and improve cooperation include:

1. Law enforcement

2. Park maintenance and development

3. Libraries and recreational programs

4. Land use management in the rural planning jurisdiction:

    a. Conservation of agricultural and timber lands

    b. Floodplain development

    c. Installation, maintenance and upgrading of streets, sewer and water services, drainage, etc. in the rural planning jurisdiction.

    d. Coordination of developments in the rural planning area with the City.

CONTINUED PLANNING

The development of a Master Plan is an ongoing and never-ending process. The dynamic nature of planning should not be addressed as an end in itself, but as a process which is in a constant state of flux. The various recommendations delineated in this study are based upon prevailing needs or deficiencies and past trends. As social and economic conditions vary, so do the needs, desires and deficiencies of Columbia Falls vary. Therefore, the Plan should not be conceived as an end product, but as a document that would require periodic review and revision.

Recommendation:

1. The City of Columbia Falls and the County need to establish an ongoing program of review and analysis of the plan at least on a bi-yearly basis to keep the plan updated, in focus and on track.