Flathead County Growth Policy

Adopted March 19, 2007

Resolution No. 2015A

Last Revised _____

Resolution No. _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Flathead County Commissioners:

Dale Lauman – Chair Jim Dupont Pam Holmquist

Flathead County Planning Board:

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Jeff Larsen	Gene Shellerud	Frank Dekort
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Cover Photo

Trevor Eagleton

RESOLUTION
OF THE FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
RECOMMENDING THE FLATHEAD COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of Commissioners created a Planning Board in order to promote the orderly development of the unincorporated areas of Flathead County pursuant to 76-1-101, M.C.A.; and

WHEREAS the jurisdictional area of the Flathead County Planning Board encompasses all areas within Flathead County excluding the City of Kalispell, the City of Whitefish and the Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Flathead County Growth Policy on March 19, 2007 by Resolution No. 2015A; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 9, Part 6, "Implementation Strategy" of the Growth Policy provides that the Growth Policy should be updated, at a minimum, every five years; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 76-1-106, M.C.A. and Flathead County Resolution No. 2015P, the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners requested that the Flathead County Planning Board update the Flathead County Growth Policy pursuant to the approved work plan; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 76-1-306 and 76-1-601, M.C.A., the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Staff assisted in preparing a growth policy update; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 76-1-603, M.C.A., the Flathead County Planning Board did hold _____ workshops to engage the public, receive comments and review recommendations and suggestions made regarding the growth policy update; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 76-1-602, M.C.A., the Flathead County Planning Board did hold _____ public hearing(s) on the growth policy update (*list dates*); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Flathead County Planning Board does hereby recommend for approval to the Flathead County Board of Commissioners the updated Flathead County Growth Policy attached hereto.

Dated this ___ day of _____, 2012

[attach signatures]

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Flathead County Growth Policy on March 19, 2007 by Resolution No. 2015A; and

WHEREAS……..

WHEREAS…….

WHEREAS……..

WHEREAS……...

WHEREAS……

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED……..

Dated this _____ of _____, 2012.

[attached signatures]

AMENDMENTS

Res. #	Date	Chapter(s), Part(s) Amended	Purpose
2015 H	10/20/08	Chapter 11 Policies & Part 1, Appendix C Part 1, Designated Land Uses 2006 Map.	Amending the Growth Policy to remove references to the Interlocal Agreement with the City of Whitefish after Resolution #1783B (03/13/08) rescinded the Commissioner's consent to that agreement.
TBD	TBD	Growth Policy 5-Year Update	Conducted 5-year update for accuracy and consistency with M.C.A.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1: THE CHARACTER OF FLATHEAD COUNTY

The character of a community may be defined as the unique cultural and physical attributes of a particular location. Nowhere else in the world looks and feels the same as downtown Bigfork or rural Marion. The irony is that growth fueled by the attractive character of our community is the same growth that can ultimately change it. High density residential development has the potential to change the character of a rural area and create safety and health hazards if not properly guided. Similarly, low density development in areas well suited for development can be an inefficient use of land resources. Some responsible developments mitigate these impacts and others do not. A growth policy should establish goals and policies that build a foundation for safe and healthy growth that preserves Flathead County's most valued characteristics.

CHAPTER 2: LAND USES

One of the single largest impacts of growth in any community is change to land uses. Many land uses are converted as access, infrastructure, visibility and other factors make certain uses more or less desirable. Changes in land use are an inevitable result of growth and can fuel multiple segments of an economy. However, without careful planning, some land uses can have unintended deleterious impacts to the surrounding area. This is especially true in communities with increasing populations and decreasing space or "buffers" between uses. The Flathead County Growth Policy seeks to allow the market to benefit naturally from the desirable impacts of growth and land use changes while protecting the community from the accompanying undesirable impacts to public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare (76-1-106, M.C.A.).

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

Conventional approaches to community planning examine population change over time, analyzing past and current population growth patterns to better predict future trends. Analysis of population incorporates not only the increase or decrease in the number of people, but also the gender, age, ethnic, and socioeconomic characteristics of the population. Understanding these population attributes allows communities to anticipate and plan for the future needs of its residents.

One of the basic needs for a growing population is housing. Housing is a fundamental element in the way communities grow and develop. The location and density of new housing are major drivers of transportation patterns, access to public services, and energy consumption. Housing is a prominent feature of the built environment, an investment and consumptive good, a symbol of personal history and familial connections, and a determinant of social interaction and achievement. A home is the largest purchase an individual is likely to make in a lifetime.

CHAPTER 4: PARKS & RECREATION

Public parks, trails and recreation offer countless values to Flathead County residents and visitors. Public parks, trails and open space provide the opportunity to be physically active and fit. Having close to home access to quality places to recreate is one of the most important factors in determining whether people are active and will continue to stay that way.

CHAPTER 5: THE FLATHEAD ECONOMY

When the Growth Policy was originally adopted in 2007, the Flathead Valley and its economy were experiencing significant growth and development. Traditionally characterized by its diversity, northwest Montana's economy was stable and growing; a 2004 report on the 'State of the Rockies" identified Flathead County as having the most balanced employment composition in the Rocky Mountain West, with no one sector of the economy prevailing over another. That all changed in 2008, when the economic recession affecting the rest of the country began to significantly impact Montana's economy. Numerous reports in the years since have characterized Flathead County as one of the hardest hit economies in the state, with some of the highest long-term unemployment rates and a significant reduction in economic diversity. And while the effects of the recession continue to be felt today, the Flathead Valley is beginning a slow recovery, building upon the natural resources and scenic qualities that have traditionally been part of the economic landscape while embracing new opportunities and supporting those economic sectors that have remained resilient throughout the recession.

The county's natural environment has always been one of its chief economic assets, contributing significantly to the high quality of life that draws visitors as well as potential employers and future residents to the Valley. This quality of life is characterized by natural scenic beauty, clean air and water and access to outdoor and recreational opportunities. Region specific export products such as Flathead cherries and timber products, as well as the tourism draw of Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake are prime examples of how Flathead County's natural environment has contributed significantly to the local economy.

Rapid population growth between 2000 and 2005 served as a major driver in the county's economic vitality during the first half of the decade. The population of older, working, financially established adults rapidly increased during this time period, as those in their early 40's to late 50's chose to relocate to Flathead County. The number of older, non-working adults and retirees requiring access to social and medical services without income attachment grew significantly during this time period, and continues to be a driving economic factor today. Although population growth continued during the second half of the decade - primarily between 2005 and 2007- the national recession that began in 2008 had a dramatic affect on the rate of growth and overall composition of the population, particularly its civilian labor force. This is not, however, the first time Flathead County has found itself in an economic recession. Cyclical changes related to the evolving needs of a local and regionally connected population will continue to

influence and drive the economy. Planning in a way that will encourage and sustain future economic growth in the face of cyclical change is one approach to the current economic situation facing the Flathead Valley.

CHAPTER 6: TRANSPORTATION

The quality and quantity of a transportation system can define a community. It can draw residents together or create barriers to separate them. A transportation element used in conjunction with other Growth Policy elements will shape Flathead County's community character, economic health, and quality of life. Not only does transportation provide for mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and development. A quality transportation system enables prompt emergency services (i.e.: sheriff, fire and medical, etc.) to protect the public's safety and welfare. Transportation planning requires developing strategies to manage the transportation system as a way to advance the county's long term goals and shape future growth. Ideally the transportation system, or at least individual components impacted by a development proposal, should be in place as subdivision and private development occurs.

Chapter 6 is intended to provide information on future transportation needs in the context of projected growth and development. A transportation system must be flexible and capable of adapting to a growing and changing population. Transportation planning examines travel patterns and trends and creates policies that meet mobility needs without creating adverse impacts to the general character of the community or the environment. Transportation planning identifies appropriate modes of travel to support development decisions. Modes of travel in Flathead County include motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, airplane, train and mass transit. Glacier Park International Airport is specifically referenced due to its regional economic importance.

CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Public facilities and services play a vital role in the health, safety and general welfare of a community. Successful communities provide education, law enforcement, emergency, health and other services. Very successful communities provide these services efficiently and effectively while fairly distributing the cost burden to those who benefit, either directly or indirectly. Communities experiencing rapid growth and increasing demand for services while relying solely on property taxes for revenue generation will be less likely to provide those services efficiently and effectively. Many participants in the 2005-2006 scoping meetings held throughout Flathead County (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary) indicated a desire for increased levels of public facilities and services, such as more police officers and better schools. Setting goals for maintaining or increasing the level of services and facilities enjoyed by the residents of Flathead County, while exploring ways to fairly share the cost burden among those who use those services (such as visitors and part time residents), is appropriate for a growth policy.

CHAPTER 8: NATURAL RESOURCES

The vitality of Flathead County is inextricably connected to the abundance of its natural resources. From the aboriginal tribes to the early settlers, prevalent natural resources have been utilized to sustain lives and livelihoods. In 21st century Flathead County, industries such as timber harvest, milling, mining, farming and ranching have shared a balance with real estate development, tourism and outdoor recreational activities. In the past as well as today, the County depends on the availability and utilization of natural resources.

The Montana State Constitution declares all citizens are entitled to clean air and water; this growth policy affirms this entitlement for residents of Flathead County. Air and water are two basic elements of a complex environmental system. The water cycle encompasses all the aspects of water quality, flooding and drought, while carbon and oxygen cycles affect air quality. There are many other nutrient cycles that directly or indirectly impact the quality – and in some cases quantity - of the county's natural resources. Development and human interaction can alter these cycles and create imbalance. Location of development is a key consideration when addressing environmental concerns. This growth policy seeks ways to protect the environment by adequately mitigating development impacts where practicable and restricting development in areas of high sensitivity.

Flathead County has an abundance of natural resources, with over 40 lakes and 3 major rivers surrounded by or adjacent to public lands. Flathead Lake extends from Flathead County into Lake County, encompassing nearly 200 square miles of surface area and 185 miles of shoreline. Flathead Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean, serving as a barometer of the ecological health for the entire Flathead watershed. The surrounding mountains are primarily forest lands managed by the federal and state government. Glacier National Park was established in 1910 and has become Flathead County's most popular tourist destination. The park is split between Flathead County and Glacier County and encompasses approximately 1,008,306 acres which include over 200 lakes and streams and over 700 miles of hiking trails[1].

Private timberlands generate positive contributions to Flathead County's economy through timber production as well as the maintenance of healthy forests, watershed protection, wildlife habitat and other aspects of public value. Flathead County's valley floor is open as a result of extensive logging in the late 19th and early 20th century, and therefore able to accommodate a variety of agricultural uses, extractive industries and residential and commercial development. The main tributaries that flow through the valley floor - the Flathead, Whitefish, Stillwater and Swan Rivers - have created areas of prime agricultural soils and critical riparian habitat.

Flathead County has a long history of beneficial utilization of its natural resources. Agriculture and timber production have historically provided a solid economic base for

[1] National Park Service, Glacier National Park webpage; http://www.nps.gov/glac/index.htm

residents and a record of stewardship that has effectively preserved the abundant natural resources enjoyed today. These resource industries are based on the sustained production of essential products and effective management of the natural resources necessary for their creation. Their role in the protection of natural resources is recognized, as is the importance of their continued presence.

Flathead County Growth Policy public input meetings held between 2005 and 2006 generated an overwhelming response from participants about the preservation of natural resources. In particular, participants wanted goals and policies to protect water resources, open space, scenic views, air quality and wildlife habitat (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). The majority of comments expressed concern about the degradation of natural resources from commercial and residential development, agricultural uses and extractive industries. The goals and policies that follow were developed from a public involvement process and are intended to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of Flathead County directly dependent on natural resources.

CHAPTER 9: SAND & GRAVEL RESOURCES

Sand and gravel are important natural resources found throughout Flathead County. While large amounts of gravel are located throughout the Flathead valley, sand is a resource that is more limited in this area of the state. Sand and gravel resources provide the foundation upon which our infrastructure is built, defining where, how and to what extent development occurs. Our roads, bridges and highways are all constructed using gravel; the houses we live in, buildings we work in and sidewalks we walk on utilize the resource as well. Access to local gravel resources reduces costs associated with transportation and processing fees, thereby reducing the overall cost of development. The potential for local extraction of sand and gravel resources also affects the overall economic climate by providing jobs and serving local construction industries. Developing an awareness of where sand and gravel resources are currently located and what types of activities (extraction, processing, and transportation) are occurring in these locations is important for a variety of reasons. Continued growth and development in areas of the County where sand and gravel resources are currently found will result in continued land use conflicts and may limit the availability of these types of resources into the future.

In 2009, a senator from Flathead County sponsored a legislative bill (Senate Bill No. 486) requiring communities provide an inventory of sand and gravel resources within their jurisdiction. By requiring local governments to identify these resources, this information was intended to provide a base upon which future land use policies could be developed to encourage the separation of incompatible uses while ensuring an economically viable source of gravel to facilitate and support future development.[2] Changes resulting from this proposal during the 2009 Legislative session now require all Growth Policies to include a description of sand and gravel resources. As part of Flathead County's Growth

[2] Montana's Growth Policy Resource Book. Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Division. April 2009; pg.33.

Policy Update for the year 2012, this chapter has been added to address these additional requirements and comply with Section 76-1-601 MCA.

Mapping the location and extent of these resources will serve to inform future land use planning efforts in Flathead County and will help ensure the continued availability and accessibility of sand and gravel for the County's future growth and development needs. Due to the limited data available, this chapter is not intended to be an evaluation of existing materials or a directive on where future sand and gravel extraction should necessarily occur. Pursuant to Section 76-1-601(3)(viii) MCA, this chapter intends to identify existing sand and gravel resources located within the planning jurisdiction of Flathead County. This will encourage the development of corresponding goal(s) and policies that may aide in future data collection and planning efforts involving sand and gravel resources.

CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A Growth Policy is a non-regulatory document created to "ensure the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience or order or the general welfare, and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of community development" (76-1-106 M.C.A.). A Growth Policy does so by working with community members to identify a collective vision and develop goals and policies to support and implement that vision over time. The Flathead County Growth Policy has fifty goals and over two hundred supporting policies that do just that. Some of those policies may be implemented by the Planning Office in the normal course of business, as land use applications undergo review. However, there are over one hundred policies that call for specific actions beyond the scope of daily application processing activities undertaken by the Planning Office. These policies call for things such as agreements with other governmental bodies, identification of lands suited for particular purposes, new countywide plans and new or expanded regulations. This chapter organizes those policies into categories and calls for the creation of an implementation plan by the County Commissioners and Planning Board. The Implementation Plan would achieve the goals of the growth policy in a reasonable timeframe. Land use maps are an integral part of the implementation strategy, and their recommended use is explained in this chapter. Existing instruments including subdivision and zoning regulations as well as neighborhood plans act as logical extensions of this strategy. New instruments should also be considered, and specific measures are suggested in this chapter. Public participation is one of the most important components of any implementation strategy; no new policies, plans, maps or regulations should be formally adopted until they have been publicly reviewed by the Planning Board and their recommendation forwarded to the County Commissioners in the manner set forth herein.

It is important to remember a Growth Policy is not a miracle cure for the ills of a growing community. Even the best Growth Policy has no impact if it cannot be implemented. In keeping with Chapter 1 of this document, regulations should protect public health and safety with minimal impact on personal freedoms. Implementing the Flathead County Growth Policy must achieve a balance. This chapter discusses various aspects of

implementing the Flathead County Growth Policy and proposes techniques that are a reasonable "middle ground" between many competing interests.

The implementation tools described in this chapter are reasonable and appropriate suggestions for Flathead County based on numerous suggestions received from the public during the development of this Growth Policy document (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary).

CHAPTER 11: NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

Montana state law allows any county or municipality in Montana to prepare a growth policy, pursuant to 76-1-106(1) M.C.A. While the growth policy is designed to be a comprehensive policy document, it may contain more site specific neighborhood plans pursuant to 76-1-601(4). Each neighborhood plan must be consistent with the growth policy. Land use decisions guided by a neighborhood plan should reflect a community's vision of how they intend to grow in the future. In the absence of a neighborhood plan, land use decisions are guided by the growth policy and existing regulatory documents, as applicable. The intent of this chapter is to provide a general framework to facilitate the preparation, revision and update of neighborhood plans in Flathead County.

CHAPTER 12: STATEMENT OF COORDINATION

The Growth Policy does not have sole jurisdiction over all lands within Flathead County; there are multiple planning jurisdictions present throughout the County. Lands under the jurisdiction of the National Forest Service, National Park Service, Salish-Kootenai Confederated Tribes, or cities of Whitefish, Columbia Falls and Kalispell are not subject to the goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy. However, growth in one area of Flathead County has the potential to impact other areas of the valley as people, goods and services move between jurisdictions. It is essential that Flathead County have a plan for coordinating with other jurisdictions on land use issues pertinent to protecting the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106 M.C.A.).

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PREFACE

PART 1: Enabling Legislation

Section 76-1-601 of Montana Code Annotated (M.C.A.) establishes a requirement for all county and municipal jurisdictions in the state of Montana to prepare a growth policy. Montana state law also states that, if requested by the governing body, the Planning Board shall prepare the Growth Policy (76-1-106, M.C.A.). The planning board may delegate to staff hired by the governing body the authority to perform "ministerial acts" (76-1-306, M.C.A.) such as drafting a growth policy. The Flathead County Planning Board worked on a growth policy from 2002 until the fall of 2004 when the monthly workload of subdivision and zoning review became too burdensome to continue both efforts. Between the fall of 2004 and October 1, 2006 the Flathead County Planning Board worked with planning staff and the advisory "Long Range Planning Task Force" to create the Flathead County Growth Policy (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). On September 18, 2006, the Flathead County Commissioners passed Resolution #1976 which reiterated their desire to have the Flathead County Planning Board prepare a growth policy, pursuant to Section 76-1-601, M.C.A for adoption by the Board of Commissioners.

PART 2: Format of the Document

The Flathead County Growth Policy is a document created to provide guidance for growth in Flathead County. The growth policy has no regulatory authority and is instead designed as a conceptual foundation for future land use decisions and is a basis for future regulations. It is therefore critical that a growth policy be a public document, created by the public who choose to participate in the process, and used to serve the public. Montana law clearly states that a growth policy should be prepared "To ensure the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience or order or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of community development…" (76-1-106, M.C.A.). However, a delicate balance must be achieved to comply with the requirements of state law and also respect the custom and culture of freedom and private property rights in Flathead County. This document attempts to achieve such a balance.

The Flathead County Growth Policy is divided into eleven chapters. Chapter 1 establishes the most important elements of life in Flathead County that were identified during the public engagement process. The identified elements of the public's vision are used to guide the entire document. Chapters 2 through 8 present existing characteristics, projected trends and goals and policies in a format that complies with the topics required by 76-1-601, M.C.A. Chapter 9 outlines an implementation strategy for the reasonable and fair use of the policies and goals set forth in all chapters. Chapter 9 also contains a statement of compliance with state subdivision regulations as required by 76-1-601(3)(h), M.C.A. The purpose, scope and format of neighborhood plans are addressed in Chapter 10. Neighborhood plans are an important tool for local planning at a level of detail that does not appear in the county-wide growth policy. Chapter 11 sets forth goals and

policies for successful coordination with other jurisdictions within Flathead County. Detailed appendices documenting the existing characteristics in Flathead County in 2006 and the public involvement process in creating the growth policy follow Chapters 1-11. It is also envisioned that additional elements such as neighborhood plans will be appended as part of the Growth Policy.

All sections are presented in a discussion format that briefly covers the existing characteristics and projected trends. Maps are provided only for illustrative and educational purposes. Maps in the Flathead County Growth Policy should not be interpreted as regulatory. If a more detailed discussion or presentation of data is warranted by the topic, it is found in Appendix A: Baseline Analysis. A summary of public involvement throughout the growth policy process is found in Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary.

Successful preservation of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, and general welfare and compliance with Chapter 1 guide the goals. The policies are suggestions for reaching the goals. Goals and policies are listed in each chapter that will guide Flathead County towards a safe and healthy future consistent with both the vision of the residents and the rights and freedoms of individuals.

PART 3: History of Land Use and Growth in Flathead County

Complex growth and land use issues have a long and constantly evolving history in Flathead County. In 1855, the Bitterroot Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai tribes signed the Treaty of Hellgate, ceding 22 million acres of land that included what is now Flathead County to the federal government in exchange for retaining the Flathead Indian Reservation. Soon afterwards, news of gold in British Columbia brought the first permanent settlers to Flathead County where agricultural lands and timber reserves were abundant. Homesteaders were able to acquire property from the federal government in exchange for making the land productive. The Timber and Stone Act of 1878 allowed wealthy individuals and corporations to purchase large amounts of federal land, and the combination of homesteading and purchases from the federal government created what is now approximately 587,431acres of private property in Flathead County.

The first mapping of the Flathead Valley occurred in the early 1870s. At that time, Montana was not yet a state, but the area that is now the State of Montana had a population of about 2,500. There were very few people living in the Flathead area until the first significant in-migration of white settlers to northwest Montana which occurred in 1883, following the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad line to Ravalli, north of Missoula. The Flathead and Lewis and Clark Forest Reserves were created in 1897 out of what is now a major portion of Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest. The Forest Service, created in 1905, took over the management of these lands from the General Land Office. Glacier National Park was established five years later in 1910. For a complete history of growth in Flathead County in the 20th century, see Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

The population of Flathead County has grown in every decade but one. In 1900, the population of Flathead County was approximately 9,375 and with the exception of 1920 to 1930, that number has grown throughout the 20th century. Timber, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism have all contributed to growth in Flathead County over the last 100 years, and the Flathead economy continues to grow and diversify in 2006.

All growth historically has had impacts on the local community. The scale and speed of growth determines the impacts that are likely to occur. Some recent impacts of growth are positive, such as jobs, housing and increased property value. Other impacts, such as traffic, delayed emergency response times or incompatible land uses have been seen by residents as negative. Since 2002, when the Flathead County Planning Board first began work on the growth policy, numerous public meetings have been held throughout Flathead County to react to how residents feel about growth. The Flathead County Planning Board, along with the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office and the Long Range Planning Task Force have used the information gathered at public meetings, as well as hundreds of letters and surveys received between 2003 and October of 2006 (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary), to determine the seven primary elements that are most important to the residents of Flathead County.

PART 4: Property Rights in Flathead County

The Flathead County Growth Policy has been created to provide guidance for future growth and development in Flathead County. As stated previously and reiterated throughout this document, the Growth Policy has no regulatory authority; instead, it is designed as a conceptual framework upon which future land use decisions and regulations may be based. Because of this, it is critical the Growth Policy be developed as a public document, created by those members of the public who choose to participate in the process, to serve the public accordingly. Montana law clearly states that a growth policy should be prepared "to ensure the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience or order of the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of community development…" (76-1-106, M.C A.). However, a delicate balance must be achieved to comply with the requirements of state law and also respect the custom and culture of freedom and private property rights in Flathead County.

Property rights have clearly been established as important to residents of Flathead County. This is evidenced by their position as a valued element identified in the public's vision of the County [Chapter 1 – *The Character of Flathead County*, pg. 3]. Goal 2 and the correlating policies found in *Chapter 2 – Land Uses* further articulate the importance of property rights when planning for future growth and development. However, defining 'property rights' and what those rights entail is less clear, fully dependent on the context in which those rights are identified. There is no universally accepted definition of property rights, although understanding differing perspectives and historical background may help to provide a clearer picture of how property rights are generally viewed. While the United State's economic, legal and governmental systems are based upon all types of property and the associated rights of each, this Growth Policy is primarily a land use

document and, as such, concerned with the rights of real property owners and how they are affected by land use decisions.

Individual property rights represent the very basis of our society, the foundation upon which our Country is built. These rights began as broad, far-reaching constructs, but over time have been limited through regulations developed from a public process. Regulation is not intended to limit property rights for the sole purpose of restriction, but to protect those rights enjoyed by all property owners by acknowledging – and balancing – their existence.

Property rights are often seen as a function of what others are willing to acknowledge – in other words, a property owner's actions are limited by the expectations and rights of others, as formally sanctioned and sustained by law.[1] There is no recognition of property – or individual property rights - without community; in this regard, property rights are rarely absolute and depend on established societal and cultural parameters. Most definitions of real property rights therefore recognize that they are, in fact, limited. The most common explanation of property rights refers to a "bundle of legal rights" or "bundle of sticks". Recognized rights of the holder of title to real property include the right of possession, the right of control, the right of exclusion, the right of enjoyment and the right of disposition; in simpler terms, a landowner may have the right to sell, lease, mortgage, subdivide or grant easement across their property. However, the public also has rights to property that may include the right to tax, acquire for public use, control (regulate) the use of and/or dispose of in case of death. While this list is by no means 'all-inclusive', it identifies the basic public and private 'bundles' of rights that are widely acknowledged.[2]

The rights of individuals are protected by the governing bodies and are subject to the limitations imposed upon them by those bodies. The role of local government is to uphold the provisions of health, safety, morals and general welfare by weighing competing and often conflicting rights ; as previously discussed, this balancing act is often accomplished through rules and regulations imposed by the governing body through a public process. Zoning, subdivision, lakeshore and floodplain regulations directly impact the extent to which an owner may utilize private property; these regulations must be based upon land use planning documents – such as this Growth Policy – that are the products of a thorough public process, and must satisfy federal and state constitutional guarantees of due process and equal protection under the law. The implementation and administration of these regulations also follow a public process to ensure the rights of private property owners are respected and maintained. It is paramount that local government officials follow the processes set forth within these documents, to provide citizens a venue to voice their opinion on land use issues and decisions that affect them (and their property) directly.

[1] Meyer, Neil. "Introduction to Property Rights"; from *Property Rights - A Primer*. Western Rural Development Center, BUL 834, pg. 4.
[2] Property Rights – A Primer. BUL834, University of Idaho College of Agriculture & Life Sciences.

Preserving and protecting the fundamentals of private property rights for the residents of Flathead County remains important in the creation of this Growth Policy as well as the administration of all land use regulations throughout the jurisdiction. As a property owner in Flathead County, you can reasonably expect the following:

- A landowner has the right to make a land use application to the County, and have that land use application reviewed according to the statutory requirements, in timely manner and in accordance with due process;
- That all rules and regulations established by the governing body shall be followed in accordance with state law;
- That all meetings of Boards and Committees appointed by the local governing body will abide by open meeting and record retention laws established by the State of Montana;
- That open and accountable service will be provided by the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Office as well as all departments of County government;
- That all landowners will receive fair and equal treatment during their interaction with the County, and during the review and processing of all land use applications.

With these rights come corresponding responsibilities, as is clearly identified in Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution of Montana. Just as Flathead County has a responsibility to ensure the rights of private property owners are recognized and respected, private property owners have a responsibility to participate; stay informed; abide by established rules, regulations and procedures; and respect their neighbor's rights to do the same.
Landowners in Flathead County may use this growth policy to help determine permissible uses of property. The Montana Supreme Court has recently reaffirmed that a governing body must substantially comply with its growth policy in making land use decisions. It can be reasonably inferred that landowners have a right to uses of their land that are in substantial compliance with this growth policy and the land use regulations that have been based upon this document. They certainly have the assurance that Flathead County will not apply this growth policy or any related regulations in an arbitrary or capricious manner. This explanation of real property rights demonstrates their "give and take" nature. No society has absolute property rights. They are subject to the limitations that society places upon them. The growth policy's public process has established a theoretical structure of property rights that have originated from the community through direct participation. There are 50 goals and several hundred policies in this document, and their application to a particular land use issue or policy decision will not always be black and white. The intent of this document, through its creation and administration, is to respect property rights in Flathead County while providing a reasonable framework upon which future land use decisions can be made.

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CHAPTER 1: THE CHARACTER OF FLATHEAD COUNTY

Introduction

The character of a community may be defined as the unique cultural and physical attributes of a particular location. Nowhere else in the world looks and feels the same as downtown Bigfork or rural Marion. The irony is that growth fueled by the attractive character of our community is the same growth that can ultimately change it. High density residential development has the potential to change the character of a rural area and create safety and health hazards if not properly guided. Similarly, low density development in areas well suited for development can be an inefficient use of land resources. Some responsible developments mitigate these impacts and others do not. A growth policy should establish goals and policies that build a foundation for safe and healthy growth that preserves Flathead County's most valued characteristics.

PART 1: Seven Elements of the Public's Vision

Identifying the most valued characteristics of Flathead County and creating goals, policies and regulations to guide growth is important to future generations of Flathead County residents. The public involvement process that informed the creation of the original Growth Policy document and took place between 2002 and 2007 identified seven primary objectives for the future of Flathead County (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary).

1. Protect the Views

One characteristic that residents of Flathead County cherish is the view. Views of mountains, lakes, forests, wildlife, and open spaces are cited as characteristics residents of Flathead County would not change. "Scenic resources" are valued throughout the county regardless of age, gender or location.

The Flathead County Growth Policy sets goals to protect views of mountains, forests, lakes and rivers enjoyed from public spaces and to protect the "wide open spaces" feel of rural Flathead County. Policies encourage growth that is non-detrimental to scenic resources and foster development opportunities that do not rob future generations of daily enjoyment of open spaces.

2. Promote a Diverse Economy

The character of Flathead County's economy was frequently identified as an important opportunity for improvement. Residents of Flathead County desire a diverse economy that respects our heritage as a primary producer and promotes development of other sectors of the economy not traditionally found in rural Montana. Residents envision low unemployment and well-paying jobs. The cost of living and home ownership should be affordable to the median income.

One of the ways the Growth Policy influences economic diversity is by setting goals and policies to keep the jurisdiction attractive to present and future economic engines. Maintaining and promoting the unique character of Flathead County through the Growth Policy insures that Flathead County will continue to attract economic engines seeking the "western rural lifestyle" and offering well-paying jobs to a qualified workforce. Supporting this public vision is of particular importance following the economic recession that began in 2008 and had a profound effect on the County as well as the state of Montana.

3. Manage Transportation

Increasing traffic and decreasing quality of roads were cited frequently as negatively impacting the character of Flathead County. Residents who participated in scoping meetings documented how increasing traffic reminded them of a growing suburban community and how a growth policy should address traffic volume, flow and safety.

As the population of any area increases, so will traffic volume, and no single factor creates or remedies traffic. The Growth Policy addresses traffic by examining a variety of public facilities and local services that impact the entire transportation network in the community. Land use patterns that impact traffic flow and volume are also reviewed. The Growth Policy identifies goals for locating and designing roads that mitigate traffic flow and safety issues.

4. Maintain the Identity of Rural Communities

Preserving the rural lifestyle is a primary goal identified by many Flathead County residents. The ability to live "the simple life" and own land in a safe, quiet, and environmentally pristine neighborhood away from cities is a characteristic many residents value.

Preventing communities from growing together and losing their unique identities was another concern of many scoping meeting participants. The concern of seeing Flathead County turn into one continuous sprawling development was expressed in a variety of ways. Many residents of Flathead County do not want to see strip malls, used car lots, mini storage, warehouse stores, lumber yards, and other visually dominating land uses disrupt the perception of driving between unique rural communities.

The Growth Policy develops goals for protecting both the identity of individual communities and the overall rural character of Flathead County. Policies to achieve the goals balance the economic importance of growth and development with the need to protect the same characteristics that attract growth.

5. Protect Access to and Interaction with Parks and Recreation

Outdoor recreational opportunities are a characteristic that defines the feel of Flathead County to many residents. From silent sports to motor sports, continued access to public lands and water bodies is a concern raised by many scoping meeting participants.

The Flathead County Growth Policy addresses the impact that growth can have on access to recreation as well as the quality of the forest, water bodies and parks that are the foundation of recreation in Flathead County. Goals for public recreation facilities and services offered by Flathead County are addressed.

6. Properly Manage and Protect the Natural and Human Environment

A theme commonly expressed was responsible management of the natural and human environment. Air and water quality were mentioned frequently as well as co-habitation of people and wildlife being qualities that make Flathead County unique and desirable. Many residents expressed a desire to protect the lakes, rivers, ponds, groundwater and air for future generations. Residents also enjoy frequent interaction with and access to wildlife as a defining characteristic of Flathead County. Commercial use of timber was a resource characteristic that many residents wish to see preserved.

The Flathead County Growth Policy sets goals for achieving successful management of the natural and human environment while guiding continued growth and development. Protecting the cultural resources and heritage of Flathead County, while limiting interference with private land management opportunities, is a goal of the document.

7. Preserve the Rights of Private Property Owners

A large number of meeting attendees cited protection of private property rights as a major concern. Few people specifically defined those rights, but it can be assumed all owners of private property have the same bundle of rights. As lots get smaller through subdivision, neighbors get closer. A balance must be achieved between zero regulation, which allows one landowner's use of land to impact the use, enjoyment and value of a neighbor's, and overregulation, which could be defined as regulation beyond goals outlined in the growth policy.

The Flathead County Growth Policy seeks to achieve that balance by respecting the cultural heritage of private property ownership in Montana and protecting the same rights of all residents. The addition of text describing private property rights and what they mean for residents of Flathead County has been included as part of the Growth Policy update, to provide additional guidance on this priority [see *Preface - Part 4*, pp. xxvi].

PART 2: How the Vision Guides the Growth Policy

A plan created solely to comply with state law does not serve entirely the needs of a community. The seven elements outlined above are used to tie aspects of the Growth Policy together and guide the goals of the Growth Policy by maintaining a community context to all state-mandated criteria. The vision is not all inclusive; it represents the seven elements that the public prioritized. The goals proposed for each chapter are crafted to both achieve success in the categories required by state law and to preserve and protect the quality of life that makes Flathead County a wonderful place to live now and in the future.

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CHAPTER 2: LAND USES

Introduction

One of the single largest impacts of growth in any community is change to land uses. Many land uses are converted as access, infrastructure, visibility and other factors make certain uses more or less desirable. Changes in land use are an inevitable result of growth and can fuel multiple segments of an economy. However, without careful planning, some land uses can have unintended deleterious impacts to the surrounding area. This is especially true in communities with increasing populations and decreasing space or "buffers" between uses. The Flathead County Growth Policy seeks to allow the market to benefit naturally from the desirable impacts of growth and land use changes while protecting the community from the accompanying undesirable impacts to public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare (76-1-106, M.C.A.).

Goal

G.1 Maintain communication and coordination on issues of land use planning with Federal, State and Tribal leaders for the benefit of all jurisdictions.

Policies

P.1.1 Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park on issues including, but not limited to, local economies, adjacent land development, road status changes, access to public lands, land use planning documents, public hearings, and noxious weed alleviation and control.

P.1.2 Attempt to develop an intergovernmental agreement to codify jurisdiction issues with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on their land.

P.1.3 Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks on issues including, but not limited to, land use conversion, adjacent land development, land use planning documents, public hearings, trust land uses, public access for recreation, land acquisition and state exchanges of trust land with private and federal entities.

P.1.4 Attempt to develop strategies for the County to provide meaningful advice on land use issues to the appropriate Federal, State and Tribal agencies so the County can influence decisions, which are of vital interest to County residents on the 78.6% of land in the County controlled by those agencies.

P.1.5 Communication and coordination between MT DNRC Trust Lands staff and the county will allow for local and regional planning that respects the

revenue generating needs and realizes the best use, be it development or recognized conservation opportunities.

Goal

G.2 Preserve the rights of property owners to the use, enjoyment and value of their property and protect the same rights for all property owners.

Policies

P.2.1 Create land use regulations that are directly linked to the vision outlined in the Growth Policy.

P.2.2 Regulatory and fiscal implementation of the Growth Policy should protect the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106, M.C.A.).

P.2.3 Recognize the potential for imprecisely surveyed parcels throughout Flathead County as a result of the original surveying methods used by the General Land Office. As a result, respect private property rights by allowing minimum lot sizes that enforce the spirit of density guidelines without punishing those who own slightly less than standard acreage units.

Goal

G.3 Preserve the cultural integrity of private and public agriculture and timber lands in Flathead County by protecting the right to active use and management and allowing a flexibility of private land use that is economically and environmentally viable to both the landowner and Flathead County.

Policies

P.3.1 Develop an educational brochure that explains active use and management of timber lands and the impacts adjacent landowners can expect. Promote the document by distributing it to home buyers in Flathead County.

P.3.2 Evaluate land uses and trends in agricultural and timber lands, and present ideas through research and discuss tools that could be used to encourage suitable development.

P.3.3 Maintain flexibility of land use options to forest and agriculture land owners by focusing on mitigating the negative impacts of development.

P.3.4 Develop equitable and predictable impact-mitigation for converting rural timber and agriculture lands to residential real estate.

P.3.5 Identify reasonable densities for remote, rural development that do not strain the provision of services or create a public health or safety hazard.

P.3.6 Identify and maintain benefits of private forest lands, including harvesting natural resources, water quality protection, wildlife habitat and traditional recreational values and ensure that conversion of private forest lands preserves as many of these benefits as is possible.

P.3.7 Adopt techniques that mitigate the threat to public health and safety created by various developments near the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

P.3.8 Encourage federal and state agencies to actively manage timber lands to reduce fire hazard and increase positive local economic impacts of timber harvesting.

Goal

G.4 Preserve and protect the right to farm and harvest as well as the custom, culture, environmental benefits and character of agriculture and forestry in Flathead County while allowing existing landowners flexibility of land uses.

Policies

P.4.1 Develop an educational brochure that explains agriculture and agricultural practices and the impacts adjacent landowners can expect. Promote the document by distributing it to home buyers in Flathead County.

P.4.2 Identify lands most suited to agriculture (appropriate soils, access to water, shape and size of parcels, etc.).

P.4.3 Identify a desirable gross density for rural residential development that retains land values, preserves the agricultural character of the community and allows for efficient provision of government services (law enforcement, fire protection, transportation, etc.)

P.4.4 Identify and encourage subdivision layouts that retain the value of land without negatively impacting the rural character and agricultural activities.

P.4.5 Develop equitable and predictable impact-mitigation for converting agricultural lands to residential uses.

P.4.6 Develop proposals for community-based incentives for farmers and forest landowners to maintain farms/forest in order to share the cost of

preserving the custom, culture, and character of agriculture in Flathead County

P.4.7 Create an agricultural/private timber lands board, with significant representation from the agricultural/timber community and the Flathead County Planning Board, to propose plans for conserving working farms and ranches, clean water and key wildlife habitat.

P.4.8 If allowable, develop and adopt a Right to Farm/Harvest Ordinance and other policies as needed to support the viability of the agriculture/forestry industry in Flathead County.

Goal

G.5 Adequate industrial land in areas that are close enough to goods and services to be efficient but far enough from other uses to offset objectionable impacts to the human and natural environment.

Policies

P.5.1 Match requirements of industrial land uses (such as human resources, adequate water supply, suitable road networks) and areas of Flathead County where those requirements can best be met.

P.5.2 Promote industrial parks and centers that take advantage of infrastructure and minimize impacts to the environment or adjacent land uses.

P.5.3 Identify trends in industrial land uses and determine the amount of land needed in the future at a variety of growth rates. Utilize these figures when determining land use regulations.

P.5.4 Identify "objectionable impacts" of industrial uses and determine desirable distance thresholds and buffers from other land uses.

P.5.5 Restrict industrial uses that cannot be mitigated near incompatible uses such as residential, schools and environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, areas of shallow groundwater, etc.

Goal

G.6 Adequate commercial land that is safely accessible and efficiently serviceable.

Policies

P.6.1 Require internal, interconnected roads for commercial development and frontage roads where appropriate.

P.6.2 Restrict commercial development in unsafe, inaccessible, remote rural areas.

P.6.3 Provide ample commercial land designation to promote affordability.

P.6.4 Require traffic impact analysis for all major commercial projects on major highways and arterials.

P.6.5 Conserve resources and minimize transportation demand by encouraging redevelopment and infill of existing commercial areas in the county.

Goal

G.7 Consider existing community character in commercial land development.

Policies

P.7.1 Determine commercial development features that support the seven elements of the Flathead County Vision detailed in Chapter 1: The Character of Flathead County.

P.7.2 Develop regulations that promote P.7.1 and mitigate the negative impacts of commercial development.

P.7.3 Encourage small-scale, impact-mitigated and compatible commercial developments in accessible, developing rural areas with good access and away from urban areas.

P.7.4 Identify existing areas that are suitable for impact-mitigated commercial uses.

P.7.5 Encourage commercial development that is visually and functionally desirable.

P.7.6 Encourage mixed use developments that share infrastructure requirements such as parking, pedestrian facilities, etc. and reduce traffic by promoting live/work situations where appropriate in Flathead County.

Goal

G.8 Safe, healthy residential land use densities that preserve the character of Flathead County, protect the rights of landowners to develop land, protect the health, safety, and general welfare of neighbors and efficiently provide local services.

Policies

P.8.1 Create reasonable, flexible and predictable development guidelines based on accurate, fair and reasonable criteria.

P.8.2 Identify required criteria for various densities that support the seven elements of the public's vision outlined in Chapter 1.

P.8.3 Create maps that spatially represent the criteria identified in P.8.2.

P.8.4 Set clear standards for amending development guidelines.

Goal

G.9 Define, identify and list desirable characteristics of open space preservation.

Policies

P.9.1 Identify open spaces that serve a critical role in public and environmental health, safety and general welfare.

P.9.2 Create regulatory incentives for the preservation and protection of open spaces during the development process.

P.9.3 Consider and develop specifications for various buffers to protect open spaces.

Goal

G.10 Restrict development on lands that pose an unreasonable risk to the public health, safety and general welfare of all Flathead County residents.

Policies

P.10.1 Discourage high density development within the 500-year floodplain.

P.10.2 Discourage development within the 100-year floodplain that displaces floodwaters to neighboring properties.

P.10.3 Encourage impact-mitigated development in areas of shallow groundwater. Use test holes or bore holes and best available data to determine areas of shallow groundwater.

P.10.4 Restrict development directly on lands with steep slopes.

P.10.5 Protect wetlands and riparian areas. See Goal 38 and Policies 38.1 through 38.4.

P.10.6 Develop reasonable and fair criteria for identifying and preserving structures, artifacts and areas with cultural and historical significance to the residents of Flathead County. Such criteria shall not be used to prohibit development, but rather to encourage development that incorporates and protects these areas for future generations.

P.10.7 On lands that contain areas both suitable and unsuitable for development, encourage open space development design techniques to cluster dwellings away from hazardous and/or unsafe areas.

Goal

G.11 Protection of scenic resources available to both residents and visitors.

Policy

P.11.1 Identify critical gateway areas that provide lasting impressions of Flathead County to both residents and visitors.

P.11.2 Identify development impacts that threaten gateway areas and develop land use guidelines that mitigate these impacts without prohibiting development.

P.11.3 Determine road and recreational waterway corridors with scenic resources that are valued by both residents and visitors.

P.11.4 Create incentives for developments that consider the scenic settings, incorporate design and construction standards that harmonize and complement the local views, and where possible, provide incentives for excellent architectural design.

P.11.5 Develop guidelines to ensure that lighting should not destroy the reasonable enjoyment by all residents of the night skies.

Goal

G.12 Mineral resource extraction that is safe, carefully planned, environmentally sound and appropriately segregated from incompatible land uses.

Policies

P.12.1 Identify areas of known sand and gravel resources.

P.12.2 Identify areas of significant mineral resource deposits and develop accurate maps reflecting these areas.

P.12.3 Create land use policies that segregate existing and future gravel extraction operations from incompatible land uses.

P.12.4 Develop policies to mitigate the impacts of mineral resource extraction. These may include road maintenance, dust abatement or vegetative buffers.

P.12.5 Designate areas where mineral resource extraction is most appropriate and will have the least impact on other resources and land uses.

P.12.6 Restrict sand and gravel operations in areas that pose a threat to water quality.

P.12.7 Encourage progressive reclamation of mineral extraction operations.

P.12.8 Require compliance with existing local, state and federal laws regarding oil, gas, and mineral exploration or production.

Goal

G.13 An efficient, safe and accessible airport system to serve the dynamic needs of a rapidly growing economy.

Policy

P.13.1 Utilize future expansion plans of Glacier International Airport to create a land use designation that protects both the economic significance of the airport and the safety of neighbors and passengers.

P.13.2 Provide development predictability to landowners neighboring the airport by designating growth areas.

P.13.3 Abide by all applicable FAA guidelines for safety around airfields.

P.13.4 Encourage the development of an airport-appropriate industrial/business center to provide convenient access to Glacier International Airport and serve a growing economy.

P.13.5 Coordinate and cooperate with GPI on the Glacier Park International Airport Master Plan.

Goal

G.14 Solid waste collection facility operation and landfill expansion free from land use conflicts with adjacent property owners.

Policies

P.14.1 Identify a 1,320 foot buffer surrounding the landfill and designate this area only for those land uses compatible with current and future landfill activities. Compatible use types such as industrial should be encouraged in this buffer.

P.14.2 Identify all suitable solid waste disposal options available to the County and implement a strategy to assure capacity is secured to meet future demands.

P.14.3 Aesthetically screen satellite refuse collection sites (green boxes) and licensed junk vehicle collection sites to reduce the spread of litter and mitigate objectionable views.

P.14.4 Encourage visually screened, wildlife resistant, centralized collection sites or contract hauling in new subdivisions.

P.14.5 Consider existing, adjacent or nearby private or public solid waste collection facilities during the development process.

PART 1: Federal, State and Tribal Lands (see Goal 1)

Flathead County is the third largest county in Montana encompassing approximately 3,262,720 acres or 5,098 sq. miles[1] . The land in Flathead County is managed by federal, state, local and tribal governments, as well as private property owners (See Map 2.1).

[1] U.S. Census Bureau State & County Quick Facts; Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) – Montana State Library. Please note, this calculation includes only includes land area, exempting approximately 101,120 acres of water area in Flathead Lake.

The federal government manages approximately 71.7% of the total land in Flathead County. The USDA Forest Service is responsible for management of National Forests. Flathead County contains portions of four National Forests and two wilderness areas. Flathead National Forest, including portions of the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas, has approximately 1,875,545[2] acres within Flathead County that comprise nearly 57% of the total county acreage. Other National Forests that have lands within Flathead County are Kootenai, Lewis and Clark and Lolo (totaling approximately 115,390[3] acres). Combined, the National Forests and Wilderness Areas comprise approximately 59% of the total acreage of Flathead County.

National Forests are not the only land in Flathead County managed by the federal government. Totaling approximately 1,008,306[4] acres, Glacier National Park is split between Flathead County and Glacier County. Approximately 635,156[5] acres of Glacier National Park comprise 19% of the total land mass of Flathead County. Other federally managed lands in Flathead County include the Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge (7,885 acres[6]), Swan River National Wildlife Refuge (1,568 acres[7]), and the Flathead, Batavia, McGregor Meadows, Smith Lake and Blasdel Waterfowl Production Areas (totaling 5,189 acres[8]). Combined, Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas comprise an additional 14,642 acres of land in Flathead County.

The State of Montana manages a substantial acreage within Flathead County. Lands managed by the DNRC Trust Lands Management System account for approximately 130,953 acres of Flathead County. The Federal Government granted these lands to the state under the Enabling Act at the time of Montana statehood in 1889. The lands were granted for the sole purpose of generating income for support of the common schools and other public institutions. The Enabling Act mandated that the lands, along with their proceeds and income, would be held in trust for the beneficiaries. As a means of generating revenue, a stipulation in the Enabling Act prohibited the state from disposing of an interest in these lands unless full market value is received. "Disposal of an interest" is considered to be the sale or exchange of the lands, or the granting of any use of them through issuance of a lease, license or easement, if such use is deemed to have a compensable value. Recreational use has been deemed to have a compensable value. The Land Board, whose members are the Governor, Secretary of State, State Auditor, Attorney General and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, oversees use of these lands and its responsibility is to assure that the mandate is met. Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages another approximately 3,235 acres[9] in Flathead County (See Chapter 4, Part 3).

[2] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[3] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[4] National Park Service, Glacier National Park
[5] Montana Natural Resource Information System, February 2011
[6] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/losttrail/
[7] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/swan/
[8] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/wmd/
[9] Natural Resource Information System, February 2011; Fish, Wildlife and Parks land ownership

The Flathead Indian Reservation comprises approximately 28,296 acres[10] of Flathead County. Approximately 24,315 acres of this total are owned by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and are not under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. An estimated 3,024 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation within Flathead County are non tribal owned private fee lands.[11] Any non tribal owned fee lands not owned by members of any Indian tribe would be under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. An additional 2,520 acres of Flathead County within the Flathead Reservation are state owned lands.

Of the total 3,262,720 acres (or 5,098 sq. miles)[12] that make up Flathead County, approximately 2,564,498 acres (78.6%) are managed by federal, state or tribal interests and are not subject to the goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy. The remaining 698,222 acres (approximately 21.4%) are managed by private landowners.[13]

PART 2: Private Property Rights (see Goal 2)

During the scoping meetings of November 2005 through January of 2006, a number of Flathead County residents referenced protection of private property rights as a goal (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). Lands held by private owners are subject to the goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy. It is appropriate to establish a goal of protecting the rights of private property owners. All private property ownership comes bundled with certain rights and responsibilities.

The majority of comments addressing property rights indicated that landowners should be able to do what they want on their property as long as it doesn't negatively impact neighbors, the environment, or the safety of the public. Conversely, some residents identified the desire to protect their property rights from the impacts of incompatible adjacent land uses. Some growth can and does negatively impact neighbor's property rights, the environment and/or public safety. The Growth Policy can be used to address these negative impacts, thereby preserving the use, enjoyment and value of all property well into the future. A discussion of property rights and what can be expected by the residents of Flathead County has been added to the Growth Policy as part of the 2011/2012 update process, and can be found in Part 5 of the Preface.

PART 3: Forest Land Uses (see Goal 3 and 4)

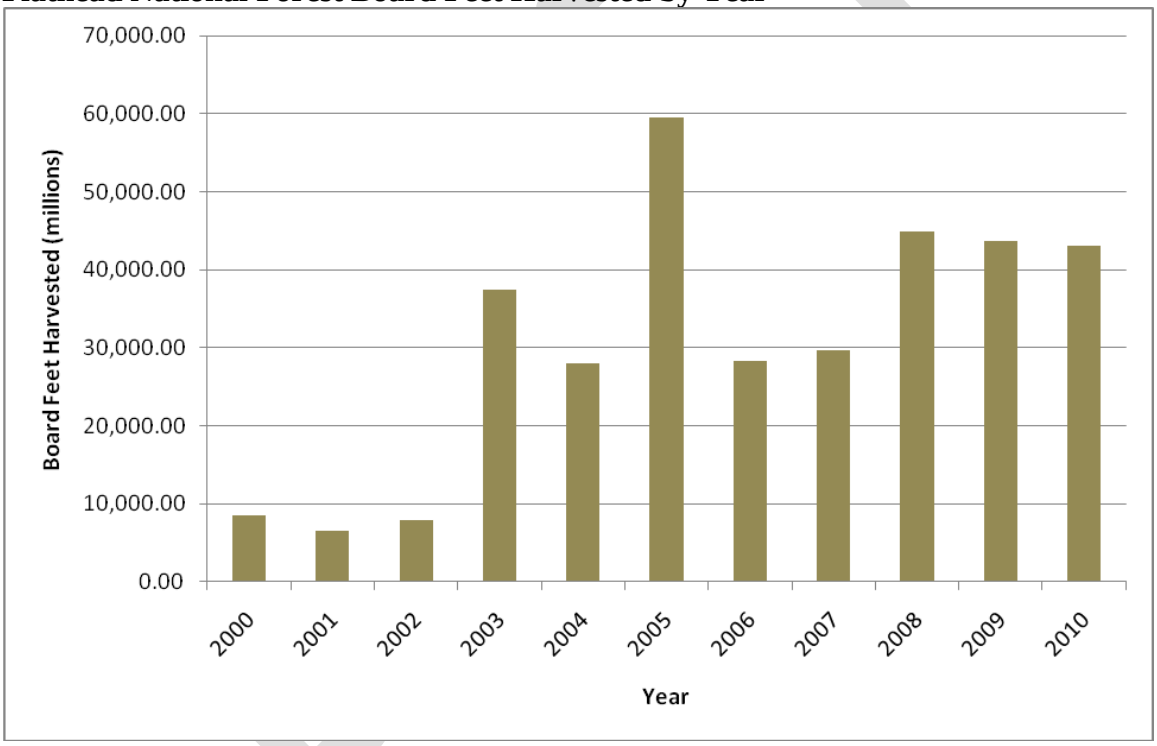
Proactive forest management creates healthy forest ecosystems through practices including planting, thinning, and harvesting of forest vegetation. Proper management of forests protects the cultural integrity of Flathead County and promotes the health and

[10] Natural Resource Information System, February 2011; Tribal and BIA land ownership
[11] Some of these lands could be owned by individual Tribal members.
[12] U.S. Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts; this calculation includes only includes land area, exempting approximately 101,120 acres of water area in Flathead Lake.
[13] Natural Resource Information System, February 2011: private land ownership percentage

safety of residents by reducing the risk of wildfires and contributing to the local economy. Forest land uses in Flathead County are divided into two types- public and private. "Forest land" means privately owned land being held and used primarily for the continuous purpose of growing and harvesting trees of a marketable species.

Public forest lands include federal and state lands on which contract harvesting takes place. The USDA Forest Service will auction portions of the Flathead National Forest to timber interests for harvests. In 2006, 29 million board feet were auctioned to private timber companies; by 2010 that number increased to over 43 million board feet harvested and auctioned. Since 2000, 337.5 million board feet have been harvested from lands owned by the USDA Forest Service (see Figure 2.1).[14] The State of Montana also manages forests lands within Flathead County. Lands managed by the DNRC Trust Lands Management System account for approximately 130,953 acres of Flathead County.

Figure 2.1
Flathead National Forest Board Feet Harvested by Year



Source: Flathead National Forest Timber Sale Reports, Calendar Year(s) 2000-2010

A substantial portion of the private property in Flathead County is used for timber production. The three largest timber landowners, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber, Plum Creek and Montana Forest Products together account for approximately 9.0% (295,500 acres) of the total land area in Flathead County (see Map 2.2). Land owned by these three corporations represents approximately 42.3% of the *private* land in Flathead County.[15] Many smaller operations also exist throughout Flathead County, contributing

[14] United States Department of Agriculture – Flathead National Forest Timber Sale Reports, 2000-2010.
[15] http://www.stoltzelumber.com; http://www.plumcreek.com

additional acreage to the private timberlands category. Although many of the private timber land owners generously allow public access to their land, these lands remain private. Private timberlands provide multiple positive benefits for Flathead County. In addition to the economic aspects of timber production and material products, these timber lands provide watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and other values. Private forest lands are also valuable reservoirs of mineral resources that are a necessary component of any growing community.

Many growth issues arise from private timber lands. Some residents perceive corporate timber lands to be "open space" and forget that the lands are being used to grow a sustainable product, similar to agriculture fields. Timber land owners utilize various silvicultural techniques and technologies to harvest timber materials using the machinery and procedures of the trade. Active forest management is essential to timber lands.

From a land use perspective, another issue arises from the conversion of timberlands to residential uses. Converting timberlands to residential real estate can be more profitable than harvesting timber. Excessive regulations and/or additional costs of owning land can hasten the conversion of timberlands to residential real estate as timberland managers look to maximize profits. However, the conversion of remote, rural lands to residential real estate impacts the community in a variety of ways. Public safety can be threatened as more people move into the wildland-urban interface. The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is commonly described as the zone where structures and other human development meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or forests.[16] This WUI zone is comprised of private and public lands and can pose risks to life, property, and infrastructure in associated communities if not mitigated. These risks to health and safety in the WUI can include inescapable wildfires and natural disasters or human contact with species such as bears, mountain lions, and wolves. Forest management practices which reduce the health and safety risks are essential in areas where public and private forest land border private properties. Risk reduction strategies can consist of commercial thinning projects and homeowner education, realizing that these practices are not a guarantee of home safety.

As is clear in the vision statement, the residents of Flathead County are interested in preserving the rural character of the county. Depending on the manner in which it is executed, residential development in rural areas can impact the character of a community, the health and safety of residents, the cost of providing public services (see *Chapter 7: Public Facilities and Services*) and the natural environment.

A balance can be achieved between providing flexible land use for corporate timber land owners and preserving the community vision by mitigating impacts to the rural character, cost of services and natural environment. As experienced stewards of the land, corporate timberland owners recognize the need to preserve the cultural integrity of rural Flathead County but must be allowed the economic flexibility to do so. Any effort to mitigate impacts of rural residential development must be reasonable, equitable and predictable.

[16] Flathead County Community Wildfire Fuels Reduction / Mitigation Plan

PART 4: Agricultural Land Uses (see Goals 3 and 4)

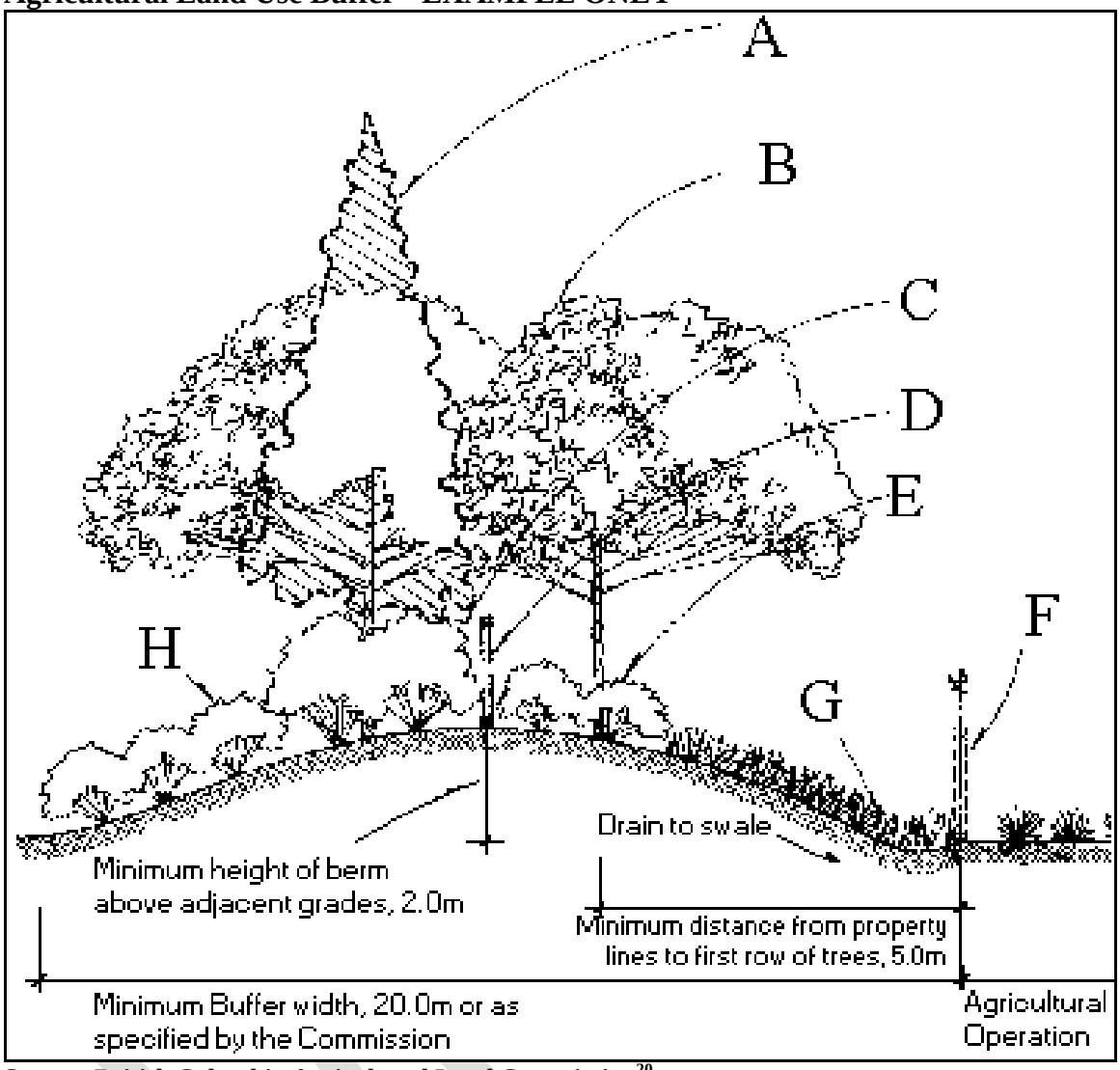
Flathead County has a long tradition of agricultural land uses. Since the first settlers came to the valley, residents have sought to make a living by growing crops and raising cattle. In the 21st century, a substantial portion of the land in Flathead County is still used for agriculture (see Map 2.3). Back in 2002, approximately 40% of the private land (234,861 acres) in Flathead County was being farmed. By contrast, in 2007 roughly 251,597 acres or 36% of privately held land in Flathead County was used for agricultural purposes.[17] According to the most recent Census of Agriculture conducted in 2007, there were approximately 1,094 individual farms operating in the County, with the majority of these farms (81%) being under 179 acres in size. Over half the farms in Flathead County had annual sales of less than $2,500.00. These numbers indicate that a large portion of the farms in Flathead County are small hobby farms and not the primary source of income for the residents. Similar to the agricultural census data for 2002, in 2007 there were only 77 farms over 500 acres in size and 112 farms with annual sales of over $50,000. These farms are more likely to be primary occupations of the landowners and represent a substantial portion of the agricultural acreage in Flathead County.[18]

Many flat areas of the Flathead Valley have very productive soils. Areas of deep, well structured and well drained soils are capable of producing a variety of crops. For more on soils, see *Chapter 8: Natural Resources*. Some of the major crops produced by Flathead County farmers include wheat, barley, flax, alfalfa, grain hays, silage, and livestock pasture. Specialty crops such as seed potatoes, mint, lawn sod, canola, mustard, raspberries, strawberries, grapes and vegetable crops are also important products.[19]

It is clear that agriculture plays a vital role in both the economy and culture of Flathead County. The custom and culture of agriculture in Flathead County is one of the features that is contributing to rapid growth and development. Lands that have traditionally been used for agriculture are being converted increasingly to residential uses as residents seek rural living. Issues can result from mixing residential and agricultural culture when new rural residents are unpleasantly surprised by the sights, sounds and smells associated with farming. Rural living requires adjustments from urban living, and it is unreasonable to expect that farming techniques could or would change when an adjacent field is converted to a residential subdivision. Vegetative buffers on the edges of new developments which abut existing agricultural operations can aid in lessening the cross contamination of weeds, chemicals, noise and odors. An example of such a buffer is seen in Figure 2.2 below.

[17] USDA 2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture; the next update is scheduled for 2012
[18] USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture
[19] Flathead Count y Natural Resource Use Policy

Figure 2.2
Agricultural Land Use Buffer - EXAMPLE ONLY



Source: British Columbia Agricultural Land Commission[20]

A- Yearly coniferous screen
B- Summer deciduous screen.
C- Shrubs to block wind-blown weed seeds.
D- Optional wood fence (invisible due to shrubs).
E- Trespass inhibiting shrubs.
F- Landowner fence
G- Drainage swale.
H- Additional trespass inhibiting shrubs.

There are no accurate data for the number of acres converted from agricultural to residential uses in Flathead County each year, but that conversion is a primary concern of many residents of Flathead County. There are a variety of factors contributing to this conversion. Current landowners are interested in farming as long as it is economically

[20] http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/

viable, but the increasing costs of farming (land, machinery, fuel, labor, etc.) combined with stagnant crop revenue impacts that viability. Farmers in Flathead County are aging and, although there is great interest in agricultural practices among the younger population, none can afford to buy land when competing with residential developers. Extraction of minerals is also a viable use of many formerly agricultural lands as landowners seek more value from their property. The custom and culture of agriculture in Flathead County is at risk, not from a lack of interest or land capable of producing, but from land values that cannot justify agricultural uses and the currently poor economic climate for farming in Flathead County.

PART 5: Industrial Land Uses (see Goal 5)

Industrial applications commonly have a greater impact on the surrounding community than other land uses. It is difficult to mitigate the impacts of industrial land uses due to their inherent nature. However, no economy can function without the important goods and services provided by industry. It is important for a growth policy to identify the existing and anticipated land use needs of a growing economy and plan for areas where industry can function efficiently with minimal impact on the natural and human environment.

Identifying appropriate land for industrial uses presents special issues for any community. Given the possibility that industrial uses will have a deleterious impact on the rights of adjacent property owners, it would seem desirable to segregate them. Certain industrial uses, such as those that have toxic byproducts, must be sufficiently separated from residential areas, schools, playgrounds, environmentally sensitive areas, etc. However, industry needs to be near a base of services in order to be efficient. The further industry is located from goods, services and people, the further all three must be transported. Industrial parks and centers provide a regional service by serving a growing economy with needed industrial space and co-locating potentially hazardous land uses in areas that have been designated as being minimally impacted by odors, heavy truck traffic, noise, etc.

Flathead County currently has approximately 333,136 acres that are zoned.[21] Many of these lands are located around or between the business centers of Flathead County, generally known as Bigfork, Kalispell, Evergreen, Whitefish and Columbia Falls. Of the 333,136 acres of land with regulated land uses, only 1,497 acres are zoned for uses commonly defined as industrial. A limited quantity of land makes prices higher and creates difficulties for businesses seeking efficient locations. This situation leads industrial business owners to acquire property further from services than they might desire, typically in unzoned areas of the County. Industry located far from services creates problems for water, sewer, transportation, safety and human resources.

[21] This includes some Federal and State land included in select zoning districts (North Fork, Ashley Lake, CALURS, etc.)

With growth comes a demand for an increase in the number of businesses serving the population. It is important to locate industrial uses close enough to services to increase efficiency but far enough from established residential uses to avoid objectionable impacts.

PART 6: Commercial Land Uses (see Goals 6 and 7)

One of the most important engines of the Flathead economy is the variety of small and large businesses. These businesses are important employers, taxpayers and service providers. In 2001 there were 3,279 private, non farm businesses in Flathead County employing approximately 29,075 people.[22] Only two years later (2003), there were 3,594 private non farm establishments employing approximately 29,906 people.[23] By 2009 a total of 4,250 private, non-farm businesses were established in Flathead County, employing an average 32,492 people a year.[24] By efficiently locating businesses so as to mitigate the negative impacts on views, traffic, and the identity of the local community, a diverse economy with a positive impact on the local community by providing goods and services where they are needed can be promoted. Inefficiently located businesses can be a high-impact burden to both the human and natural environment, and the cumulative costs to the community can outweigh the benefits.

Commercial land uses can be characterized by location and impact. If left to the business owner, location would be a function of the cheapest land with the best visibility and accessibility. Large signs, brightly colored aluminum buildings, pavement from lot line to lot line and direct highway access has been the trend along state highways. The downside to such commercial development is the impact on the surroundings. Large, bright signs are not only potentially out of character with the surrounding community but are also a potential safety risk as motorists are distracted from driving. Voluminous buildings lining a road can quickly change a pleasant rural commute into a journey through a commercial canyon. Large parking areas with no landscaped islands can prevent rain water from soaking into the ground, creating an environmental problem as well as a safety problem when waters collect and flood roads and buildings. Dozens of adjacent businesses with direct road access can create a safety issue as motorists are forced to contend with numerous merging and braking cars in high speed areas. Commercial development does not have to create this series of problems.

Commercial land uses are unique for their ability to adapt and blend with other land uses. Mixing uses is especially appropriate when mutually negative impacts are mitigated. When land is visible, accessible and relatively affordable, there are limitless possibilities for commercial uses to match the local community character. Unlike industrial uses, commercial uses can more easily mitigate negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods, typically with minimal effort or expense. Visual impacts can easily be softened by simply building a few feet further back from the road and planting a few

[22] http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30/30029.html
[23] http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/cbpnaic/cbpsect.pl
[24] Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages Program

trees. Safety hazards can be corrected with frontage roads, turning lanes, sign controls, etc. However, it should be recognized that impact mitigation might preclude short-term profitability for some businesses and they will choose to locate elsewhere.

It is important to note that many commercial uses can have a positive impact by efficiently providing localized goods and services and an improved sense of community and place. Locating small scale commercial developments in the middle of developing rural areas can create places for neighbors to meet. Successful integration of such commercial uses requires careful planning to create a development within the character of the existing neighborhood and provides' the developer marketable amenities. Such rural commercial can help to lessen traffic as nearby residents no longer need to drive into town to shop or conduct business.

Flathead County currently has a mix of commercial land uses. Some are fixtures in a local community, built and operated to integrate seamlessly into the community. Others are buildings built to provide maximum function to the business owner. Combining the need for commercial land uses with the vision of residents is both a function of where they are located, and the impact on the local community. All but one of the seven elements of the public's vision for the future of the county outlined in Chapter 1 are directly impacted by the manner in which commercial land is developed. County residents regularly comment on the need to prevent "strip development" from dominating the rural landscape between business centers. Strip development is a pattern of commercial development located along one or both sides of a street which is generally one lot in depth and is characterized by multiple and relatively closely spaced driveways, visually dominant parking schemes, low landscaping ratios and high floor area ratios within the development. It is not a common remark that no development should take place, just that a certain type of development should be avoided. Again, the *impact* of the development is just as important as the location of the development.

Current land use regulations allow commercial uses in a variety of designated areas. It is difficult to account for exact acreages of existing commercial designations because of the varying definitions of commercial uses between zoning districts. There are approximately 973 acres of "Business" zoning, with an additional 460 acres (approximate) designated "Business Resort". There are approximately 368,023 acres of private property in the County which are unzoned.

PART 7: Residential Land Uses (see Goal 8)

Residential lots are the single most rapidly growing land use in Flathead County, but economic conditions in the past five years have influenced the rate at which development is occurring. In 2005, 535 new residential lots hit the market in rural Flathead County. Although the number of lots created in 2005 is less than that of 2004, it still represents 1,928 new acres of residential land (see Table 2.1). The number of lots created through subdivision remained relatively high through 2008 before beginning a sharp decline as a result of the economic downturn. By 2009 the number of lots created through

subdivision totaled 203, less than half as many as were created the previous year. By the end of 2010 only 38 lots had been created, for a total of 74 acres subdivided. It should be noted that these figures do not include lots and acreage totals from activities exempt from subdivision review such as family transfer or court ordered split. The change in land uses from agriculture and timberlands to residential and the accompanying impacts of that change, create some of the greatest growth challenges to the county.

Table 2.1
2000-2010 Lots Created and Acreage Converted by Year.

Year	Lots Created[25]	Total Acreage Subdivided[26]
2000	260	3,030
2001	326	1,659
2002	517	3,386
2003	592	2,081
2004	894	2,644
2005	535	1,928
2006	420	2,371
2007	705	2,292
2008	430	1,349
2009	203	1,024
2010	38	74
Total	**4920**	**21,838**
Average per year	**390**	**1,985**

Source: Flathead County Planning and Zoning Subdivision Database

The density of residential developments is an issue raised throughout the public involvement process (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). Residential development, including the subdivision of land, is not inherently problematic. However, residential development at a density that is not compatible with existing local services and neighborhood character is likely to be contentious.

Inappropriate residential density causes a variety of challenges. Road capacity determines efficiency of traffic movement. Capacity is based on the size and quality of the road, and once the capacity is exceeded, public safety suffers. Low density residential land uses on low capacity roads are a match, but medium or high density land uses on low capacity roads create problems. Emergency services such as fire, ambulance and law enforcement have a level of service that is dictated by response times. The further a development is located from services being provided, the longer the response times and likelihood of tragedy. High density development with delayed response times for emergency services is not a match. Low density land uses in areas with delayed

[25] Number of lots does not include lots created using an exemption from subdivision review such as family transfer or court ordered split.
[26] Acreages do not include land divided using an exemption from subdivision review such as family transfer or court ordered split.

response times are more appropriate for the welfare of the landowner and the public as a whole.

Appropriate densities can be dictated by the land itself. Areas with shallow groundwater or limited access to groundwater are more suited to low density residential land uses (see Map 2.4). High density residential land uses should be avoided in areas of steep slopes due to the risk of rockslides, mudslides, severe erosion, earthquakes, and avalanches (see Map 2.5). Although it is easy for a community to gradually forget about the devastating impacts of floods, floodplains with less than a 1% chance of flooding each year (areas between the 100 and 500-year floodplain) are still sure to flood again (see Map 2.6). The community should be vigilant about avoiding high density residential development in flood prone areas. History shows that taxpayers bear the burden of flood recovery, so it is prudent to minimize that expense through reasonable planning. Denying all development would be unreasonable. Allowing high density development in an area known to be at risk of flooding is unwarranted and irresponsible because it knowingly allows a future catastrophe to both those that live in the floodplain and the community that will be burdened with the cost of recovery.

Access to recreation is a factor that can limit density if a healthy community is to be promoted. Flathead County is surrounded by millions of acres of public lands on which residents can recreate (see Map 2.1). The downside is that many of these lands are "destination" recreation areas requiring full day excursions. Quick, convenient access to recreation such as pedestrian and walking trails and ball fields promotes a healthy community in which citizens will utilize recreation because it is convenient to their daily lives. High density residential land uses can be appropriate in areas with convenient places for children and adults to recreate (see Chapter 4: Parks and Recreation). The County has acknowledged the importance of these resources by creating and adopting a Parks & Recreation Master Plan as well as a Trails Plan, to be incorporated and recognized as part of the 2012 Growth Policy update.

Many residents of Flathead County have expressed frustration with favorite hunting grounds being converted to subdivisions. Others have expressed concern over new subdivisions negatively impacting "backyard wildlife" encounters. The density of residential land use has a significant impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat if not adequately mitigated. When proper development techniques are combined with a low overall density, humans and wildlife can successfully co-exist. It is unreasonable to stop all development in wildlife habitat, but it is also unreasonable to allow high density development in areas that are critical to the healthy management of wildlife populations.

Local access to commercial goods and services can partially mitigate impacts of medium density development in rural areas. Residents of the county frequently mention traffic and traffic-related issues as a source of frustration. Some of the traffic is attributable to rural residents making frequent trips into urbanized areas of the county to shop and do business. Local access to libraries, coffee shops, hair salons, movie rentals, cafés, etc., can not only reduce some traffic on arterial roads and highways, but also act as neighborhood focal points.

One of the most important goals identified by residents of Flathead County is preservation of the character and identity of rural areas. Traditionally, the character of an area is a combination of features that make an area unique. Many features already discussed contribute to the character of rural areas of Flathead County. Country roads, wildlife, rural cafes and low density residential land uses are just a few examples of rural character. Another feature of rural character is the "feel" of wide open spaces and low population density. This "feel" is the product of large lots, mountain views, quiet neighborhoods, dark night skies and many other less obvious features. The "wide open spaces" so commonly associated with Montana are a critical component of rural character.

It is important to note that open space and residential development are not mutually exclusive. Many successful and marketable subdivisions in Flathead County have utilized open space development design. Preserving open space during creation of residential subdivisions in rural and suburban areas has a positive impact on all criteria previously discussed. Developers should be encouraged to preserve open space through density bonus incentives.

PART 8: Open Space Land Uses (see Goal 9)

Flathead County residents value the wide open spaces associated with living in "big sky country." The character of a community is not the only thing open spaces preserve. Agriculture, timber, tourism, construction, recreation, and other important economic engines rely on a balance of undeveloped and developed lands. Open spaces also preserve lands critical to the proper functioning of the natural environment, such as riparian areas, wildlife habitats, wetlands, floodplains, etc. In fact, many of the items identified as critical to the future well being of Flathead County by residents of the county (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary) depend on careful mixing of development with open space preservation.

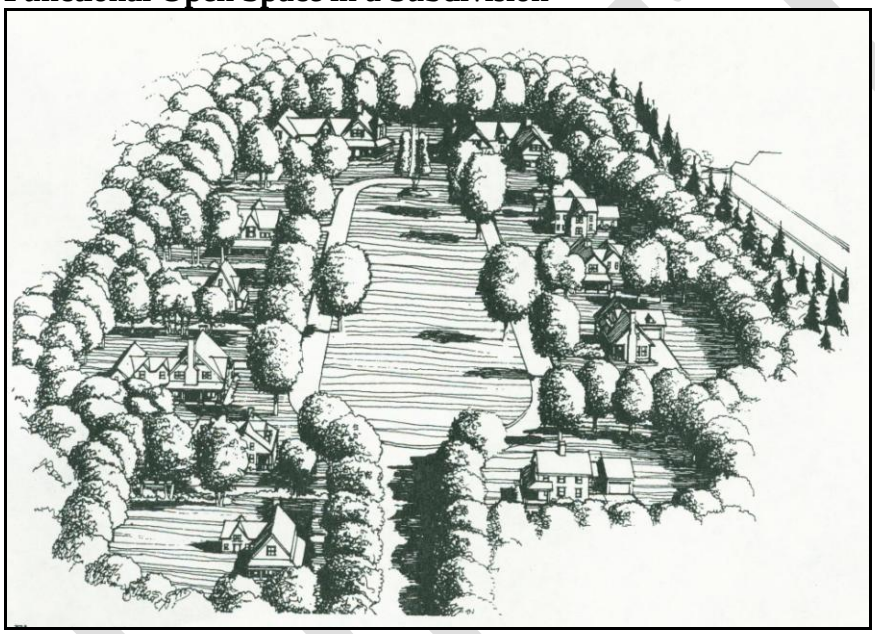
Open space can take many forms. During the development process, agricultural lands can be set aside in a portion of a subdivision. Those lands can then be leased to farmers for a minimal charge. The farmer can farm the land, while those living in the development can pay the taxes on the land from which they derive the scenic benefits. Conservation easements can be used to lower taxes paid on land by a landowner, while benefiting both the natural and human environment. In 2010 nearly 34,000 acres in Flathead County were held in conservation easement. The majority of acreage under easement is currently managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (9,960 acres) or the Montana Land Reliance (8,143 acres), with the remaining acreage managed by organizations including the Flathead Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy, the Vital Ground Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service.[27] Common areas, greens and ball fields can improve the character of a development and increase financial benefits to developers while increasing the overall health of the future

[27] For additional information reference *Appendix A; Baseline Analysis*.

residents (See Figure 2.3). Even areas of grass, shrubs and trees between roads and commercial or residential land uses can function as critical open space, softening the impact of both land uses and increasing property values (see Figure 2.4).

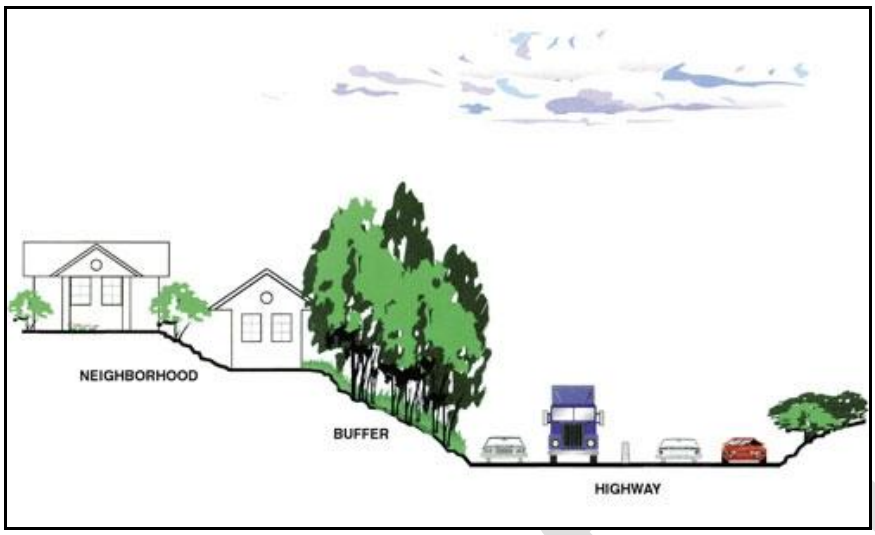
Open space preservation should consider the benefits of regional coordination. Recreation, the natural environment, and the economy all benefit when open spaces link up and allow a natural flow of humans and wildlife; these linkages have been contemplated in both the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan as well as the Trails Plan to be adopted as elements of this Growth Policy. Riparian areas and bicycle path easements are perfect examples of the benefits of contiguous open space preservation.

Figure 2.3
Functional Open Space in a Subdivision



Source: Rural by Design

Figure 2.4
Buffer – EXAMPLE ONLY



Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration[28]

Compliance with the elements of the public vision set forth in Chapter 1 demands fair and predictable methods of defining and preserving open space. All lands on which developments do not currently exist are not automatically considered critical open spaces. Private property rights may not be violated with open space policies that unfairly force a few landowners to bear the financial burden of creating scenery for the public. Conversely, all lands in Flathead County are not to be developed to the maximum possible density and intensity of land use at the expense of the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order or general welfare of residents.

A reasonable middle ground is development incentives for voluntary dedication of open spaces for the enjoyment of future generations. If open spaces are preserved only until the next developer can adequately profit, bonuses are granted but no preservation for the sake of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order or general welfare of *future generations* has occurred. Flathead County must plan for a desirable future economy and character.

Currently there are thousands of acres of "open space" with which Flathead County residents are fortunate to interact every day. New developments may either permanently preserve the integrity and character of "big sky country" or erase it. At the rate Flathead County is developing, once a property is fully developed, the opportunity to preserve even small areas of open space for the health of residents is lost. Many fully developed communities nationwide have determined that open spaces are important enough to spend large sums of public money to buy back developed properties. Flathead County is currently in a position to plan ahead and prevent tax dollars from being spent in the future by offering incentives for developers to preserve open spaces now.

[28] http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/index.html

PART 9: Lands Unsuitable for Development (see Goal 10)

There are lands in Flathead County on which development would pose such a substantial threat to the health, safety and general welfare of the entire community that it is reasonable to guide all growth away from these areas. It must be said that such areas comprise a relatively small percentage of Flathead County. However, it is important that an effort to protect the welfare of the community by identifying lands unsuitable for development should only delineate the minimum area to accomplish the goal. Prohibiting development in additional areas such as buffers is unreasonable and those areas should be considered areas of low density development.

100-year floodplains are areas where there is a 1% chance of flooding in any given year based on the historical flood of record [see Maps 2.6 and 2.6(a)]. The federal government requires minimum standards be observed in these areas, but local communities can regulate beyond the minimums to protect taxpayers and residents from future flood events. Fill in the floodplain raises the ground level above the base flood elevation, but this simply displaces flood waters to other areas of the community and is both extremely unfair to other landowners on the flood fringe and hazardous due to unpredictable flood processes.

Areas prone to high groundwater pose a special risk to both the public and the landowner. Previous generations have been familiar with the risks of living in areas subject to flooding from rising groundwater or pooling rain and have avoided development in these areas. Homes constructed in areas of shallow groundwater are far more likely to experience flooding, mold and unstable foundations. During drought years, it is easy to forget the impacts of shallow groundwater to the health and safety of Flathead County residents. Some health issues created by mold-infested living areas are a burden to all county taxpayers and are sometimes avoidable in new subdivisions. Areas subject to shallow groundwater should be identified, and regulating development in these areas is a responsible action that should be taken for the health and safety of current and future residents.

Steep slopes can be extremely unsafe (see Map 2.5). Dynamic processes occur in these areas that are not compatible with public health and safety. Rock slides, flash floods, tree falls, avalanches, and unstable soils are among the more serious hazards in steep terrain. Flathead County is also an area of known seismic activity, making development in areas of steep slopes additionally hazardous (see Map 2.7). The vast majority of lands in Flathead County that exceed slopes of 30% are in National Forest and State lands. However, there is private property on which a steep slope designation would apply and those lands should be restricted from development directly upon the steep slopes.

Wetlands serve a variety of important functions in the natural environment. From retaining flood waters during rain events to filtering natural and man-made pollutants from water, wetlands are a critical resource that can be threatened by unrestricted development. Degrading the function of wetlands negatively impacts the entire community when rain and flood waters take on a more “flashy” character or when water

quality in lakes, rivers and groundwater begins to degrade. It is reasonable to prohibit development in wetlands as long as the areas are delineated using scientific methods. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service has inventoried wetlands throughout the United States, but the accuracy of some wetland inventory maps is questioned by many experts [see Maps 2.8 and 2.8(a)]. An accurate, unbiased and scientifically-based method should be utilized for identifying wetlands on individual properties to ensure the development rights of landowners are not impacted by inaccurate designations.

Northwest Montana and Flathead County contain a variety of areas with historical and cultural significance. Original homestead structures, Native American hieroglyphs, and historic trails and railroad beds are some of the cultural phenomenon that should be preserved for the education and enjoyment of future generations. Some development can destroy these important links to the custom and culture of Flathead County, and once they are gone, they cannot be retrieved. It is worth noting that these land uses are frequently very small. Prohibiting development on a property just because a historic farmstead is there would be unreasonable. Allowing the destruction of a historic farmstead structure to make way for new town homes would also be unreasonable. In keeping with the vision principals outlined by the residents of Flathead County, development should seek to incorporate and highlight the cultural significance of historic places and artifacts. Due to the subjective nature of determining cultural and historical significance, reasonable minimum criteria for such a determination should be established.

PART 10: Special Need Areas (see Goals 11 through 14)

When planning for growth in Flathead County, it is important to identify special need areas critical to the vision of the residents. Some land uses do not fit neatly under the criteria above but play a vital role in the future of Flathead County. Land uses that have a potential to impact any of the attributes that drive the Flathead economy are areas of special needs. One of the single greatest economic attributes of Flathead County is tourism. Tourists flock to northwest Montana to visit Glacier National Park, recreate in the national forests, and shop at local businesses. Numerous shops and services cater to the tourist seeking the "Montana experience" of open spaces, friendly people and beautiful scenery.

Scenic resources are so critical to both the character of Flathead County and the diversity of the Flathead economy that it is the number one most mentioned aspect of Flathead County to protect (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). If the growth policy is a document that serves the desires of the public, then preserving the scenery is of the utmost importance. Scenic resources are not just views of mountains, but views of forests and open spaces as well. Scenic resources might be defined as views that are unique to Flathead County. However, it is impractical and unreasonable for the growth policy to protect every view from every vantage point in Flathead County. It is reasonable to focus on areas of *public scenic resources*.

Most of the scenery viewed from public spaces in Flathead County is from roads and recreational waterways. It is of utmost importance to protect these scenic resources. It is

extremely important to recognize that preserving scenic resources does NOT mean prohibiting development. Scenic resources are not threatened by development that "blends in" and follows a minimal number of simple guidelines. Any land use guidance applied to scenic resources should address the negative impacts of development to scenic resources and suggest ways development can enhance such resources.

Gateway areas of Flathead County are areas where local residents and tourists are treated to some of the most beautiful views in the world. Unrestricted development can negatively impact important scenic resources and make Flathead County feel like anywhere else. It is important to develop minimal land use guidance that ensures the preservation of these resources. Gateway areas differ from scenic corridors in that views are more expansive and can be negatively affected by a larger number of development impacts.

There are special need areas that have little to do with scenery and more to do with safety, economic diversity, and public health. There are currently 245 gravel pits identified in Flathead County as active, inactive, reclaimed or unknown; according to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality there are currently 142 open cut mining operations permitted in Flathead Valley.[29] Existing gravel deposits are a needed resource for growth in Flathead County. However, the extraction, processing and transportation of gravel can create negative impacts to the community. Some argue that gravel operations should not be located near schools, homes and businesses, while others argue that schools, homes and businesses should not be located in areas of known gravel deposits. Future growth will have the perplexing affect of creating more schools, homes, businesses AND gravel extraction sites. Since the gravel extraction industry has little choice of where to locate, it is desirable to identify areas of gravel deposits that will serve the need of growth in Flathead County and restrict these areas to low density development and prohibit high impact public facilities such as schools. Given the potential impact of such a land use policy, it is also reasonable to limit the area from which gravel can be extracted. The transportation of gravel should be restricted to roads capable of accommodating gravel trucks without posing an undue threat to public safety. Gravel located in environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and areas of high groundwater should not be extracted due to the potential impact to the health of all residents. Gravel extraction should be located in areas where the impacts can be adequately mitigated. Sand and gravel resources in Flathead County are addressed further in Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy document, in conformance with changes to the M.C.A. requirements for growth policies adopted in 2009.

Transportation in general has special land use needs. Areas like Glacier International Airport that serve the economy of Flathead County have special needs that are not met by standard land use considerations. Tourism, business, and emergency services in Flathead County depend on Glacier International Airport to provide efficient transportation services to and from Flathead County. In order to serve a growing county, the airport will need to expand and modify its existing site. Any airport has an impact on neighbors

[29] Flathead County Geographic Information System; Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Permitting Section

due to the volume and frequency of aircraft. A buffer area around Glacier International Airport that provides reasonable land use designations to protect both the future of the airport and the welfare of the neighboring land owners is both reasonable and desirable.

Buffering is a technique that can work in other special need areas. The Flathead County Landfill is well served by a buffer with adjacent land uses. The existing 275-acre landfill site has a projected life expectancy of approximately 29 to 57 years, depending upon the rate of growth.[30]. Given the importance of refuse disposal to any growing area, it is reasonable to protect the ability of the Flathead County Landfill to continue providing service. Protecting this ability, as well as protecting the health, safety and welfare of adjacent land owners calls for a special need area to be designated around the landfill. This buffer serves to mitigate the impacts of the landfill to adjacent property owners as well as protect the ability of the landfill to expand and serve the future of Flathead County.

[30] Flathead County Solid Waste District

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

Introduction

Conventional approaches to community planning examine population change over time, analyzing past and current population growth patterns to better predict future trends. Analysis of population incorporates not only the increase or decrease in the number of people, but also the gender, age, ethnic, and socioeconomic characteristics of the population. Understanding these population attributes allows communities to anticipate and plan for the future needs of its residents.

One of the basic needs for a growing population is housing. Housing is a fundamental element in the way communities grow and develop. The location and density of new housing are major drivers of transportation patterns, access to public services, and energy consumption. Housing is a prominent feature of the built environment, an investment and consumptive good, a symbol of personal history and familial connections, and a determinant of social interaction and achievement. A home is the largest purchase an individual is likely to make in a lifetime.

Goal

G.15 Promote a diverse demographic of residents.

Policies

P.15.1 Encourage housing, employment, education and recreation to attract, support and maintain young families.

P.15.2 Provide services and facilities to support elderly and special-needs residents.

P.15.3 Promote and respect the culture, heritage and history of Flathead County residents.

Goal

G.16 Safe housing that is available, accessible, and affordable for all sectors of the population.

Policies

P.16.1 Provide land use-based incentives and density bonuses for the promotion and development of affordable housing opportunities for a range of household types, family sizes, incomes, and special consideration groups.

P.16.2 Create an affordable housing plan for the county which includes evaluating the need for a county housing committee and establishing

coordination between the county and the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish.

P.16.3 Promote the development of affordable single and multi-family housing in areas of adequate service networks.

P.16.4 Consider the locational needs of various types of housing with regard to proximity of employment, access to transportation and availability of public services.

P.16.5 Promote the rehabilitation of historic and/or architecturally significant structures for the purpose of conversion to housing.

P.16.6 Consider the advisability of adopting a building inspection procedure for new residential construction.

P.16.7 Identify areas suitable for quality mobile home park development.

Goal

G.17 Encourage affordable homeownership in Flathead County.

Policies

P.17.1 Include provisions in the county zoning and subdivision regulations to promote affordable homeownership throughout the county.

P.17.2 Incorporate density bonuses in zoning and subdivision regulations for developments offering affordable homeownership.

P.17.3 Encourage mobile home parks as a form of affordable homeownership in areas with access to public sewer and water.

P.17.4 Develop zoning and design standards for Class A manufactured housing.

P.17.5 Encourage the establishment of public/private partnerships as a method to offer financing to first time homebuyers.

P.17.6 Establish affordable housing standards for developing infrastructure that would reduce the cost of affordable lots while maintaining the character of the projects.

P.17.7 Develop criteria for developers to meet to qualify for affordable housing incentives.

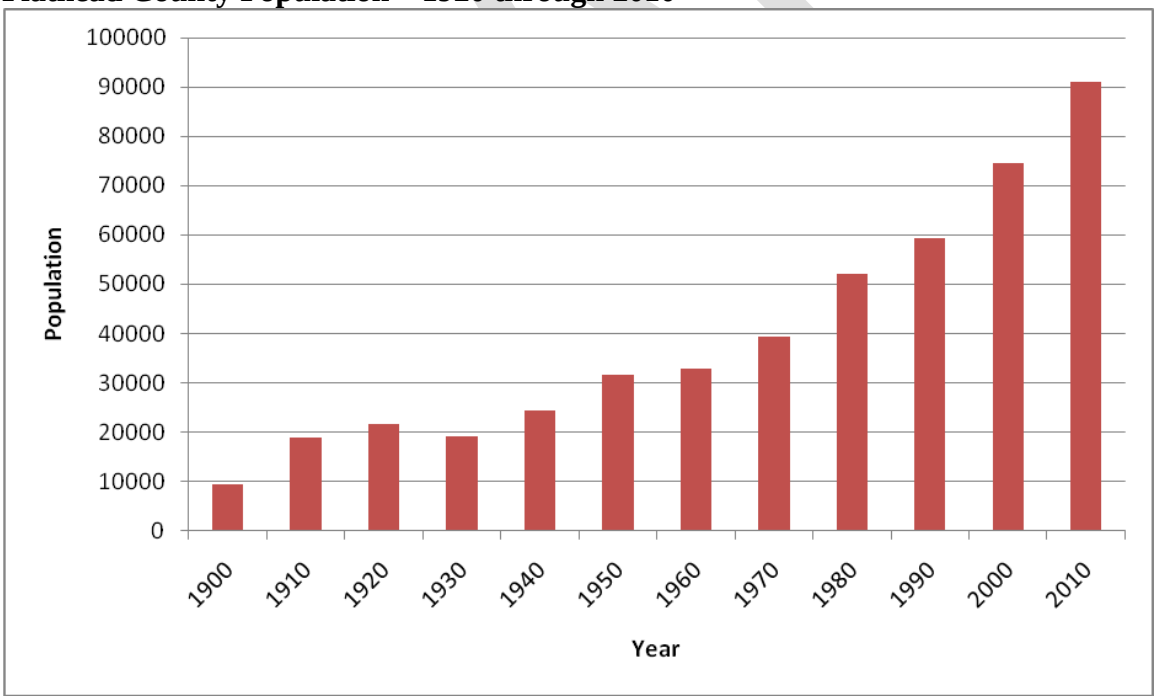
PART 1: Population (see Goal 15)

Population Growth

Population growth in Flathead County over the past 100 years has been significant and dynamic, as shown in Figure 3.1 below. With the exception of the period between 1920 and 1930, growth has generally exceeded 10% over the course of each decade. Only the decade between 1950 and 1960 experienced a single digit population growth of 5%. In total, population growth over the last 100 years has been approximately 81,553 people, which translates into a nine-fold population increase in the County. For a detailed account of the historical growth and development of Flathead County, please refer to Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

The population boom of recent time began in the 1970s when population growth accelerated dramatically. The largest growth rate for any 10 year period since 1900 was the ten year period between 1970 and 1980 which experienced a 32% increase in population from 39,460 to 51,966 residents. This growth lessened during the 1980's to 14% as the population increased by 7,252 people. From 1990 to 2000 the growth in population resumed its post 1970 charge with a 26% increase, resulting in a 2000 population of 74,471 people.[1]

Figure 3.1
Flathead County Population – 1920 through 2010



Source: U.S. Census Data, 1900 thru 2010

Since 2000 Flathead County's population has increased at a relatively constant rate of approximately 2% per year. Between 2000 and 2005 the US Census estimated a

[1] United States Census Bureau, population summary data, 1900 thru 2010

population increase from 74,471 to 83,172 people, representing an approximate 12% increase over the first five years of the decade. By the year 2010 Flathead County's population had increased over 22% during the course of the decade, for a total of 90,928 residents by the time the decennial census was conducted.[2] While the overall growth rate appears consistent with the growth experienced between 1990 and 2000, the second half of the decade experienced a significantly different level and direction of growth than the first half, as evidenced by Table 3.1 below.

Rural Population Growth

Approximately 66% of the population in Flathead County resides outside of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish. This is a slight decrease from 2000 when 69% of the population in the county lived outside of the cities. Recent data shows that the growth in the cities between 2000 and 2010 has notably increased; however, when comparing the first half of the decade (2000 to 2005) to the second half of the decade (2005 to 2010), a stark contrast is apparent in where growth actually occurred. Cities experienced the highest rate of growth in the earlier half of the decade, with populations increasing by 20% or more in Whitefish, Kalispell and Columbia Falls. During this same time period the County's population grew by only 3%. During the second half of the decade the County experienced the highest rate of growth at 15%, while all three cities slowed significantly and, in the case of Whitefish, appear to have lost population. The combined populations of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish equate to approximately 34% of the total 2010 population of the county; an increase of 2% since 2000. The city of Kalispell alone comprised approximately 29% of the total population of the county in 2010. Table 3.1 contrasts the population change of the three cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.

Table 3.1
Population Growth in Unincorporated Areas vs. Cities – 2000 through 2010

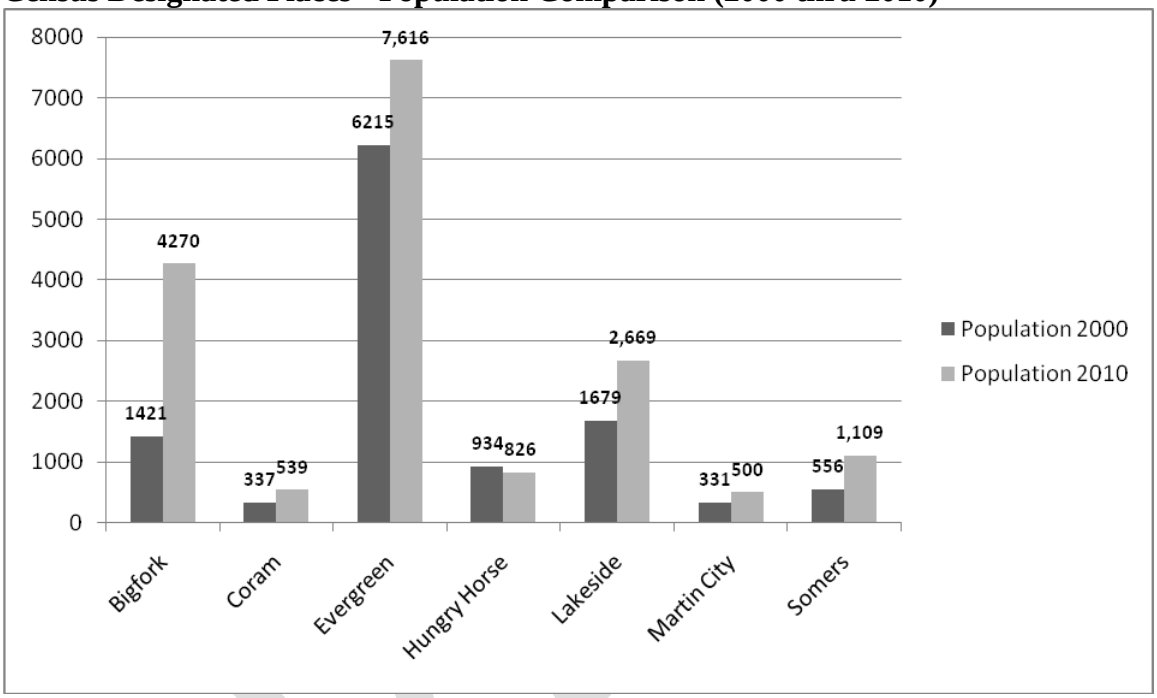
	2000	2005	% Change 2000-2005	2010	%Change 2005-2010
Unincorporated Flathead County	50,672	52,348*	3%	59,956	15%
Columbia Falls	3,674	4,651*	27%	4,688	< 1%
Kalispell	14,999	18,422*	23%	19,927	8%
Whitefish	5,126	7,114*	39%	6,357	-11%
Total Population	74,471	82,535	11%	90,928	10%

*Denotes population estimate provided by the U.S. Census Bureau
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Population Counts; 2000, 2010 and Population Estimates; 2005

[2] United States Census Bureau State & County QuickFacts; Flathead County, Montana, 2010.

Nearly 19%[3] of the county's population living outside of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish are located in Census designated places, as shown in Figure 3.2 and Map 3.1. Census Designated Places (CDPs) are delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of population that are identifiable by name but are not incorporated.

Figure 3.2
Census Designated Places - Population Comparison (2000 thru 2010)



Source: 2010 U.S. Bureau of the Census TIGER Line File, MT Census Places with Population Data

There are currently fifteen CDPs in the county. These include the communities of Bigfork, Evergreen, Lakeside, Somers, Niarada, Marion, Little Bitterroot Lake, Batavia, Kila, Forest Hill Village, Olney, Hungry Horse, Martin City, West Glacier and Coram. Bigfork, Somers, Evergreen and Lakeside have had the greatest increases in population over the past ten years. The community of Bigfork nearly tripled in population with a 200% increase between 2000 and 2010. The population of Somers increased by 99%, the population of Lakeside increased by 59 % and the population of Evergreen increased 23% during the same ten year period. The most significant increases in population in rural communities are occurring where vital public services such as public sewer and water facilities are available.

Several other communities throughout the county are also experiencing growth; some have experienced enough growth over the past decade to be designated CDPs according to the 2010 census. These communities are more scattered, and development is less dense. Residents in these communities are self reliant with individual water and sewer facilities. These communities include Marion, Kila, Ferndale, Creston, and West Glacier.

[3] Census 2010 - State and County Population Summary; Census 2010 – Census Place Population Summary (City, Town, CDP)

The more remote communities such as Polebridge, Olney, and Essex have not experienced the rapid growth that the more accessible communities in the county are currently undergoing, but have still a population increase over the past ten years. Map 3.2 shows the existing overall population per square mile in Flathead County.

Seasonal Populations

Census population numbers do not account accurately for seasonal fluctuations in population. Seasonal residents require the same local services and infrastructure that full time residents require.

Although there is no precise way to calculate seasonal population, estimates can be derived using several indicators such as electrical hookups and consumption, increased traffic, waste generation, and law enforcement and emergency service calls. Certain communities have higher numbers of seasonal populations. Although it has proven difficult to quantify, the population of the county could be in significant excess of 90,928 persons as estimated by the US Census.

Demand is strong in the county for second home ownership as well as for seasonal, recreational, occasional use and vacation housing. Those housing units dedicated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use have been identified and quantified in the 2000 US Census. The 1990 Census indicates that there were 2,517 housing units in Flathead County that were occupied seasonally, for recreational use or for occasional use. That number rose to 3,570 in 2000, a 42% increase. By 2010, the number of housing units occupied seasonally or for recreation or occasional use rose to 6,542 units, roughly comprising roughly 14% of the housing stock in Flathead County and exhibiting a nearly 83% increase over the number of units in 2000. During the same period the total number of housing units available rose to 46,963, an increase of 35%.[4]

Population Growth Factors

Population growth or decline is attributed to two factors: natural change and net migration. Measurements of these two factors illustrate trends over time and are important when planning for the needs of future populations. The combination of the two factors indicates the overall condition and health of the community. Natural change is the difference between births and deaths. Between 2000 and 2004 Flathead County experienced a net increase of 1,214 people due to natural change, representing approximately 18% of the total population growth. Migration patterns are responsible for the remaining 82% of the population increase; approximately 5,577 people relocated to the county from elsewhere during the four year period.

Population Characteristics

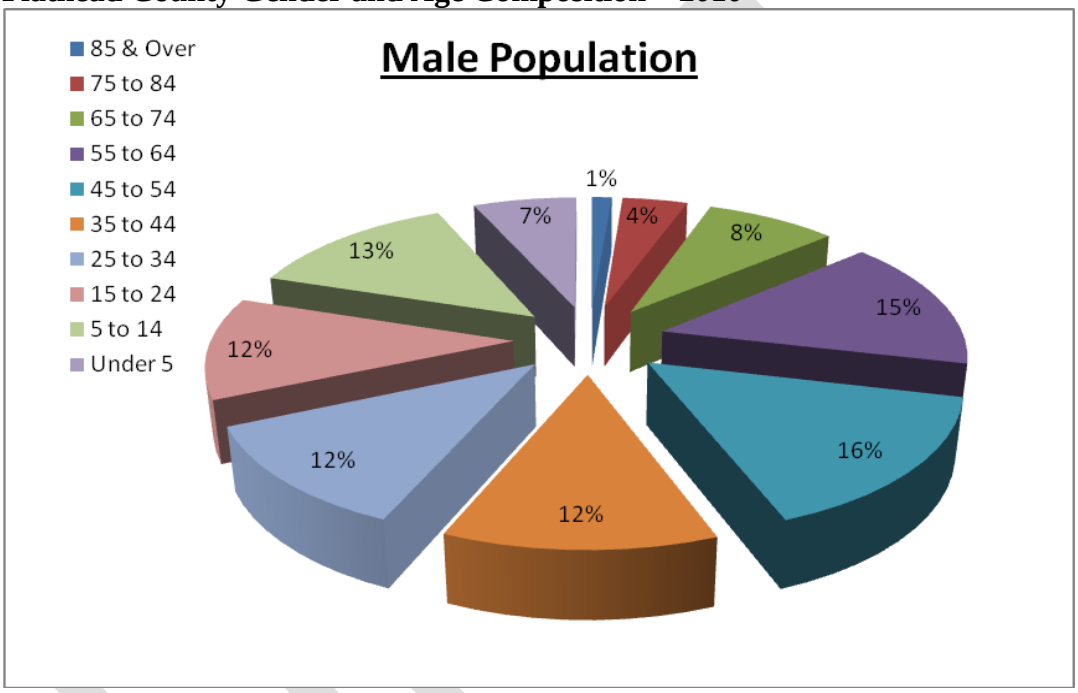
In 2000 the county's male-female ratio was approximately 1:1, meaning there were nearly equal numbers of males and females in the population as shown in Figure 3.3. This remains true in 2010, where 49.8% of the Flathead population is male and 50.2% of

[4] Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics, U.S. Census Bureau: 2000, 2010

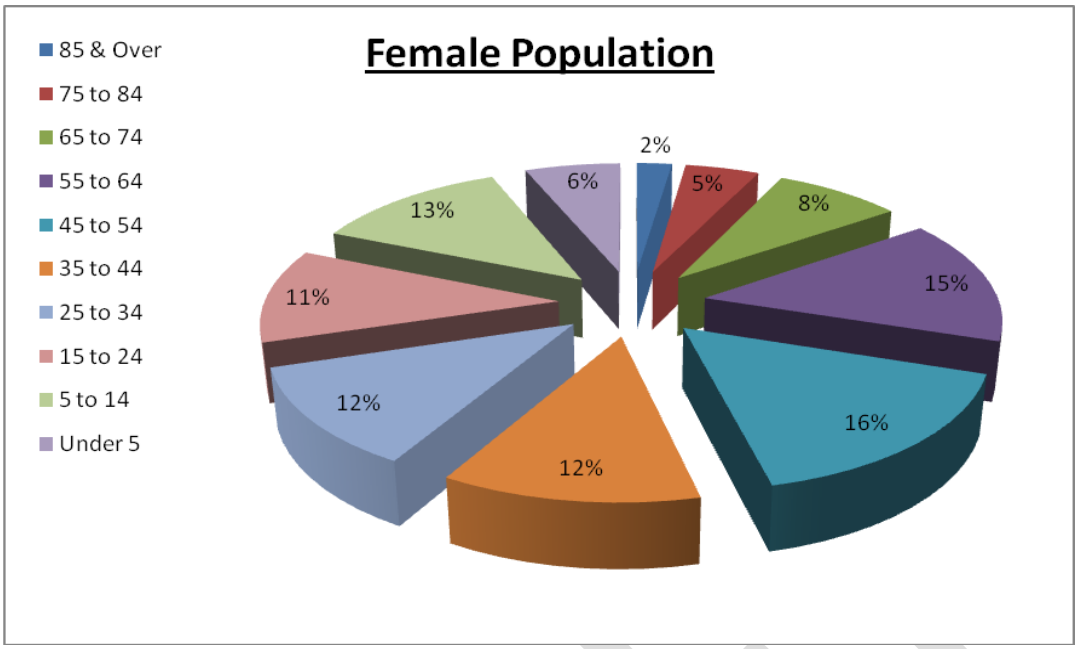
the population is female. Although not charted, U.S. Census Bureau historic data indicate that the near even proportion of genders has remained constant since the 1970's.

The ethnic composition of Flathead County is rather homogenous. In 2010, approximately 96% of the population was white, with the remaining 4% of the population comprised of one or more other races. African Americans represent 0.5% of the population; American Indian and Alaska Native represent 2.4%; individuals of Asian descent represent 1.0% of the population, with Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or those of other origin make up the remaining 0.8% of the population.

Figure 3.3
Flathead County Gender and Age Composition – 2010



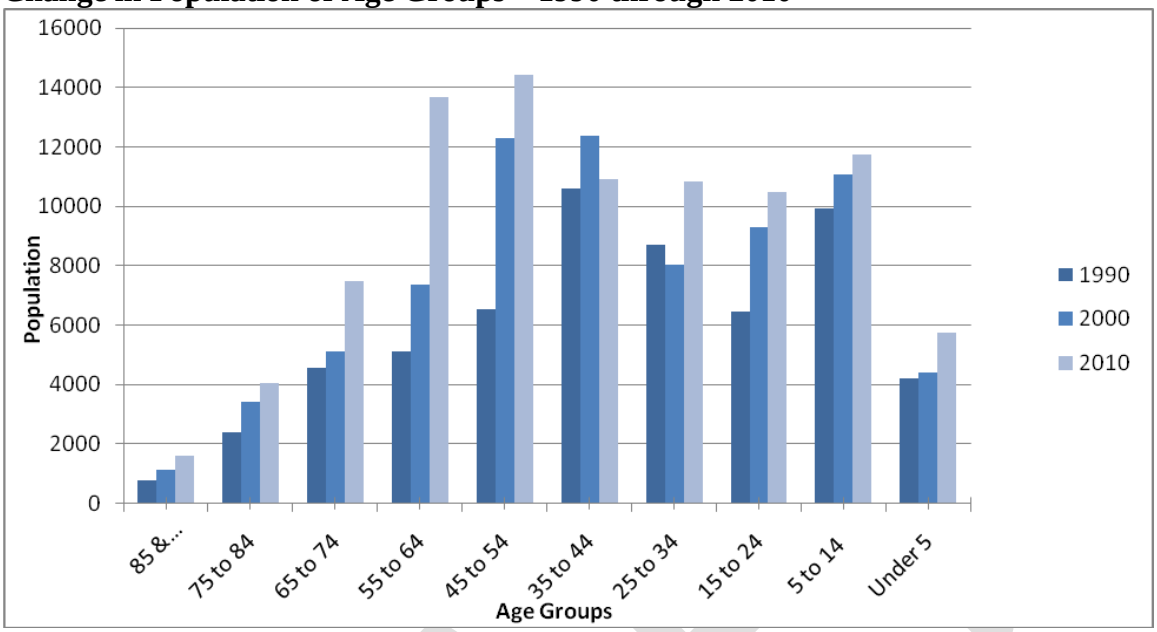
Source: Profile of General Population & Housing Characteristics, U.S. Census Bureau 2010



Source: Profile of General Population & Housing Characteristics, U.S. Census Bureau 2010

As shown in Figure 3.4, all age groupings increased in population during the decades spanning 1990 to 2010, with the exception of the population between the ages of 25 to 34 who experienced an approximate 8% decline. The largest population gain and percent increase occurred in the 45 to 54 age-bracket between 1990 and 2000, adding 5,760 people representing an 88% increase over the course of the decade. The second largest increase occurred in the 55 to 64 age bracket between 2000 and 2010; this age group added 6,317 people for an increase of nearly 86% over the decade. The 25 to 34 age group recovered from the overall decline experienced between 1990 and 2000, adding 2,818 people for an increase of 35% between 2000 and 2010. While its population is steadily increasing, the 85 and over age group still remains the smallest segment of the population and experienced the smallest gains between 2000 and 2010, along with the 75 to 84 age group.

Figure 3.4
Change in Population of Age Groups – 1990 through 2010

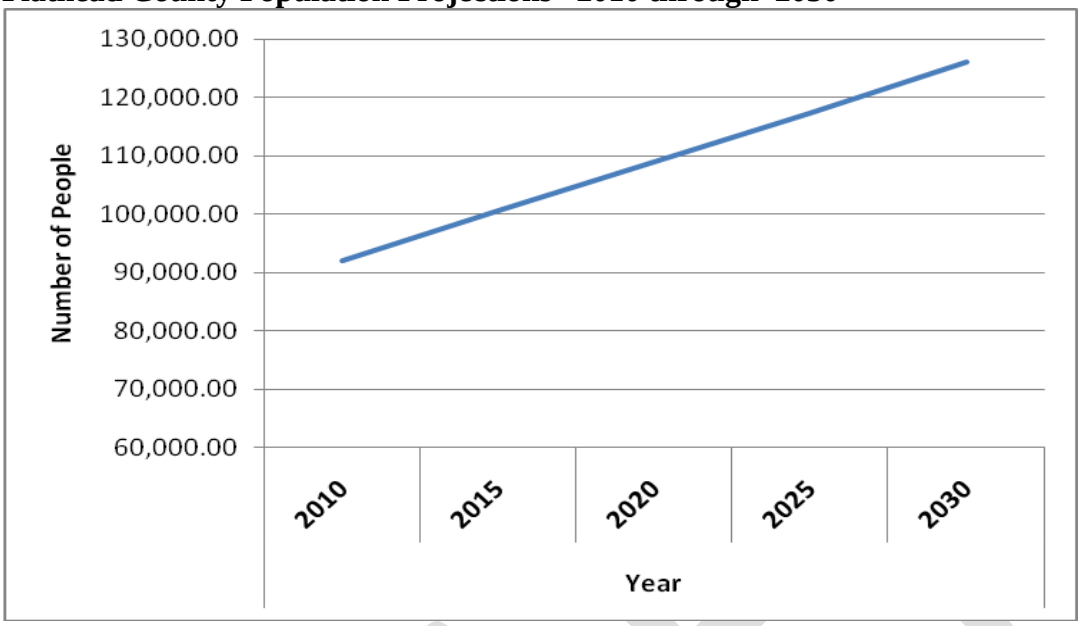


Source: Profile of General Population & Housing Characteristics, U.S. Census Bureau 2010, 2000, 1990

Population Projections

Projections are estimates illustrating plausible courses of future population change based on assumptions about future natural change and net migration patterns. These projections are trends established from existing population data. The projected population for Flathead County through the year 2030 is shown in Figure 3.5 below. The projected population for 2030 is estimated at 125,980, representing an increase of 35,052 people from the current 2010 population of 90,928. The projection shows that the total population is likely to increase by approximately 39%. Based on existing natural change and net migration factors, this projected population increase will be due primarily to net migration and to a lesser extent by natural change.

Figure 3.5
Flathead County Population Projections– 2010 through 2030



Source: NPA Data Services, Inc, 2008

More data are required to adequately provide for the land use needs of a growing population. Information on the desires and preferences of residents and in-migrants will determine suitable housing locations, as well as projected requirements for commercial and industrial uses. Accurate information on the service costs per mile of road maintenance, school bus operation, emergency services and other county services will inform the public and decision makers as land use designations are made.

PART 2: Housing (see Goals 16 and 17)

General Affordability

Housing costs often constitute the largest single monthly household expenditure. The affordability of housing is a major factor in community growth and development. Affordable housing is also a driving force of a vibrant economy. Home ownership is a goal for many Americans and it is an achievement that can be a stepping stone to increased economic involvement in the community. This Growth Policy has goals and supporting policies which recognize the desirability of affordable housing and home ownership. A standard definition of "affordable housing" is yearly housing payments that cost no more than 30% of a household's gross annual income. Households paying in excess of 30% of their income for yearly housing costs are considered cost-burdened and may have difficulty meeting the costs associated with common necessities such as food and transportation[5]. Calculating the annual household income needed to afford the median-value home in a given area provides a snapshot of the current housing affordability.

[5] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Using the standard definition of affordability outlined above, Table 3.2 illustrates the annual household income needed to afford the median-priced home in Flathead County. The table assumes a 10% down payment, 30-year fixed mortgage, a monthly payment that is 30% of a household's income, 7% interest rate, 1.2% tax rate and a normal insurance charge.

Table 3.2
Housing Affordability in Flathead County

Year	Median Home Price in Flathead County	Annual Household Income ***Needed*** to Afford Median Home Price
1990	$64,206[6]	$18,949
2000	$138,950[7]	$41,014
2001	$126,000	$37,191
2002	$136,000	$40,143
2003	$159,000	$46,933
2004	$178,500	$52,689
2005	$215,000	$63,464
2006	$234,900	$69,338
2007	$249,000	$73,501
2008	$239,000	$70,549
2009	$205,000	$60,512
2010	$227,300[8]	$67,095

Source: Housing Affordability & Montana's Real Estate Market, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, June 2010

Comparing the annual household income needed to afford the median home price in the county to the actual median household incomes for the same time periods provides insight as to whether the median home price is affordable to the median household. Table 3.3 shows that a disparity exists between median incomes and median home prices in Flathead County.

Table 3.3
Median Income Needed vs. Actual Median Income

Year	Annual Household Income ***Needed*** to Afford Median Home Price	Median Flathead County Household Income (U.S. Census)
1990	$18,949	$24,145 (1989)[9]
2000	$41,014	$36,327
2001	$37,191	$35,909
2002	$40,143	$36,159
2003	$46,933	$37,492

[6] American Factfinder, US Census 1990
[7] *Economic and Demographic Analysis of Montana, Volume III: Housing Profile*; Montana State University, 2005
[8] U.S. Census Bureau , ACS Profile Report - H9 Home Values, Census 2010
[9] American Factfinder, US Census 2000

2004	$52,689	$39,885
2005	$63,464	$39,917
2006	$69,338	$44,413
2007	$73,501	$45,122
2008	$70,549	$44,013
2009	$60,512	$45,594
2010	$67,095	$42,278

Source: Flathead County - Annual Median Income, 1990-2010; Research & Analysis Bureau, Montana Department of Labor & Industry. http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/cgi/dataanalysis/incomeReport.asp?menuchoice=income

The median home price in Flathead County increased by nearly 64% between 2000 and 2010; while a significant increase, it is not nearly as large as the jump in median home price between 1990 and 2000, which more than doubled the median cost of a home (116%) while the median household income only increased by 42.7% over that same period of time[10]. By looking even closer at the breakdown by year, one begins to see the annual change in median housing price between 1998 and 2010 has varied significantly, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Median Home Prices – 1998 through 2010

Year	Median Home Value[7]	Annual Percent Change
1998	$110,000	---
1999	$108,000	-1.8%
2000	$138,950	28.7%
2001	$126,000	-9.3%
2002	$136,000	7.9%
2003	$159,000	16.9%
2004	$178,500	11.9%
2005	$215,000	20.4%
2006	$234,900	9.3%
2007	$249,000	6.0%
2008	$239,000	-4.0%
2009	$205,000	-14.2%
2010	$227,300[11]	10.9%

Source: Housing Affordability & Montana's Real Estate Market, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, June 2010

[10] American Factfinder, US Census 2000
[11] U.S. Census Bureau , ACS Profile Report - H9 Home Values, Census 2010

The average yearly increase in median home prices between 1998 and 2003 was equal to 8%; if the annual median housing prices had continued to increase at this rate each year, the median home price in 2010 would have equaled $272,498, requiring a minimum median household income of $78,098 (an increase of 127% from 2003) to afford a median priced home. However, beginning in 2008 the median price of a home in Flathead County began to decrease, only rebounding in the past year to reach approximately $227,300.

Rental housing is often a more affordable option for those without the ability to own a home. The average gross rent in 2000 equated to $484[1012] which would require a minimum yearly income of approximately $19,360 if the gross rent were to equate to exactly 30% of the occupants' monthly income. By 2010 the median rent in Flathead County was recorded at $657, which would require a minimum annual income of roughly $26,280 by those same standards.[13]

While Policy 16.2 calls for the creation of a county plan for affordable housing in coordination with the cities, it should be noted that this growth policy recognizes the need to address this as a community wide issue. A solid plan would include data on the availability of affordable housing for various income classifications and demonstrate the severity of the problem county-wide. Rapidly increasing home prices like those experienced over the last decade, combined with a growing number of service workers and lower-wage employment opportunities, has resulted in a serious problem that will continue to affect the county's ability to attract industry and maintain a robust work force in the future.

Housing Stock

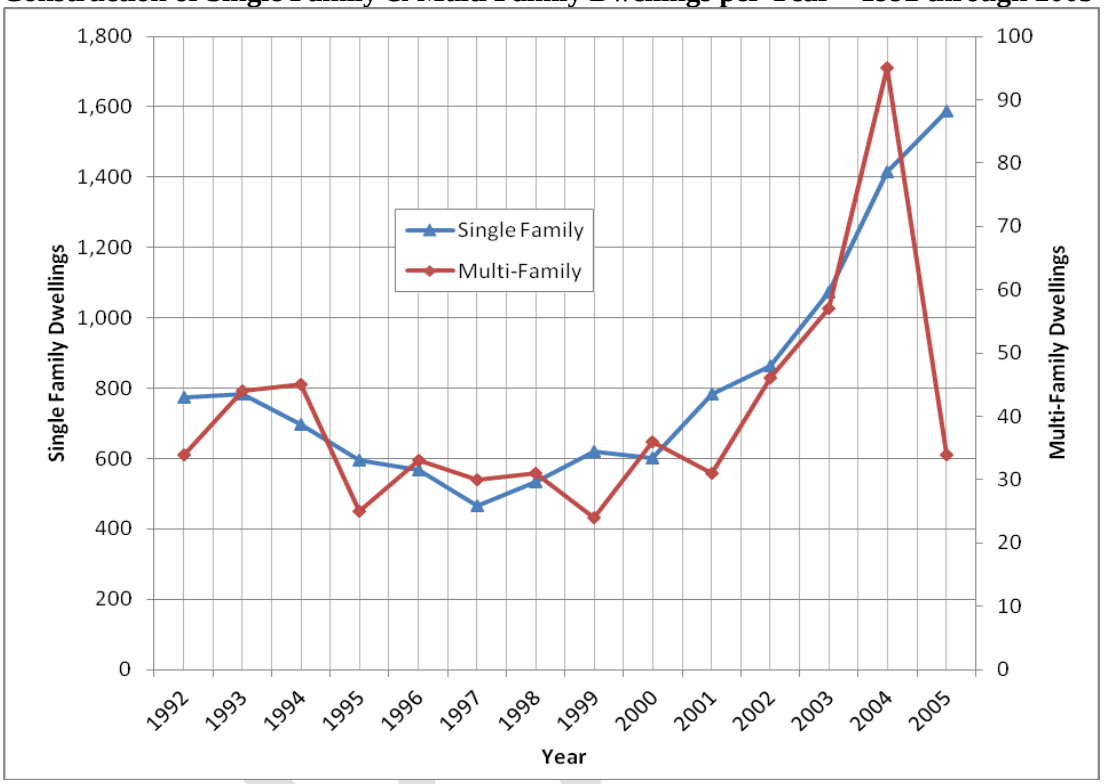
According to the 2010 American Community Survey, 69.7% of the homes in Flathead County are 1-unit, detached structures. Manufactured or mobile homes are the second most dominant housing type, comprising 9.1% of the housing stock. Multi-family housing, comprised of 2 units or more, accounts for 21.1% of the housing stock. The remaining 0.1% of housing is provided by recreation vehicles, boats, vans and other mobile types[14]

The number of housing units in the county has steadily increased over recent years. The total number of housing units in 2000 was 34,773 and grew to 36,077 in 2004, exhibiting a 4% increase[15]. By 2010 there were 46,963 housing units recorded in Flathead County, an increase of 30% since 2004 and 35% over the decade.[16] Units are identified as the individual living quarters and include single family homes, individual condominium units as well as individual apartments, meaning a multi family dwelling is comprised of several

[12] U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Profile Report - H11 Gross Rent, Census 2000
[13] U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Profile Report - H11 Gross Rent, Census 2010
[14] U.S. Census Bureau. Selected Housing Characteristic, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
[15] Population Division, US Census Bureau. *Table 4: Annual Estimates of Housing Units for Counties in Montana: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 (HU-EST2004-04-30).* July 21, 2005.
[16] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Summary File 1; Housing Units (H1)

housing 'units'. As shown in Figure 3.6 the total yearly construction of single family dwellings has dramatically accelerated since 1992.

Figure 3.6
Construction of Single Family & Multi Family Dwellings per Year – 1992 through 2005



Source: Economic and Demographic Analysis of Montana: Volume III Housing Profile. Montana Department of Commerce, January 2007.

Housing is either rented or owned. Housing types as defined by the Montana Department of Commerce are either residential or commercial. Residential housing is homes that can be purchased as individual units and include mobile homes, condominium units, and single family residences. Commercial housing mainly refers to multi-unit rental properties including apartments, duplexes, and mixed use structures[17].

The 2000 overall vacancy rate for the available rental and owner occupied housing units was nearly 15%, or 5,186 units. Approximately 69%, or 3,570 units, of those units were designated as seasonal, recreational, or for occasional use. Therefore, the actual vacancy rate in 2000 for non-seasonal housing was 7% for rental units and 1.7% for owner-occupied. In 2010 the vacancy rate for available rental and owner occupied housing units had risen to 21.8%. As 6,542 units were classified as seasonal, recreational or for occasional use, the current vacancy rate is actually more like 8% for rental and owner occupied housing.[18]

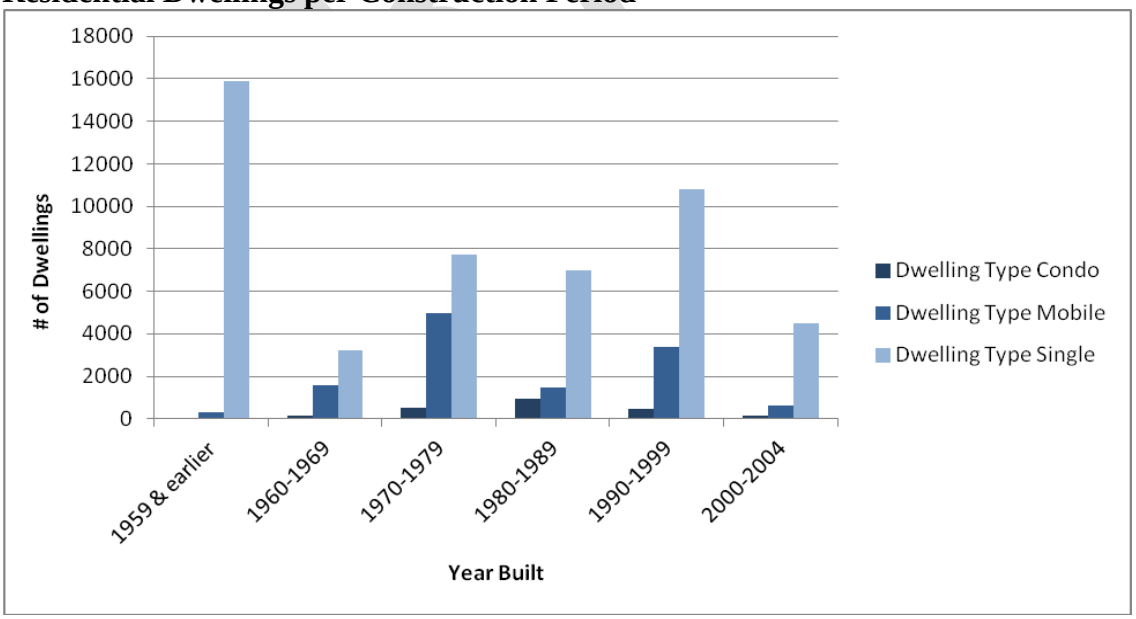
[17] Center for Applied Economic Research. *Housing Conditions Study*. 2002. Montana Department of Commerce: Billings, MT.
[18] U.S. Census Bureau 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Selected Housing Characteristics (DP04)

Based on the 2000 housing unit estimates, nearly 27% (7,190 units) of the 29,588 occupied housing units were renter occupied, while the remaining 73.3% were owner occupied. This means that the rate of homeownership in Flathead County in 2000 was 73.3%. By comparison, the amount of owner occupied housing dropped to 66.5% in 2010, or 24,412 units, indicating the rate of homeownership has declined over the past decade. This can be attributed to the economic downturn that has affected the Country since 2008. Housing density in Flathead County is depicted in Map 3.3.

As shown by Figure 3.7 below, approximately 28% of the housing in the county was constructed prior to 1960 in 2000. Approximately 8% of the homes in the county were constructed between 1960 and 1969, resulting in the least productive era of home construction. It is significant to note that although the majority of housing was built earlier than 1959, this era covers multiple decades. The periods of 1970 to 1979 and 1980 to 1989 witnessed significant home construction, comprising 23% and 16% of the total housing stock, respectively. Housing construction increased slightly in the 1990s, with 25% of homes built during this decade. Over the past ten years nearly 11,000 housing units were constructed in Flathead County, totaling nearly 23% of the total number of housing units.[19]

The largest era of single family home construction occurred prior to 1960. Manufactured or mobile homes peaked in construction during the period of 1970 to 1979, while the majority of condominiums in the county were constructed between 1980 and 1989.[20] Manufactured and mobile homes are often first home purchases. They are an integral part of a viable affordable housing program.

Figure 3.7
Residential Dwellings per Construction Period



Source: Montana Housing Condition Study, Appendix I. Montana Department of Commerce 2005

[19] U.S. Census Bureau 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; Selected Housing Characteristics (DP04)
[20] Montana Housing Condition Study, Appendix I. Montana Department of Commerce, 2005.

The Montana Department of Commerce 2005 Housing Condition Study rates the physical condition of residential housing – condominium units, mobile homes, and single-family homes – as excellent, very good, good, average, fair, poor, very poor or unsound. Housing rated good, very good, or excellent in Flathead County comprises 37% of the existing stock. 42% of condominium units were given the top rating of excellent. 87% of the residential housing units in Flathead County were rated as average or above. Below average rating of either fair, poor, very poor, or unsound were given to 4% of single family homes and 49% of mobile homes in the County.[21]

Commercial housing, which offers units for rent and often refers to multi family structures, is rated for condition as good, normal, fair, poor, or very poor. Nearly 93% of the housing classified as commercial in Flathead County rates as either normal or good.[22]

Special Consideration Groups

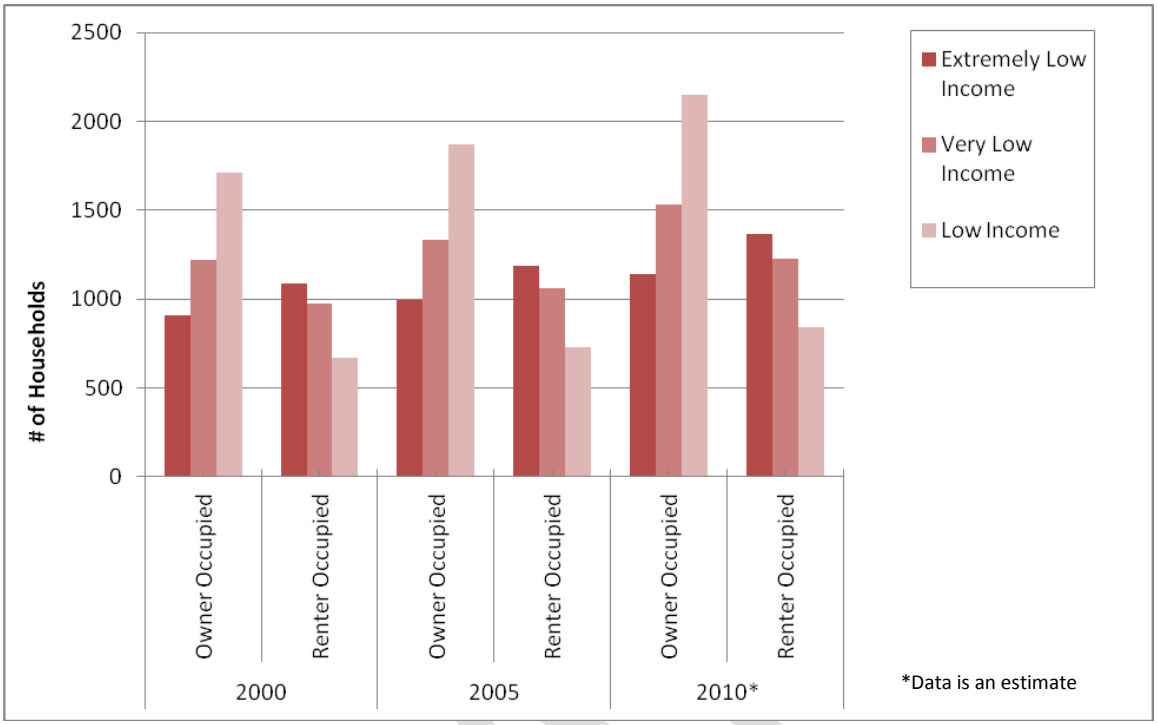
The US Department of Housing and Urban Development sets standards based on median family income (MFI) for assessing low income housing needs. Three classifications are used when discussing low income households: extremely low income (30% or less of MFI), very low income, and low income. These categories are defined as follows:[23]

- Extremely low income - those households with an income of 0% to 30% of the MFI;
- Very low income – those household with an income of 31% to 50% of the MFI;
- Low income – those households with an income of 51% to 80% of the MFI

Figure 3.8 shows the number of renter and owner households in the county by income category for low, very low, and extremely low income households.

[21] Montana Housing Condition Study, Appendix I – Residential Dwelling. MT Department of Commerce, 2005.
[22] Montana Housing Condition Study, Appendix I – Commercial Dwellings, MT Department of Commerce 2005.
[23] U.S Department of Housing & Urban Development. FY2012 Income Limits. http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il/il12/index.html

Figure 3.8
Low Income Households– Renter vs. Owner



Source: Montana Housing Needs Assessment, Montana Department of Commerce 2010

HUD also defines types of low income households as small related, large related, elderly, and other households, in addition to special needs households which have members with mobility impairment, disabilities, or drug or alcohol addiction. Elderly and special needs households comprise a large portion of the low income housing population. Over half of elderly and special needs households are considered low income, and these groups are expected to increase as the population ages.

Homeless persons are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and have a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised shelter for temporary living accommodation, an institution providing a temporary accommodation, or a public or private place not designed for sleeping[24]. Two homeless shelters are located in Flathead County, both within the city of Kalispell. The Samaritan House provides shelter for the homeless with 20 beds for men, eight beds for women, and four family units. According to their website, the Samaritan House served over 32,000 meals and housed over 1,120 people in 2011.[25] The Ray of Hope is another homeless shelter located within the city limits with the ability to provide housing and assistance for 15 to 20 individuals at a time.

[24] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federal Definition of "Homeless"; http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/homelessness/definition
[25] Homeless in the Flathead; http://www.homelessintheflathead.blogspot.com/, December 27, 2011 entry.

Location of Housing

Costs associated with the housing location can be significant. The cost of transportation to and from destinations such as home, work, and school increases as the distance increases. The same is true for the cost of serving homes located away from public services such as police and fire protection, solid waste collection, and public sewer and water services. The average travel time to work for Flathead County commuters in 2010 was 15-19 minutes, which coincides with the fact that many residents in the County live outside of cities in rural areas. The term 'rural' refers to all population, housing and territory outside of urbanized areas (UAs) or urban clusters (UCs), as defined by the Census Bureau, which have a population of 2,500 or more[26]. Excluding the cities of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls, unincorporated rural communities have the largest concentrations of housing. Communities such as Bigfork, Coram, Evergreen, Hungry Horse, Lakeside, Martin City and Somers are just a few Census Designated Places identified in the sections above and shown on Map 3.1.

[26] 2010 Census Urban and Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria; http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010urbanruralclass.html

CHAPTER 4: PARKS & RECREATION

Introduction

Public parks, trails and recreation offer countless values to Flathead County residents and visitors. Public parks, trails and open space provide the opportunity to be physically active and fit. Having close to home access to quality places to recreate is one of the most important factors in determining whether people are active and will continue to stay that way. Policy 18.5 originally called for the creation – and now utilization - of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide facilities planning in Flathead County. This policy was met in 2009 when Flathead County formally adopted a Parks and Recreation Plan [Resolution No. 2015L} as an element of the Growth Policy. The Master Plan considers a number of factors related to parks and recreation master planning throughout Flathead County, including population growth, facilities maintenance and the future needs and desires of the community. The Master Plan is referenced heavily throughout this chapter, as it provides more detailed analysis and comprehensive evaluation as an extension of the Growth Policy document.

Goal

G.18 To accelerate the development process for park, trail, and open space infrastructure to meet the challenges of community growth and development.

Policies

P.18.1 Acquire park and leisure facility sites now to serve the future needs of the county, particularly water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers and streams.

P.18.2 With the exception of water based parks, utilize subdivision park requirements to create and/or fund dedicated park sites of an optimal size no less than five acres, to accommodate operation and maintenance costs.

P.18.3 Ensure existing parks and recreational facilities are operated and maintained in a quality condition for use by the general public.

P.18.4 Develop strategies to fund, operate, and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.

P.18.5 Utilize the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the expansion of the park system to meet the needs and expectations of the growing public. Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan at a minimum of every five years from the date of adoption, to ensure the plan is current.

P.18.6 Preserve and increase recreational access to public lands and waterways by procuring necessary land, easements, or rights of way.

P.18.7 Create a committee to determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.

Goal

G.19 To create partnerships with common interest groups and the people within our community.

Policies

P.19.1 Encourage parks, planning, maintenance and development coordination with other local jurisdictions as well as state and federal agencies.

P.19.2 Participate with developing partnerships, community civic groups and organizations, private sector building and development industry, and others interested in parks and recreation activities.

P.19.3 Support "pocket parks" which are owned and maintained by home owner groups and Associations.

P.19.4 Recognize riparian buffers for their recreational value and their ability to protect the quality of water along major streams and rivers in the County in order to enhance recreational opportunities, protect the quality of water (reduce erosion; surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, etc.; stream bank depredation/defoliation; etc.) and their ability to protect the natural aesthetics of waterways.

P.19.5 Develop County Parks in conjunction with public or private schools whenever possible.

P.19.6 Develop standards, procedures, and requirements for the preparation, review, and adoption of neighborhood and subdivision park plans.

Goal

G.20 Maintain and/or increase the current level of service for park facilities and recreation services in Flathead County relative to population growth and public demands and expectations.

Policies

P.20.1 Provide for and acquire new lands and indoor/outdoor recreation and park facilities as outlined in the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to keep pace with expanding population and demand.

P.20.2 Maintain the current level of recreation services by providing innovative programs geared towards a diverse demographic of county residents (children, adults, seniors, etc.).

PART 1: Community Benefits of Parks and Recreation (see Goals 18 and 19)

The economic benefits of parks and recreation areas are numerous. One of the more significant benefits is the increase in value of private lands adjacent to or near protected public parks, trails or open space. Close proximity of parks to residential areas leads to increased land values and safer walks for children and adults to the park and back. Often, quality parks and recreation areas are an important consideration of businesses looking at expansion or relocation. Parks and recreation areas improve the quality of the living environment and make communities more desirable for businesses and homeowners.

Parks, trails and open spaces provide vital green space in an ever-changing landscape. They provide vegetative buffers and recreational areas and can be used to reduce the impacts of development. These areas are also instrumental in providing access to rivers, lakes and adjoining public lands. Just as importantly parks, trails and open space can help to maintain view sheds, provide groundwater recharge areas, floodplain protection, natural sound barriers, weed buffers, and filter pollutants from the air. Parks help to keep the living environment healthy.

Parks, trails and open spaces facilitate social interactions between individuals, families, civic groups and others. These areas are critical to maintaining community cohesion and pride. Parks provide meeting places where the community can develop social ties and bonds. Leisure activity in parks can reduce stress and enhance a sense of wellness. People go to parks, use trails or experience open space to reinvigorate themselves and to decrease anxieties of daily life.

Community recreation services and programs encourage organized structure and enjoyable activities for people of all ages. The Department of Parks and Recreation offers organized recreation programs for both youth and adults. Programs currently offered for youth include outdoor flag football, volleyball and t-ball at various locations throughout the county. Adult programs include basketball, flag football and softball. The Conrad Sports Complex currently services over 100 softball teams. There are also a large number of nonprofit sports organizations throughout the county that utilize these facilities to offer a wide variety of activities for children and adults.

PART 2: Flathead County Parks

Existing Characteristics

The growing popularity and demand for parks and recreational opportunities are in proportion to the dynamic growth and development Flathead County has experienced over the years. During the growth policy public meetings held throughout Flathead County in November and December of 2005 and January of 2006, numerous residents cited increased and improved parks and recreation services as desirable goals for the future of the county. (See Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary.) A growing public desires greater opportunities for passive and organized recreation programming. Greater access to water-based recreation is also a growing priority. The Department of Parks and Recreation is currently responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of a wide range and variety of parks and recreation facilities. Although the existing park and recreation system offers recreational opportunities for individuals, families and group users, it should be dynamic to meet changing public needs and desires.

The department currently maintains 70 park and recreation facilities and one cemetery totaling approximately 515 acres. The facilities can be categorized by function. Of the 70 park sites, 32 sites are developed parks totaling 383 acres, 14 sites are water based parks, 14 sites are neighborhood parks, 2 are sports parks, 2 are classified special use parks and 3 are linear parks.[1] Map 4.1 shows the location of existing park and leisure facilities. The Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a detailed overview of all the County parks identified, inventorying the size, location, type, facilities and availability of water access in Appendix A of the Master Plan document. Please reference this document for further details and analysis regarding existing parks and recreation characteristics in Flathead County.

Administration of Parks and Recreation

The Flathead County Parks Board oversees park and recreations services for the County. The board is comprised of five members appointed by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners to serve three year terms. The Board meets monthly and has responsibility for administration of the Parks and Recreation Department.

In July 1997, the County Commission merged the Parks and Recreation Department with the Weed Department. The two boards were merged and the Parks & Recreation Director currently acts as the noxious Weed Coordinator as well as the Facilities Manager in charge of building and grounds maintenance for the County.

The Parks Board advises staff and the County Commission on community needs and provides input related to parks and recreation issues. The Board is also responsible for long-range park planning. Park Boards are authorized under Section 7-16-2301 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA). Under these provisions, the Park Board has authority to employ the department director and make rules for the use of parks and impose penalties for the violation of rules. The Board employs staff to program recreation as

[1] **Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Resolution No. 2015L; pg. 31, Table 6**

well as operate and maintain facilities. The Parks Board can also acquire land needed for parks and recreation facilities. These sites may be in incorporated cities as well as in unincorporated areas of Flathead County.

In 2008, the Parks Board created an advisory committee to develop a Trails Plan under guidance from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program of the National Park Service, and in compliance with associated goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy. The committee formed was known as the PATHS Committee, standing for "people, athletics, travel, health and safety". The Committee met for nearly 18 months in order to develop a comprehensive trails plan for the County, gathering community input, reviewing past efforts, developing goals and policies, analyzing trail patterns, network strategies and implementation and administration efforts. The Flathead County Trails Plan was formally adopted October 12, 2010 by Resolution No. 2015O as an element of the Growth Policy. Content of the Plan will be referenced later on in Chapter 6 of this document, regarding transportation in Flathead County.

PART 3: State and Federal Recreation Areas (see Goal 1 in Chapter 2: Land Uses)

Within Flathead County there are numerous parks and recreation areas under federal and state management. These facilities offer a wide diversity of all season outdoor recreational amenities for county residents. Major recreational facilities and administering agencies are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Federal & State Recreation Areas

Facility	Area	Management Agency
Glacier Nat'l Park	635,214	US National Park Service
Flathead National Forest	1,875,545	US Forest Service
Kootenai, Lewis and Clark and Lolo National Forests	115,390 (total acreage)	US Forest Service
Lost Trails National Wildlife Refuge	7,885	US Fish & Wildlife
Swan River National Wildlife Refuge	1,568	US Fish & Wildlife
Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area	5,189	US Fish & Wildlife
Wayfarers State Park	67	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish Lake State Park	11	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish State Trust Lands	13,000	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Flathead River FAS	44 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks

Pressentine FAS	11 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Horseshoe Lake FAS	23 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Kokanee Bend FAS	185 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Lone Pine State Park	229 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Old Steel Bridge FAS	128 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Sportsman's Bridge FAS	6 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks

Source: Montana Natural Resource Information System

The primary distinction between federal and state recreation areas and county recreation areas is programming. Parks under county administration typically offer active organized sport activities (e.g. softball, volleyball, soccer and football, etc.), while federal and state lands promote unique outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, fishing and hunting. The importance of federal and state lands for recreation is tied to the custom and culture of Montana residents and visitors for outdoor activities. Flathead County seeks to provide recreational opportunities that are an alternative to activities found on federal and state lands as well as safeguard public access to public lands and water bodies.

PART 4: Level of Service (see Goal 20)

Level of service is one tool used to baseline existing parks and recreational infrastructure relative to population. Flathead County's population between 2006 and 2008 was estimated slightly less than 87,000. The population of the unincorporated area of the county was estimated at 53,483 for this same time period. Based on the unincorporated population, the county offers approximately 7.2 acres of total recreational area per 1,000 residents. Existing park space available to the residents of Flathead County is further discussed in *Chapter 5: Level of Service* of the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Level of service calculations are used to monitor performance in implementing park and recreation service delivery and infrastructure goals. Level of service goals are normally associated with comprehensive parks master plans; The Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted in 2009 analyzes the current level of service as well as anticipated needs to serve future populations and increasing level of service demands. This information and a detailed analysis of current and future LOS projections can be found in Chapter 5 of the plan.

Comments gathered from County residents during the 2006 public survey process for the Growth Policy[2] indicated a need to provide organized sports and other recreational

[2] **Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Res. No. 2015L; Appendix E – Survey Summary**

activities and services. Softball and youth soccer are popular and highly visible activities, with more than 100 teams competing annually for space at the Conrad Sports Complex. Organized recreation for youth is also in demand. More specialized types of recreation, such as skateboard parks and swimming, are growing in popularity. The County provides organized recreational programs to more than 10,000 residents each year. Presently, the county does not have a recreation center for basketball or other indoor recreation activities. These needs are comprehensively addressed in Chapter 6 of the Master Plan regarding organized sports.

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CHAPTER 5: THE FLATHEAD ECONOMY

Introduction

When the Growth Policy was originally adopted in 2007, the Flathead Valley and its economy were experiencing significant growth and development. Traditionally characterized by its diversity, northwest Montana's economy was stable and growing; a 2004 report on the 'State of the Rockies" identified Flathead County as having the most balanced employment composition in the Rocky Mountain West, with no one sector of the economy prevailing over another. That all changed in 2008, when the economic recession affecting the rest of the country began to significantly impact Montana's economy. Numerous reports in the years since have characterized Flathead County as one of the hardest hit economies in the state, with some of the highest long-term unemployment rates and a significant reduction in economic diversity. And while the effects of the recession continue to be felt today, the Flathead Valley is beginning a slow recovery, building upon the natural resources and scenic qualities that have traditionally been part of the economic landscape while embracing new opportunities and supporting those economic sectors that have remained resilient throughout the recession.

The county's natural environment has always been one of its chief economic assets, contributing significantly to the high quality of life that draws visitors as well as potential employers and future residents to the Valley. This quality of life is characterized by natural scenic beauty, clean air and water and access to outdoor and recreational opportunities. Region specific export products such as Flathead cherries and timber products, as well as the tourism draw of Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake are prime examples of how Flathead County's natural environment has contributed significantly to the local economy.

Rapid population growth between 2000 and 2005 served as a major driver in the county's economic vitality during the first half of the decade. The population of older, working, financially established adults rapidly increased during this time period, as those in their early 40's to late 50's chose to relocate to Flathead County. The number of older, non-working adults and retirees requiring access to social and medical services without income attachment grew significantly during this time period, and continues to be a driving economic factor today. Although population growth continued during the second half of the decade - primarily between 2005 and 2007- the national recession that began in 2008 had a dramatic affect on the rate of growth and overall composition of the population, particularly its civilian labor force. This is not, however, the first time Flathead County has found itself in an economic recession. Cyclical changes related to the evolving needs of a local and regionally connected population will continue to influence and drive the economy. Planning in a way that will encourage and sustain future economic growth in the face of cyclical change is one approach to the current economic situation facing the Flathead Valley.

Goal

G.21 A healthy and vibrant Flathead County economy that provides diversity and living-wage job opportunities and is comprised of sustainable economic activities and private sector investment.

Policies

P.21.1 Provide adequate land area designated for commercial and industrial use to promote affordability, creating entrepreneurialism and/or businesses relocation to Flathead County.

P.21.2 Develop methods to enhance a sustainable agricultural and timber industry through community-based incentives.

P.21.3 Foster business development as a method to provide employment and locally produced goods and services to meet the needs and demands of local communities and to provide region specific export goods.

P.21.4 Promote education and work force development programs to better prepare current and future generations for high quality job opportunities and to provide employers with quality and dependable workers.

P.21.5 Utilize economic development authorities to attract relocation or startup of businesses that offer competitive wages and job opportunities for those with a range of educational backgrounds.

P.21.6 Preserve the natural amenities that characterize the county in order to attract industries and businesses that maintain the high quality of life that attracts visitors and new residents, and sustains the tourism sector of the economy.

P.21.7 Support the continuation of traditional and existing industries to maintain economic diversity and aid future business expansion.

Goal

G.22 Available, accessible, and adequate business infrastructure including facilities, utilities, services and transportation networks to facilitate new businesses and relocation of existing businesses to the County

Policies

P.22.1 Identify infrastructure needs of the various business types and identify areas of the County which can best suit those needs.

P.22.2 Promote business centers and industrial parks in areas served by sufficient infrastructure with consideration to proximity to population densities.

P.22.3 Encourage the development of an airport industrial/business center to provide convenient access to Glacier International Airport and to foster a growing economy.

P.22.4 Consider the infrastructure needs of local businesses when prioritizing development of new county facilities.

P.22.5 Encourage/support coordination with in the creation and update of the Flathead County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

PART 1: Economic Composition (see Goals 21 and 22)

The Flathead Valley was historically a natural resource based economy. Logging, mining and commodities production have decreased over the past decade, and as a result the Flathead economy has had to diversify in order to accommodate this change (as shown in Figure 5.1 below). The County's economy has experienced significant restructuring over the past thirty years, with significant growth in the retail trade and service industries during the late 1990's and early 2000's. However, the economic downturn has tempered the diversification of the economy in the same way it has affected economic growth and stability. Those industries that experienced enormous increases in employment, labor earnings, and sales over the past decade have since experienced significant losses in these same indicator areas during the recession. The closure of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company and the Plum Creek mill, coupled with cyclical declines in the wood products and construction industry have added to these losses. However, the natural amenities and quality of life that contribute to the character of Flathead County continue to attract small businesses and technology companies that are becoming more prevalent in light of the new knowledge based, globalized economy. The city of Kalispell's evolution as a regional trade and service center has also contributed to the growth of the County's economic base, even during this period of economic decline.

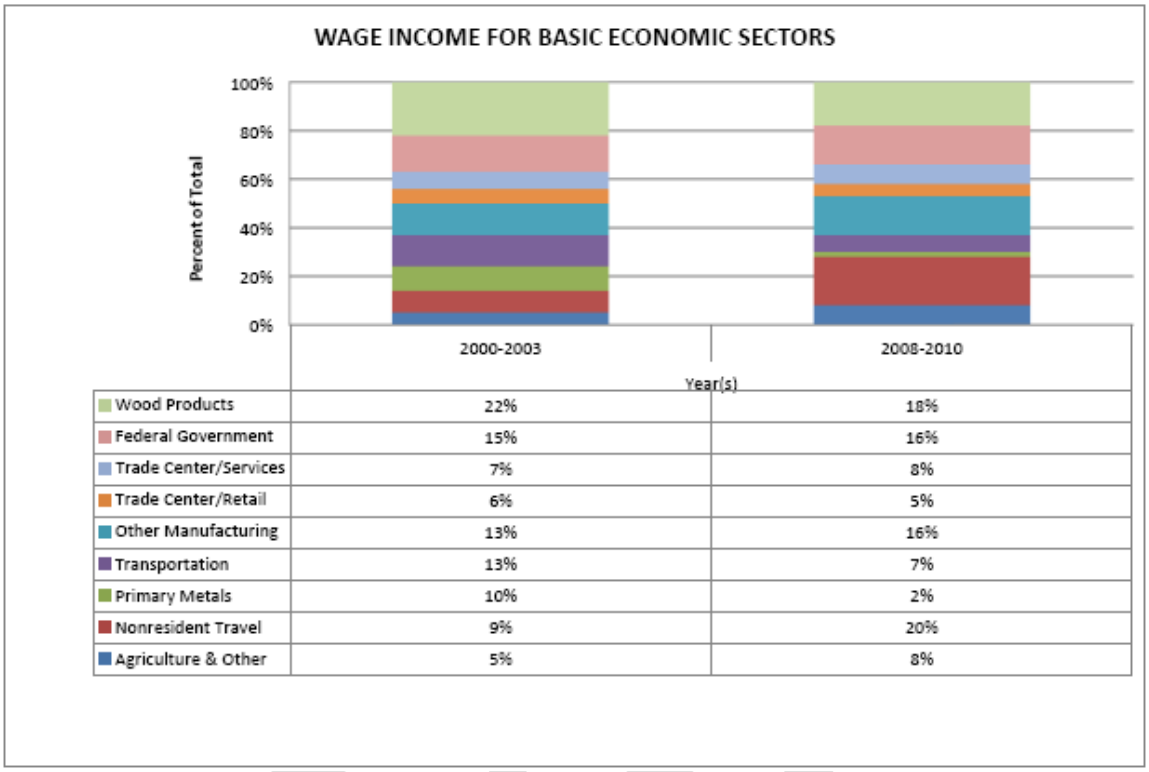
Several types of indicators may be used to evaluate trends in sectors and sub sectors of the economy. Wages and income, employment, and sales are some indicators which show changes over time. All of these indicators are discussed throughout this chapter to contrast past and current trends and to provide a snapshot of today's economy. The data detailing the Flathead County economy are extensive. However, consistent information for inter sector comparisons per year is not always available. Information contained in this chapter describes both basic and non basic sectors. Basic sectors are those sectors of the economy which are entirely dependent on export of their goods or services. Examples of basic sector goods are agriculture, manufacturing, and retail trade. Non-basic sectors are dependent on local consumption of goods and services, and include services such as healthcare and education. It is important to note that although the healthcare service industry has been a major contributor to the Flathead's economy over the past decade, it

will not be considered a "base industry" until the provision of services expand to a regional level supported by non-localized spending.

While the county has grown in population over the past two decades, the labor force has experienced a slight decline in population in the last three years[1]. This decline is attributed in large part to the high unemployment rate and evolving economic base Flathead County is currently experiencing. Growth indicators such as wage income for basic economic sectors show the change in the economic landscape since 2000. According to data provided by the Bureau of Economic Analysis and shown in Figure 5.1 below, sectors including wood product manufacturing, transportation, and primary metals all experienced significant decline in their percentage of total labor income over the past ten years. Basic economic sectors including trade services, other types of manufacturing, non-resident travel and agriculture experienced growth totaling 52% of the total labor income. The federal government, another major component of the County's economic base that includes the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Park Service, grew slightly over this time period, comprising 16% of the labor income in 2010. Impacts to basic economic sectors as a result of the economic downturn have been particularly acute over the past three years. The construction industry was especially hard hit, a factor that may not be evident based upon the figure below. Many of the industries that experienced significant reductions in staffing and annual wages are not considered basic economic sectors, but are one component of those sectors upon which they rely. These impacts will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections of this chapter.

[1] Historic Data for Unemployment Rate; Research & Analysis Bureau, MT Department of Labor & Industry

FIGURE 5.1
Labor Income in Basic Industries – 2000-2010 (percent of total)



	2000-2003	2008-2010
Wood Products	22%	18%
Federal Government	15%	16%
Trade Center/Services	7%	8%
Trade Center/Retail	6%	5%
Other Manufacturing	13%	16%
Transportation	13%	7%
Primary Metals	10%	2%
Nonresident Travel	9%	20%
Agriculture & Other	5%	8%

Sources: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana;
Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

The US Economic Census is conducted every five years and provides data for standard industry sectors important to the county's economy. The most recent census was conducted in 2007, and data collected indicates a substantial increase in sales for all sectors from $2.86 billion in 2002 to $3.62 billion in 2007, an increase of nearly 20% over a five year period. Retail trades were the largest portion of sales in the county equaling nearly $1.6 billion in 2007 while manufacturing sales totaled $9.2 million, and health care and social assistance equaled $4.7 million.[2] It is important to remember these significant sales increases do not reflect current economic conditions, but those conditions present in 2007; before the economic recession took hold. When the next Economic Census is completed in 2012, it is likely the economic landscape for the past five years will look much different than what the data from 2007 indicate.

In light of the current economic conditions, it is important that Flathead County take the appropriate measures to create a market friendly environment that promotes entrepreneurship and business investment. Appropriate and compatible land uses, such as industrial parks near the airport and visible and accessible commercial lands, are a critical component of rebuilding and maintaining a diverse economy; this is just one example of the many areas to be considered for their future development potential. With a population projected to increase to 125,980 by 2030, the Flathead economy will

[2] US Bureau of the Census, 2002 and 2007 Economic Census

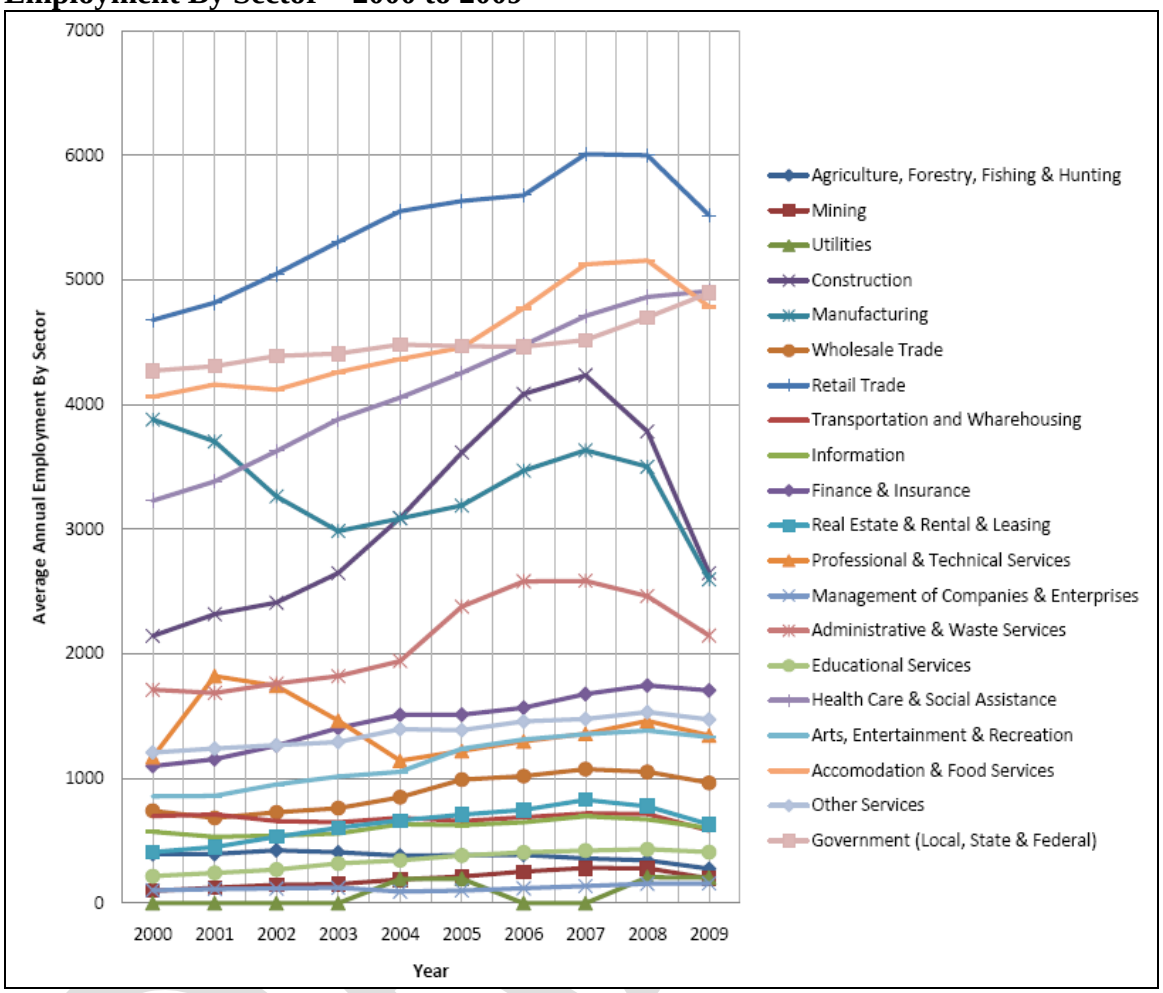
continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate than the growth experienced prior to 2008.[3] Having a plan in place to promote economic development in all viable sectors through appropriate, diverse and compatible land uses will ensure opportunities for diverse growth. The creation of an economic development plan will be discussed in greater detail in Part 6 of this chapter.

PART 2: Employment (see Goal 21)

From 1990 to 2000 approximately 15,700 new jobs were created in Flathead County, a reflection of the diversifying economy and population growth occurring during this time period. As shown in Figure 5.2 below, employment sectors including retail sales, accommodation and food service, construction, health care and social assistance continued to grow rapidly between 2000 and 2007. Other employment sectors such as mining, real estate, wholesale trade, finance and insurance continued to grow during this time period, albeit less rapidly. Following the economic downturn in 2008, most employment sectors suffered losses in their labor force, the most drastic of which occurred in the construction, manufacturing and retail trade sectors. Only the government and the health care and social assistance sectors have continued to experience modest gains in employment numbers during the economic recession.

[3] Montana Population Projections; NPA Data Services, Inc.

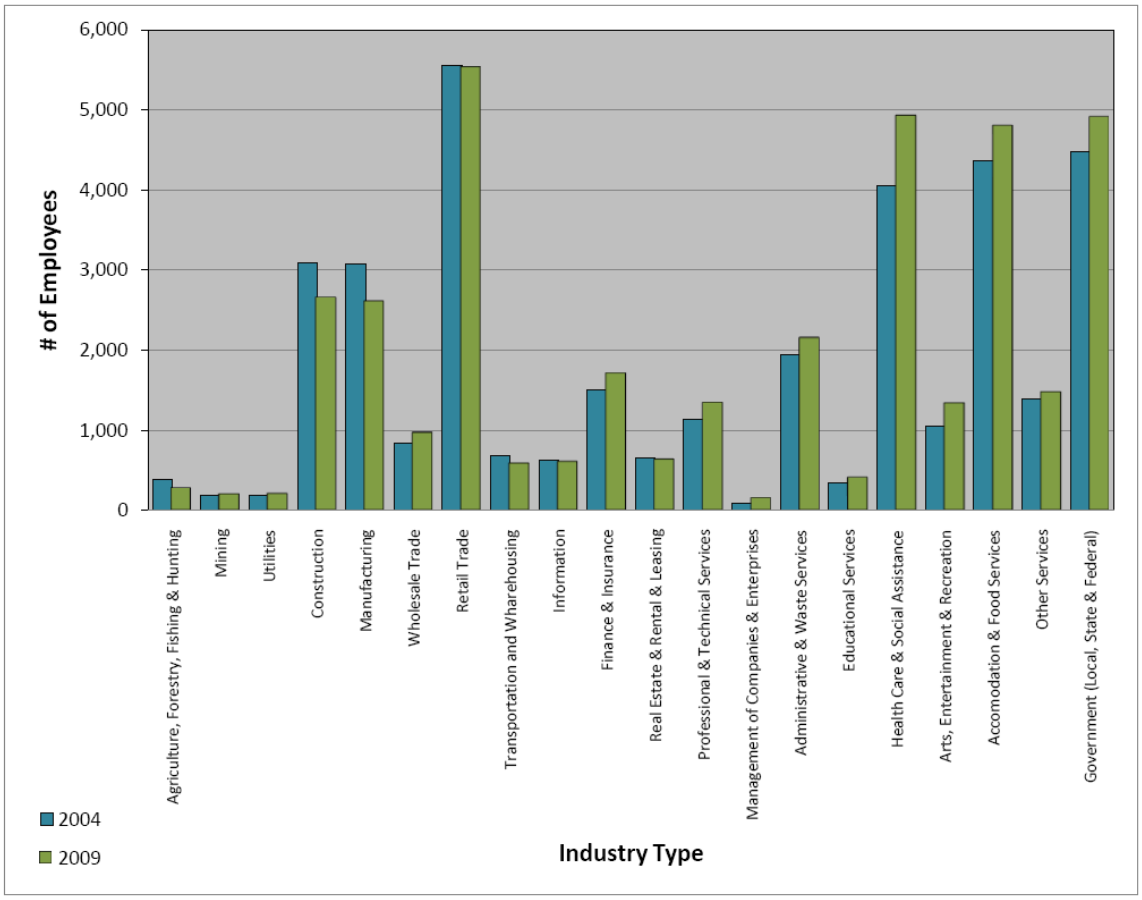
FIGURE 5.2
Employment By Sector – 2000 to 2009



Source: Montana Bureau of Labor & Industry; Employment & Earnings (ES-202/QCEW)

Approximately 37,388 persons were employed in private and public agencies in -2009, up from 35,707 persons in 2004. The concentration of employment is spread over several sectors as shown in Figure 5.3. The sector with the largest number of employees remains retail trade with - 5,519 employees, followed by local, state and federal government services; accommodation and food services; and healthcare and social services. Over the past five years industry sectors including wholesale trade, finance and insurance, professional and technical as well as administrative and waste services have increased their annual employment levels compared to 2004. Conversely, traditional sectors such as agriculture and forestry, construction and manufacturing have reduced their annual employment levels.

FIGURE 5.3
Employment by Industry – 2009



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages Program

Growth in the service and retail sectors including retail trade and finance, insurance, and real estate has notably increased to meet the growth in population. Service and retail trade sectors witnessed a 57% employment growth during the 1990s. The types of occupations that increased were mainly high quality jobs such as those in health care, engineering and management services, and business services. Service and retail occupations accounted for over 70% of the labor earnings during the 1990's. Between 1997 and 2000, the number of employees in health care and social assistance increased by 257%, followed by arts, entertainment, and recreation with an increase of 74% and employees in administrative and waste management services which increased by 70%.[4] These industry types are components of the service sector of the economy, characterized as providing a service (i.e. intangible good) instead of producing a tangible end product, through activities where people offer knowledge and time to improve productivity, performance, potential and sustainability. As evidenced in Figure 5.3 above, most service sectors continued to experience growth since 2004, primarily in the realm of healthcare and social assistance, accommodation and food as well as government services. Industrial sectors of the economy – those producing tangible goods instead of intangible services –

[4] US Economic Census 1997, 2002

generally experience a decline in employment in the years since 2004. Particularly hard-hit were the construction and manufacturing industries, with decreases in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting as well.

Unemployment Rates

When the Growth Policy was written in 2007, Flathead County was experiencing low unemployment rates, as evidenced by Figure 5.4 below. Higher unemployment rates in the 1990's gave way to a relatively stable economy in 2000, and unemployment rates generally remained between 4% and 6% from 2000 to 2007. Over the past three years the unemployment rate has more than doubled, hitting 13.1% in March 2011.[5] Prolonged unemployment, combined with a reduction in diversity and prevalence of low-wage earning opportunities have resulted in the County experiencing a level of outmigration, as individuals seek career opportunities elsewhere in the state and region. Table 5.1 and Figure 5.5 below illustrate the impacts of the economic downturn on Flathead County's labor force.

The data regarding unemployment rates in Flathead County is limited in that it only reflects the number of individuals applying for unemployment insurance during the time period (month) the data is collected. Job loss is a significant factor that has a direct impact on both unemployment rates as well as the current instability of the economy in Flathead County. Figure 5.6 shows the percent change in annual employment trends between 2004 and 2010, while Figure 5.7 looks more specifically at the change in the number of employed by major industry sector between the 3rd quarter of 2009 and the 3rd quarter of 2010.The majority of industry employers reduced their workforce over the course of a year, indicating significant job loss in sector including utilities, construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trades, information, finance, real estate and management. Mining, administrative support and waste management and health care all added job during this same time period, with the mining industry increasing employment levels by over 40%.[6]

[5] Economic Outlook 2011; Bureau of Business & Economic Research, The University of Montana. Montana Department of Labor & Industry Research & Analysis Bureaus; Unemployment Rates & Labor Force Statistics (March 2011)

[6] Brad Eldridge, Executive Director of Institutional Research, Assessment & Planning, Flathead Valley Community College.

FIGURE 5.4
Flathead County Unemployment Rate – 1990-2009

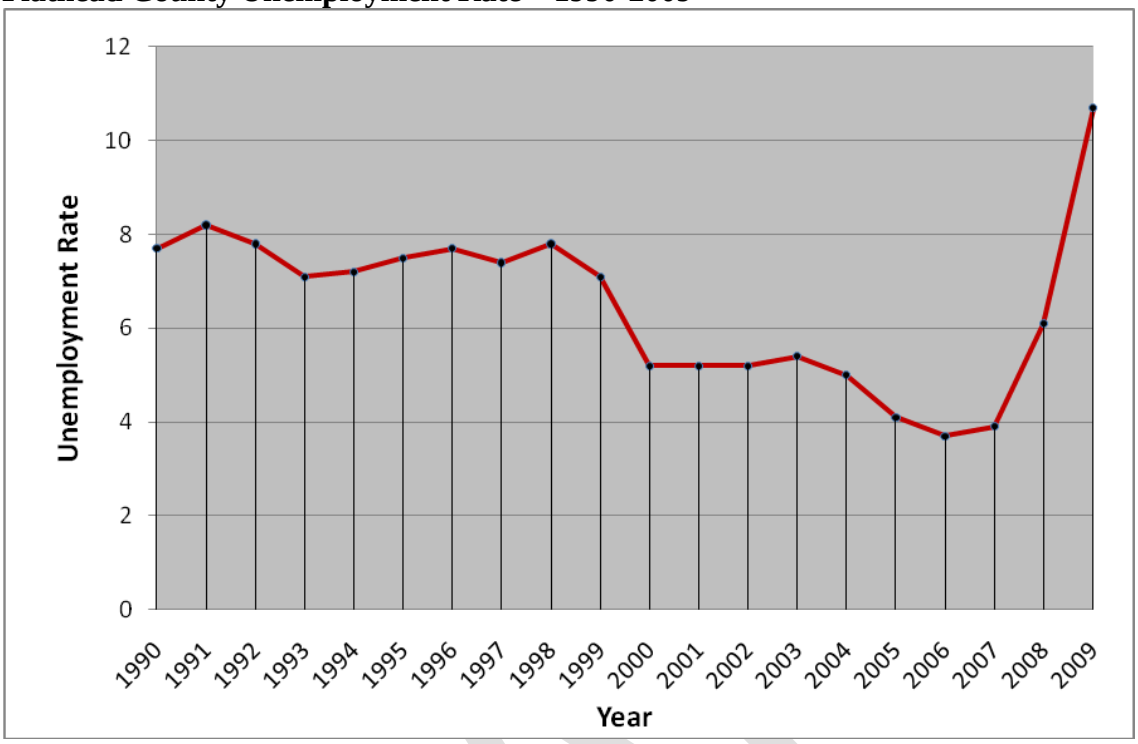
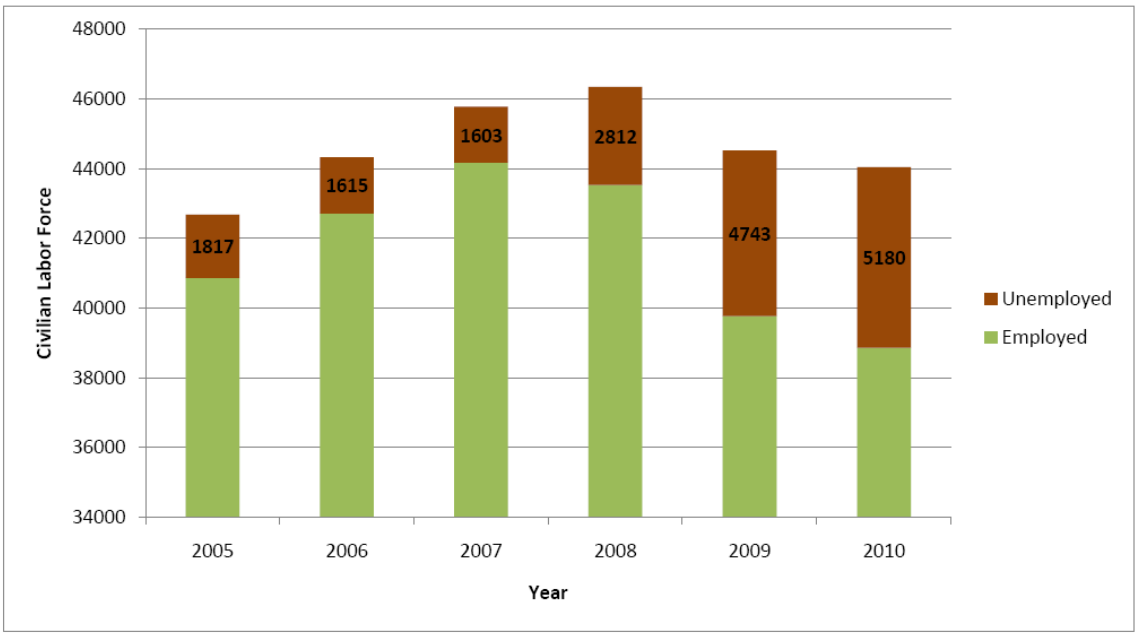


TABLE 5.1
Annual Average Labor Force in Flathead County – 2005-2010

Year	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2005	42685	40868	1817	4.3%
2006	44329	42714	1615	3.6%
2007	45777	44174	1603	3.5%
2008	46348	43536	2812	6.1%
2009	44516	39773	4743	10.7%
2010	44046	38866	5180	11.8%

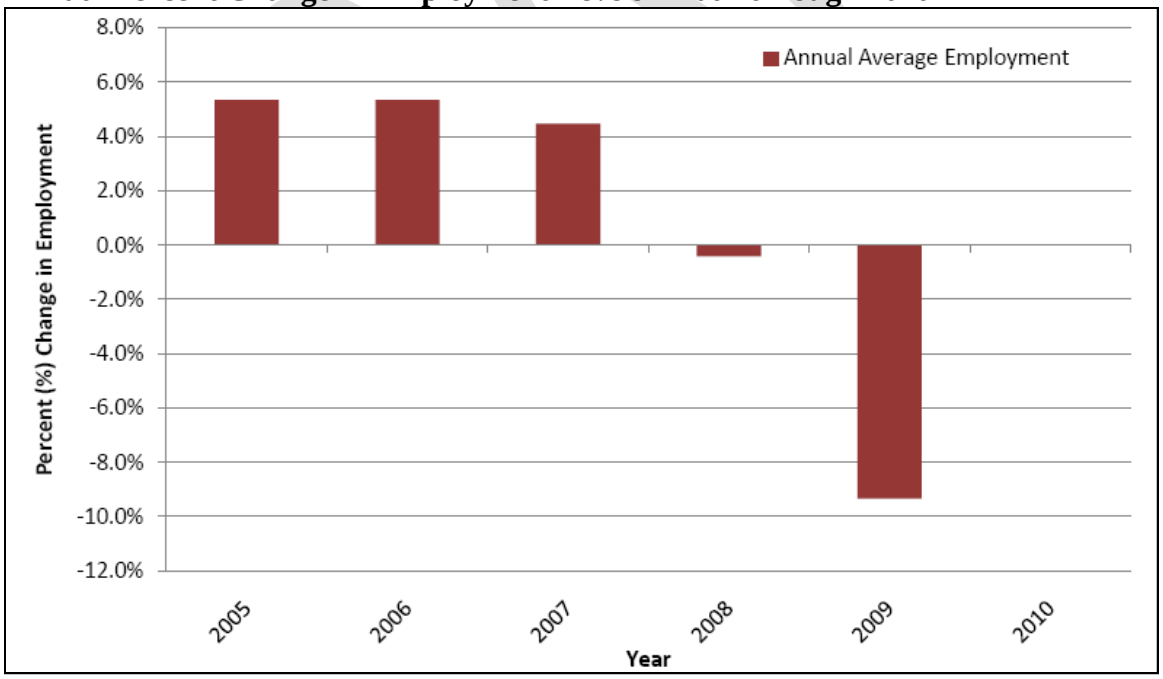
Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Unemployment Rates & Labor Force Statistics

FIGURE 5.5
Annual Average Labor Force in Flathead County – 2005-2010



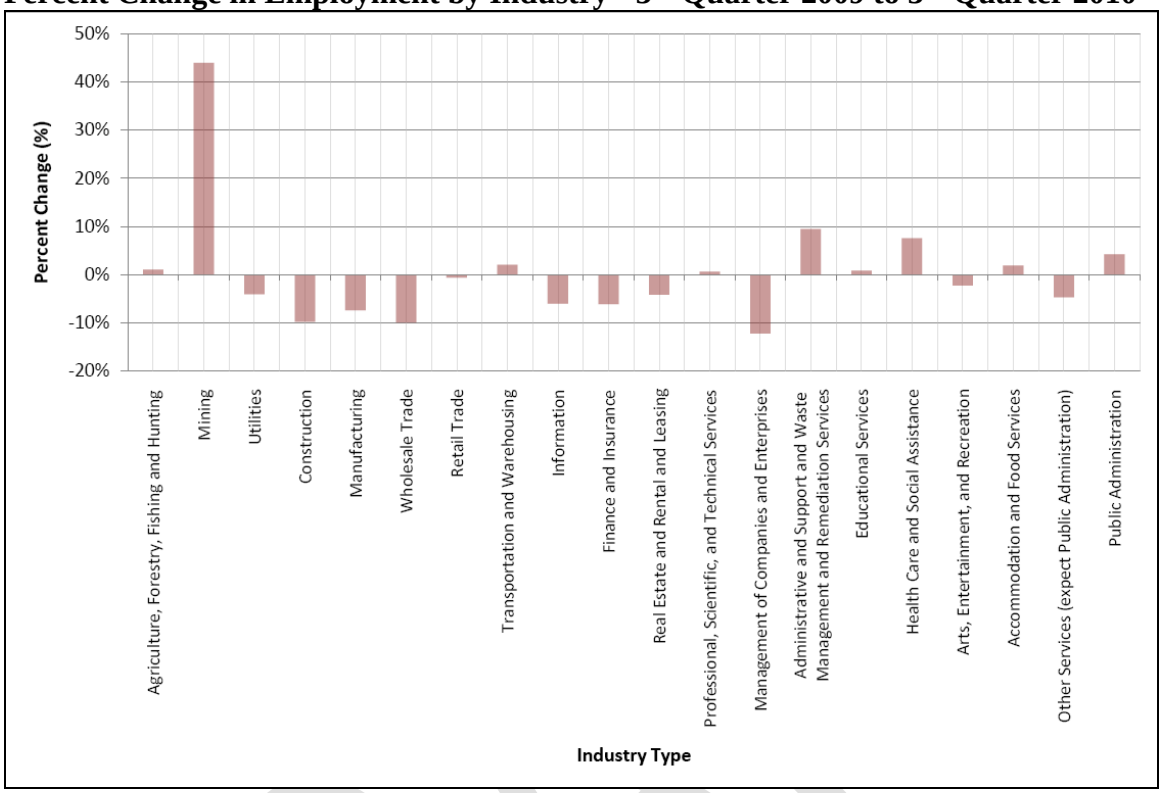
Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Unemployment Rates & Labor Force Statistics

FIGURE 5.6
Annual Percent Change in Employment Levels – 2004 through 2010



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Employment & Earnings (ES-202/QCEW)

FIGURE 5.7
Percent Change in Employment by Industry - 3rd Quarter 2009 to 3rd Quarter 2010



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Employment & Earnings (ES-202/QCEW)

TABLE 5.2
Percent Change in Employment by Industry - 3rd Quarter Annual Statistics, 2005 thru 2010

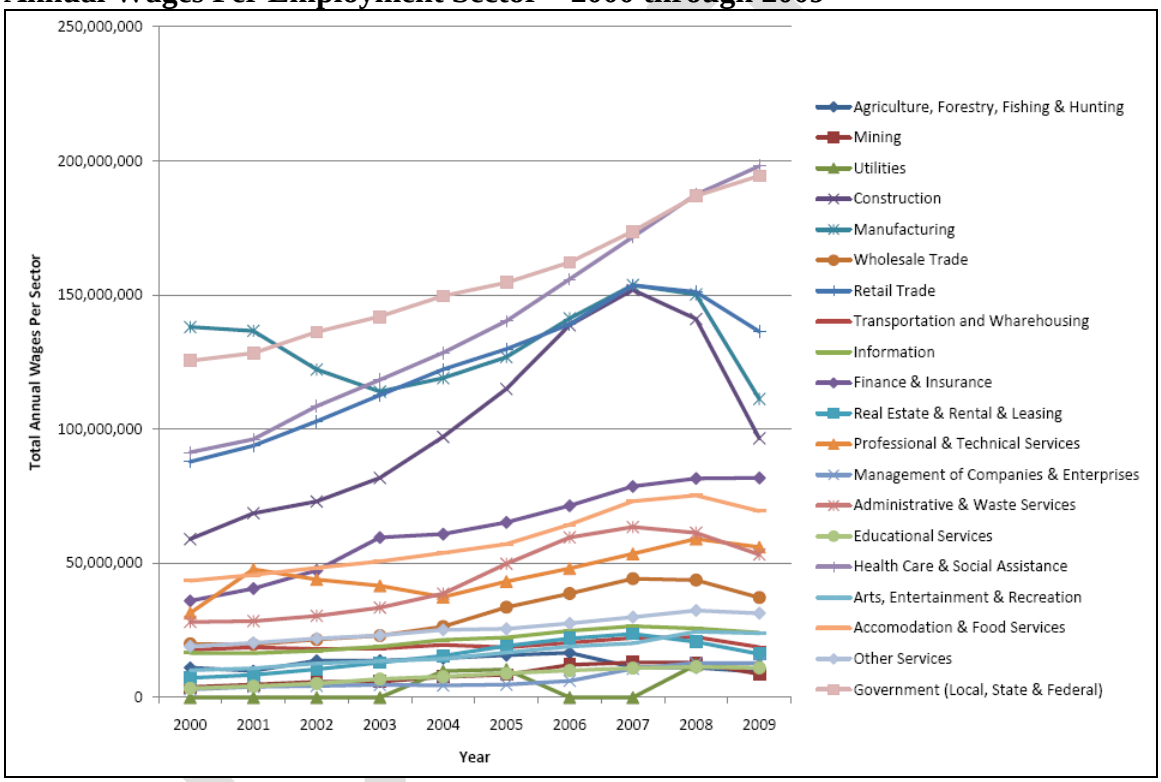
	Annual Percent (%) Change by Industry				
	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3.8%	9.4%	-6.3%	-17.4%	1.1%
Mining	45.0%	0.3%	-2.6%	-33.8%	43.9%
Utilities	-5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%	-4.1%
Construction	10.6%	2.8%	-9.8%	-27.1%	-9.8%
Manufacturing	9.5%	3.4%	-2.4%	-27.8%	-7.4%
Wholesale Trade	4.2%	6.6%	-2.9%	-8.5%	-10.0%
Retail Trade	-0.2%	7.6%	-0.5%	-7.1%	-0.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	9.1%	3.0%	-4.2%	12.2%	2.1%
Information	4.0%	14.9%	-7.3%	-12.0%	-6.0%
Finance and Insurance	2.5%	8.4%	4.0%	-3.9%	-6.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5.8%	6.4%	-5.4%	-20.7%	-4.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8.6%	1.8%	5.3%	-7.7%	0.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	15.4%	16.7%	9.3%	2.0%	-12.2%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	5.7%	3.7%	-4.1%	-16.9%	9.5%
Educational Services	8.5%	3.5%	2.9%	334.9%	0.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5.4%	4.4%	3.9%	5.9%	7.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4.6%	4.6%	3.3%	8.3%	-2.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	6.3%	9.3%	1.3%	-6.8%	1.9%
Other Services (expect Public Administration)	6.7%	-1.0%	5.1%	1.4%	-4.7%

Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Employment & Earnings (ES-202/QCEW)

Wages

Between 2000 and 2007, annual wages for most employment sectors were on the rise, as shown in Figure 5.8 below. Following the economic downturn in 2008 there was a significant decrease in annual wages in the construction, manufacturing and retail trade sectors of the economy, and moderate decreases were felt in other sectors including wholesale trade, administrative and waste services, professional and technical as well as accommodation and food services. Only the health care and social assistance, finance, insurance and government sectors have experienced increases in total annual wages since 2008.

FIGURE 5.8
Annual Wages Per Employment Sector – 2000 through 2009



Source: Montana Bureau of Labor & Industry; Employment & Earnings (ES-202/QCEW)

The increasing cost of living in Flathead County has influenced what is defined as a "livable wage" or a wage which covers the costs of basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, healthcare, and insurance. The cost of housing in the county, as discussed in Chapter 3, is a major factor in determining a 'livable' wage since this cost has risen dramatically over the past decade. According to a report produced by the Montana West Economic Development, cost of living expenses related to groceries, transportation and healthcare all tend to be higher in the city of Kalispell (and surrounding environs) than the national average.[7] Job related benefits also factor into the cost of living equation. A recent report conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation indicates approximately

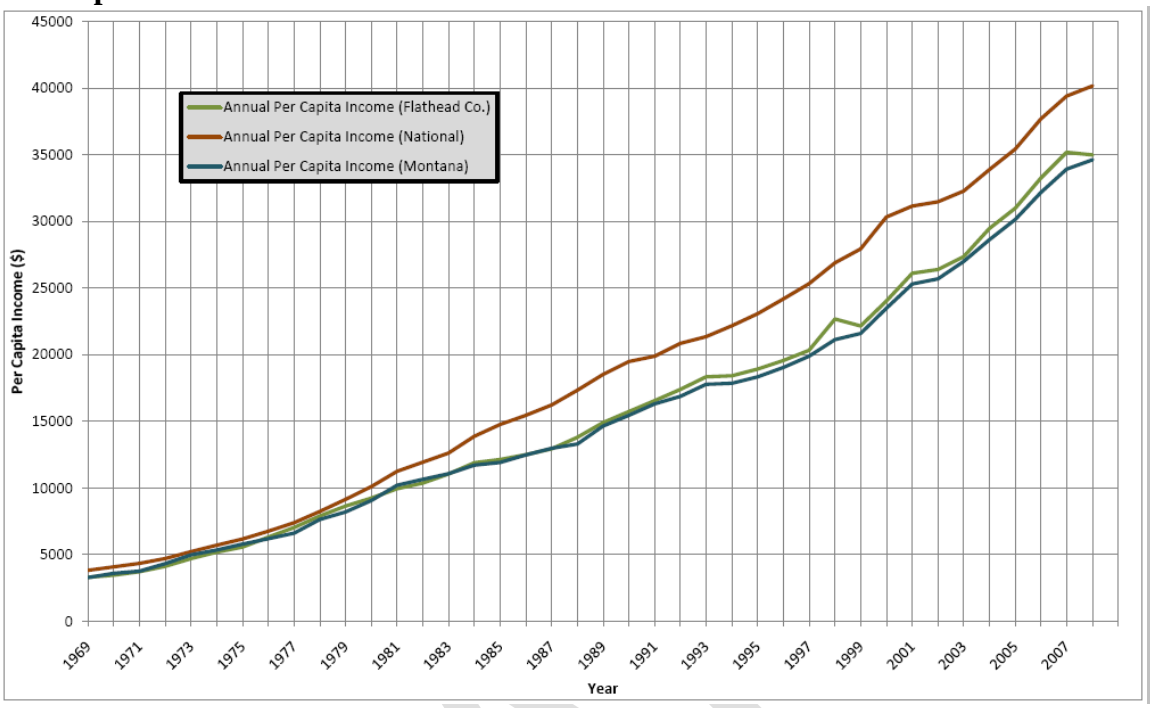
[7] ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Q3 2010, www.coli.org

76% of Montanans are covered by some form of health insurance, be it public, private, or a combination of both. 55% of Montanans receive job based health insurance, a percentage that has remained steady over the past decade despite a decrease at the national level. 2009 estimates provided by the US Census Bureau indicate an elderly population (age 65 and over) of approximately 11,709 persons, or roughly 14% of the total population.[8] Affordable healthcare becomes particularly important when factoring in the cost of living for residents in this age bracket, but should be a considerable when factoring wage and per capita income for all area residents.

Generally speaking, personal wages and per capita income have increased since the latter part of the 1990s. However, when compared to the United States, annual individual earnings in Flathead County have steadily declined against the national average. In the early 1970s the earnings per job in the county were comparable to those nationwide; in fact, in 1973 the average earnings per job in the county was over 95% of the national average. Over time, however, the rate of personal income increase slowed in Montana generally and Flathead County specifically, while annual per capita income continued to gain ground at the national level. Figure 5.9 offers an evaluation of per capita income for residents of Flathead County compared to residents of Montana and the U.S. as a whole. It is apparent from the data that while Flathead County employers pay less than US employers on average, they are slightly more competitive than their counterparts across the state of Montana. In 2004, per capita personal income in Flathead County was $29,471 placing Flathead County as 10th highest in the state; today per capita income for Flathead residents is $34,982, on par with the state at $34,622 but 23% below the national average of $40,166.[9] Frustration with below average wages is evident from the residents of Flathead County. A goal commonly cited by participants in the 2005-2006 growth policy scoping meetings was jobs with adequate wages that include health insurance (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). These sentiments continue today, as unemployment rates have risen dramatically, and those jobs that are available are often found in industry sectors like retail trades or accommodation and food services that offer lower pay with few or no benefits.

[8] ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates for Flathead County, Montana: 2005-2009
[9] Montana Department of Labor & Industry; Income Report (1969-2009)

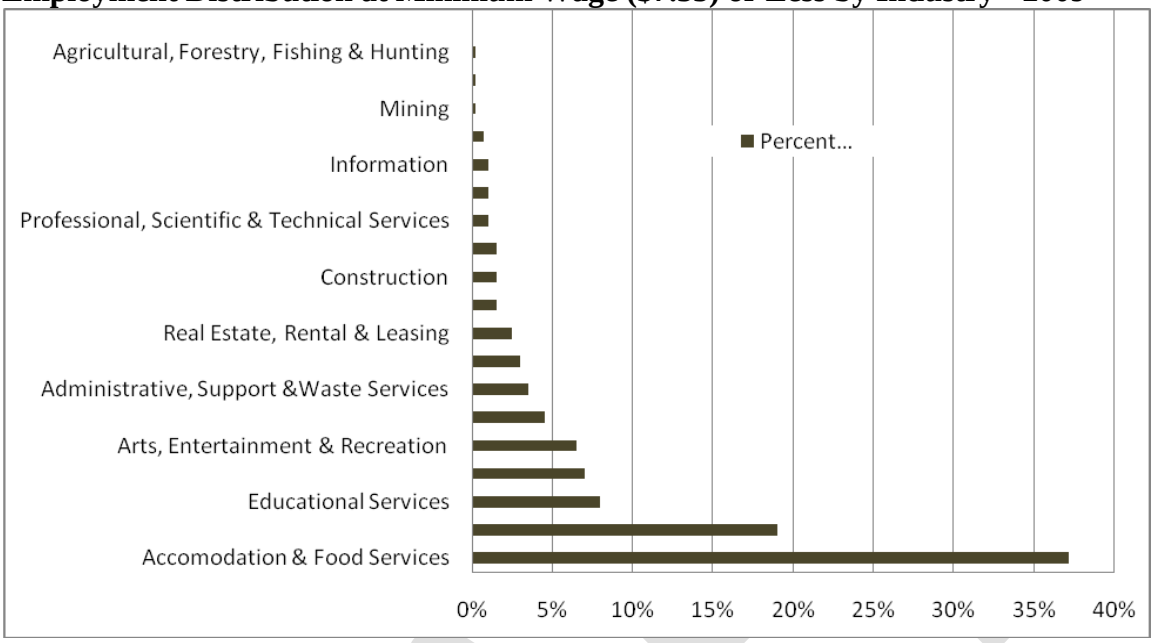
FIGURE 5.9
Per Capita Personal Income – 1969-2008



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry; Income Report (1969-2009)

Growth in the service sector has resulted in an infusion of lower-wage employment opportunities in Flathead County during the second half of the decade. While any economic growth is typically considered positive, an increase in lower wage and often part-time jobs has its own unique impact on the economy. Figure 5.10 below shows the distribution of minimum wage jobs paying $7.35 or less across key employment sectors; note accommodation and food services account for nearly 37% of the jobs paying minimum wage, with retail trades following as a close second. As previously touched upon, these types of jobs rarely offer employment benefits or insurance to help offset cost of living expenses, and minimum wage is rarely considered enough of an income for an individual to provide for themselves or for a family. Current economic conditions have led to the prevalence of underemployment, a situation where skilled workers are employed in low-wage jobs that fail to offer the financial security necessary to support themselves, which tends to affect regional economic stability as well.

FIGURE 5.10
Employment Distribution at Minimum Wage ($7.35) or Less by Industry - 2009



Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, 2009

In years past, Census data has shown Flathead County residents increasingly live on non-wage incomes, which include income from investments and transfer payments such as social security. This may be due to the fact that the number of residents identified as 'traditional retirees', as well as people between the ages of 40 and 60 years old has been steadily growing. However, in 2010 over 77 % of all household income in Flathead County was reported as all or partially wage-based, a 17% increase over the percentage reported in 2000. 27% of all households in Flathead County receive Social Security benefits, while nearly 17% of households receive other forms of retirement income. 12% of households receive additional income in the form of Supplemental Security Income, cash public assistance or food stamp benefits.[10]

[10] ACS Profile Report, 2010 - Flathead County, Montana.

Workforce

Five years ago Flathead County employers were experiencing difficulty filling available positions, whereas today the County is experiencing a very different problem The high rate of unemployment rate and number of jobs lost during the recession means there are more people than there are jobs in Flathead County. When the Growth Policy was written five years ago, the lack of a sufficient workforce raised employers' concerns about education, training and employee recruitment. With the high rate of unemployment and lack of available jobs, the potential for outmigration of qualified professionals looking for work in other parts of the state and Country could significantly impact the Flathead's road to economic recovery. Creating and maintaining a local economy that is diverse and can be sustained relies upon the availability of jobs that pay a living wage and a qualified, able workforce to fill those positions. In addition to outmigration, individuals residing in Flathead County but having to work outside the County's jurisdiction has grown slowly but steadily over the past five years. In 2006 approximately 13.6% of the labor force fell into this category, whereas estimates from 2009 indicate that number has grown to 16.3% of the labor force. Based on data provided by the US Census Bureau, nearly 54% of workers employed outside the County are between the ages of 30 to 54.[11]

The majority of Flathead County residents 25 years or older have some education beyond high school, with - 8.1% holding a two-year associate degree, 18.6% holding a four-year bachelor's degree, 7.7% with graduate or professional degrees, and 27.7% with some college but no degree.[12] This education trend is similar to that throughout Montana. An educated workforce is critical to a diverse economy. A major component of attracting business investments to the county is having a well trained ambitious workforce. Flathead Valley Community College provides a critical service in achieving this objective and should be supported. For more on Flathead Valley Community College, see Chapter 7: Public Facilities and Services.

TABLE 5.3
Workforce Education (population 25 years and older) – 2009

Educational Attainment	Flathead County	Montana	United States
Less than H.S. Diploma	5.8%	9.1%	14.8%
H.S. Diploma/Equivalent	31.1%	31.5%	28.5%
Some College	27.7%	24.1%	21.3%
Associate's Degree	8.1%	7.9%	7.5%
Bachelor's Degree	20.5%	19.1%	17.6%
Master's/Professional Degree	6.8%	8.3%	10.3%

Source: American Community Survey Estimates, 2009; Selected Social Characteristics, Flathead County, Montana

[11] US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics; http://lehdmap.did.census.gov/

[12] American Community Survey Estimates, 2009; Selected Social Characteristics, Flathead County, Montana

Based on 2009 projections, the workforce (age 18-65) appears to be evenly split with 50% of workers female and the remaining 50% male.[13] Although the current data available from the 2007 Economic Census does not specify which industry types each gender is prevalent in, data from the 2000 US Census indicated men held more jobs in labor intensive industries such as manufacturing and construction and retail trade while more women held positions in education, healthcare finance and insurance[14].

PART 3: Business Characteristics (see Goals 21 and 22)

The majority of businesses in the county are small businesses indicating entrepreneurship is significant. Advanced telecommunication and transportation infrastructure has allowed new business opportunities in the county to grow and thrive. A high quality of living in the county is an advantage when encouraging relocation or the start-up of high tech and value added businesses, as these businesses produce high value goods with low environmental impact. Non employee businesses, or small businesses that employ only the business owner, are prevalent and compose a significant part of the Flathead County economy.

Approximately 4,250 individual private businesses operated in the county in 2009. Construction firms were the most numerous with 869 businesses in operation, which include the construction of buildings, heavy and civil engineering construction, as well as special trade contractors. Retail trade was the second most numerous in regard to number of establishments with 484 businesses including motor vehicle and parts dealers, furniture and home furnishing stores, gasoline stations, and general merchandise stores. Professional and technical services, accommodation and food services, and other service-based business establishments follow closely behind, as seen in Table 5.4 below. While there were only 325 health care and social assistance establishments in Flathead County in 2009, the Kalispell Regional Medical Center remained the largest employer with 2,282 employees. Employment estimates provided by the chief medical officer as of January 2011 indicate KRMC continues to grow, with approximately 2,400 employees today.

TABLE 5.4
Number of Establishments per Sector and Annual Wages Per Job – 2009

Industry	# of Establishments	Annual Wages Per Job
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	88	$34,651
Mining	20	$44,185
Utilities	11	$62,227
Construction	869	$36,473
Manufacturing	188	$42,830
Wholesale Trade	142	$38,598
Retail Trade	484	$24,712
Transportation and Warehousing	124	$32,240

[13] ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates for Flathead County, Montana: 2005-2009
[14] www.censusscope.org

Information	58	$40,045
Finance & Insurance	210	$47,953
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	236	$25,641
Professional & Technical Services	440	$41,668
Management of Companies & Enterprises	14	$81,174
Administrative & Waste Services	244	$24,828
Educational Services	38	$26,999
Health Care & Social Assistance	325	$40,332
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	121	$17,967
Accommodation & Food Services	326	$14,523
Other Services	312	$21, 296
Government (Local, State & Federal)	112	$39,707
TOTAL Private	**4,250**	
TOTAL All Industries	**4,362**	

Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages Program

Larger private employers comprise a much smaller segment of the Flathead County economy. In 2010 there were nineteen businesses employing between 100 and 499 employees, while only five businesses employed 500 or more employees. Of the public sector employers listed in Table 5.6 below, two of the top five employ more than 500 employees.

TABLE 5.5
Top Private Employers in Flathead Valley – 2010

Industry/Employer	# Employed
Kalispell Regional Medical Center	2282
Teletech	850
Applied Materials	800
CenturyLink	580
WinterSports, Inc.	500*/80
Wal-Mart	411
Burlington Northern	375
L.C. Staffing	350
North Valley Hospital	305
Plum Creek	300
National Flood Service	260
Super 1 Foods	260
Immanuel Lutheran Home	250
Western Building Center	225
Glacier Bank Corp.	220
Costco	210
The Lodge at Whitefish Lake	180*/110

Flathead Electric Coop	165
Lowes	160*/142
Target	137
Sportsman & Ski Haus	131
Northwest Montana Human Resources	125
F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber	125
Grouse Mountain Lodge	125*/100

* Indicates seasonal employment figures

TABLE 5.6
Top Public Employers in Flathead Valley -2010

Industry/Employer	# Employed
School District #5 (Kalispell)	750
Flathead County	526
School District #6 (Columbia Falls)	339
School District #44 (Whitefish)	207
City of Kalispell	180

Sources: Montana West Economic Development – Flathead County Profile

PART 4: Facilities and Infrastructure (see Goal 22)

Adequate business facilities and public infrastructure are necessary to promote a healthy business climate. Successful business communities often rely upon designated business districts to promote close proximity of businesses and services. Advances in transportation and communication technologies have enabled businesses to thrive in more remote areas of the nation. Important transportation infrastructure to support the county economy includes Glacier National Airport, road networks, and the railroad lines. Utilities such as those providing high speed internet and phone services are also essential. For an overview of land use considerations for commercial development see Chapter 2, and for more information on public facilities and infrastructure in the county, refer to Chapter 7.

Existing public facilities, utilities and infrastructure - and their availability for future growth - are key considerations when determining what types of commercial and industrial development can be accommodated and/or planned for into the future. These considerations also directly relate to the patterns of land use and planning for future growth and development based on where necessary infrastructure exists and where infrastructure should be expanded. One component of an Economic Development Plan would deal with these types of issues by inventorying available infrastructure, assessing the needs of future development and prioritizing likely improvements that may be necessary to accommodate certain types of industry in the future. This in turn provides a road map for economic development in the County, providing guidance as to what improvements may be necessary to promote economic growth in Flathead County, based

on the types of commercial and industrial business desired and the County's ability to reasonably accommodate them.

The expansion of commercial air service to and from Flathead County is one area of infrastructure improvement that has the potential to benefit the Flathead economy, by creating additional jobs at or serving Glacier International Airport and increasing the opportunities for tourists to visit during peak travel seasons. Improvements to existing rail infrastructure throughout the valley are yet another consideration. Due to the lack of interstate highways serving Flathead County, the majority of shipping and transportation occurs via rail; capitalizing on this existing resource and improving operations could add to the Flathead economic viability into the future. And lastly, highway maintenance and expansion to better serve localized transport and delivery will continue to have a lasting impact on the Flathead valley. With the first half of the Highway 93 By-Pass complete and plans for the second half underway, commercial and industrial development opportunities will continue to expand in areas of the County not previously accessible or compatible for these types of uses.

PART 5: Economic Outlook

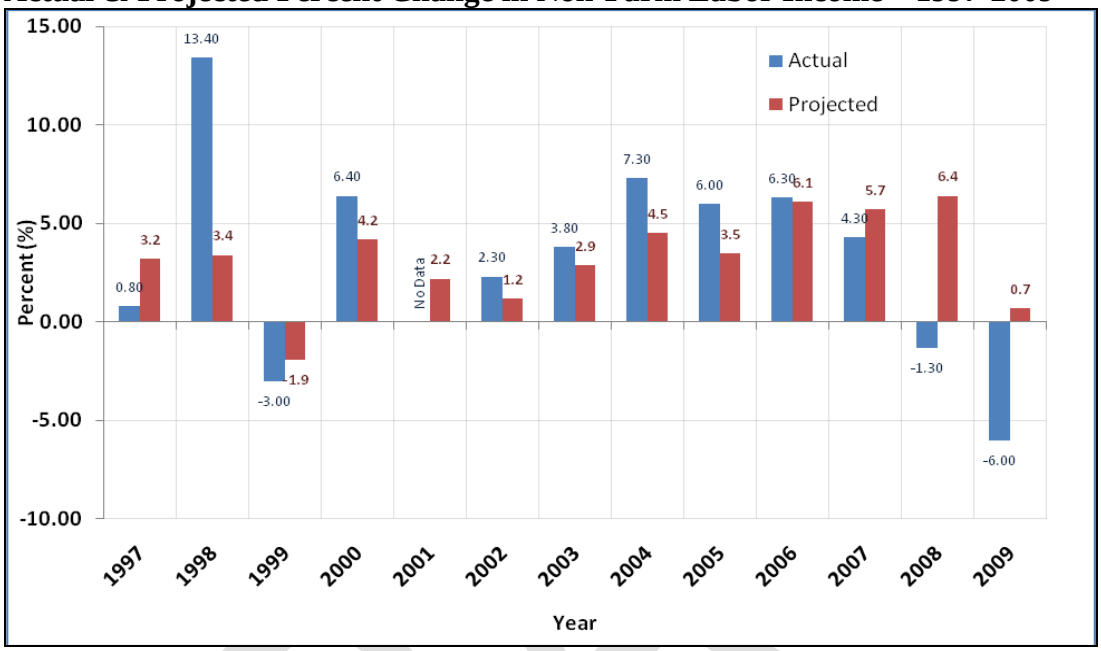
When the Growth Policy was originally developed, the economic outlook for Flathead County was essentially good; most estimates projected steady economic growth well into the future, with the possibility of only a slight deceleration late in the decade. As with all economic projections, this rosy outlook was based upon the significant growth and development the County was experiencing during the early 2000s; the impending national economic crisis and it's far-reaching impact on the Flathead economy could not have been anticipated.

Predicting future economic trends is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, and becomes particularly difficult when dealing with a transitioning economy like that of Flathead County. As population growth slows, sectors dependent on the growth itself, such as the construction industry, will experience decline – this is precisely what has happened over the past three to four years. The manufacturing sector of the economy has continued its decline since 2007, and retail trade – once a fast growing service sector of the economy – has experienced significant declines in employment levels and annual wages. Although the health care and government service sectors have remained solvent and, in some cases, continued to grow in the face of the recent economic downturn, future economic stability relies heavily on diversification and a stable, if not growing population.

As can be seen in Figures 5.11 and 5.12 below, the effects of the national recession significantly impacted economic projections at the County level. 2008 was the first year in almost a decade where the Flathead economy experience negative growth in non-farm labor income; 2009 was even worse. Although projections show a modest increase in non-farm labor income by 2013, it will take the Flathead economy years of positive growth to regain the ground lost to the negative economic growth that occurred in 2008

and 2009. Even as the economy begins to recover, industry projections indicate it will be at least 2014 before real non-farm labor income – the overall measure of the economy – regains a level of growth comparable to 2007. It could take even longer for employment to rebound to levels similar to those pre-dating the economic downturn.[15]

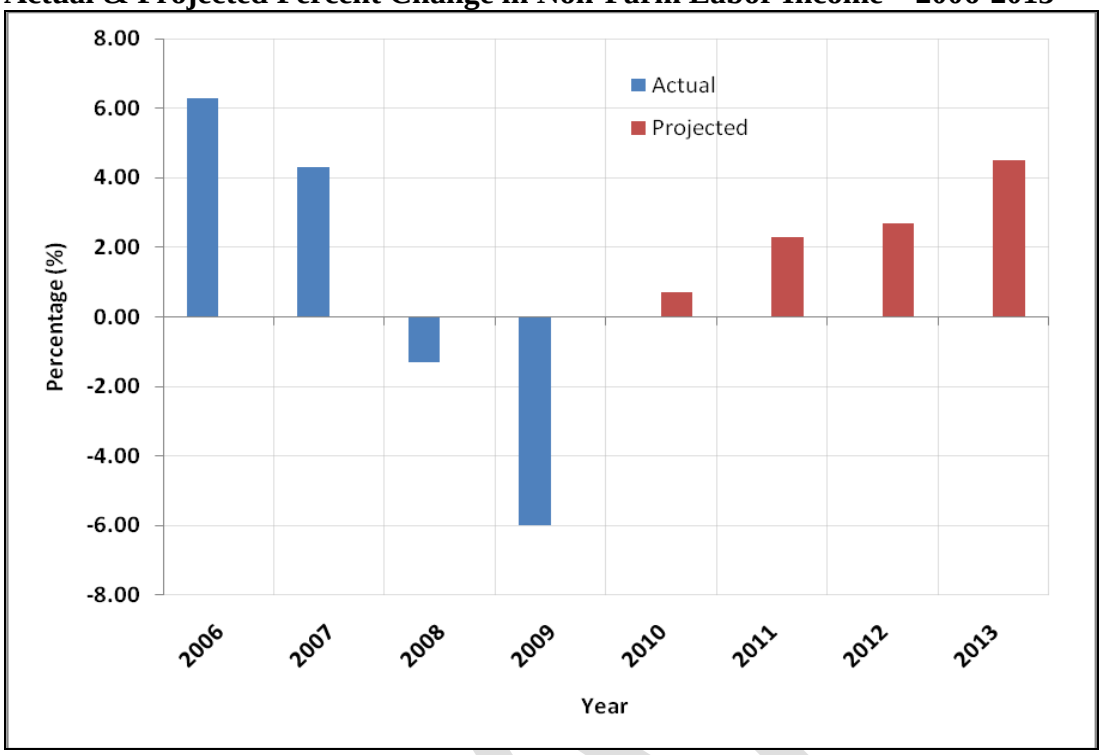
FIGURE 5.11
Actual & Projected Percent Change in Non-Farm Labor Income – 1997-2009



Sources: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana; Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

[15] Flathead County - Outlook 2011; Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana.

FIGURE 5.12
Actual & Projected Percent Change in Non-Farm Labor Income – 2006-2013



Sources: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana; Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

Projections for the state of Montana through 2012 appear to reflect similar trends in the county economy. Continued and expanding investments in statewide energy and natural resource infrastructure programming, coupled with strengthened consumer spending levels and growth in exports appear to be setting the stage for a stable economy in 2012. These circumstances are projected to bolster Montana industries such as agriculture and natural resources, while forest products and construction are projected to experience little or no growth into the future. Real estate sales and development will continue to struggle into 2012, while service sectors including healthcare and the tourism industry (non-resident travel, accommodations and food services) are projected to grow moderately over this same time-period.[16] Data indicates the economic impact from tourism expenditures and non-resident travel - including hunting, fishing and guiding operations - will continue to play a significant role in Montana's economic recovery in years to come. With proximity to Glacier National Park and an abundance of hunting, fishing and recreating opportunities available to residents and non-residents alike, Flathead County is poised to capitalize on this economic force.[17]

[16] The Montana Outlook - Outlook 2011; Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana.

[17] The Economic Review of the Travel Industry in Montana – 2010 Biennial Edition; Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, The Univeristy of Montana.

On January 1, 2011 the minimum wage for state of Montana workers increased from $7.25 to $7.35, exceeding the Federal minimum wage.[18] Based on current figures provided by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, it is likely wage income for Flathead County residents will continue to increase moderately, reflecting overall trends at the state level. However, both state and county wage levels remain far below the current national average. This poses a significant problem for employers seeking to attract and maintain a quality workforce in the face of high cost-of-living expenses.

PART 6: Plan for Economic Development

The goals and policies of this chapter call for a number of activities that support business and economic development to be undertaken by the county. These include providing adequate land area, fostering business and workforce development, supporting traditional industries, promoting business and industrial centers and other efforts to support future economic development that can be sustained for years to come. These approaches tend to be most successful when the business community works with the county to produce an economic development strategy or plan. Such a plan must clearly articulate the needs of existing businesses and employers, evaluate present conditions and future needs, identify goals and opportunities and set forth an implementation strategy to encourage and support the desired outcome – an economic climate that is both stable and sustainable now and in the future. Efforts must be integrated so the county can send a unified message to prospective new businesses in a highly competitive climate. Land area needs must be demonstrated together with strategies for steering commercial growth to selected locations. Such a coordinated effort will help to assure that Flathead County's economic goals will be reached.

This chapter of the Growth Policy identifies key resources and data that will be useful in supporting economic development through the creation and implementation of an economic development plan. The Growth Policy serves as a general overview of the past and present economic climate, whereas an economic development plan would delve deeper into issues affecting the Flathead economy and provide a more comprehensive strategy for future growth and development. Economic development plans may be purely informational; focused on fulfilling the particular needs of a community; or intent on identifying and capitalizing on opportunities based upon existing resources and workforce. A development plan may also include a target industry study used to identify specific industries a community ought to target; this provides the basis for a focused marketing strategy should the County wish to pursue one. The scope of an economic development plan for the County will be dependent upon the goals and objectives identified by the committee participants at that time the plan is developed.[19]

A successful economic development plan should be based upon inter-agency coordination, utilizing existing partnerships and developing new ones to share information, knowledge and expertise beneficial to the plan's development. Existing

[18] Minimum Wage Information; Montana Career Resource Network
[19] Kelly & Becker, *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan*; Island Press, 2000.

documents – such as the Flathead County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – may be a logical starting point for this collaborative effort. The CEDS document is the outcome of a collaborative planning process intended to guide future economic development and improve current economic conditions in the local economy. Much like the County Growth Policy, the document serves as both a summary of the current economic climate and a plan for how to address key issues and opportunities identified in the preliminary overview and analysis. The CEDS is updated every five years, the most recent of which occurred in 2007. In an effort to coordinate economic development efforts and utilize the wealth of existing information available, the County's participation in the 2012 update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan could serve as the basis upon which the CEDS document could be integrated within the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Planning for economic growth and development directly has a direct link to land use applications and coordinated infrastructure planning in Flathead County; therefore it is key that members of the Planning Board as well as County planning staff be involved in current and future update(s) of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. A document like the CEDS provides guidance on what types of infrastructure may be necessary to support growth in certain industry sectors, and can also provide insight on where that infrastructure should be located and why. This information is an important consideration when it comes to land use planning. For example, existing infrastructure may be available to accommodate a certain industry, but is located in an area of the County that is zoned for residential or agricultural uses. Another consideration is that the extension of infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, sewer) typically precedes development in the area to which it is extended, and planning staff may be able to provide a valuable perspective on development patterns and impacts resulting from this type of growth.

The following is a list of key participants that should be involved in the development and/or update of any economic development plan for Flathead County. The current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2007) lists over fifty committee members from local government agencies, citizen groups and private industries involved in the creation of the CEDS document. Their continued involvement is imperative to a continued well-rounded economic plan for the future.

- Montana West Economic Development (MWED)
- Flathead County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA)
- Local Chamber(s) of Commerce
- Cities of Whitefish, Kalispell, Columbia Falls
- Montana Department of Labor & Industry

As with any planning document, implementation tools and strategies are key components in realizing the goals of any economic development plan. Implementation strategies may include marketing and technical studies, small business support, cultivation of existing industries or job training. Implementation tools could include tax increment financing (TIF) districts, major financial incentives, development assistance from state and local

governments, shell buildings and even the use of free (public) lands.[20] It is up to each individual community to determine which tools and implementation strategies suit their needs; this will be an important component of Flathead County's Economic Development Plan as it takes shape.

[20] Kelly & Becker, *Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan*; Island Press, 2000.

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CHAPTER 6: TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

The quality and quantity of a transportation system can define a community. It can draw residents together or create barriers to separate them. A transportation element used in conjunction with other Growth Policy elements will shape Flathead County's community character, economic health, and quality of life. Not only does transportation provide for mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and development. A quality transportation system enables prompt emergency services (i.e.: sheriff, fire and medical, etc.) to protect the public's safety and welfare. Transportation planning requires developing strategies to manage the transportation system as a way to advance the county's long term goals and shape future growth. Ideally the transportation system, or at least individual components impacted by a development proposal, should be in place as subdivision and private development occurs.

Chapter 6 is intended to provide information on future transportation needs in the context of projected growth and development. A transportation system must be flexible and capable of adapting to a growing and changing population. Transportation planning examines travel patterns and trends and creates policies that meet mobility needs without creating adverse impacts to the general character of the community or the environment. Transportation planning identifies appropriate modes of travel to support development decisions. Modes of travel in Flathead County include motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, airplane, train and mass transit. Glacier Park International Airport is specifically referenced due to its regional economic importance.

Goal

G.23 Maintain safe and efficient traffic flow and mobility on county roadways.

Policies

P.23.1 Manage land use and the transportation system as a unified and coordinated system to ensure that one does not outpace the other.

P.23.2 Limit private driveways from directly accessing arterials and collector roads to safe separation distances.

P.23.3 Encourage local (neighborhood) roads that access directly onto collector roads.

P.23.4 Recognize areas in proximity to employment and retail centers as more suitable for higher residential densities and mixed use development.

P.23.5 Protect public safety and allow safe travel by restricting development in areas without adequate road improvements.

P.23.6 Support land use patterns along transit corridors that reduce vehicle dependency and protect public safety.

P.23.7 Develop a transportation grid system that minimizes environmental impacts to developed and natural areas.

P.23.8 Promote coordinated and cooperative transportation planning with Kalispell, Columbia Falls, Whitefish and Montana Departments of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

P.23.9 Adopt urban road standards and designs consistent with city road standards in county areas adjacent to cities.

P.23.10 Restrict direct access from private properties onto the Montana State highways and require frontage roads where needed and internal vehicle circulation roads for all development outside of urban areas.

P.23.11 Plan for and pursue opportunities for the development of additional east-west transportation corridors, especially between U.S. Highways 2, 93 and MT Highway 206.

P.23.12 Adopt urban transportation standards in areas developed to urban densities.

Goal

G.24 Develop a quality transportation network to meet the present and future needs of the public.

Policies

P.24.1 Ensure that identified functional class, road easement width, and condition of existing transportation facilities are adequate

P.24.2 Require County road improvements to mitigate impacts directly attributable to a subdivision or development as a necessary component of that development to preserve the carrying capacity of the roadway.

P.24.3 Require development projects to design local road systems that complement planned land uses and maintain mobility on arterial roads and highways.

P.24.4 Require road easement dedications for identified areas of future connectivity as subdivision developments are proposed, to serve the present and future needs of the county residents.

P.24.5 Restrict signalized highway intersections to a minimum of one mile spacing outside of urban areas to promote mobility and ½ mile within urban settings such as Evergreen.

P.24.6 Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with the Montana Department of Transportation and the United States Federal Highway Administration to promote coordination of land use and transportation planning and the efficient use of transportation facilities.

P.24.7 Develop a comprehensive countywide transportation plan to categorize current needs and to identify future needs.

P.24.8 Develop uniform system of prioritization for road improvements and maintenance.

P.24.9 Develop a Dust Abatement Program to mitigate dust impact from traffic on county roads as funding and resources allow.

Goal

G.25 Identify and support alternative modes of transportation.

Policies

P.25.1 Encourage development that provides functional alternative modes of travel such as bicycle and pedestrian paths.

P.25.2 Identify and prioritize areas for a predictable regional and interconnected bicycle path network and require pedestrian/bicycle easements on both sides of identified county roads. Encourage developments that aid and/or connect to this network.

P.25.3 Support the partnership between Eagle Transit, the State of Montana and the National Park Service to develop a joint transit system that services both Glacier National Park and the residents of Flathead County.

P.25.4 Support the expansion of the Glacier International Airport to keep pace with the emerging demand for aviation services.

P.25.5 Determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize the use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding

mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.

PART 1: Roads in Flathead County (see Goals 23 and 24)

Flathead County Road and Bridge Department

The Flathead County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for operating and maintaining public county roads in unincorporated areas of the county. Department responsibilities include conducting traffic counts, snow plowing during winter months, and major construction projects during the non-winter months. Some other areas of responsibility include monitoring encroachment, utility installation and coordination, issuing approach permits and completing road reviews for subdivision processing. In addition to the installation and maintenance of guardrails, there are approximately 100 bridges and 700 culverts, cattle passes and cattle guards maintained by the department.[1]

Existing Road Conditions

Population growth over the past decade has resulted in an increase in the number of vehicles on the road system and the overall demand for travel. The existing primary transportation system for roads and highways is shown on Map 6.1. Sustained growth and vehicle trips attributed to that growth have stressed the road network. Although population growth has slowed over the past three years when compared to the 2% growth rate per year (average) when the Growth Policy was originally written, the average annual daily traffic (AADT) on county roads has continued to increase at a dramatic pace. Since 1990 the population of Flathead County has increased approximately 54%, with traffic increases on selected county roads ranging from 4% to 64% *per year*. Increased growth directly influences land use patterns, and there is a direct correlation between land use patterns and traffic. Most of the local traffic increase is related to the rapidly expanding residential housing market, as each new home can be expected to generate an average of 10 trips per day (based on traffic engineering standards). Table 6.1 provides information on selected county roads and their AADT.

Table 6.1
Flathead County Road AADT

Location	Point	Early AADT (yr)	Recent AADT (yr)	% Increase/Yr.
Bierney Creek Rd.	W. of US 93	933 (1998)	1,335 (2009)	3.9%
Boon Rd.	W. of US 93	390 (1998)	563 (2008)	4.4%
Cemetery Rd.	E. of Airport Rd.	753 (1999)	1746 (2008)	15%
Jellison Rd.	N. of Pioneer Rd.	205 (1998)	1,121 (2005)	63.8%
JP Rd.	E. of US 93	456 (1997)	1,506 (2005)	28.8%
Kila Rd.	At US 2	1,098 (1997)	1,960 (2005)	9.8%

[1] Flathead County Road and Bridge Department

LaBrandt Rd.	E. of MT 35	307 (1997)	681 (2009)	10.2%
McCaffery Rd	At Echo Lake Rd.	354 (1997)	518 (2007)	4.6%
Pioneer Rd.	E. of US 2	398 (1998)	1,322 (2005)	33.2%
Rocky Cliff Rd.	W. of US 93	629 (1997)	1,216 (2005)	11.7%
Stillwater Rd.	N. of Farm-to-Market	480 (1997)	2,035 (2008)	29.4%
Valley View Dr.	S. of Foys Lake Rd.	397 (1997)	1562 (2005)	36.7%
W. Springcreek Rd.	N. of US 2	948 (1997)	2,011 (2008)	10.2%
West Valley Dr.	N. of Farm-to-Market	581 (1997)	1,206 (2008)	9.8%

Source: Flathead County Road and Bridge Department Traffic Counts, 1997-2009

Traffic on Montana State and US Highways is increasing at rates similar to county roads. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is responsible for management and maintenance of the federal and state highway systems. The state highway system includes major highways and secondary highways such as Whitefish Stage Road. The primary purpose of the highway system is to transport people and commodities over long distances. In Flathead County the highway system functions as a major arterial network to move people from collector roads to local destinations. MDT monitors daily traffic on the highways statewide by means of 86 permanent automatic traffic recorders (ATR sites), as well as numerous short term count recorders. According to MDT traffic count data, the AADT on highways has increased an average of 4% per year since 1990. Selected traffic counts for State and Federal highways are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2
Selected Highway Average Annual Daily Traffic

Highway	Location	1990	2000	2010	% Change 1990-2010
US Hwy 2	W. of Kalispell	5,540	7,500	7,920	43%
US Hwy 2	S. of MT Hwy 40	6,540	11,650	14,870	127%
US Hwy 93	S. of Lakeside	2,540	3,670	3,940	55%
US Hwy 93	S. of MT Hwy 82	5,120	7,050	7,640	49%
US Hwy 93	S. of MT Hwy 40	7,050	10,500	14,060	99%
US Hwy 93	N. of Whitefish	2,020	3,710	3,970	97%
US Hwy 93	N. of US Hwy 2	15,880	16,860	22,410	41 %
MT Hwy 35	S. of Bigfork	3,100	4,610	3,980	28%
MT Hwy 35	N. of MT Hwy. 82	2,600	6,090	6,020	132%
MT Hwy 35	S. of MT Hwy 206	2,660	5,610	6,910	160%
MT Hwy 35	E. of US 2	12,440	15,600	14,240	14%
MT Hwy 40	W. of US 2	5,280	7,590	8,030	52%
MT Hwy 82	W. of MT Hwy 35	3,880	4,500	5,950	53%
MT Hwy 206	N. of MT Hwy 35	2,730	3,440	4,170	53%

MT Hwy 206	S. of US 2	2,850	4,290	4,080	43%

Source: Flathead County Long Range Planning Task Force Road transportation Report, 2006; current data from Montana Department of Transportation Statewide Traffic Count Site Map, http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/statewide_traffic.shtml [collected 9/19/2011].

General observations can be made from the information contained in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. On county roads daily traffic is increasing, on average, more than 15% per year. County roads are, by function, intended to collect traffic from local subdivision roads and connect to the highway system. As more local roads are built inside developments, collector and arterial roads will become busier. Motorists will seek alternative routes as existing roads become more congested, impacting other roads that are not paved or already over utilized. Providing transportation choices for travel from residences to other destinations is an important consideration in developing a road system network.

The highway system AADT clearly shows that the highest concentration of traffic radiates outward from, or towards, the city of Kalispell. MT Highway 35, between Bigfork and Kalispell, has shown significant increase in travel as has US Highway 93 between Whitefish and Kalispell.

In addition to population increases, the location of new development influences trip generation and mobility. The travel time to work is a good indication of the functionality of the transportation system and developing land use patterns. Development close to a functional road system creates less impact (measured in travel time) than scattered development. Longer distances from residential development to destinations such as workplace, school, and shopping equate to increased traffic as well as increased travel time. Travel time, based on US Census Transportation Planning Package from 1990 to 2010 is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3
Flathead County Travel Time to Work

	# of Residents with Commute Time Indicated				
	1990	**2000**	**% Change**	**2010**	**%Change**
Travel Time					
Less than 5 minutes	1550	2041	32%	2102	3%
5-9 minutes	4707	5578	19%	7106	27%
10-14 minutes	5462	6518	19%	8032	23%
15-19 minutes	4239	5579	32%	6145	10%
20-29 minutes	4175	6348	52%	7760	22%
30-44	2463	4225	22%	3572	-15%

minutes					
Over 45 minutes	1027	2035	98%	1970	-3%
TOTAL	**23623**	**32324**		**36687**	

Source: U.S. Census Transportation Planning Package, 1990-2010

Table 6.3 shows that commuting times have generally increased since 1990, although travel time to work in excess of 30 minutes has decreased over the past ten years. The number of individuals with commute times averaging less than 5 minutes remained steady since 2000, while those reporting travel times ranging from 5 to 29 minutes have continued to increase at comparable rates to the previous decade.

The condition and maintenance of the county road system is a primary concern of most residents. County roads are very rural in character. Of the approximately 1,130 miles of county maintained roads, 430 miles are paved and the remaining 700 miles are graveled or unimproved.[2] Since the mid-1980's, the county has generally not accepted maintenance responsibility for new roads or easements. Approximately 20%, or 80 miles, of paved roads are near the end of their life cycle or are reaching carrying capacity and need to be reconstructed to meet the needs of the growing motoring public.

The Road Department's ability and resources to construct new roads have not kept pace with the growth in traffic due to new development, population growth and lack of funds. The department maintains the existing road system by asphalt overlay, chip sealing, minor repairs by filling potholes and easement improvements (i.e. guard rails, road signs, line-of-site maintenance, etc.). On average, the Road Department overlays between 30 to 40 miles of paved roads and chip seals about 35 to 50 miles annually.

The existing roadway system, consisting of asphalt paved and graveled surfaces, provides difficult decision making regarding allocation of resources. Asphalt paving is more intensive with up-front capital costs while gravel is less capital intensive. Conversely, once it is constructed, asphalt pavement is less costly than maintenance of new or reconstructed roads. Graveled roads become extremely cost prohibitive and resource intensive. Over a 10 year period pavement and graveled roads tend to equalize in overall costs. However, paved roads accommodate more vehicles while maintaining mobility.

This growth policy has goals and policies that call for the development of a county wide transportation plan that will address current and future needs, a uniform system of prioritization for road improvements and maintenance, a potential dust abatement program and other related issues. Any discussion of the road system should include the financial structure that supports it. The county must have a road improvement strategy for the future; that strategy should be coordinated with land use planning. The preferred locations for residential and commercial development influence new road and pathway construction and maintenance work done by the road department. Transportation Demand Management (TMD) techniques should be considered as a strategy to mitigate traffic effects as the transportation plan is implemented.

[2] Flathead County 2-Year Road Network Maintenance Plan, February 2010

Roadway Classifications

Defining road types by function is the first step in designing a transportation system. County roads have two basic functions: moving traffic and providing physical access to abutting land uses. Roadway designs and standards are developed for each classification considering use, volume, vehicle speed and public safety. The use of these standards is also intended to keep the operating cost of maintaining the road system at a reasonable level while providing infrastructure to meet public needs.

- **Local Roads** – Roadways that are used for direct access to residential, commercial, industrial, or other abutting properties in areas of lower traffic volumes at low speeds. Typically, these roads are located within a subdivision or commercial/business development.

- **Collector Roads** – Roadways which serve to distribute traffic between local roads and arterial roads and provide limited primary access to abutting properties. Higher traffic volumes and speed are normal. These roads may connect residential areas to commercial and other areas. Collector roads typically are dedicated to the public and maintained by the county, but can be privately maintained in specific instances.

- **Arterial Roads** – A roadway system serving as the principal network for through traffic flow. These roads connect areas of traffic generation. Arterials should always be public county roads maintained by the county or the MDT.

- **Highways** – A primary roadway system which allows movement of goods and commodities over long distances. In Flathead County the highways act as major arterials to move people from collector and arterials to other local destinations such as the work place and retail centers. Highways are maintained by the MDT.

Transportation Projections

Land use and transportation policies work together. Over the next 20 years, the population is expected to increase by an additional 35,052 people. To maintain a livable and workable community, practical transportation solutions will be essential.

Traffic Projections

Traffic in Flathead County will continue to grow in direct relationship with population growth. Assuming a household average of 2.5 persons per residence, population projections can be used as an indicator of future vehicle trips. Assuming no change in motorist behavior, each new detached single family residence adds about 10 vehicle trips per day to the road system. Projected vehicle trips, based on population estimates, are identified in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4
Projected Annual Vehicle Trips in Flathead County

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	90,928	100,520	108,890	117,290	125,980
Vehicle Trips (In millions)	132.8	146.8	159.0	171.2	184.0

Source: U.S. Census Transportation Planning Package, 1990-2010

Standardizing roadway design for functional road classifications to accommodate future demand will aid in maintaining mobility. Road designs incorporate shoulders for emergency parking, turn lanes and vehicle speeds. Level of service ratings will be extremely useful in developing a road system today to serve future motorists. Evaluation of the existing road system has been initiated by the Road Department. The Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating System (PASER) is used to evaluate paved roadway conditions. This information will be valuable in setting priorities for near term and long term improvements.

Flathead County can expect approximately 184,000,000 vehicle trips per year in 2030, an increase of 39% over existing travel. These trips will be a function of emerging land use patterns. Vehicle trips should not be confused with vehicle miles traveled (VMT). To protect public health and safety, the road system in Flathead County should be improved as the county population grows.

The existing roadway system, with 430 miles of paved roads and nearly 700 miles of graveled roads, coupled with the MDT highway system, provides the backbone for future easement or corridor expansion. Future growth in travel may be partially accommodated through improvements to the existing system as well as new road corridors to move traffic west to east across the Flathead Valley. Transportation modeling and travel demand modeling is needed to prepare a more comprehensive regional transportation plan. A collaborative modeling effort should show spatial relationships to existing and proposed land use patterns.

PART 2: Public Transportation (See Goals 24 and 25)

Existing Characteristics

Given the size and population of Flathead County, public transportation options tend to be limited. The population base and scattered low density land use patterns constrain the viability of an expansive public transit system. Low ridership coupled with long distances between pick-up/drop-off stops make comprehensive general public transit cost prohibitive. Specialized public transit is available to service the general population as well as those with special needs.

Eagle Transit provides general public transportation service in the county. The organization operates several transportation services, and for some residents is the only means of mobility. Eagle Transit is controlled by the Flathead County Area IX Agency on Aging, which began in 1987 and focuses on the elderly. Since then, Eagle Transit has expanded to serve the disabled population and general public within Flathead County. Eagle Transit currently provides a variety of services including city bus routes; Countywide "Dial-a-Ride" and "door to door" services, some of which are integrated with fixed city routes in Columbia Falls and Whitefish; commuter service to Kalispell from Columbia Falls and Whitefish; and demand-response intercity services.

The Kalispell City bus route operates year round during the work week. The route stops at key destinations including the community college, hospital, shopping mall, County Courthouse complex, senior housing and a variety of shopping markets. During Fiscal Year 2004-05 the service made approximately 12,000 trips and accounted for 25% of the total system wide ridership.[3] During Fiscal Year 2010-11, ridership levels had increased to 25,764, accounting for 32% of the total system ridership.[4] Commuter services have also been implemented between Kalispell and the cities of Columbia Falls and Whitefish. Current commuter ridership levels between Kalispell and Columbia Falls are at 3,965 for FY 2010-11; ridership levels between Kalispell and Whitefish are much higher, coming in at 6,063 for the year.[5]

The "Dial-a-Ride" service implemented by Eagle Transit has been designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled and has measured great success in the past few years. In Kalispell, the service logged ridership levels of 30,862 in FY 2010-2011, with ridership in Columbia Falls at 6,063 (combined with the fixed city route) and Whitefish at 4,769 (also combined).[6] As part of this "door to door" service, Eagle Transit provides elementary school curbside pick up and transport to the Summit's after school program called "SPARKS." The service provided approximately 5,000 rides in Fiscal Year 2004-05. The "SPARKS" service is now integrated as part of the Kalispell fixed city route, and annual ridership numbers have been incorporated into ridership totals discussed in the paragraph above.

An additional "door-to-door" service provided by Eagle Transit is called the New Freedom Act and provides Dial-a-Ride services for those with disabilities, to help integrate them into their community. This service is provided outside of normal business hours and operates beyond the regular, established transit routes. In FY 2010-11, the New Freedom Act logged ridership levels of 1,348.[7]

Annual ridership by market segment is relatively well understood. The elderly and disabled population currently comprises 57% of the total ridership. Contracted transit and the general public comprise the remaining 43%. Elderly ridership has continued to slowly

[3] Transportation Development Plan Update, 2007-2012. LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. Chapter 4, pp. 1-2
[4] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[5] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[6] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)
[7] FY 2010-2011 data provided by David Polansky, Eagle Transit (9/21/2011)

decline since 2005, while general public ridership has slightly increased. Ridership in the disabled market segment has been fairly stable in recent years. This modest change is a result of Eagle Transit promoting its services and expanding transit routes and programs to serve the general population, in addition to those with special needs.

Public Transportation Projections

Eagle Transit ridership had been declining from approximately 53,000 riders in 2001 to 47,000 riders in 2005. However, the Eagle Transit 5-year Transportation Plan developed in 2005 indicated there would be a shift in population that would increase ridership levels by year 2010. This proved correct when total ridership levels increased to 81,462 in Fiscal Year 2010-11. The transit company has continued to develop and expand programs including their "Dial-a-Ride" service promoting advanced reservations, designated route deviation to pick up call in ride requests, demand response services and extended weekday and weekend hours. The 2007-2012 Transportation Plan Update is currently undergoing revision and will become available in July 2012, with public service transportation projections through 2017. The plan will incorporate the most current data related to public transportation programs and ridership throughout the County, and should be referenced in conjunction with this Growth Policy document for the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

There continue to be opportunities for Eagle Transit to expand partnerships with Flathead County, the State of Montana and the National Park Service with the goal that Glacier National Park's internal transit system would serve as a catalyst for development of such services outside the park. At the end of FY 2010-11, ridership within Glacier National Park exceeded 170,000 for the year, and is anticipated to continue to grow. The current transit system in Glacier National Park could be expanded to extend to Kalispell during the non-tourist season. Eagle Transit could use the Glacier National Park vehicles for public transportation in Flathead County during the off season. A partnership should be fully investigated.

PART 3: Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths (See Goal 25)

Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths in Flathead County

Bicycle and pedestrian paths offer a range of benefits. Bicycle lanes, when added to road rebuilding plans, are a viable alternative to potentially costly separated paths. The Bicycle Transportation Committee initially called for in this document was formally created in 2008 by the Flathead County Weed, Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board), in compliance with the Growth Policy. The PATHS Advisory Committee ("People, Athletics, Travel, Health and Safety") was established to provide guidance and recommendations on developing a countywide trails program, to provide residents safe and convenient access to a non-motorized trail network connecting communities throughout Flathead County. The PATHS Committee incorporated this vision in an overall plan – The Flathead County Trails Plan, adopted by Resolution No. 2015O on

October 12th, 2010 – that will be incorporated as an element of the Flathead County Growth Policy as part of the 2012 update.

Families, groups and individuals use paths in Flathead County to actively recreate. There is a significant health and fitness benefit as most recreation activities on pedestrian/bike paths involve exercise. It is common to see families biking or walking on the Great Northern trail or a group of cyclists cruising down the Somers trail. Serving as transportation corridors, these paths encourage pedestrian and bicycle commuting, thus reducing traffic congestion and fuel consumption.

Safety is another community benefit because pedestrian/bicycle paths are separated from automobiles. Most roads in the county were constructed specifically for motor vehicle use. Pedestrian/bike paths are separated from roads and are an attractive alternative to vehicles. Unincorporated Flathead County has about 33 miles of pedestrian/bike paths, which are primarily used for recreation activities and secondarily for commuting to work. Existing pathways, as well as proposed routes and new trail networks are discussed in greater detail in the Flathead County Trails Plan and represented accordingly in the County-wide trails map found in Appendix M of the planning document.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Path Projections

Given the levels of growth Flathead County has experienced in the past decade, a more comprehensive pedestrian/bicycle path program may be warranted in the county. Existing and proposed commuter and recreational path corridors are shown on Map 6.2, as well as in Appendix M of Trails Plan. Flathead County constructs an average of two miles of pedestrian/bike paths per year. Proposed project sponsors typically compete for available federal Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) funds, which are administered by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and passed through to local agencies. While CTEP funds often seem to be the most readily used funding source for new trail construction, many other funding options and programs are available to aid in the development and implementation of long range non-motorized transportation planning projects. Varieties of funding resources available, as well as their administrative requirements, are discussed at length in Appendix G of the Flathead County Trails Plan. At the County level, the administration and implementation of future trail planning and development, as well as the funding and coordination of such projects, is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Trails Plan document.

PART 4: Glacier Park International Airport (See Goal 25)

The demand for air service has increased dramatically over the last twenty years. In 1990, Glacier Park International Airport reported approximately 100,000 boardings. Total boardings increased to 178,000 by 2004, then dropped slightly to 174,795 enplaned passengers in 2010.[8] Even with this slight drop, air service needs have increased

[8] GPI Airport Enplaned PAX Market Share data, 2011

roughly 75% over the past twenty years. The airport currently has the following amenities[9]:

- Runway Aprons -2
- Tie Downs – 20
- FBO Hangars – 63
- Conventional Hangars – 10
- Passenger Gates – 4
- Public Parking – 518
- Rental Car Spaces – 119

The increase in the number of plane boardings evidenced over the past two decades is directly related to the number – and size - of aircraft transporting passengers. With the increase in air travel demand there is a need to continually monitor facility performance and assess needs to ensure that airport operations have the capacity to accommodate increased numbers of aircraft carriers, as well as larger planes accommodating more passengers. Such monitoring is also used to optimize internal terminal and parking activities. The airport is an extremely important asset in linking Flathead County to the regional and global markets as well as transporting visitors to the area. Given the location of Flathead County relative to other non-county destinations, the airport plays a vital role in meeting the air transportation needs of the area.

Several other general aviation airports exist in Flathead County. These airports are intended primarily for general and recreational use and have no scheduled carriers. General aviation airports are located in Kalispell, Whitefish and Ferndale. The Kalispell City Airport provides charter services and is managed by the City. Whitefish Municipal Airport and Ferndale Airport are managed by Glacier International Airport.

[9] GPI Airport 2005 Master Plan Update

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CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Introduction

Public facilities and services play a vital role in the health, safety and general welfare of a community. Successful communities provide education, law enforcement, emergency, health and other services. Very successful communities provide these services efficiently and effectively while fairly distributing the cost burden to those who benefit, either directly or indirectly. Communities experiencing rapid growth and increasing demand for services while relying solely on property taxes for revenue generation will be less likely to provide those services efficiently and effectively. Many participants in the 2005-2006 scoping meetings held throughout Flathead County (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary) indicated a desire for increased levels of public facilities and services, such as more police officers and better schools. Setting goals for maintaining or increasing the level of services and facilities enjoyed by the residents of Flathead County, while exploring ways to fairly share the cost burden among those who use those services (such as visitors and part time residents), is appropriate for a growth policy.

Goal

G.26 Provide cost effective solid waste collection, transport, and safe, environmentally responsible disposal to all communities.

Policies

P.26.1 Create design criteria for new development to ensure the safe, efficient, and effective collection and disposal of solid waste. Require all new subdivision site plans to be reviewed by the solid waste district and/or private hauler.

P.26.2 Encourage new subdivisions to establish centralized refuse and recycling collection sites within the development when curb-side pick-up is not feasible.

P.26.3 Encourage new development to utilize contractor haul of refuse.

P.26.4 Recommend solid waste containers in rural areas to utilize measures such as animal-proofing, and encourage public education on disposal methods to discourage the attraction of wildlife.

P.26.5 Promote and encourage increased opportunities for community recycling through recycling pilot programs and the initiation of public-private partnerships.

P.26.6 Encourage safe disposal of household hazardous wastes through education and collection programs.

P.26.7 Ensure that programs for junk vehicle collection and disposal are available and encourage stricter enforcement of existing laws.

P.26.8 Recommend impacts to the local community be mitigated at the time of construction, improvement, or consolidation of a green box collection facility by encouraging visual screening, safety improvements and dust mitigation measures.

Goal

G.27 Safe, efficient and environmentally sound collection and disposal of solid waste.

Policies

P.27.1 Encourage contract hauling in all new developments to reduce traffic and disposal burden at satellite container sites (green boxes).

P.27.2 Perform a needs analysis to assess current and future levels of service to provide cost effective and efficient solid waste collection services within the County.

P.27.3 Encourage county-wide recycling program(s) to reduce the rate at which the existing landfill approaches maximum capacity.

P.27.4 Explore new funding mechanisms for continued solid waste disposal activities as well as future expansion.

Goal

G.28 Efficient and effective waste water treatment and drinking water delivery.

Policies

P.28.1 Encourage high density development in areas that will be served by community sewer systems that treat to municipal standards.

P.28.2 Discourage development in areas not conducive to individual on-site sewage disposal systems because of flooding, ponding, seasonal high water tables, bedrock conditions, severe slope conditions or lack of access to a community sewage system.

P.28.3 Prepare a comprehensive water quality management plan for the county.

P.28.4 Initiate the development of a regional wastewater treatment plan.

P.28.5 Work to engage water and sewer districts in the county development processes.

P.28.6 Require technologically advanced wastewater treatment methods for individual septic systems where they are needed to protect water quality, such as areas close to surface water, areas with a high water table or other environmentally sensitive locations. .

P.28.7 Encourage wastewater treatment facilities and technologies adequate to meet or exceed water quality standards.

P.28.8 Implement scientifically defensible protection zones for aquifers susceptible to potential contamination and limit land uses to low intensity development in these zones.

P.28.9 Encourage land division served by public sewer facilities in areas of high groundwater as established by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Goal

G.29 Improve, protect, and maintain drinking water resources.

Policies

P.29.1 Ensure developments comply with state regulations to provide evidence that drinking water of sufficient quantity and quality is available in areas of proposed development.

P.29.2 Promote the installation of community sewer and/or water services in areas where the quantity and/or quality of drinking water resources are threatened.

P.29.3 Identify wellhead protection areas for public wells and limit land uses in those areas to reduce the risk of drinking water contamination.

P.29.4 Support land uses and subdivision activities that do not threaten drinking water sources.

Goal

G.30 Safe and healthy individual wastewater treatment.

Policies

P.30.1 Identify areas of higher susceptibility to impacts from septic systems due to soils, depth to groundwater, proximity to sensitive surface waters, topography, and/or density of development.

P.30.2 Determine the feasibility of a countywide wastewater management plan for the maintenance and management of septic systems.

P.30.3 Develop an educational brochure that explains the appropriate management of septic systems and the impacts associated with inadequate management. Promote the document by distributing it to home owners and home buyers in Flathead County.

Goal

G.31 Growth that does not place unreasonable burden on the ability of the school district to provide quality education.

Policies

P.31.1 Consider a school district's ability to accommodate new students as part of the proposed subdivision review process.

P.31.2 Consider the needs for future school building sites as development occurs.

P.31.3 Determine common characteristics of developments most likely to add school children to the local schools and identify incentives for projects to mitigate impacts.

P.31.4 Support multi-use of schools and parks as well as other community meeting places.

Goal

G.32 Maintain consistently high level of fire, ambulance and emergency 911 response services in Flathead County as growth occurs.

Policies

P.32.1 Require new subdivisions to have adequate on-site water capacity and recharge for fire protection.

P.32.2 Support mutual aid agreements between rural and municipal fire districts.

P.32.3 Recommend subdivisions located outside existing rural fire districts be annexed into the nearest district if possible.

P.32.4 Ensure convenient access to and within all subdivisions for the largest emergency service vehicles.

P.32.5 Encourage two or more subdivision access points in areas of high and extreme fire hazard.

P.32.6 Encourage subdivisions to either mitigate the impacts of delayed ambulance response times or limit density of development in identified rural areas.

P.32.7 Identify target level of service (LOS) for emergency 911 call processing and work to achieve and maintain that target as growth occurs. This should include security, survivability and redundancy of facilities and services.

Goal

G.33 Maintain a consistently high level of law enforcement service in Flathead County as growth occurs.

Policies

P.33.1 Create a seamless emergency response system through a regional 911 emergency response provider network.

P.33.2 Attempt to increase the current ratio of patrol officers per 1,000 residents to meet the growing number of calls for assistance.

P.33.3 Support crime prevention through planning and community design.

P.33.4 Develop a comprehensive public response plan for sheriffs and fire districts to support growth and development in the county.

Goal

G.34 Communicate growth issues with utility providers to address health, safety and welfare of the community.

Policies

P.34.1 Add appropriate agencies to the referrals during the subdivision and zoning review process.

P.34.2 Coordinate with utility providers for co-location easements to ensure adequate easement access to all current and future utilities at the time of final plat.

P.34.3 Promote land use patterns that permit the logical, predictable and effective extension and integration of utilities.

P.34.4 Establish standardized regulations for wireless and fiber optics communications infrastructure that ensure the following are maintained: public health, safety, general welfare, convenience, natural resources, and the visual environment/appearances.

PART 1: Solid Waste (see Goals 26 and 27)

Flathead County Solid Waste District

Solid waste disposal services are provided by the Flathead County Solid Waste District. The District provides refuse collection, disposal services, hazardous waste collection, and recycling opportunities to all county residents. In 1969 the Flathead County Solid Waste District was created by Resolution No. 78. The district was created to meet the need for suitable areas and facilities to dispose of the refuse generated by county residents, commercial establishments and industries. The district boundary coincides with the county boundary and is governed by a board of seven appointed members. The district is enterprise funded, meaning that fees for disposing solid waste are used to fund all operations and activities. In Fiscal Year 2010 nearly 94,000 tons of refuse was disposed of by the district, compared to the approximately 116,000 tons of solid waste processed by the district in 2005.[1]

Facilities and programs

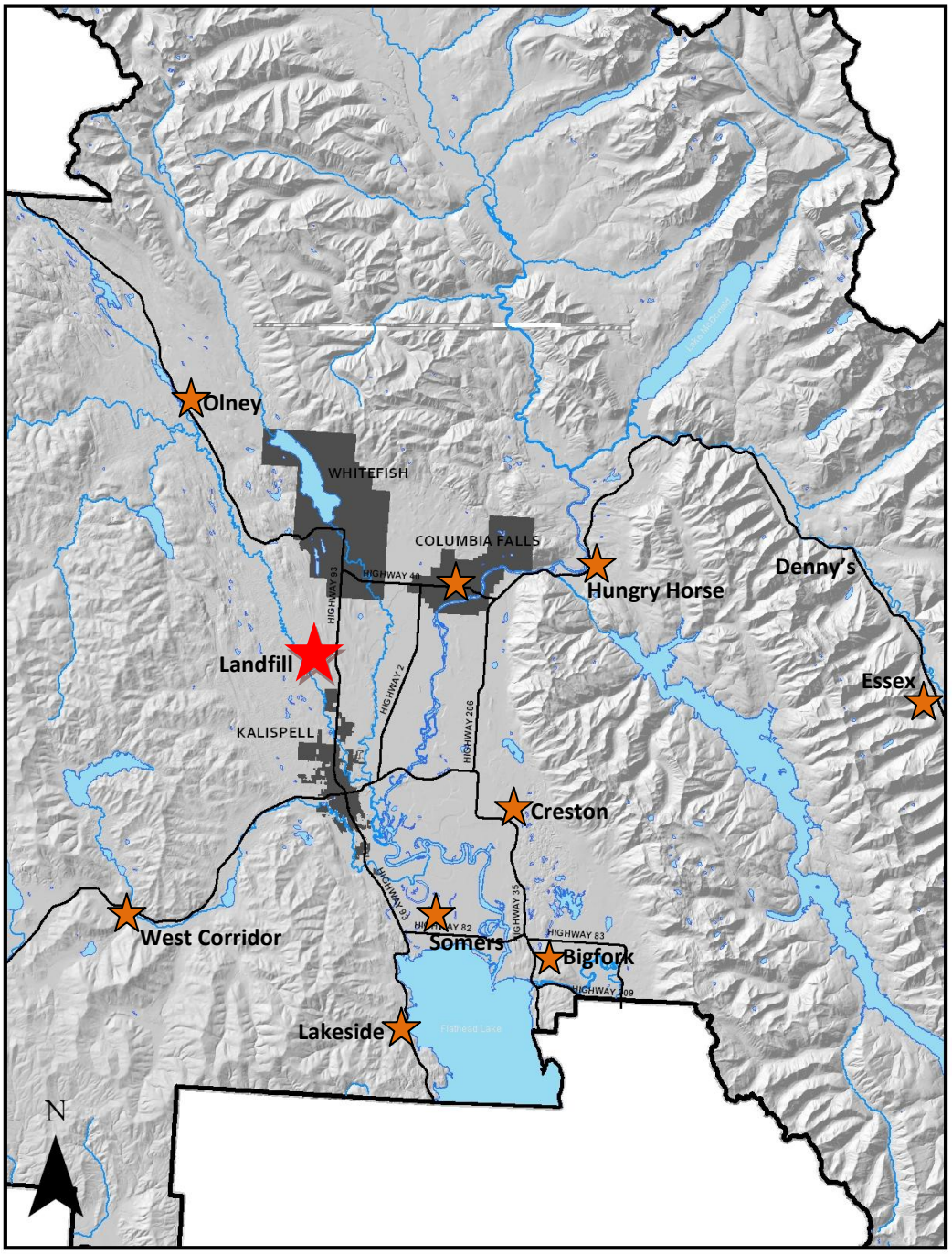
The Flathead County landfill is located five miles north of the city of Kalispell on US Highway 93. The landfill is permitted for waste management activities on approximately 80-acres, with a total of 275-acres dedicated for current and future waste management needs. The facility operates seven days a week and permits county residents to drop off waste at the county landfill or dispose of household refuse at one of 10 container or "green box" sites.

Container sites are located in the communities of Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Coram, Creston, Denny's, Essex, Somers, Olney, Nyack, and Lakeside, as shown in Figure 7.1 below. The former green box sites in Marion and Kila were consolidated into one location known as the "West Corridor" site, approximately half-way between the two communities along U.S. Highway 2. Refuse accumulated at these sites is hauled by the district to the Flathead County landfill. As shown in Figure 7.2, waste travels to the landfill via the following four methods: individual private citizen haul, contracted private

[1] Flathead County Solid Waste District 2010 Solid Waste Report, pp.17.

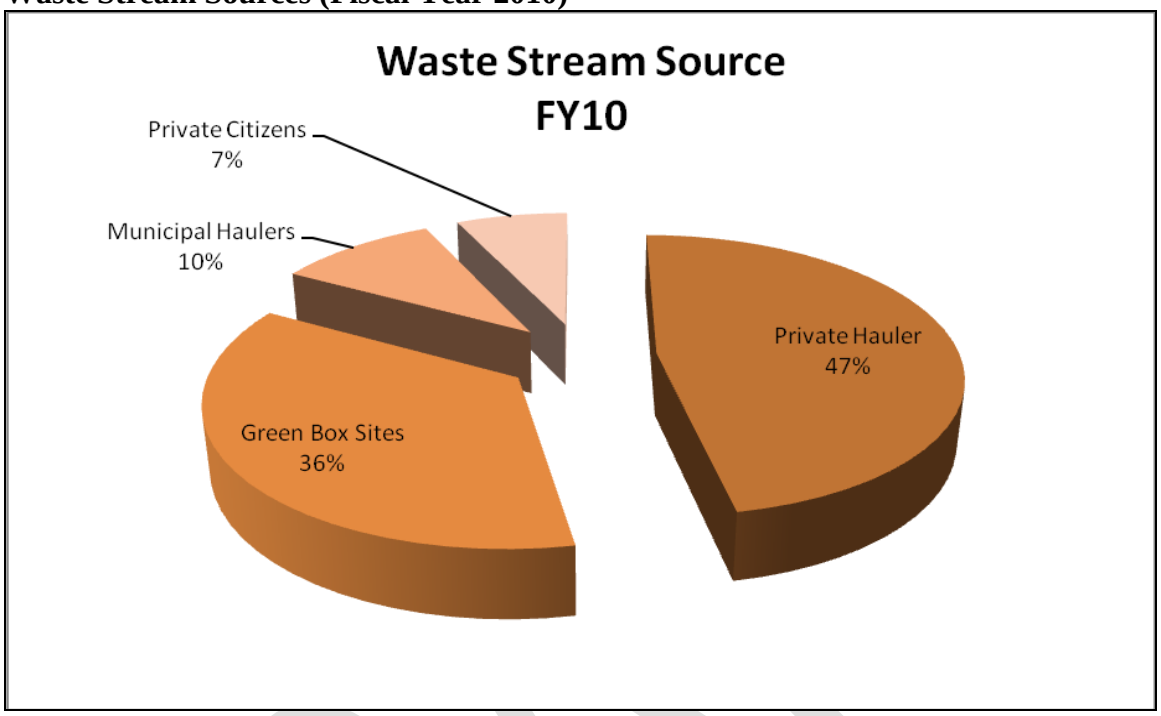
company haulers, municipal haulers, and green box disposal. Very similar to the figures provided in the 2005 Solid Waste Report, contracted private hauling companies are the most utilized method, followed by green box disposal, municipal haulers and individual private citizen haul.

Figure 7.1
Flathead County "Greenbox" Sites



Source: Flathead County Solid Waste District; Flathead County GIS Department

Figure 7.2
Waste Stream Sources (Fiscal Year 2010)

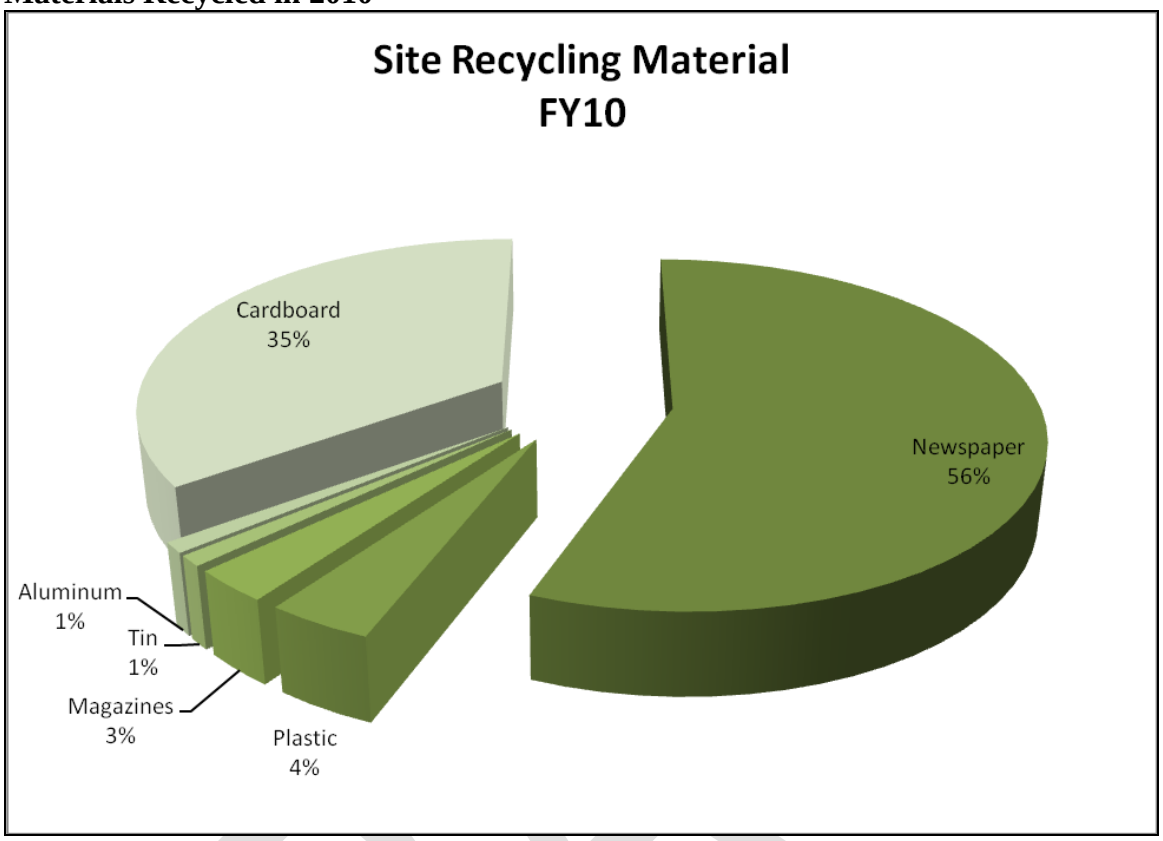


Source: 2010 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

Recycling

The Solid Waste District funds the county "WasteNot" consumer education program to increase awareness of solid waste issues with emphasis on recycling, waste reduction, and safe disposal of household hazardous waste. In the county, recycling programs provide opportunity to recycle cardboard, newspaper, tin, aluminum, and plastic bottles and milk jugs. Recycling containers are available at the Flathead County Landfill, and the Columbia Falls, Coram, Kila, Creston, Bigfork and Lakeside and Somers collection sites (see Figure 7.1 above). The District maintains a contract with Valley Recycling Center for the recycling of most household recyclable materials. As is shown in Figure 7.3, the most frequently recycled material is newspaper, followed by cardboard, plastics, magazines, tin and aluminum. Glass recycling is not currently offered by the District. In addition to commonly recycled household materials, lead batteries, used oil, paints, solvents, chemicals, pesticides/herbicides and fertilizers, as well as materials from appliances and junk vehicles may also be recycled.

Figure 7.3
Materials Recycled in 2010



Source: 2010 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

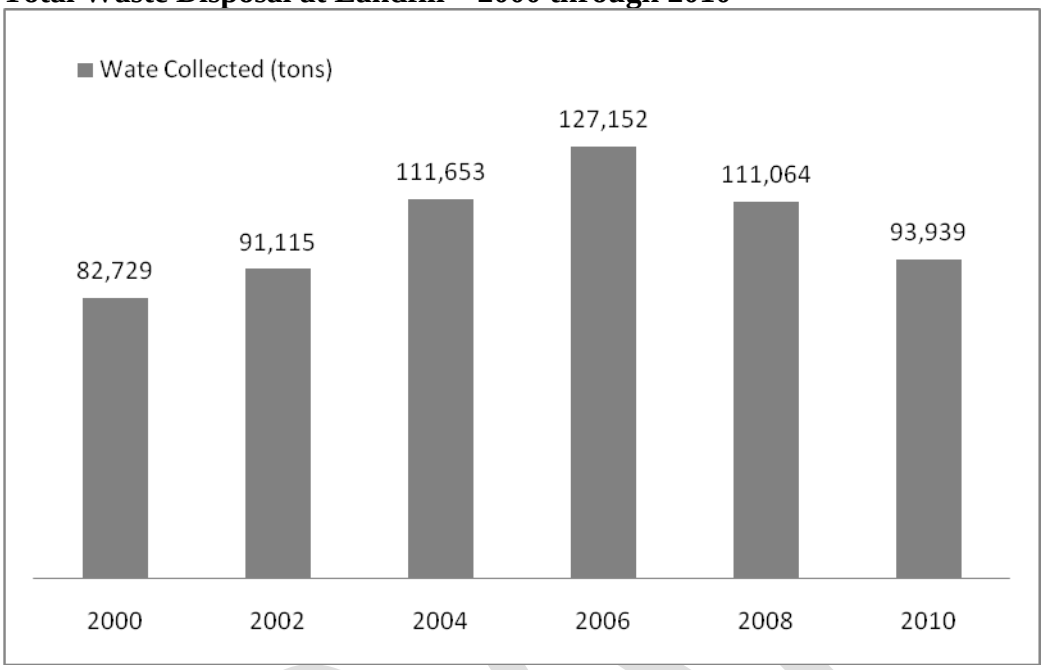
The Solid Waste District maintains a household hazardous waste program (HHW) that collected 3,386 gallons of household hazardous waste in 2010, a significant decrease over the 8,000 gallons of household hazardous waste collected in 2005. Residents can dispose of HHW at no cost while small businesses have the opportunity to dispose of HHW once a year for a fee. Household hazardous waste is collected every third Saturday of the month and transported to a hazardous waste facility where it is either recycled or disposed of properly. Much of the household hazardous waste in the county is not disposed of properly. The District estimates that Flathead County residents dispose of between 80 and 240 tons of hazardous products in their garbage on an annual basis.

As the County experienced high growth rates during the first half of the decade, the volume of waste collected and disposed of in the landfill grew accordingly. The District witnessed a 40% increase in tons of refused hauled from container sites between 2000 and 2005. The summer months tend to be the time when the largest volume of waste is disposed of, with a 500 ton per day disposal rate. The increase in waste disposal during the summer can be attributed to the influx of visitors and seasonal residents. The total amount of waste disposed of in 2005 equaled 115,779 tons, while current figures place the total amount of waste disposed of at the landfill at just under 94,000 tons[2]. Figure 7.4

[2] 2005 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District; 2010 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District.

shows a steady increase in waste disposal between 2000 and 2007, followed by a steady decline over the past four years as a result of the downturn in the economy.

Figure 7.4
Total Waste Disposal at Landfill – 2000 through 2010



Source: 2009 Strategic Report for Flathead County Landfill

As a result of an overall trend in population growth over the past decade, the County has begun to experience the effects of increased waste collection and disposal needs. The increasing amount of refuse being collected from container sites has resulted in an increase in wildlife attraction to the container areas, including bears and large game. A visual degradation of the sites due to litter and lack of appropriate screening is another result. Illegal dumping of business wastes has increased also. The increase of individual households' hauling refuse to the landfill and to container sites has resulted in litter along transportation routes because refuse is improperly covered or secured, and because there is increased traffic congestion at the container sites and landfill.

Solid Waste Projections

In the spring of 2006 the Flathead County Solid Waste District acquired an additional 90 acres of land to the south of the current operating area (known as the South Area). This acreage was approved by the Montana DEQ as part of an expansion plan for the Flathead County Landfill. In addition to improvements made to the Creston and Columbia Falls container sites in 2005, the District has enlarged the Somers container site and consolidated the Kila and Marion container sites into the West Corridor site near Ashley Lake Road.

Of the 275-acre landfill area, 171 acres are dedicated (and permitted) for current and future waste disposal needs. In 2005 the landfill had a projected capacity of 29 years

assuming the increase in tons of waste disposed grew at an 8% annual rate. In that same year the projected capacity extended to a 57 year capacity if the tons of waste disposed grew at an annual rate of 2%. Based on the estimated capacity remaining as of July 2008, combined with current and projected inflow as well as diversion rates, the Flathead County Landfill is anticipated to reach capacity by 2055. Regardless of the changing growth rates, the county must continue to address ways to slow the increase of refuse growth, such as a more effective recycling program, and seek alternatives for the time when the landfill is full.

Given the growing increases in annual waste production, the landfill is a critical amenity for public health in the county. As the community grows adjacent to landfill operations, it is critical to maintain an understanding and application of compatible land use decision making. Land uses which are compatible to district operations (e.g. low intensity industrial and commercial, etc.) should be encouraged and uses not compatible discouraged (e.g. medium to high density residential).

Several waste disposal services not available from the District are provided by the private sector. Hauling of individual refuse is accomplished by private contractors, as well as tire disposal, Class III disposal of rock, dirt, concrete, clean wood and recycling facilities.

PART 2: Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment (see Goals 28 through 30)

County Water and Sewer Districts

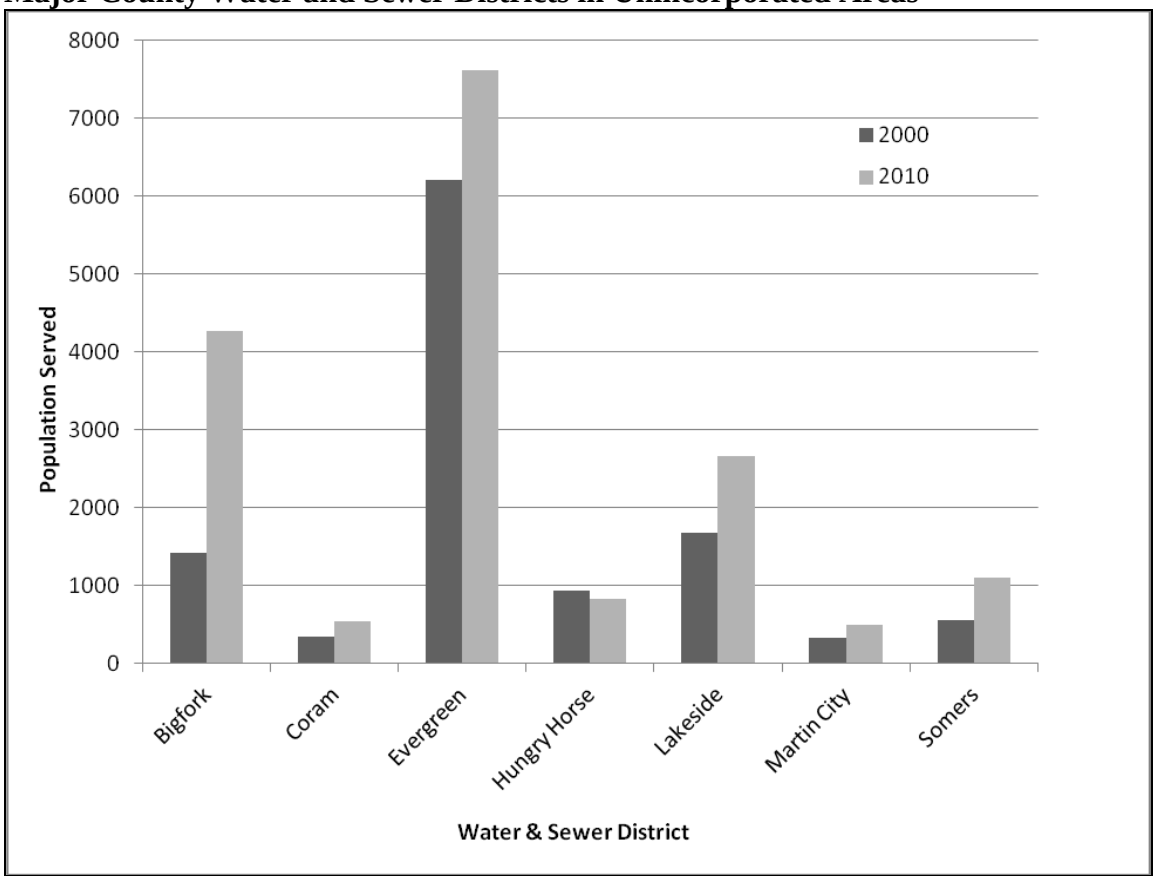
The majority of developments in the unincorporated areas of the county utilize individual septic systems and individual water wells to sustain development. Thirty-two Flathead County water and/or sewer districts have been established to serve larger scale development or rural communities. The ability to provide public sewer and/or public water services is a major factor influencing density and type of development in a community, as the necessary land area for septic systems and individual water wells is not a limiting factor. As these public services allow for higher densities, the public water systems can have hundreds to thousands of residents utilizing one or more wells. This makes protection of wellhead areas vital to limiting the risk of contamination to these public drinking water sources. Water and sewer districts, as they relate to the unincorporated areas of Flathead County are shown in Maps 7.1 and 7.2.

Existing Major Water and Sewer Districts

Seven major water and sewer districts, as seen in Figure 7.5, serve entire unincorporated communities, half of which provide both water and wastewater treatment services. These water and sewer districts in the communities of Bigfork, Coram, Evergreen, Hungry Horse, Lakeside, Martin City and Somers each serve between 500 and 8,000 residents and businesses. The Coram, Hungry Horse and Martin City Districts offer public water services only. No public sewer treatment is available. The Bigfork and Lakeside Districts operate their own sewer treatment facilities, while Somers contracts with Lakeside for

sewer treatment, and Evergreen contracts with the City of Kalispell for sewer treatment services. Bigfork, Lakeside and Somers each grew over 50% between 2000 and 2010, continuing the growth trend from the previous decade. For more on these individual sewer and water districts, including applicable DEQ reports, see Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

Figure 7.5
Major County Water and Sewer Districts in Unincorporated Areas



Source: US Census Bureau Place Population Summary, 2000 and 2010

Existing Minor Water and Sewer Districts

The remaining 25 county water and wastewater treatment systems listed below serve large subdivision areas, not entire communities. Many smaller county water and sewer districts serve one or two large subdivisions and often provide only water services. These systems are often comprised of one or two wells providing drinking water, and several are serviced by a county or city sewer district.

- Big Mountain County Sewer District (sewer only)
- Cove Creek Ridge Water & Sewer
- Eagle Ridge Estates County Water and Sewer District
- Emerald Heights Water & Sewer
- Essex County Water and Sewer District

- Foy's Lakeside Estates County Water & Sewer District
- Fox Hill Estates Water & Sewer District
- Glacier Ranch County Water and Sewer District
- Green Tree Meadows HOA County Water and Sewer District
- Greenacres Water & Sewer District
- Happy Valley Water District, Areas A, and B (water only)
- Happy Valley Water & Sewer RSID (District #8)
- Kelsey County Water & Sewer District
- Lakeshore Heights County Water District
- Meadow Hills County Water and Sewer District
- Meadow Lake County Water and Sewer District
- Panoramic Mountain River Heights County Water District
- Pleasant View Homesites County Water and Sewer District
- Ranch County Water and Sewer District
- Smith Lake Vista County Water District
- Stillwater Estates County Water and Sewer District
- Stillwater Water & Sewer District
- South Happy Valley Water District, Area C (water only)
- Wapiti Acres Water and Sewer District
- Whitefish County Water & Sewer District

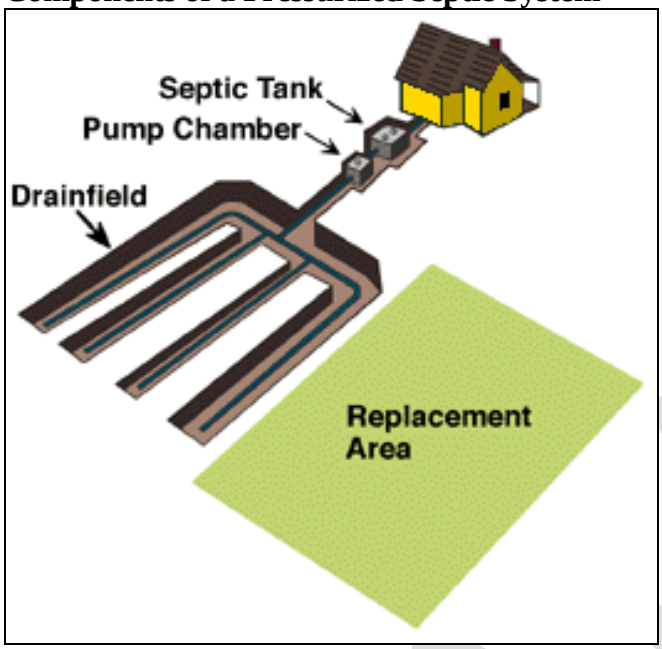
Septic Systems

Individual wastewater treatment technologies are utilized in a majority of the county because rural development is not often located within a water and sewer district; this is evidenced by Map 7.1. Several scenarios have arisen throughout the county as areas are witnessing increased growth.

- Waterfront communities, once characterized as seasonal, have begun to host year-round residents.
- Development has increased in rural communities and on the fringe of urban areas beyond the service area of public water and sewer.
- An increasing number of inadequately maintained and aging systems lie scattered in the rural areas.

Figure 7.6 shows a typical pressure septic system that contains five main components: a pipe from the home or business, a septic tank, a pump chamber, a drainfield and the soil. Microbes in the soil remove the majority of contaminants from the wastewater before it reaches the groundwater. Septic tanks are buried, watertight and hold wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle and oil and grease to float to the surface. The remaining wastewater is discharged into the drainfield and percolates through the soil, removing bacteria, viruses and nutrients.

Figure 7.6
Components of a Pressurized Septic System



Source: Washington State University
http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1673/eb1673.html

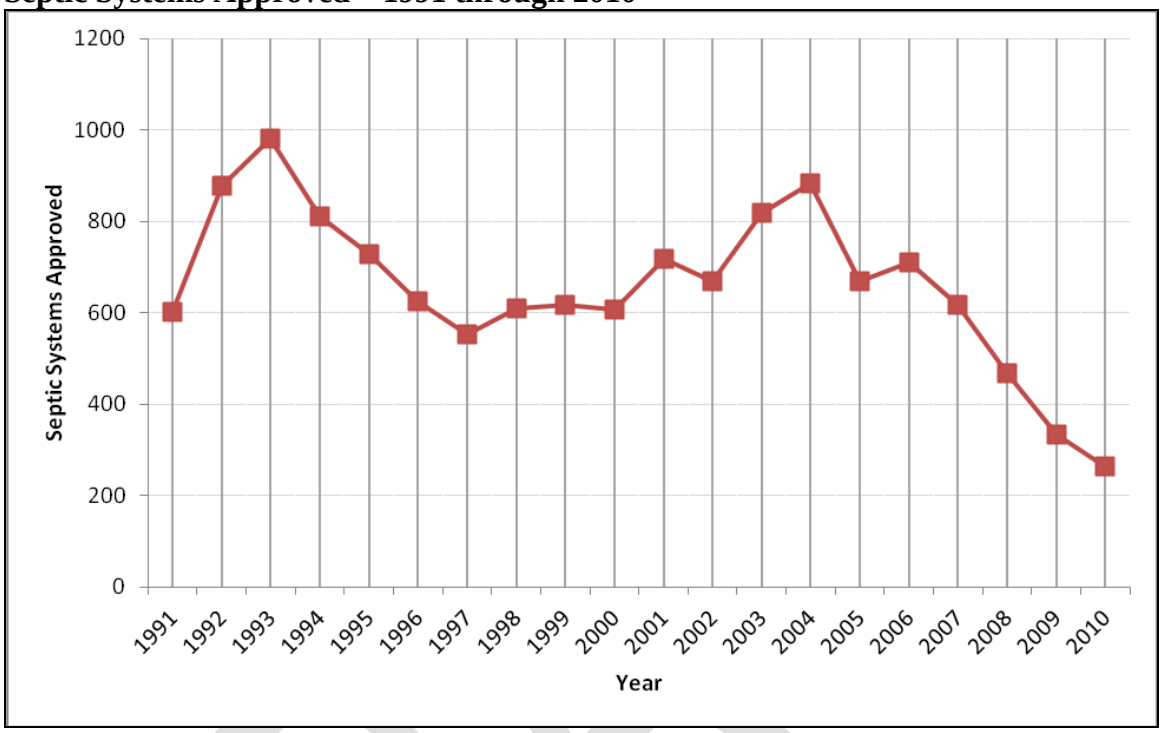
Alternative systems are appropriate in areas of less suitable soils, areas of increasing development, areas of high groundwater established by the DEQ or Flathead City-County Environmental Health Department, or near bodies of water. These systems can provide higher levels of pre and post treatment and can be modified to cater to specific wastewater treatment needs. The advanced systems incorporate a variety of technologies and are manufactured by a variety of companies. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency currently lists 27 alternative septic effluent treatment system technologies utilizing a variety of treatment methods[3].

As the county population has increased over the years, notable growth in areas without public water and sewer systems has occurred. Map 7.1 displays existing septic system density throughout the county. Figure 7.7 shows the number of septic systems that received approval at final inspection by the county Department of Environmental Health from 1991 through 2010. Noticeable increases in the number of approved septic systems occurred in the mid-1990s as well as the early part of this decade; however, these increases were tempered by a significant drop in septic system approval beginning in 2004. Table 7.1 shows the number of septic systems that were approved annually between 2000 and 2010. Beginning in 2000 the number of septic systems approved on an annual basis increased dramatically, from just over 600 to 884 in 2004. While the number held steady until 2006-2007, a significant drop in permits has been observed over the last part of this decade. In 2010 only 265 septic system permits were issued by the Environmental Health Department, a -56% decrease over the past ten years. The

[3] Onsite Septic Systems - Technology Fact Sheets, http://cfpub.epa.gov/owm/septic/septic.cfm?page_id=283

negative change in permit approvals correlates with the economic downturn experienced during the second half of the decade.

Figure 7.7
Septic Systems Approved – 1991 through 2010



Source: Flathead County Department of Environmental Health Services, 2010

Septic System Failure

Many new residents in rural areas are unaware of the location of their existing septic systems and are untrained in the proper maintenance of these systems. Septic systems that are inadequately maintained cause bacterial contamination of groundwater and recreational waters, algal growth in water bodies and wetlands, and ultimately impact public health. Improperly maintained systems contribute to major water quality problems, which creates concerns in rural areas characterized by relatively small lot sizes where residents are dependent on individual wells[4].

Some of the reasons for septic system failure include when a system is overloaded with too much wastewater; when amenities that use large quantities of water such as hot tubs and swimming pools are connected to the system; affects from household toxics and cleaners as well as impacts from garbage disposals; improper design or installation and lack of proper maintenance[5]. After the failure of a septic system, nutrients may leach into the groundwater. Failed individual septic systems lead to a dramatic increase in the number of non-point source sources of water pollution discussed in chapter 8 of this

[4] USEPA - Voluntary National Guidelines for Management of Onsite and Clustered (Decentralized) Wastewater Treatment Systems; March 2003. http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/septic_guidelines.pdf
[5] USEPA – A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems; http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf

growth policy. In 1998 the Flathead County Health Department estimated that more than 50% of all individual septic systems in Flathead County were over 20 years old; this number will surely increase as the numerous systems approved and installed in the early 1990s reach the 20-year mark[6]. Flathead County and DEQ require a designated replacement area for all septic systems.

Community wide septic system management can assist in minimizing part of the impact of septic system use. Management should include public education, planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance, permitting, inspections and monitoring, reporting, and financial assistance and funding to ensure that individual septic systems are permitted in areas that pose no health threats, are constructed properly, and are routinely maintained. Proper maintenance conserves water, protects property values, preserves the tax base, keeps costs low for homeowners and protects public health, residents and the environment.

Projected Trends

As discussed in Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing, population is expected to increase through the year 2030, although not at the rate once anticipated. With this increase population, the number of septic systems will likely increase in response to this growth. The extent to which development is directed to areas served by county water and sewer districts will dictate how much of the new development will utilize individual septic systems. As cities continue to grow and annex land, new and existing development may have access to public water and sewer utilities, eliminating some of the need for new septic systems in developing areas of the County.

PART 3: Education (see Goal 31)

Flathead County residents enjoy quality public and private educational options. In the public meetings held prior to writing this growth policy (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary), residents were asked what they would not change about living in Flathead County. Quotes such as "the quality of the schools in the area", "high quality schools" and "our own children have excellent schooling" were prevalent. Maintaining the level of service for schools in Flathead County requires careful planning and consistent – if not additional – revenues.

Flathead County serves over 9,200 elementary students and 4,200 high school students in 19 public elementary school districts and 4 public high school districts. The county is also home to the Flathead Valley Community College, with a current enrollment of over 4,000 students. There are ten private elementary and four private high schools in Flathead County. Approximately 3% of school age children in Flathead County are home schooled.[7]

[6] Critical Lands Status Report: The North Flathead Valley & The Flathead River Corridor, Flathead Lakers, 2002
[7] County Statistical Report of Schools, 2010; Flathead County Superintendent of Schools Office

Enrollments have fluctuated drastically as the regional demographics of the county have changed. Canyon Elementary School in Hungry Horse was forced to close in June 2011 due to budget cuts and declining enrollment, shifting student attendance to Public School District #6 in Columbia Falls. Overall enrollment for public elementary schools in Flathead County has experienced a 5% increase over the past decade. Enrollment at private elementary schools had been on the increase during the first half of the decade (2000 through 2005) before experiencing a significant drop in enrollment between 2006 and 2010; overall, private elementary school enrollment has decreased 24% over the past ten years. Private high school enrollment suffered an even more significant decrease over the decade, with enrollment down 40% over ten years. Reference Table 7.1 for a summary of Flathead County school enrollment, as well as Appendix A: Baseline Analysis for detailed enrollment statistics.

Table 7.1
Flathead County School Enrollment

	2000	2005	2010	Change 2000-2010
Public Elementary	8,911	8,853	9,156	2.7%
Private, other and home elementary schools	1,345	1,361	1,070	-20.4%
Public High School	4,369	4,456	4,175	-4.4%
Private, other and home high schools	326	372	285	-12.6%
Flathead Valley Community College	1,614	1,914	4,087	30%
TOTALS	**16,565**	**16,956**	**18,773**	**11%**

Source: County Statistical Report of Schools, 2010; Flathead Valley Community College Enrollment (provided by Susie Birch, Director, October 6th, 2011)

Development patterns in Flathead County are generally reflected in school enrollments. As people move into high and medium density areas that are affordable to families with children, schools add students. This is evidenced by the increase in enrollment in the urbanized Kalispell District (up 20% over the decade) and the nearby West Valley Elementary District (up 42% over the decade). However, districts in less densely populated areas have also grown during this time period, including Cayuse Prairie, Olney/Bissell and Smith Valley. Schools likely to add students should be incorporated into the subdivision review process to familiarize both school districts and the public with health and safety issues of expanding enrollment. These communities should identify lands on which future schools could be built and plan ahead for acquisition. Such planning will save the taxpayers money and ensure schools are located in safe, logical and efficient locations with good access and space for children to safely recreate.

Schools can also boost a sense of community as many activities take place in and around schools. Well maintained, effective schools are sources of pride in a community and should be prioritized.

Areas of low density are usually not affordable to young families with children and school enrollment has declined over the past decade in areas such as Deer Park and West Glacier. However, some urban and suburban areas have experienced similar declines over the decade, including Bigfork, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish. Home schooling tends to be more prevalent in extreme rural areas where large tracts may still be affordable.

Population growth, coupled with increased per-student expenditures and facility needs, demand proper planning. Identifying future school lands, offering incentives to developers to mitigate impacts of additional students and asking school officials to be involved in the development process are valuable steps towards a safe and well-educated future.

Table 7.2
Per Student Expenditures, 2000 through 2010

	2000	2005	2010	Change (2000-2010)
Average Expenditure per Elementary Student	$5,126.77	$6,045.41	$7,945.85	+55%
Average Expenditure per High School Student	$6,018.30	$6,777.89	$9,278.01	+54.2%

Source: County Statistical Report of Schools, 2010

Flathead County offers education opportunities after high school. Flathead Valley Community College is a two year college that offers educational opportunities for advancement to a four year college, career enhancement and life long learning. A graduate of FVCC can obtain an Associate of Arts, Associate of Science in Nursing, Associate of Applied Science degrees, or a certificate in a variety of programs.

According to the FVCC economic impact fact sheet of November 2008, FVCC skills embodied in the present day workforce increase regional income in the FVCC service area economy by $84.9 million. Altogether, the economy in the FVCC service area owes nearly $113.5 million of its current labor and non-labor income to the past and present efforts of FVCC. This demonstrates FVCC as an engine of economic growth.[8]

[8] Flathead Valley Community College Economic Impact Overview Fact Sheet; November 2008.

PART 4: Emergency Services and Facilities (see Goals 32 and 33)

The provision of fire, ambulance, law enforcement, and 911 services are the community services most directly related to the health, safety and welfare of the public. Accurately assessing the impact of growth on these services in Flathead County is critical, as the County relies heavily on volunteer fire and ambulance departments and operates under severe budget constraints. The size of the county itself directly impacts the ability to maintain an acceptable level of emergency services in the face of highly dispersed growth. Much more work should be done by the emergency services sector to assess capacity and gauge its ability to meet projected demands.

Emergency 911 Services

The role of public safety (911) communications in emergency services has changed significantly in the last 20 years. Cell phones have caused an enormous rise in the number of 911 calls, and difficulty in knowing the location of such emergencies has created the need for sophisticated location technology. Nearly half of all 911 calls are placed from cell phones. In addition, when the public dials 911, there is an expectation that the 911 dispatcher will provide help before responders arrive on scene. This has placed the dispatcher in the role of the "first" first responder. These and other expectations require emergency communications centers to acquire sophisticated equipment and advanced training for their staff. In Flathead County, these expectations have caused both municipal and county public safety agencies to support the construction of a fully consolidated 911 dispatch center for all responders in the county. Calls for emergency services are processed and multi-agency responses more easily coordinated through this center, which was finished in 2009 and is fully operational today. The number of calls for service continues to rise, as does the need for emergency medical services, likely due to the aging population in our county.

Fire Services

Fire response in Flathead County is covered by 19 separate fire departments, many of which are staffed solely by volunteers (see Map 7.3). Fire departments are primarily responsible for responding to fires and medical emergencies. Increased development has resulted in an increasingly high risk of fire in rural areas that are far from public services and facilities. On the opposite end of the spectrum, departments such as Evergreen are responsible for a high density area equivalent to the surrounding municipal departments of Kalispell, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish. In most cases the municipal and volunteer departments have mutual aid agreements to assist each other in the event of an emergency, providing better coverage to Valley residents. Citizens of Flathead County are fortunate to have excellent volunteer departments, although these departments are being stretched greatly in the face of increased development. For more information on individual fire districts and services, see Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

Many rural departments may require additional facilities, equipment and staff resources in order to maintain current service levels. Response time to a fire location is critical and

must factor in the constraints of a volunteer staff. Response time includes travel time from a volunteer's home or place of employment to the fire station and then to the fire location. The maximum response time in combination with other variables determines the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) rating of a fire department or fire district. ISO ratings range from 1 – 10, with 1 being the best rating. ISO ratings are used by insurance companies to assess risk and base homeowner premiums accordingly. In Flathead County, ISO ratings generally range from 6 to 8. Keeping a good ISO rating is important to the fire chiefs and departments; consequently, the Flathead County volunteer fire department chiefs have an important role in directing future residential growth in ways that ensure public health and safety needs can be met.

Flathead County can assist by involving fire departments in the subdivision review process, through agency referrals and public discussion. Basic water supply requirements and safe access are two of the most obvious ways that subdivisions can proactively accommodate emergency services. Quick, convenient access to a substantial water supply should be made available on site. Cul-de-sacs should be avoided in fire hazard areas to avoid residents' being trapped due to limited ingress and egress. Road slope standards should be observed in all subdivisions, and legitimate secondary access should be secured or constructed whenever possible.

Ambulance Services

Ambulance services are limited in Flathead County due to the size of the county and the location of its population. Basic Life Support (BLS) is the first level of ambulance service and provides non invasive procedures to stabilize and revive patients; however, not all rural fire districts are licensed to provide BLS service. Advanced Life Support (ALS) is a higher level of service and includes administering drugs and establishing IVs. Transporting patients requires a state license and currently is performed by Kalispell, Whitefish, Evergreen, West Valley, Bigfork, Marion, Big Mountain and Fire Departments as well as the Lakeside Quick Response Unit, Olney Ambulance service, West Flathead EMS and Three Rivers EMS in Columbia Falls. The ALERT helicopter is both ALS and transport certified, and is designed to reduce response and transport times in rural areas of the county. The ALERT service responds to areas too distant for effective ambulance response or other areas in the county when requested. Map 7.4 shows the emergency response areas throughout Flathead County.

Growth in Flathead County creates many issues related to provision of emergency ambulance services. Development existing far from ambulance services creates a situation where those who are injured are more likely to die prior to reaching a hospital. To mitigate this situation, it would be reasonable to direct high density development in the county towards areas reasonably close to emergency services.

Law Enforcement

**Note – This section of the Growth Policy has not been fully updated; staff awaiting information from County Sheriff's Department*

The Flathead County Sheriff's Department is responsible for protecting residents of the unincorporated areas of the county. Deputies are dedicated to protect the people of Flathead County and the professional enforcement of local, state and federal laws. Currently the Sheriff's Department employs 118 people. About 40% of this total, or 48 patrol officers, provide "on the ground" law enforcement. This is a ratio of .41 patrol officers per 1,000 residents. The remainder work as support, court or jail staff. The adult correctional facility employs 28 staff, and the juvenile facility employs 12. The juvenile facility is regulated by the State of Montana, and the ratio of staff to inmate is almost 1:1.

There are five divisions within the Sheriff's Department:

1. *Adult Detention*
2. *Juvenile Detention*
3. *Detective Division*
4. *ANW Drug Task Force*
5. *Children's Advocacy Center*

In 2000 the Sheriff's Office responded to about 22,400 calls for assistance. By 2005 the number of calls increased by 60% to 35,700, greater than a 10% increase each year. Because of the ratio of patrol officers to population the Sheriff's office has prioritized call responses. Crimes in progress or life threatening situations receive first priority response and immediate attention. Other calls for assistance are prioritized based on availability of officers and the nature of the call relative to higher priority calls received at the same time.

The Sheriff's Office operates three shifts per day. A minimum of four to six officers are on duty each shift and deployed to specific geographical areas or patrol zones within the unincorporated county. Normally these zones include

- *Canyon Area*
- *Whitefish Area*
- *Evergreen Area*
- *Somers/Lakeside Area*
- *Bigfork Area*

An additional officer or two rove the county and assist where needed. The number of calls for assistance is much greater in Evergreen than elsewhere in the unincorporated county. Approximately 60% of the total calls to the Sheriff's Office come from the Evergreen area. It is typical to station two patrol officers in Evergreen to be more pro-active in anticipating requests for assistance. Although the number of calls steadily increases each year the Sheriff's Office has been able to maintain a relatively constant time in responding. This is partly due to stationing patrol officers in the field who are available to provide assistance on request and where needed. Specialty teams made up of existing sworn officers, including a Boat Patrol, Snow Mobile Patrol, S.W.A.T. Team and Bicycle Patrol provide alternative means to respond more quickly to calls for assistance.

The Sheriff's Office oversees other public safety functions. The Sheriff's Office provides administrative and operational oversight for citizen volunteer activities and groups. About 200 citizens volunteer for the county's search and rescue activities. These volunteers provide specialty emergency functions and can be called on at any time to locate and provide medical assistance to the people lost and injured in the wildlands. There are 22 sworn deputy reserves who may be called to assist other officers at organized events. The 90 person "Sheriff's Posse" assists with crowd control, at election polling places and other county sponsored and community events. The value to the community generated by Sheriff Office volunteer groups can not be overstated or over valued.

Law Enforcement Projections

The number of calls for assistance and initiated officer responses has continued to outpace the rate of population growth in the county. While the overall county grows at about two percent each year the number of requested response calls increases by more than 10 percent each year. Requests for assistance calls projected and adjusted to reflect five-year incremental increases are shown on Table 7.4. When contrasting the number of patrol officers to number of annual calls, each officer in the field responded to an average of 744 calls each year.

The current level of service for the Sheriff's Office is approximately 0.41 patrol officers per every 1,000 residents in the unincorporated county. It is a goal of the Sheriff's Office to increase public protection and support to one full time patrol officer per 1,000 residents. To maintain the current level of 0.41 patrol officers per 1,000 residents would require one additional patrol officer every two years through 2025. The number of calls for assistance is growing at more than 10 percent per year. If the status quo is maintained, with an additional officer hired every two years through 2025, the total number of calls per officer ratio would increase to 1,793 calls per officer per year. An additional 26 patrol officers would need to be hired by 2025 to obtain the goal of one patrol officer per 1,000 residents to produce a total of 112 patrol officers.

It is important that impacts of growth such as those referenced above are considered during the process of community development. Increasing population commonly increases crime, with more people living closer to one another and interacting more often. Improving and/or increasing the level of law enforcement services offered to residents of Flathead County is in the interest of all residents.

PART 5: Utility Services (see Goal 34)

County residents rely on many basic services such as utilities that help define their quality of life and maintain their health and well being. Utilities in Flathead County include natural gas, electricity, and telecommunication services such as cable, telephone and internet. These services are usually taken for granted, but coordination and

conscientious planning for future growth must be established to assure service is uninterrupted and adequate.

Communications Media

There are currently several Internet service providers that service Flathead County. These include Bresnan (now Optimum), CenturyTel (now CenturyLink), MontanaSky and Mountain Max. Optimum offers cable service in addition to internet connections. Satellite and wireless services are also available through a variety of companies that operate locally and nationwide.

CenturyTel – now known as CenturyLink - is the third largest telecommunications company in the United States, and delivers advanced communications to Northwestern Montana. In 2010, CenturyLink employed over 270 Montanans and had 244,000 access lines active throughout the state.[9] The company is a provider of residential and business communications in rural areas and urban cities in 37 states. CenturyLink offers a range of consumer services including broadband, television, voice and wireless communications. Additionally, CenturyLink offers data, voice and managed services for businesses, government and wholesale customers in local, national and select international markets through a high quality advanced fiber optic network and data centers. CenturyLink offers more fiber-optic bandwidth in Flathead County, per capita, than anywhere else in the Country, allowing residents and businesses more streamlined and reliable access to the internet. Beyond CenturyLink's fiber optic offerings, the Health Information Exchange of Montana is in the process of developing a 17,000 square mile fiber-optic network across rural northwest Montana, thanks to a $13.6 million grant from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).[10]

Phone service is offered by CenturyLink, Optimum and AT&T. Optimum and AT&T do not have traditional land lines. Instead, the service is conducted over cable or the internet. In addition, there are several cellular companies in the Flathead Valley including AT&T, Cellular One and Verizon Wireless.

Electrical Service

Flathead Electric Cooperative, Inc. (FEC) is a locally owned and operated cooperative and is the only supplier of both commercial and residential power to Flathead County. Flathead Electric Coop is the second largest electric utility in Montana with nearly 48,000 members/customers. Over 3,800 miles of line serve the entire Flathead Valley and Libby, as well as several hundred members along the Montana-Wyoming border.

In 2004 the Co-op processed a record number of work orders and new services. Engineering released more than 2,700 jobs for construction taking in more than 125 new subdivisions. Underground cable replacement projects were completed in Desert Mountain, Kokanee Bend Subdivision, Rogers Lake Road and Peaceful Acres

[9] CenturyLink in Montana; http://www.centurylink.com/static/Pages/AboutUs/FieldNews/Documents/montana.pdf
[10] Montana West Economic Development; http://dobusinessinmontana.com/case-studies/broadband/

Subdivision. More than 416,000 feet of underground cable was installed, compared with 376,000 feet in 2003. Other projects completed in 2004 include U.S. Highway 93 from Four Corners to 13th Street in Kalispell, the Bigfork transmission rebuild, the Montana Avenue rebuild in Kalispell, design work for new substations in Lakeside and North Kalispell as well as a number of relocation projects related to highway construction. Replacement of standard electric meters with automated meter reading units continued, allowing the meters to be read electronically from the FEC office. More than 5,500 old standard meters were replaced with new automated meters in 2004.[11]

The FEC Annual Report in 2010 paints a different picture, influenced by the economic downturn over the past three years and the slow in customer growth that has resulted. New member services anticipate a net increase of just 263 metered services between 2009 and 2010; this growth rate is significantly less than the historical long-term trend experienced by the company. Staffing levels have adjusted accordingly between 2007 and fiscal year 2010, and the amount of contract work has been reduced (with the exception of tree-trimming services).[12]

Natural Gas Service

Northwest Energy is the only major supplier of natural gas to the Flathead Valley. The company distributes natural gas to approximately 181,300 customers in 105 Montana communities, while also servicing smaller distribution companies that provide service to approximately 31,000 additional customers. Northwest Energy transmits natural gas statewide through a distribution system consisting of roughly 4,900 miles of underground pipeline.[13] Pricing for natural gas is approved by the Montana Public Service Commission and is deregulated.

Utility Projections

As population increases, so will the demand for utility services. Availability of utilities plays a role in successful community development. Communications are a vital element in attracting new businesses to the county. For more on the importance of communications to a diverse economy, see Chapter 5 - *The Flathead Economy*. Public health and safety is affected by the location of utilities on developed property. A meeting with representatives of the major utility companies in 2004 revealed many concerns with development techniques that impact the provision of safe and convenient services now and in the future. Foremost was the issue of locating utility easements in new developments. Increased coordination between utility companies throughout the development process regarding locations of easements and locations of individual pipes and lines within easements would increase the safety of those working on the lines as well as the residents living nearby.

[11] Flathead Electric Cooperative Annual Report 2004
[12] Flathead Electric Cooperative Annual Report 2010
[13] Northwestern Energy 2010 Annual Report

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CHAPTER 8: NATURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

The vitality of Flathead County is inextricably connected to the abundance of its natural resources. From the aboriginal tribes to the early settlers, prevalent natural resources have been utilized to sustain lives and livelihoods. In 21st century Flathead County, industries such as timber harvest, milling, mining, farming and ranching have shared a balance with real estate development, tourism and outdoor recreational activities. In the past as well as today, the County depends on the availability and utilization of natural resources.

The Montana State Constitution declares all citizens are entitled to clean air and water; this growth policy affirms this entitlement for residents of Flathead County. Air and water are two basic elements of a complex environmental system. The water cycle encompasses all the aspects of water quality, flooding and drought, while carbon and oxygen cycles affect air quality. There are many other nutrient cycles that directly or indirectly impact the quality – and in some cases quantity - of the county's natural resources. Development and human interaction can alter these cycles and create imbalance. Location of development is a key consideration when addressing environmental concerns. This growth policy seeks ways to protect the environment by adequately mitigating development impacts where practicable and restricting development in areas of high sensitivity.

Flathead County has an abundance of natural resources, with over 40 lakes and 3 major rivers surrounded by or adjacent to public lands. Flathead Lake extends from Flathead County into Lake County, encompassing nearly 200 square miles of surface area and 185 miles of shoreline. Flathead Lake is the largest natural freshwater lake between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean, serving as a barometer of the ecological health for the entire Flathead watershed. The surrounding mountains are primarily forest lands managed by the federal and state government. Glacier National Park was established in 1910 and has become Flathead County's most popular tourist destination. The park is split between Flathead County and Glacier County and encompasses approximately 1,008,306 acres which include over 200 lakes and streams and over 700 miles of hiking trails[1].

Private timberlands generate positive contributions to Flathead County's economy through timber production as well as the maintenance of healthy forests, watershed protection, wildlife habitat and other aspects of public value. Flathead County's valley floor is open as a result of extensive logging in the late 19th and early 20th century, and therefore able to accommodate a variety of agricultural uses, extractive industries and residential and commercial development. The main tributaries that flow through the valley floor - the Flathead, Whitefish, Stillwater and Swan Rivers - have created areas of prime agricultural soils and critical riparian habitat.

[1] National Park Service, Glacier National Park webpage; http://www.nps.gov/glac/index.htm

Flathead County has a long history of beneficial utilization of its natural resources. Agriculture and timber production have historically provided a solid economic base for residents and a record of stewardship that has effectively preserved the abundant natural resources enjoyed today. These resource industries are based on the sustained production of essential products and effective management of the natural resources necessary for their creation. Their role in the protection of natural resources is recognized, as is the importance of their continued presence.

Flathead County Growth Policy public input meetings held between 2005 and 2006 generated an overwhelming response from participants about the preservation of natural resources. In particular, participants wanted goals and policies to protect water resources, open space, scenic views, air quality and wildlife habitat (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary). The majority of comments expressed concern about the degradation of natural resources from commercial and residential development, agricultural uses and extractive industries. The goals and policies that follow were developed from a public involvement process and are intended to promote and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of Flathead County directly dependent on natural resources.

Goal

G.35 Protect and preserve water resources within the Flathead watershed for the benefit of current residents and future generations.

Policies

P.35.1 Establish public/private partnerships to develop a Flathead basin watershed management plan using scientific data to determine critical areas and evaluate the impacts of future development on water quantity and quality.

P.35.2 Provide improved educational information to landowners on the importance of buffers and restoration techniques to reduce nutrient loading to water resources.

Goal

G.36 Protect water quality in lakes, rivers, aquifers and streams from existing and potential pollution sources.

Policies

P.36.1 Require development to demonstrate compliance with local, State, Tribal, and Federal water quality standards, where applicable.

P.36.2 Review and revise the Lakeshore Protection regulations to include consideration of potential harm caused by fertilizers and pesticides entering lakes, streams and rivers.

P.36.3 Investigate the feasibility of a regional wastewater treatment system. Ensure that the regional wastewater treatment plan protects the Flathead watershed.

P.36.4 Require all public waste water treatment systems to meet applicable DEQ l discharge standards.

P.36.5 Identify and encourage land development practices that do not contribute to increases in Total Maximum Daily Loads.

P.36.6 Support non-point source pollution reduction within the Flathead Basin watershed.

P.36.7 Identify critical aquifer recharge areas in Flathead County and support land uses in these areas that protect water quantity and quality.

Goal

G.37 Prevent untreated storm water from entering into any surface water, stream, river, or lake.

Policies

P.37.1 Encourage the development of innovative stormwater collection, detention and retention systems.

P.37.2 Develop and provide educational information to individuals, organizations, and neighborhood associations regarding storm water management and the importance of proper storm water management practices.

P.37.3 Develop best management practices (BMPs) and setback requirements for development projects that impact water bodies. This may include vegetative buffer strips along stream sides and riverbanks, and the use of sedimentation barriers.

P.37.4 Encourage constructed wetlands as part of on-site drainage plans to restrict untreated storm water from entering lakes, rivers, and streams.

Goal

G.38 Preserve and protect floodplains to ensure the safety of residents from flood hazards and to prevent the degradation of water quality and critical wildlife habitat.

Policies

P.38.1 Adopt FEMA maps and existing floodplain studies as they become available.

P.38.2 Review and revise floodplain regulations as necessary. Consider appropriate setback requirements from floodplain.

P.38.3 Discourage development in floodway or floodway fringe that may result in a net increase in the floodplain area.

P.38.4 Consider density guidelines in the floodplain regulations.

P.38.5 Discourage development that displaces floodwaters within the 100-year floodplain.

Goal

G.39 Preserve and protect wetlands and riparian areas to prevent degradation of natural resources, including but not limited to water quality and critical wildlife habitat.

Policies

P.39.1 Use scientific studies to identify locations of riparian areas and delineated wetlands.

P.39.2 Encourage educational programs on voluntary conservation strategies for private property owners.

P.39.3 Develop regulations that restrict development in jurisdictional wetlands and riparian areas.

P.39.4 Develop best management practices (BMP's) and setback requirements for development to mitigate adverse impacts to sensitive wetland and riparian areas.

Goal

G.40 Protect sensitive areas over shallow aquifers.

Policies

P.40.1 Use scientific studies to identify the location of shallow aquifers.

P.40.2 Promote development in areas with public facilities or appropriate depth to groundwater to preserve water quality and water supply.

P.40.3 Encourage rural residential densities or community wastewater treatment systems in areas of high groundwater established by MT DEQ

P.40.4 Encourage rural low-intensity land uses in areas of high groundwater, as defined by the MT DEQ.

P.40.5 Develop incentives to encourage failing and polluting septic systems to be upgraded.

P.40.6 Encourage educational programs on septic system impacts to groundwater and surface water quality for neighborhood associations and other organizations to utilize.

Goal

G.41 Promote the preservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat and preserve the area's unique outdoor amenities and quality of life.

Policy

P.41.1 Develop an educational brochure that explains "Living with Wildlife" concepts and the impacts landowners can expect when living in rural areas of the County. Promote the document by distributing it to home buyers and home owners in Flathead County.

P.41.2 Discourage unmitigated development in areas identified as critical wildlife habitat.

P.41.3 Maintain a greenbelt along streams and rivers to protect the quality of water, protect critical wildlife corridors, and maintain the natural aesthetics of waterways.

Goal

G.42 Recognize and work to manage Flathead County's rich heritage of hunting, fishing, timber, agricultural and mineral activities that provide economic benefits while utilizing and protecting our natural resources.

Policy

P.42.1 Promote an active and environmentally responsible timber industry utilizing sustainable practices on private and public lands.

P.42.2 Encourage agricultural practices and uses which protect natural resources and allow for productive use.

P.42.3 Recognize and respect the important history and heritage of hunting and fishing by encouraging development that creates new or preserves existing access to public lands and waters.

For further policies associated with G.42, see G.3 and G.12 in Chapter 2.

Goal

G.43 Protect the air quality in Flathead County.

Policy

P.43.1 Implement the existing Flathead County Air Pollution Plan, adopted December 16, 1996 and revised January 17, 2008, into development standards. Any new plans should be considered for inclusion through a public process.

P.43.2 Prioritize and perform road-surfacing and dust abatement projects annually to reduce airborne dust generated from gravel-surfaced roads.

P.43.3 Encourage industrial and other land uses that do not degrade the Glacier National Park Class I air shed.

PART 1: Water Resources (see Goals 35 through 40)

Flathead Watershed

The Flathead Basin watershed encompasses approximately 8,587 square miles - or six million acres of land that drains water into Flathead Lake and the Flathead River. Running north to south the basin stretches 175 miles, and is 88 miles at its widest point. Water flows from headwaters in Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Canada into Flathead Lake.[2] Water from the Flathead Basin sustains life in the Flathead Valley and is delineated in Map 8.1.

[2] Flathead Basin Commission 2006-2011 Strategic Plan

The Flathead Basin encompasses the Swan, Stillwater and the Whitefish Rivers, as well as the North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River. The North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River drain the eastern portion of the Flathead Basin and merge at Columbia Falls to become the Upper Flathead River; combined, these forks of the Flathead contribute approximately 80% of the water entering Flathead Lake. The Whitefish River and Stillwater River drain the northwest part of the Flathead Basin and join the Upper Flathead River below Kalispell. The Upper Flathead River and Swan River are the two main tributaries that empty into the northeast corner of Flathead Lake. Water flow into and through the lake is controlled in part by the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River, and the Kerr Dam near the lake's outlet south of Polson.[3]

Rivers and streams in the Flathead basin create floodplain areas, riparian corridors and wetlands critical to water quality, wildlife and fisheries habitat. Functional riparian corridors and wetlands are important because they filter nutrients, trap sediments, reduce flooding, stabilize soils and provide critical wildlife habitat. Riparian corridors typically extend along the banks of rivers, streams and drainage ways where ground water and surface water mix.

Groundwater is an important resource in the Flathead Basin. Most residential and agricultural development relies on groundwater wells for drinking water. Shallow aquifers provide water to many of the wells. Well-defined shallow aquifers include the Delta region, located between the north shore of Flathead Lake and the Flathead River; the Evergreen aquifer located between the Flathead and Whitefish Rivers, which is the most developed shallow aquifer; the east side between the Flathead River and the foothills of the Swan Mountains; and the Lost Creek fan west of the Stillwater River near the Salish Mountains. Most other places where shallow aquifers have been developed are along stream valleys.

Major threats to the water resources of the Flathead Basin include non point source pollution, where sediments and nutrients - in particular nitrogen, or nitrates, and phosphorus - end up in streams and lakes via storm water runoff or groundwater contamination. Water quality in Flathead Lake is an important indicator of the health of the entire Flathead Basin. Research by the University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay shows that water quality in Flathead Lake has been declining since the 1970s. Flathead Lake has been listed as an impaired water body by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality since 1996, and water quality monitoring of the lake and its tributaries continues to be vital for evaluating and understanding long term trends.[4]

Clean Waters

Preservation and improvement of water quality are perhaps the most critical elements when considering surface waters in Flathead County. The high water quality of Flathead

[3] *Flathead Watershed Sourcebook: A Guide to an Extraordinary Place*. Chapter 1, pp. 3
[4] Flathead Lakers Water Quality Monitoring; http://www.flatheadlakers.org/index.php?page=water-quality

County's lakes and rivers is consistently referred to as a prized and cherished characteristic of the Flathead Basin that leads to a high quality of living for residents and visitors.

The North and Middle Forks of the Flathead, as well as the South Fork of the Flathead River above the Hungry Horse Reservoir, are designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Under the authority of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, a river or river section may be designated by the U.S. Congress or the Secretary of the Interior. Rivers, or sections of rivers so designated are preserved in their free flowing condition and are not dammed or otherwise improved. These portions of the Flathead River include the landscapes of Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness areas.

Designation as a Wild and Scenic River is not the same as designation as a national park, and generally does not limit use of a river in the same manner as a Wilderness Area designation. The idea is not to halt development and/or use of a river, but to preserve the character of a river.

Every two years the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) compiles a list of water bodies that fail to meet water quality standards. This document is known as the 303(d) list, after the section of the Federal Clean Water Act that requires states to report impaired waters. The 303(d) list identifies the probable causes of impairment as well as the suspected sources of the pollutant. In turn, the DEQ is required to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for all water bodies on the 303(d) list. (See Appendix A)

There are two primary sources of water pollution resulting from human influence – point source and non-point source pollution. Point sources are discharges from a specific outlet such as pipes or ditches, and are regulated through permits issued by the DEQ. Examples of point sources include municipal and public sewage treatment facilities, factories, some storm sewers and large livestock feedlots. Non-point sources are more dispersed and generally relate to land extensive activities from multiple contributors that do not require discharge permits. Non-point sources include agriculture and forestry activities, small construction projects, unregulated storm water discharges, individual septic systems and the many negative effects resulting from forest fires. Another potential source of non-point source pollution is leakage from municipal sewer lines. There are also natural sources of pollution that are inherent to any watershed and are contributed without the influence of human activity. Examples include sediment and nutrient loading as a result of fire, or the naturally high concentration of metals or chemicals in rocks and soil which leach into surface or groundwater.[5]

A Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) is the total amount of a pollutant a given water body can receive without exceeding water quality standards. The purpose of establishing TMDLs for waterbodies throughout this state is to ensure there are safe and healthy

[5] Understanding the Montana TMDL Process (pamphlet); by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2007.

waters available for current and future generations of Montanans. The TMDL process for a particular watershed and/or water body begins by diagnosing the problems concerning water quality; identifying and assessing the source(s) of the problem; setting pollutant level thresholds (or targets); setting a TMDL based on the established threshold; allocating the amount of pollutant reduction among all the contributors; and outlining how those reductions can be made. Once this process is complete, decisions about what to do next rest in the hands of local governments, individuals and organizations. The TMDL process by itself does not institute new regulations; however, local governments may decide regulatory measures are appropriate to ensure the recommended reductions are made and water quality standards are met.[6]

Flathead Lake has been listed as a "water quality limited water body" or "impaired" by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality; therefore, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) have been determined for the lake to guide restoration efforts reducing point and non-point source based pollution. TMDL's have also been established for the Swan River Watershed and the Flathead Headwaters (including the North, Middles and South Forks of the Flathead River). Current TMDL efforts in Flathead County include developing TMDLs for impaired waters in the Flathead-Stillwater Planning area, as well as the development of Phase II TMDL allocations for the Flathead Lake Watershed. Phase I TMDL allocations for Flathead Lake are shown in Table 8.1 below; Table 8.2 identifies streams and lakes throughout the Flathead watershed that are impaired for nutrients, sediment and temperature. [7]

Table 8.1
Proposed Flathead Lake TMDL Targets

Primary production	80.0 g C/m^2/yr
Chlorophyll a	1.0 micrograms/liter
Soluble Reactive Phosphorous (SRP)	<0.5 micrograms/liter (BDL)
Total Phosphorous	5.0 micrograms/liter
Total Nitrogen	95 micrograms/liter
Ammonia (NH_3)	<1.0 micrograms/liter
Nitrate/ Nitrite ($NO_{2/3}$)nitrogen	30 micrograms/liter
No measurable blooms of Anabaena (or other pollution algae)	
No oxygen depletion in the hypolimnion	
Algal biomass measured as Chlorophyll a (on near-shore rocks) remains stable or exhibits a declining trend.	

Source: ***Appendix C: Current Flathead Lake Monitoring Program (2000),*** **Flathead Lake Biological Station.** **http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/TMDL/finalReports.mcpx**

[6] Understanding the Montana TMDL Process (pamphlet); by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2007.
[7] Flathead TMDL Project – Montana DEQ and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); http://montanatmdlflathead.pbworks.com/w/page/21641099/Welcome%20to%20the%20Flathead%20Basin

Table 8.2
Flathead Basin Impaired Streams and Lakes

	Impaired Streams & Lakes		
TMDL Planning Area	**Nutrients**	**Sediments**	**Temperature**
Flathead Lake	Flathead Lake	Flathead Lake	(none)
Flathead Headwaters	Challenge Creek	(none)	(none)
Flathead - Stillwater	Lake Mary Ronan, Ashley Creek, Fish Creek, Sheppard Creek, Spring Creek, Stillwater River, Swift Creek, Whitefish River	Whitefish Lake, Ashley Creek, Fish Creek, Logan Creek, Sheppard Creek, Stillwater River	Ashley Creek, Whitefish River

Source Flathead TMDL Project – Montana DEQ and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); http://montanatmdlflathead.pbworks.com/w/page/21641099/Welcome%20to%20the%20Flathead%20Basin

According to Section 303(d) of the Federal Clean Water Act, and Title 40 part 130 of the Code of Federal Regulations, each state is required to develop a list of waters that do not meet water quality standards. The 303(d) list is a subset of all impaired waters listed in the comprehensive 305(b) water quality report. Water bodies on the 303(d) list have at least one impairment caused by a pollutant, and are currently without a TMDL completed and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A water body is placed on the 303(d) list when it does not meet, or is not expected to meet the state's water quality standards after full implementation of technology-based controls – because of this it is considered 'impaired'. Up-to-date annual lists of 303(d) impaired water bodies in Flathead County can be found by visiting the Clean Water Information Center on the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's website.[8]

The 303(d) List identifies probable causes of impairment such as, nutrients, siltation, suspended solids, flow alteration, organic enrichment or low dissolved oxygen, algal growth, PCBs, metals, mercury, and noxious aquatic plants. The main sources of pollution include runoff from development, old and poorly maintained septic systems, poor agricultural and timber harvest practices, and air pollution. Air pollution contributors include dust, exhaust and fumes as well as smoke from chimneys and forest fires.

In 1998, the levels of dissolved oxygen in the Big Arm Bay of Flathead Lake were the lowest ever recorded and blooms of a pollution algae (Anabaena Flosaquae) were observed near shore. The result is the oxygen supply in the water becomes depleted. Similar oxygen sags, as they are called, have been identified in Swan Lake and Whitefish Lake. Nitrogen concentrations in the Stillwater and Flathead rivers were among the highest ever recorded. As nutrients increase (nitrogen and phosphorus), the number of algae and other organisms increase. As these organisms die, bacteria break down their remains using oxygen in the process. Oxygen depletion is a recognized sign of water quality degradation.

[8] Clean Water Act Information Center, Montana Department of Environmental Quality: http://cwaic.mt.gov/faq.aspx?qryId=87109

Wastewater is produced from homes, industries, schools, and businesses; thus demand on wastewater systems is dependent on land use, population density, the magnitude and type of commercial and industrial activity in the area, visiting population and employment impact, the condition of the existing systems and regulatory requirements. Wastewater treatment plants remove solids, organic matter, nutrients, and pollutants and restore oxygen before discharging into surface water bodies.

The *Nutrient Management Plan and Total Maximum Daily Load for Flathead Lake, Montana*[9] provides a prioritized nutrient management plan for the Flathead Lake. This document presents information on point and non-point sources of pollution to the Flathead Lake watershed and makes recommendations on approaches to achieving water quality goals for this same body of water. The document offers sources of pollution to the entire watershed and shows Sewer Treatment Plants (STPs) at 2% and 1% of the total Phosphorus and Nitrate/Nitrite load respectively (Figures 4 – 7 and 4 – 8). Nonetheless, the State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality mandates phosphorous limits for wastewater treatment plants. The City of Kalispell's Advanced Waste Water Treatment Plant continues to surpass its 1 mg/L total Phosphorus permit requirement by meeting levels closer to a daily average of 0.2 mg/L for total phosphorous and voluntarily undertakes active nitrogen removal.

In order to meet the needs of a growing community and to continue the City of Kalispell's efforts to protect streams and groundwater in the area, it was necessary to increase the City's wastewater treatment capacity in 2006. In preparation for growth and to provide adequate infrastructure for the next 20 years, the City upgraded the Advance Wastewater Treatment Plant to the design capacity of 5.4 million gallons per day.[10]

Past efforts to reduce the amount of nutrients reaching Flathead Lake and its tributaries have been successful. Upgrading sewage treatment plants in the upper basin for phosphorus removal, connecting Evergreen to the Kalispell sewer system, and banning domestic use of phosphorus containing detergents have reduced the amount of nutrients reaching Flathead Lake from these sources. Community facilities have also played a significant role in reducing non-point loading. Reductions in non-point loading through the development of new public systems, such as Lakeside/Somers, and the expansion of areas served by public systems such as Evergreen, Big Mountain, Whitefish Lake and Bigfork have played a major role in protecting water quality.

Storm Water Runoff

Polluted runoff, also known as non-point source pollution, is perhaps the greatest threat to water quality in the Flathead Basin. It is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As it moves, runoff picks up and carries natural and human-caused pollutants, finally depositing them into rivers, lakes and groundwater.

[9] Executive Summary: *Nutrient Management Plan and TMDL for Flathead Lake, Montana.* 12/28/2001. Montana Department of Environmental Quality.
[10] *City of Kalispell Wastewater Facility Plan Update*, March 2008. Prepared by HDR Engineering, Inc.

Croplands, livestock feedlots, golf courses, lawns, gardens, roadways, parking lots, construction sites, landfills, city storm sewers, logging operations, residential septic systems and erosion from streams, river banks and lake shores are all sources of polluted runoff. Even airborne chemicals and particulates resulting from wood-burning chimneys and forest fires can be carried into our waters by rain or snow and contribute to the non-point source pollution problem.

The scattered locations of these pollutants and their often unpredictable dispersal make clean up efforts complex and often costly. This is because the waterways within a watershed are interconnected. Streams flow into rivers, which in turn flow into lakes. Surface waters and groundwater are often interconnected; a pollutant introduced in one area upstream can pollute the water downstream.

Meeting TMDL targets and allocations for Flathead Lake will require reductions in nutrient loading in the Flathead River Headwaters and Whitefish and Swan Lakes as well as rivers and streams that flow into and out of these lakes. Increased development in close proximity to rivers, lakes and streams directly contributes to non-point source pollution. Impervious surfaces increase the amount and velocity of stormwater run-off, carrying pollutants directly into waterbodies with limited opportunity for infiltration. Limiting development in these areas or increasing the amount of pervious surface (i.e. natural grass, foliage or other types vegetation) between impervious surfaces and water bodies helps reduce the velocity of run-off as well as the amount of non-point pollutants entering our lakes and streams.[11]

Floodplains

Flooding causes more property damage in the United States than any other natural disaster. It is estimated that flooding causes 90 percent of all property losses from natural disasters in the United States. In terms of economic disruption, property damage and loss of life, floods are "nature's number one disaster."[12]

The presence of floodplain in Flathead County [see Map 2.6 and 2.6(a)] is an impediment to growth and development. The topography of the county, which includes extremely mountainous areas, large lakes, several deep river valleys and the low valley floor, form a very complex drainage system and wide variation in climate.

Foothills and valley bottom land make up approximately 20 percent of the county landscape. The relatively flat terrain of the valley floor manifests itself in the sinuous nature of the rivers that wind through the valley to Flathead Lake. Glacier outwash underlies most of the area in the Flathead River Valley and forms floodplains and terraces adjacent to the Flathead River and its tributaries.

[11] Coffman, Larry S. *Low-impact development: An alternative to stormwater management technology.* Handbook of Water Sensitive Planning and Design. Lewis Publishers, 2002. pp. 97-123.
[12] National Flood Insurance Program. *Flood Insurance Guide for Community Associations*. 2005.

Precipitation averages are generally higher in Flathead County than in other areas of Montana. The most severe flooding in Flathead County usually occurs in the spring and early summer months as a result of snowmelt and/or rainfall runoff. On rare occasions, ice jams result in some overbank flooding. In addition to flooding along streams, shallow flooding periodically occurs in other isolated, developed areas of the county due to other factors. The mountains can receive several hundred inches of snow annually. Low flows in the basin occur naturally during the winter months, and floods normally occur in the spring during periods of rapid snowmelt. Runoff from snowmelt, occasionally combined with rainfall, provides high streamflows in the spring.

Historically, flooding has shaped much of the Flathead Valley floor. The Flathead Valley has experienced six (6) severe flood events. These occurred in 1894, 1926, 1948, 1964, 1975 and 1995. During the 1964 flood, families were evacuated from their homes, livestock drowned, and property damage was excessive. For a history of these floods, see Appendix A: Baseline Analysis.

The 100-year floodplain, also known as the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), is the land subject to inundation by one percent (1%) or greater chance of flood in any given year. Construction is extremely limited in these areas and requires state, federal and local permits. The SFHA is divided into two parts: the floodway and the floodway fringe. The floodway is the channel of a stream and any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free of encroachment so that a 1% annual chance flood can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights.[13] The floodway further limits the amount of construction within its boundary, beyond that which is allowed by permit within the SFHA in general. According to the Flathead County Floodplain Regulations, the floodway fringe is defined as the portion of floodplain *outside* the limits of the floodway.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not identified all of the floodplain in Flathead County, but most of the Flathead, Whitefish and Stillwater River corridors and the valley bottoms have been mapped and shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Approximately 12% of the valley area of Flathead County is designated as 100-year floodplain. An additional 2 to 3% of the valley bottom is designated as 500-year floodplain.[14] Most of the floodplain is located along the Flathead River corridor between Columbia Falls and Flathead Lake. Areas of 100-year floodplain are present along the Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers.

Flathead County also contains areas where FIRM panels are not printed. These areas are considered to be unmapped, or areas where no SFHA is present. Although many of these areas contain streams and rivers that have flooded in the past, since they are not located on a FIRM panel they are not required to comply with the Flathead County Floodplain and Floodway Management Regulations.

[13] FEMA Map Service Center, Definitions of FEMA Flood Zone Designations. http://www.fema.gov/

[14] Calculations based on current Flathead County GIS data provided by FEMA; calculations contemplate the amount of 500-year floodplain *beyond* what is already classified as 100-year floodplain.

FIRM panels can only be amended or modified by FEMA. There are two ways for individual property owners to amend an adopted FIRM panel. If a property owner feels that they have inadvertently been included in the floodplain and that the ground is *naturally* above the 100-year floodplain elevation, they can apply to FEMA for a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA). If a property owner has placed fill or other material to raise the ground *artificially* above the 100-year floodplain elevation (with an appropriate permit), they may apply to FEMA for a Letter of Map Revision based on Fill (LOMR-F). If FEMA approves the LOMA or LOMR-F, a Letter of Determination is sent to the applicant indicating the new flood zone designation. A copy of the determination is also submitted to the Community; however the actual FIRM panel is not reprinted.

100-year floodplain offers numerous benefits to the property and community by:

- Providing flood storage and conveyance;
- Reducing flood velocities and the potential for erosion;
- Absorbing large volumes of water and gradually releasing it to adjacent streams or water bodies during low flow periods;
- Recharging wells and aquifers by holding water long enough to allow it to percolate into underlying soils;
- Supporting vegetation that acts as a flood buffer and stabilizes the shoreline;
- Enhancing water quality by absorbing sediments, toxins and nutrients;
- Providing habitat for millions of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians.

Construction is allowed in the floodway fringe by special permit and must meet established regulations. The Flathead City-County Health Department, which issues permits for all on-site sewage disposal systems, does not allow a system in or within 100 feet of a designated 100-year floodplain because of DEQ requirements that septic systems be 100 feet from surface water.

Current national floodplain management standards allow for channel and overbank conveyance areas to be reduced, essential valley storage to be filled, or velocities changed with little or no regard to how these changes impact others in the floodplain and watershed. The net result is that through our actions we are intensifying damage potential in the floodplain. This current course is not equitable to those whose property is impacted, and has been shown to be economically unsustainable.

The Association of State Floodplain Managers and the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers support local accountability and active management of the floodplain through outreach and education. Both organizations support the "No Adverse Impact" policy that is meant to ameliorate negative impacts associated with floodplain development. This growth policy discourages activities in the floodplain that might displace floodwaters to neighboring properties.

Riparian Areas and Wetlands

The NRCS defines riparian areas as ecosystems that occur along watercourses or water bodies. They are different from surrounding lands because of unique soil and plant

characteristics that are strongly influenced by free or unbound water in the soil. Riparian ecosystems occupy the transitional area between the terrestrial (dry) and aquatic (wet) ecosystems. Typical examples would include floodplains, streambanks, lakeshores, and wetlands. Riparian areas may exist within any land use area, such as cropland, hayland, pastureland, rangeland, and forestland.[15]

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying time periods throughout the year. Water saturation levels (hydrology) determine how the soil develops and what types of plant and animal communities can be supported in the environment; wetlands can support both aquatic and terrestrial species. Inland wetlands (such as those found in Montana) are commonly found on floodplains along rivers and streams (riparian wetlands); in isolated depressions surrounded by dry land; along the margins of lakes and ponds; and in other low lying areas such as vernal pools and bogs. Inland wetlands include marshes and wet meadows as well as wooded and shrubby swamps.[16]

Wetland preservation is beneficial to many species of plants, birds, mammals and invertebrates. They serve as retention areas for overflowing rivers, lakes, and streams, thus reducing flood and erosion damage in other areas. Wetlands also filter pollutants through plant assimilation and slowing untreated surface runoff before entering the water body.

Only about 4% of the land area in the state of Montana has been identified as riparian and/or wetland habitat. Yet these areas are critical to conservation efforts, as many of the the state's mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish depend on these riparian habitats for survival. According to the Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy prepared by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 196 of the 265 terrestrial species found within the wetland and riparian community type are classified as being "essentially associated", which means an association exists between geographic area, type of vegetation, or fish and wildlife species that is critical to the existence of a population of fish or wildlife. Additionally, 17 of the 19 species of greatest conservation need found in these riparian and wetland community types are essentially associated.[17]

The quality of Montana's blue ribbon streams are uniquely dependent on the riparian habitat that is commonly found along rivers, streams and lakes. These areas usually have a variety of riparian forbs, shrubs and trees such as cottonwood, alder, serviceberry, chokecherry and willow to keep them intact. There is abundant wildlife and waterfowl as well as amphibious and unique plant life.

Riparian areas help slow stream bank erosion, remove contaminants from water draining into streams and rivers, improve fish habitat and help to maintain cool water temperatures that many fish species require to survive. Riparian habitat may be degraded when water diversions and dams prevent flooding or when wetlands are drained or filled. Harvesting

[15] Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/water/setbacks/
[16] USEPA Circular on Wetlands: http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/
[17] Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Conservation Strategy; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 2005

of trees, noxious weed invasions, livestock over-grazing and human use can destroy stream riparian habitat. Maintaining proper and healthy vegetation may include harvesting and planting trees along with trimming and planting shrubs.

The main stem of the Flathead River, Stillwater River, Whitefish River and Ashley Creek, as well as their associated backwater channels, spring creeks, wetlands and tributaries provide important wildlife habitat. Areas that support intact natural stands of forest and shrubby vegetation are critical to a variety of species. These areas provide food as well as screening and thermal cover, and although these habitats may be intermingled with residential development and agricultural use, they remain important to the wildlife species that depend on them.

Groundwater and Depth to Water Table

Groundwater is water that fills pores and cracks in rocks and soil. Groundwater sustains lake levels, provides for base flows in streams, and is a major source of domestic water. Groundwater comes from precipitation and condensation that enters the soil and is susceptible to depletion in quantity and degradation of quality. Groundwater flows beneath the surface of the earth, generally moving downhill following the contours of the land toward a point of discharge, usually a lake, stream, spring or well. [18]

The depth to groundwater varies with seasons and precipitation levels. Many areas experience seasonally high groundwater levels, typically in the spring, which limits land use. These areas are commonly located within or near floodplain, alluvial deposits and swamps, and their presence places certain limitations on septic tanks, basements and road building. In Flathead County, both public and private water supplies commonly depend on wells that utilize a variety of natural aquifers.

An aquifer is a water-bearing layer of permeable rock, sand or gravel. The thickness and depth of an aquifer vary with its location. The quantity of water a rock can contain depends on its porosity or the amount of open space and cracks between grains. Water movement in rock depends on permeability, defined as the measure of how well spaces are connected and allows water to flow. Aquifers are recharged or filled by precipitation and infiltration from streams. Recharge is greatest in late spring when snow melt creates runoff from the mountains.[19]

According to a 2004 report by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology[20], a large intermediate and deep aquifer sits below Flathead Valley, in the "Kalispell Sub-Area". This large aquifer is confined by bedrock to the north, west and east, and by Flathead Lake to the south. Water at depths of 100-200 feet below the surface is considered to be from the intermediate aquifer, while wells drilled to over 200 feet below the surface are

[18] U.S. Geological Survey Open File Report 93-643; http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/1993/ofr93-643/
[19] U.S. Geological Survey Open File Report 93-643; http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/1993/ofr93-643/
[20] LaFave, John, Smith, Larry N. and Patton, Thomas W. *Ground-Water Resources of the Flathead Lake Area: Flathead, Lake, Missoula, and Sanders Counties, Montana. Part A- Descriptive Overview and Water Quality Data.* Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. 2004.

considered to be utilizing the deep aquifer. Well logs show that most residents living at the outer perimeter of the Flathead Valley derive water from the intermediate and deep aquifer.

Recharge to the intermediate and deep aquifer comes from the mountain ranges surrounding the valley. Recharge occurs within and at the base of the Swan range front to the east, along the base of the Whitefish range to the north, and along the Whitefish and Salish ranges to the northwest and west. Much of the recharge is often at the valley floor where the aquifer contacts are relatively close to the surface and the overlying impermeable deposits are thin or absent. Sources of recharge come mainly from precipitation and snow melt run-off. Run-off from the Swan range front seems to contribute a significant amount through surface water to recharge the deep aquifer as well as overlaying shallow perched aquifers along the valley margins. Noisy Creek, Krause Creek, Brown Creek, Blaine Creek, Hemler Creek and others all go immediately underground at, or shortly after, contact with the valley floor. Brown Creek alone has been shown to produce peak flow rates in excess of 20 cfs and produce an average volume of nearly 3,000 acre-feet, none of which reaches far beyond Foothill Road before it disappears into the gravels of the deep aquifer. Interformational leakage from the shallow perched aquifers may also recharge the deep aquifer at differing locations in the valley. Clearly, the quality and quantity of the deep aquifer owes a significant amount of its water recharge to the west side of the Swan range, and protection of the quality and quantity of water that comes off of this basin is one of the keys to the long term health of the deep aquifer.[21]

The median yield reported from wells accessing the intermediate and deep aquifer is 25 gallons per minute. The Bureau of Mines and Geology report states that a downward trend in intermediate and deep aquifer irrigation well water levels was observed in the 1980s, but the trend appeared to level off in 1991. Overall water level declines over the past 10-20 years have been observed in most long-term records of all wells accessing intermediate and deep aquifers. The Bureau of Mines and Geology calls for continued monitoring of deep aquifer water levels to allow time for remedial steps by users if water levels should become dangerously low.

Residents living closer to the center of the valley commonly access a shallow alluvial aquifer, often referred to as the Evergreen Aquifer. The Evergreen Aquifer is located between the Flathead River to the east and Whitefish River to the west, and between Badrock Canyon to the north and the confluence of the Flathead and Whitefish rivers to the south. The depth to water table in this area is generally less than 50 feet and, for much of the area, less than five feet.

A significant amount of area with seasonally high ground water and/or frequent flooding can be found throughout the Flathead River corridor and the valley bottom, which is experiencing development pressure. Much of the development south of Kalispell in the

[21] LaFave, John, Smith, Larry N. and Patton, Thomas W. *Ground-Water Resources of the Flathead Lake Area: Flathead, Lake, Missoula, and Sanders Counties, Montana. Part A- Descriptive Overview and Water Quality Data.* Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. 2004.

Lower Valley area is occurring where the depth to groundwater is less than 15 feet. Homes being constructed in this area are on individual water and septic systems. Since there is a direct connection between the aquifer and the Flathead River and Flathead Lake, activity that substantially or incrementally changes the natural integrity of the floodplains and their aquifers will have a direct and pervasive impact on surface water quality. The groundwater supply in this area feeds directly into the aquifer and Flathead Lake. High density development in Lower Valley and other areas of high groundwater has the potential to degrade the water quality of both Flathead River and Flathead Lake, as well as the groundwater that supplies and recharges domestic water wells in the area.

The Flathead Lake Biological Station of the University of Montana has conducted groundbreaking research (see Appendix A: Baseline Analysis) detailing the environmental importance of the shallow alluvial aquifer of the Flathead River. They have documented water flows and detailed the effects of pollution through continued water quality monitoring of Flathead Lake and its tributaries. They have also identified areas where the depth to groundwater is five feet or less as critically sensitive.

Shallow aquifers are intrinsically susceptible to surface sources of contamination. The aquifer materials are highly permeable, allowing rapid movement of water (and any associated contamination) from the land surface to the aquifer. Furthermore, as the land surface in the valley becomes more developed, potential sources of point and non-point source contamination will increase. Surface land uses not compatible with water quality policies in areas of shallow groundwater should be discouraged. High density individual wastewater disposal systems, high density housing, open pit gravel and mineral operations and other industrial uses are examples of surface land uses that have the potential to create health and safety issues in areas of shallow groundwater.

PART 2: Fish and Wildlife Resources (see Goals 36 through 38 and 41)

Fish and Wildlife Species

Mountain forests, meadows, streams, lakes, valley rivers, wetlands and riparian corridors provide aquatic and terrestrial habitats for wildlife. These areas are nesting sites for 319 species of birds including the threatened bald eagle. Only one mammal present in the Flathead Watershed - the Canada lynx – is currently listed as a threatened species according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grizzly bear is unique in that it is managed by the federal government in geographically distinct locations which include the Yellowstone, North Continental Divide, Selkirk, Cabinet-Yaak, North Cascades and Bitterroot ecosystems. In March of 2007 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the Yellowstone District Population Segment (DPS) of grizzly bears no longer met the ESA's definition of 'threatened' or 'endangered', and was subsequently delisted. While this decision and its impacts continue to be debated in the court system, the grizzly remains a threatened/endangered species in the remaining ecosystems, including the Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak regions within and surrounding Flathead

County.[22] The gray wolf was recently removed from the endangered species list following three decades and much controversy. Forty-six (46) species of fish inhabit the aquatic ecosystems, which also provides habitat for seven species of amphibians and nine species of reptiles.[23]

The biggest threat to fish and wildlife is habitat loss. The Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) is the primary agency responsible for management of fish and wildlife populations in the Flathead. FWP jointly manage fish and wildlife habitats with the Salish and Kootenai Tribes within the Flathead Reservation. Throughout the year, FWP regulates fishing and hunting seasons for big game, upland game birds, webless migratory birds, waterfowl and furbearers. The white-tailed deer remains the most popular big game animal pursued by hunters in northwest Montana, known as FWP Region 1.[24]

Fish Species

The rivers, streams, reservoirs and lakes of Flathead County support native fish communities that are threatened from declining water quality and the introduction of non-native fish species. Of the 46 species of fish that call the Flathead Watershed home, only 23 are considered native; these include the westslope cutthroat trout, bull trout, lake trout lake whitefish, mountain whitefish, pygmy whitefish and grayling. Long considered the lifeblood of the watershed for their persistence over 14,000 years, the bull and westslope cutthroat trout are indicator species for environmental disturbance in the watershed. The westslope cutthroat has experience significant declines in numbers over the years, as a result of habitat degradation, competition with non-native species, hybridization and a high intolerance for disturbance; the fish now occupies between 19-27% of its historic range in Montana. Bull trout have been listed as threatened species according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.[25] In the past Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) fisheries biologists have conducted sinking and floating gill net surveys of Flathead Lake to assess shifts in species composition. Gill net surveys occurring in 1983 (pre-mysis) and 1999, showed a decrease in native westslope cutthroat trout from 23% of the catch in 1983 to only 5% of the catch in 1999. Conversely, the survey showed the presence of the northern pike minnow increased from 12% of the catch in 1983 to 25% of the catch in 1999.[26] A similar gillnet survey was proposed by Montana FWP as part of the ongoing co-management plan for Flathead Lake in 2010; however, the results of the survey are not yet available for comparison.

[22] U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Mountain-Priarie Region Endangered Species Program. Grizzly Bear Recovery. http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/
[23] Flathead Watershed Sourcebook, Chapter 2 – Natural History, 2010 Edition; pp.59 through 73.
[24] http://fwp.mt.gov/regions/r1/
[25] Flathead Watershed Sourcebook, Chapter 2 – Natural History, 2010 Edition; pp.59.
[26] Montana FWP; Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. *Flathead Lake and River Fisheries Co-Management Plan, 2001-2010*. November 2000; pp. 30.

Wildlife Species

Of the total 3,262,720 acres that make up Flathead County, 78.6% of the land is managed by federal, state or tribal agencies (see Chapter 2: Land Uses). These public lands are home to a wide range of forest carnivores, big game species, osprey, eagles, upland game birds, migratory waterfowl, amphibians and reptiles.

Important wildlife species include grizzly and black bear, mountain lion, white-tailed deer, three species of mountain grouse, and furbearers such as the marten and wolverine. Big game species include black bears, mountain goats and lions, moose, elk, white-tail and mule deer. Elk and deer inhabit forested areas, while moose typically occupy wetland and riparian areas. Highly important bear habitats occur along foothills of major valleys, particularly the east Flathead Valley, Stillwater, Swan, Middle Fork, and North Fork Valleys.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a list of all species classified as endangered, threatened or candidate in Flathead County. Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Threatened species are likely to become endangered within the near future. Candidate species are those for which there is sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support a proposal to list as endangered or threatened. The loss of a species to extinction can have irrevocable impacts on the ability of remaining species to survive.

Table 8.3
Endangered, Threatened, and Candidate Species

Designation	Species Name
Endangered	None
Threatened	Canada lynx, bull trout, Spalding's Catchfly
Candidate	None

Source: Montana Natural Heritage Program Plant/Animal Species of Concern Report(s) for Flathead County; October 2011

Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest include Federal Wilderness, Research Natural Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers. These critical habitat areas provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of open space important for wildlife migration corridors. A variety of designated protection areas exist in Flathead County. Table 8.4 shows over 15,000 acres that have been permanently set aside for the health of fish and wildlife species.

Table 8.4
Special Designated Wildlife Areas in Flathead County

Name	Acres	Year Initiated	Management Agency
Flathead Waterfowl Protection Area	2,370	1971	FWS
Batavia Waterfowl Protection Area	510	1975	FWS
Smith Lake Waterfowl Protection Area	975	1973	FWS
Blasdel Waterfowl Protection Area	535	1987	FWS

McGregor Meadows Waterfowl Protection Area	799	1999	FWS
Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge	7,885	1999	FWS
Ray Kuhns Wildlife Management Area	1,530	1953-1986	FWP
Flathead River Wildlife Habitat Protection Area	216	1986-1999	FWP
Owen Sowerwine Natural Area	442	1970s	DNRC
Total	**15,262**		

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MT DNRC, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks websites

PART 3: Land Resources (see Goals 36 through 42 and see also Chapter 2: Land Uses)

Forestry

Proactive forest management creates healthy forest ecosystems through practices that include planting, thinning and harvesting of forest vegetation. Proper management of forests protects the cultural integrity of Flathead County and promotes the health and safety of residents by reducing the risk of wildfires and contributing to the local economy.

The USDA Forest Service is responsible for management of National Forests (including wilderness areas), and Flathead County contains portions of four National Forests and two Wilderness Areas. Flathead National Forest (including portions of the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas) has approximately 1,875,545[27] acres within Flathead County. Various species of trees found in the mid elevation areas of these forests are Douglas fir, western larch, Lodgepole pine, western white pine, grand fir, western red cedar, western hemlock and Engelmann spruce. Various species of trees found in the higher elevation areas of these forests are subalpine fir, whitebark pine and subalpine larch.

The three largest private timber landowners, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber, Plum Creek and Montana Forest Products together account for approximately 9% (295,500 acres) of the total land area in Flathead County. Land owned by the three largest corporations represents approximately 42.3% of the private land in Flathead County (see Map 2.2).[28]

Many growth issues are associated with forest lands such as the declining timber industry and the conversion of private forest lands into residential development. One important growth-related issue is the wildland-urban interface. The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is commonly described as the zone where structures and other human development meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or forests.[29] This WUI zone is comprised of both private and public lands, and poses tremendous risks to life, property, and

[27] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[28] http://www.stoltzelumber.com; http://www.plumcreek.com
[29] Flathead County Community Wildfire Fuels Reduction /Mitigation Plan 2005; Resolution No. 1913

infrastructure in associated communities. These risks to health and safety in the WUI can include inescapable wildfires and natural disasters or human contact with wildlife species such as bears, mountain lions and wolves if development is not adequately mitigated. Forest management practices that reduce these health and safety risks are essential in areas where public or private forested lands border developed properties. Risk reduction strategies can consist of commercial thinning projects and homeowner education.

The State of Montana manages approximately 130,953 acres of forested trust lands in Flathead County. The lands are managed by the Montana Department of Natural Resources Conservation Trust Lands Management System. Although trust lands are commonly thought of as forestry and/or recreation lands, these lands are managed to generate revenue and uses can be as varied as any other public or private lands in Flathead County.

Agriculture

Agriculture represents a significant part of the historic culture in the Flathead Valley, and as the economy continues to change, agriculture remains critically important to maintaining economic diversity. In 2002, approximately 40% of the private land (234,861 acres) in Flathead County was being farmed; roughly 1,075 individual farms were counted, with the majority of these farms (78%) under 179 acres. By contrast, in 2007 roughly 251,597 acres or 36% of privately held land in Flathead County was used for agricultural purposes.[30] According to the most recent Census of Agriculture conducted in 2007, there were approximately 1,094 individual farms operating in the County, with the majority of these farms (81%) being under 179 acres in size.

Some of the major crops produced by farmers include wheat, barley, flax, alfalfa, grain hays, silage and livestock pasture. Specialty crops such as seed potatoes, mint, lawn sod, canola, mustard, raspberries, strawberries, grapes and vegetable crops are important products.[31]

A primary concern of residents is the conversion of farmland into other land uses, including residential development. The conversion of these lands has a lasting impact on the rural community character, and can negatively affect water quality, water supply and wildlife habitat.

Soils

A comprehensive soils survey for Flathead County has not yet been completed, although portions of the County have been partially mapped by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), including the Flathead National Forest and the upper Flathead Valley, as well as portions of the Highway 2 West corridor and the Highway 93 corridor south of Kalispell as recently as 2010. Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) completed a soil survey for the Upper Flathead Valley Area in 1960, which continues to be utilized

[30] USDA 2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture; the next update is scheduled for 2012
[31] Flathead Count y Natural Resource Use Policy

today. However, soils in the relatively flat portion of Flathead County north of Flathead Lake consist of two broad types. One is rocky and poorly drained and is underlain by unsorted glacial till. This is commonly used for timber production. The second type of soil is deep, well structured and well drained. It is underlain by deposits that have been reworked or sorted by running water and is the most productive in Flathead County. It is important to note that soils in this area can be highly irregular as a result of glacial deposits over time; it is not uncommon to find a variety of soil types in one location.

The concept of hydric soils includes soils developed under sufficiently wet conditions to support the growth and regeneration of hydrophytic vegetation. Soils that are sufficiently wet because of artificial measures are included in the concept of hydric soils. Soils in which the hydrology has been artificially modified are hydric if the soil, in an unaltered state, was hydric. Some series designated as hydric have phases that are not hydric depending on water table, flooding and ponding characteristics.[32]

Hydric soil lists have a number of agricultural and nonagricultural applications including land use planning, conservation planning and assessment of potential wildlife habitat. A combination of hydric soil, hydrophytic vegetation and hydrology criteria defines wetlands as described in the National Food Security Act Manual (Soil Conservation Service, 1994) and the Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory, 1987).

Surveys were completed in the upper Flathead valley for most of the valley bottom by the NRCS. The majority of hydric soils are found along the Flathead River in the Lower Valley area, along Ashley Creek and Smith Lake, and southeast of Whitefish. Much of the remaining soil types in the valley bottom have hydric inclusions and characteristics, especially prevalent along the Flathead River corridor. A complete list of hydric soils and soils with hydric inclusions in the Upper Flathead Valley, along with descriptions of soil characteristics, is available on t the Montana Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) website.

Geology and Minerals

The topography of Flathead County was formed during the ice ages when the enormous glacier that filled the Rocky Mountain Trench of British Columbia thinned as it spread southward through the Flathead Valley and into the Mission Valley. The Mission Range split the glacier sending one branch of ice down the Swan Valley and another to the southern end of Flathead Lake. When the glacier melted, it left a deep fill of sediment in the floor of the Flathead Valley.[33]

The valley bottom is generally level to moderately sloping. Most steep slopes occur along the fringe, in the public and private timberlands surrounding the valley bottom, as well as in Glacier National Park. Approximately 75% of Flathead County has slopes

[32] Natural Resource Conservation Service, Hydric Soils circular; http://soils.usda.gov/use/hydric/
[33] Alt, David and David Hyndman: Roadside Geology of Montana. Mountain Press Publishing Company, June 2003, pp. 50.

over 25%, most of which occur in the mountainous areas within the National Forest or National Park.

At the beginning of the 1900's, coal and oil exploration began in the North Fork Valley along the Flathead Fault. Open cut mining is primarily limited to sand, gravel and rock in the Flathead Valley, based upon the geologic composition of the area. Various types of gravel are in demand for road construction, while rock is used for concrete and asphalt road construction, as well as fill and road surfacing project.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality is the regulatory authority for all open-cut and hard rock mining in the state of Montana. The Opencut Mining Act (82-4-401 et seq., M.C.A.) and resulting regulations apply to the mining of bentonite, clay, scoria, soil materials, peat, sand or gravel.[34] The Hard Rock Mining Program established under the Metal Mine Reclamation Act (MMRA) applies to the mining of all ore, rock, or substances with the exception of oil, gas, uranium, and those materials covered under the Opencut Mining Act. Under the Act, "mining" is defined as the extraction of ores or minerals in commercial quantities for sale, beneficiation, refining, or other processing.[35]

All open cut sand and gravel operations must comply with the applicable zoning regulations if operating in an area that is zoned for such uses. An air quality permit from the DEQ is required for the operation of any mineral crushing or other processing plants.

Currently there are 142 open cut mining operations permitted in the valley; of those currently permitted, 130 are active, 11 are inactive and 1 has been reclaimed. Please reference Chapter 9 – Sand and Gravel Resources, for additional information on mining activity in Flathead County.

PART 4: Air Quality (see Goal 43)

Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes air quality standards to protect public health, including the health of "sensitive" populations such as people with asthma, children, and older adults. EPA also sets limits to protect public welfare. This includes protecting ecosystems, including plants and animals, from harm, as well as protecting against decreased visibility and damage to crops, vegetation and buildings.[36]

Air quality problems in Montana are usually related to urban areas and mountainous topography or river valleys that are sensitive to temperature inversions. Particulate matter and carbon monoxide are the pollutants that have the greatest adverse impact on Montana's air quality. Particulate matter generally comes from vehicles traveling on unpaved roads, sand and gravel from winter traction material, and residential wood burning. Increasing traffic levels on unpaved roads has been a growing problem as

[34] Montana DEQ Opencut Mining Program; http://www.deq.mt.gov/opencut/default.mcpx
[35] Montana DEQ Hard Rock Mining Program; http://www.deq.mt.gov/hardrock/default.mcpx
[36] The Plain English Guide to the Clean Air Act; http://www.epa.gov/air/peg/index.html

development pressure increased over the past decade, and these impacts continue to be a significant topic of discussion when considering appropriate land use in Flathead County. This growth policy contains policies recommending county-wide dust abatement programs to help address this issue.

In January 2008 an Administrative Order on Consent (Docket No. AQ-07-04) went into effect between the Department of Environmental Quality and Flathead County. The basis of the Consent Order centered around Airborne dust created from roads maintained by the County. Excessive dust on County roads was a major contributor to the overall deterioration of air quality in Flathead County, and the County was given the option to pay an administrative penalty or implement a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP). The County chose to submit an annual SEP report to the DEQ, beginning in 2009, detailing abatement measures related to signage, enforcement and dust palliative application(s) throughout the jurisdiction.[37]

Although prevalent, dust is not the sole contributor to air pollution in Flathead County. Carbon monoxide pollution primarily results from motor vehicle exhaust and residential wood burning. Although industrial sources account for only a small part of carbon monoxide and particulate matter emissions in most communities, industries are the main source of sulfur dioxide and lead pollution in Montana. Forest fires also pose a very serious threat to air quality. The Flathead County Air Pollution Control Program requires the use of all available practicable methods to reduce, prevent and control air pollution from a variety of sources in Flathead County. The Flathead County Air Pollution Control Plan regulates open burning, solid fuel burning, prohibited materials for wood or coal residential stoves, and the Kalispell, Columbia, and Whitefish Air Pollution Control Districts.[38] Air quality monitoring sites are located throughout Flathead County; at the Columbia Falls Ball Park at the corner of 4th Avenue and C Street E.N.; in Whitefish at the end of West 10th and Highway 93 (referred to as the 'dead-end'); and at the Flathead Electric site in Kalispell, at the corner of Center Street and Woodland Avenue.[39]

Congress states that one of the purposes of the Clean Air Act is "to preserve, protect and enhance the air quality in national parks, national wilderness areas, national monuments, national seashores and other areas of special national or regional natural, recreation, scenic or historic value".[40] In Glacier National Park, an extensive air quality monitoring network exists for pollution and visibility conditions. As a Class I airshed, Glacier National Park is provided the greatest air quality protection under the Clean Air Act. This includes visibility and fluoride monitoring and a national atmospheric deposition network. Glacier's monitoring instruments are located mostly on the west side of the

[37] Special Environmental Project Annual Report; Administrative Order on Consent. Docket No. AQ-07-04; Flathead County, MT.
[38] Flathead County Air Pollution Control Program, Chapter II – Declaration of Policy & Purpose
[39] Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Monitoring Sites; http://svc.mt.gov/deq/AGMonitoringSites/listDisplay.aspx
[40] Clean Air Act, Title 42, Chapter 85, Subchapter 1, Part C, Subpart (i), Section 7470 – Congressional Declaration of Purpose.

park. Seasonal vegetation collection associated with fluoride monitoring also occurs at various sites on the west side.[41]

[41] Glacier National Park website; http://www.nps.gov/glac/naturescience/airquality.htm

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CHAPTER 9: SAND & GRAVEL RESOURCES

Introduction

Sand and gravel are important natural resources found throughout Flathead County. While large amounts of gravel are located throughout the Flathead valley, sand is a resource that is more limited in this area of the state. Sand and gravel resources provide the foundation upon which our infrastructure is built, defining where, how and to what extent development occurs. Our roads, bridges and highways are all constructed using gravel; the houses we live in, buildings we work in and sidewalks we walk on utilize the resource as well. Access to local gravel resources reduces costs associated with transportation and processing fees, thereby reducing the overall cost of development. The potential for local extraction of sand and gravel resources also affects the overall economic climate by providing jobs and serving local construction industries. Developing an awareness of where sand and gravel resources are currently located and what types of activities (extraction, processing, and transportation) are occurring in these locations is important for a variety of reasons. Continued growth and development in areas of the County where sand and gravel resources are currently found will result in continued land use conflicts and may limit the availability of these types of resources into the future.

In 2009, a senator from Flathead County sponsored a legislative bill (Senate Bill No. 486) requiring communities provide an inventory of sand and gravel resources within their jurisdiction. By requiring local governments to identify these resources, this information was intended to provide a base upon which future land use policies could be developed to encourage the separation of incompatible uses while ensuring an economically viable source of gravel to facilitate and support future development.[1] Changes resulting from this proposal during the 2009 Legislative session now require all Growth Policies to include a description of sand and gravel resources. As part of Flathead County's Growth Policy Update for the year 2012, this chapter has been added to address these additional requirements and comply with Section 76-1-601 MCA.

Mapping the location and extent of these resources will serve to inform future land use planning efforts in Flathead County and will help ensure the continued availability and accessibility of sand and gravel for the County's future growth and development needs. Due to the limited data available, this chapter is not intended to be an evaluation of existing materials or a directive on where future sand and gravel extraction should necessarily occur. Pursuant to Section 76-1-601(3)(viii) MCA, this chapter intends to identify existing sand and gravel resources located within the planning jurisdiction of Flathead County. This will encourage the development of corresponding goal(s) and policies that may aide in future data collection and planning efforts involving sand and gravel resources.

[1] Montana's Growth Policy Resource Book. Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Division. April 2009; pg.33.

Goals &Policies

G.44 Support land use policies that ensure adequate quality and quantity of sand and gravel to meet current and future demands in Flathead County.

In addition to the above stated goal, existing goals and policies found in "Chapter 2 – Land Uses" and "Chapter 8 – Natural Resources" of the Flathead County Growth Policy specifically address sand and gravel resources and should be referenced accordingly. Specifically, G.12 and P.12.1-12.8, as well as G.42 reflect and support the issues addressed in this chapter.

PART 1: History of Sand & Gravel Resources and Extraction in Flathead County

The importance of sand and gravel resources in Flathead County has led to a great deal of discussion over the years; in some cases that discussion has led to zoning map and text amendments and even law suits regarding the evaluation of gravel extraction, and extractive industry in general, within the Flathead County Zoning Regulations (FCZR). The zoning regulations identify "gravel extraction" and "extractive industry" as two distinct yet similar uses conditionally permitted in select, zoned areas of the County. Although the Planning and Zoning Office has no regulatory reviewing authority over the types of uses in unzoned areas of the County, any extractive industry resulting in the removal of more than 10,000 cubic yards of material proposed in these areas is still required to obtain a permit through the Department of Environmental Quality Opencut Mining Program (pursuant to the Opencut Mining Act, 82-4-401 et seq., MCA).

Certain areas of the County address gravel resources and extractive industry more often than others, due in part to the zoning in place but also based upon the location and availability of gravel resources in particular geographic locations. The West Valley, North Fork and West Glacier areas have most recently dealt with gravel extraction issues related to land use. However, this is not to say that other areas of Flathead County have not or will not deal with sand and gravel resource issues in the future.

The West Valley area has been characterized as predominantly residential, following the outcome of a series of court decisions in 2008. The zoning district that applies to much of West Valley is unique in that it identifies "gravel extraction" as a conditionally permitted use; this differs slightly from agricultural and industrial zoning districts that identify 'extractive industry" as the type of conditional use under which gravel extraction would be included. Section 76-2-209(2) of the Montana Code Annotated identifies instances where the recovery of gravel and certain extractive industries (such as concrete or asphalt operations) can be conditioned or prohibited in areas zoned for residential uses. In an attempt to address this inconsistency, a 2010 text amendment was approved by the Flathead County Commissioners [Resolution 955 HE], adding a formal definition of "gravel extraction" to the zoning regulations. This definition included the processing of gravel through crushing, screening, asphalt, wash and concrete plants as well as transportation and stockpiling, and applies to Flathead County as a whole.

Another part of the County where the issue of gravel resource extraction has been prominent in recent years is the North. The North Fork area is rural and remote, accessible only by a gravel road extending nearly forty miles north of the City of Columbia Falls to the Canadian border. Mining and extraction has been a controversial issue affecting the area since its discovery, as the North Fork is part of a trans-boundary region spanning from British Columbia south into Montana. The North Fork of the Flathead River serves as the western boundary of Glacier National Park, which has been designated a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). After years of discussion, deliberation and negotiation, a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on Environmental Protection, Climate Action and Energy was signed between the Province of British Columbia and the State of Montana on February 18th, 2010. The Memorandum serves to permanently prohibit coal and hard rock mining as well as oil and gas development in the North Fork region. The governments involved have been working since this adoption to secure and retire existing land leases for gas, coal and mining activities, in an effort to return the ecosystem back to its natural state. A text amendment to the North Fork zoning district was proposed in early 2010 to address the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding. The proposed amendment would have altered the definition of extractive industries for only the North Fork zoning district, limiting the size and scope of operations permitted in this specific area of the County. However, the proposed amendment was tabled and eventually denied by the Flathead County Commissioners following a public hearing in the fall of 2010.

In addition to amendments (proposed and/or approved) described above, the following list of resolutions approved by the County Commissioners deal with gravel extraction and extractive industries in Flathead County. This list should not be considered exhaustive due to the constantly evolving nature of land use issues in the County, but should be viewed as informational, providing a succinct history of the issues relating to sand and gravel resources in the Flathead.

Resolution No. 955 GM (8/17/2005)
Added new subsections 9 and 10 to Section 3.03.020 to define those zoning districts that allow residential uses as residential ones for purposes of Section 76-2-209, M.C.A., to delete Section 3.09.030(14) in order to delete extractive industries as a condition use in R-1 zones, and to amend Section 3.07.010 to allow for estate-type residential development in SAG-10 zoning districts, in order that regulation of operations that mine sand and gravel or that mix concrete or batch asphalt may be allowed, conditioned or prohibited in those residential zones.

Resolution No. 955GU (3/20/2008)
Amend Section 3.03.020 of the Flathead County Zoning Regulations to redefine what districts are "residential" for purposes of applying the zoning regulations to gravel operations, and clarify that AG-40 (Agricultural) and AG-80 (Agricultural) districts are not residential zones for those purposes and (ii) amend Section 4.10.010 of the Flathead County Zoning Regulations to remove the requirement that a Montana Department of

Environmental Quality reclamation contract be executed prior to the issuance of a conditional use permit for gravel operations.

Resolution No. 955GY (10/09/2008)
Amend Section 4.10.040 of the Flathead County Zoning Regulations, setting forth the process by which conditional use permits for gravel permits are issued, by deleting the sentence thereof which requires that "When such a plan is also required by the Open Cut Mining Act, the submitted plan shall have been approved by the Department of Environmental Quality" and replacing it with a sentence that states that "When such a plan is also required by the Open Cut Mining Act, the submitted plan must include all information required by the Department of Environmental Quality for such an application."

PART 2: Existing Sand & Gravel Resources

Gravel resources are commonly found in glacial fluvial valleys where the water table is high, and in alluvial floodplains along streams and glacial deposits.[2] These areas are generally acknowledged as environmentally sensitive, and are typically designated as floodplain, wetland, or riparian areas having characteristics of prime habitat or sensitive classification. Because gravel extraction must occur where the gravel is located, the potential for conflict is heightened due to the environmentally sensitive nature of these areas and the methods and machinery used to extract the resource.

In the spring of 2010, at the direction of a sub-committee of the Flathead County Planning Board, planning staff researched and compiled available data on surficial soil classifications from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MTBMG), open cut permits issued through the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ), hard rock and open cut mining permit sections, and the status of existing gravel operations based upon data collected and maintained by the Flathead County GIS Department (through 2010); the end result is the Flathead County Gravel Resources Map included in this chapter (see Map 9.1).

The map identifies the location of known gravel pits throughout Flathead County and provides their operation status – active, inactive, reclaimed or unknown - as of 2010. Of the 142 open cut mining operations permitted in the valley, 130 are currently active, 11 are inactive and 1 has been reclaimed. These locations are overlaid atop the surficial soils data provided by the Bureau of Mines and Geology, showing the types of soil classification units prevalent throughout the Flathead Valley. The map also includes data points identifying each operation having obtained an open cut or hard rock mining permit through the state Department of Environmental Quality; these permit locations typically correspond to a mapped gravel pit location. Open cut permits include sand, gravel, bentonite, scoria, peat moss and soil extraction; hard rock permits include rock picking,

[2] Sand & Gravel Operations in Montana; www.montanagravel.org

quarrying for talus, ballast as well as mining for gold, leads, copper, zinc and other minerals.[3]

Although permitted sand and gravel operations are located throughout Flathead County, it should not be assumed that just because an area is void of any existing, permitted extractive industry there are no resources present. If anything, the dispersed nature of resource extraction in Flathead County is beneficial to the economic vitality of the industry and the area in which it is located. Having localized sand and gravel resources in a variety of locations reduces hauling costs to complete infrastructure improvements in these areas and may reduce transportation costs for employees as well.

TABLE 9.1 – MDEQ Open Cut Mining Permits

Permit No.	Operator	Mine Status
110	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
111	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1118	COLUMBIA FALLS INDUSTRIAL PARK	ACTIVE
1119	COLUMBIA FALLS INDUSTRIAL PARK	ACTIVE
112	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1125	CLARK ED A	ACTIVE
1133	CRESTON TOPSOIL	ACTIVE
114	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1147	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1148	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
115	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1151	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1152	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1160	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1161	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1162	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1163	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1164	DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STILLWATER UNIT	ACTIVE
1181	ESLICK PAUL	INACTIVE
12	ANDERSON LLOYD K	ACTIVE
1207	FH STOLTZE LAND AND LUMBER COMPANY	ACTIVE
126	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
127	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1276	GOOSE BAY EQUIPMENT INC	ACTIVE
1277	GOOSE BAY EQUIPMENT INC	ACTIVE
128	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1281	GLACIER HORSE RANCH LLC	INACTIVE
129	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1298	GRIZZLY LOGGING AND LUMBER LLC DBA GRIZZLY GRAVEL PRODUCTS	ACTIVE
13	WAGONERS SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
130	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1305	HANSON NEIL	ACTIVE
1315	HAMILTON HOWARD D	ACTIVE
1320	HANSON NORMAN K	ACTIVE
1321	HANSON NORMAN K	INACTIVE
1337	HELENA SAND AND GRAVEL INC	ACTIVE
1383	KELLER LES	ACTIVE
1387	KLEMPEL JOE AND RON	ACTIVE
1388	KLEMPEL JOE AND RON	ACTIVE
1407	KNIFE RIVER	ACTIVE
1408	KNIFE RIVER	ACTIVE
1410	KNIFE RIVER	ACTIVE

[3] Information provided by Craig Jones, MDEQ Hard Rock Mining Permitting Program (May 27, 2011); James Connor, MDEQ Open Cut Permit Program (May 25, 2011).

1411	KNIFE RIVER	ACTIVE
1416	KNIFE RIVER	ACTIVE
142	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1422	KRUEGER GARY	ACTIVE
1424	LEIGHTY BROS CONSTRUCTION LLC	ACTIVE
1432	LHC INC	ACTIVE
1440	LASALLE SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
1478	MANY LAKES EAST	ACTIVE
1494	MURPHYS EXCAVATING INC	ACTIVE
1520	OLSEN RUSSELL	ACTIVE
1527	PLUM CREEK TIMBERLANDS LP	ACTIVE
1552	POTTS LYLE	INACTIVE
1555	PUMCO INC	ACTIVE
1559	RIVERSIDE CONTRACTING INC	ACTIVE
1640	RUSSELL KIMBERLY J	INACTIVE
1645	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1648	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1650	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1658	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1659	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1661	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	INACTIVE
1668	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1669	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1679	SCHLEGEL AND SONS CONTRACTOR INC	ACTIVE
1685	SPOKLIE GRANT	ACTIVE
1686	SPOKLIE GRANT	ACTIVE
1713	SPOKLIE ROBERT	ACTIVE
1714	STREET ROBIN	ACTIVE
1717	SILVERTIP PROPERTIES	ACTIVE
1719	STUPAK JAMES	ACTIVE
1720	STW PARTNERSHIP	ACTIVE
1721	SUDAN INC	ACTIVE
1724	SWIFT CREEK CABINS LLC	ACTIVE
1725	SCHWARZ CONSTRUCTION	ACTIVE
1726	CHARLAND STEVE R	ACTIVE
1731	TUNGSTEN HOLDINGS INC	ACTIVE
1733	TAMARACK HOLDINGS LLC	ACTIVE
1734	THORNBERRY RONALD AND ESTHER	ACTIVE
1743	TIMBERLINE READY MIX	ACTIVE
1753	TURNER WAYNE	ACTIVE
1754	TUTVEDT BRUCE	ACTIVE
1757	US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE	ACTIVE
1769	WAGAR JOE	ACTIVE
1783	WOODRING ERIC	ACTIVE
1788	WHITE ROCK AGGREGATE LLC	ACTIVE
1797	WAGONERS SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
1798	WAGONERS SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
1807	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	WITHDRAWN
1812	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	INACTIVE
1821	PLUM CREEK TIMBERLANDS LP	DENIED
1846	WHITE ROCK AGGREGATE LLC	ACTIVE
1873	KNIFE RIVER	PENDING
1886	JTL GROUP INC - KALISPELL	INACTIVE
1910	WILKE LAURENCE G	DENIED
1946	SCHELLINGER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY	ACTIVE
1991	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	ACTIVE
1992	GRIZZLY LOGGING AND LUMBER LLC DBA GRIZZLY GRAVEL PRODUCTS	ACTIVE
2	PACK AND COMPANY	INACTIVE
2006	ESLICK PAUL	PENDING
2031	WAGONERS SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
24	DOANE DON	ACTIVE
25	ROBINSON SAND AND GRAVEL	ACTIVE
3	CITY OF WHITEFISH	ACTIVE
30	JTL GROUP DBA MCELROY AND WILKEN	ACTIVE
305	DOTEN NEIL	ACTIVE

38	NORVELL LINDA EVART	ACTIVE
486	PLUM CREEK TIMBERLANDS LP	ACTIVE
500	PLUM CREEK TIMBERLANDS LP	ACTIVE
515	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
516	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
517	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
518	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
519	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
520	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
521	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
522	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
523	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
524	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
525	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
526	FLATHEAD COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENT	ACTIVE
54	JTL GROUP DBA MCELROY AND WILKEN	ACTIVE
545	MISSION VALLEY CONCRETE	ACTIVE
55	PACK AND COMPANY	ACTIVE
650	LHC INC	ACTIVE
661	THORNBERRY RONALD AND ESTHER	ACTIVE
671	AC ENTERPRISES LLC	ACTIVE
706	BEASLEY JOE	ACTIVE
721	BROWNN PAMELA	ACTIVE
724	BRASH PROJECTS LLC	ACTIVE
83	HAMILTON HOWARD D	ACTIVE
	RUSSELL WILLIAM M	ACTIVE
	SPOKLIE ROBERT	INACTIVE

TABLE 9.2 – MDEQ Small Miner Exemption Status

PROGRAM	COMPANY NAME	OPERATION TYPE	MINERAL	STATUS
07-011	STAHLBERG BRYAN K	OPEN PIT	TALUS	SHUTDOWN
07-021	JENSEN PAUL	OPEN PIT	SHALE, ROCK	ACTIVE
07-027	JARVIS WILLIAM	ROCK PICKER	RIP RAP ROCK	ACTIVE
07-032	F H STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER CO	OPEN PIT	ROCK	ACTIVE
07-034	GRIZZLY LOGGING & GRAVEL PRODUCTS INC	ROCK PICKER	ROCK	ACTIVE
07-035	KLEMPEL JOE & GINA	OPEN PIT	ROCK	ACTIVE
07-036	ANDERSON MASONRY INC	OPEN PIT	DECORATIVE ROCK	ACTIVE

TABLE 9.3 – MDEQ Operating Permits (Hard Rock Mining)

PROGRAM	MINE NAME	OPERATION TYPE	MINERAL	STATUS
00045	ESSEX QUARRY	OPEN PIT	BALLAST, RIP-RAP	ACTIVE
00123	HOG HEAVEN MINE	OPEN PIT, UNDERGROUND, VAT LEACH	COPPER, GOLD, LEAD, OXIDES, SULFIDE, ZINC	ACTIVE
00151	WEAVER GRAVEL QUARRY	OPEN PIT	TALUS ROCK	ACTIVE
00167	MULTIPLE QUARRY PERMIT	MULTIPLE QUARRY SITES	ROCK	ACTIVE
00175	MULTIPLE QUARRY PERMIT	GENERAL QUARRY	ROCK	ACTIVE

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CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Introduction

A Growth Policy is a non-regulatory document created to "ensure the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience or order or the general welfare, and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of community development" (76-1-106 M.C.A.). A Growth Policy does so by working with community members to identify a collective vision and develop goals and policies to support and implement that vision over time. The Flathead County Growth Policy has fifty goals and over two hundred supporting policies that do just that. Some of those policies may be implemented by the Planning Office in the normal course of business, as land use applications undergo review. However, there are over one hundred policies that call for specific actions beyond the scope of daily application processing activities undertaken by the Planning Office. These policies call for things such as agreements with other governmental bodies, identification of lands suited for particular purposes, new countywide plans and new or expanded regulations. This chapter organizes those policies into categories and calls for the creation of an implementation plan by the County Commissioners and Planning Board. The Implementation Plan would achieve the goals of the growth policy in a reasonable timeframe. Land use maps are an integral part of the implementation strategy, and their recommended use is explained in this chapter. Existing instruments including subdivision and zoning regulations as well as neighborhood plans act as logical extensions of this strategy. New instruments should also be considered, and specific measures are suggested in this chapter. Public participation is one of the most important components of any implementation strategy; no new policies, plans, maps or regulations should be formally adopted until they have been publicly reviewed by the Planning Board and their recommendation forwarded to the County Commissioners in the manner set forth herein.

It is important to remember a Growth Policy is not a miracle cure for the ills of a growing community. Even the best Growth Policy has no impact if it cannot be implemented. In keeping with Chapter 1 of this document, regulations should protect public health and safety with minimal impact on personal freedoms. Implementing the Flathead County Growth Policy must achieve a balance. This chapter discusses various aspects of implementing the Flathead County Growth Policy and proposes techniques that are a reasonable "middle ground" between many competing interests.

The implementation tools described in this chapter are reasonable and appropriate suggestions for Flathead County based on numerous suggestions received from the public during the development of this Growth Policy document (see Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary).

PART 1: Categories for Policy Implementation

This section organizes various policies of the Growth Policy into categories based upon the type of action called for. A variety of plans, agreements, maps and regulations are listed below. The county will be able to more effectively deal with the ramifications of growth when the recommended documents are in place. The County Commissioners should meet with the Planning Board in the first six months after the growth policy has been adopted to establish priorities and create an implementation plan to be a part of the initial amendment (see Part 6 of this chapter). The implementation plan shall include a complete timetable for implementing the growth policy. The implementation plan and timetable for completion should be revisited following each Growth Policy update cycle, to review what has been accomplished and revise the strategy accordingly. Ultimately, the implementation plan and timetable for completion are determined by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners, and may evolve depending on the make-up of the Board over time.

PART 2: Public Process

The Flathead County Growth Policy does not address the specifics of every growth issue but rather creates a guiding framework that calls for detailed plans to be developed and incorporated over time, as appendices to this document. The list of plans that may be appended to the Flathead County Growth Policy includes (but is not limited to);

- **Development Predictability Plan**
- **Affordable Housing Plan**
- **Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
- **Trails Master Plan**
- **Transportation Plan**
- **Water Quality/ Flathead Basin Management Plan**
- **Public Facilities Plan**
- **Emergency Plan(s)**
- **Wastewater Management Plan**
- **Mineral Resource Extraction Plan**
- **Economic Development Plan**

All plans created in Flathead County should involve the public and be a reflection of the views of the residents. In order to accomplish this, the following process will be utilized:

1. **Guidance from Planning Board and Commissioners**: The Flathead County Planning Board and Flathead County Board of Commissioners will prioritize and guide planning projects in Flathead County and offer guidance to planning staff accordingly.
2. **Scoping Meetings:** The public must first be informed of the problem or problems and the manner by which the proposed plan will address these issues. This allows the public to determine if the proposed plan is an efficient and worthwhile

allocation of public resources. Meetings shall have opportunities for the public to provide comments and suggestions. Public meetings should be held county-wide at convenient times and locations and should be advertised on the County's website as well as in the local newspaper, and posted locally in public places including (but not limited to) post offices, convenience stores and/or libraries.

3. **Public Workshops:** As the draft plan is created, interactive public workshops will be conducted covering concepts and solutions being considered for incorporation into the plan. Workshops will allow staff and the public to refine ideas before they are presented in the draft.
4. **Public Comment on Draft:** After the document is created, a draft version will be released for public review and comment. Electronic versions shall be available online and paper versions at Flathead County libraries and the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office. The public will have an adequate amount of time (no less than 30 days) to read and comment on the draft plan, prior to formal consideration by the Planning Board.
5. **Planning Board Review and Revision:** The Flathead County Planning Board shall review and revise the draft plan as the Board deems appropriate and based on public comment received. This review will take place during a series of public workshops and at least one public hearing, following the procedural requirements set forth in Section 76-1-602 M.C.A.
6. **Final Public Review and Comment:** A final, revised version of the plan will be forwarded to the Flathead County Commissioners for their consideration. After the commissioners pass a resolution of intent to adopt, the public will have an opportunity to read and comment on the final plan, the timeline for which shall be established by the Commissioners.

PART 3: Land Use Maps

Land use maps are traditionally used to illustrate locations in a given area that have identified characteristics. They graphically present valued information such as boundaries, spatial relationships and various geographical characteristics. The Growth Policy utilizes land use maps in several ways. There are Officially Adopted Maps that become extensions of the Growth Policy. There are Illustrative Maps that indicate relatively specific areas where certain conditions exist. There are also Proposed Maps that are not yet in existence, but are suggested as a means to accomplish certain objectives.

Officially Adopted Maps

The following Officially Adopted Maps have been adopted as part of the Flathead County Growth Policy. They serve as visual representations of select parts of this document and are thus considered visual policy statements. They should be implemented and regarded the same as the written portions. Additional maps may be officially adopted as part of the Growth Policy in the future.

- **Designated Land Use Map (See enclosed map)** - This map depicts areas of Flathead County that are legally designated for particular land uses, including zoning districts and neighborhood planning areas. Further information on particular land uses in these areas can be obtained by consulting the appropriate zoning regulations or neighborhood plan document. The uses depicted are consistent with the regulations and individual plan documents. This map is a foundation for zoning and neighborhood plans and continues their legal basis. This map will be changed from time to time to reflect additional zoning districts, map changes and neighborhood plans as they are adopted and/or updated in the future.

Illustrative Maps

These maps illustrate areas of the county that have been identified as belonging in various categories. Initial versions of these maps are included in the Growth Policy and have been noted as being for "illustrative purposes only". The Planning Department will update these maps and provide additional maps as information becomes available. These maps are not definitive and are not to be used to legally classify a particular piece of real property. They can be used to indicate the likelihood of a particular condition existing on a particular site. The burden of proof will fall upon the owner or developer of a parcel to demonstrate the condition does not exist. The following maps have been provided as part of the Growth Policy:

- Map 2.1: Flathead Lands
- Map 2.2: Corporate Timber Lands
- Map 2.3: Agricultural Land Use
- Map 2.3(a): Agricultural Land Use (detail)
- Map 2.4: Groundwater
- Map 2.5: Slopes Analysis
- Map 2.6: Floodplain
- Map 2.6(a): Floodplain (detail)
- Map 2.7: Geologic Fault Lines
- Map 2.8: Wetlands
- Map 2.8(a): Wetlands (detail)
- Map 3.1: 2010 Census Designated Places

- Map 3.2: 2010 Population per Square Mile
- Map 3.2(a): 2010 Population per Square Mile (detail)
- Map 4.1: Existing Park and Recreation Sites
- Map 6.1: Transportation Network
- Map 6.2: Bike & Pedestrian Paths Network
- Map 7.1: Existing Septic Systems
- Map 7.2: Existing Wells
- Map 7.3: Fire Districts
- Map 7.4: Emergency Response Districts
- Map 8.1: Flathead Watershed
- Map 9.1: Sand and Gravel Resources
- Map 11.1: Existing Neighborhood Plans

Proposed Maps

- **Development Predictability Map** - The Flathead County Development Predictability Map (DPM) would be created by establishing a list of spatial criteria relevant to the seven elements of Flathead County listed in Chapter 1, then assessing the appropriate development density based on the importance of the criteria devised. The criteria, densities and number of categories would be developed through public input during a series of workshops, and would be subject to public review prior to being utilized in the mapping process. Clustering bonuses may be considered for those who contribute to the health, safety and welfare of Flathead County by dedicating as permanent open space critical lands such as floodplains, wetlands, areas of high groundwater, or other critical areas specifically identified in the DPM.

  The Development Predictability Map would provide a certain level of predictability to landowners, developers, neighbors, and staff during development review, and would allow flexibility in areas transitioning from rural to suburban.

- **Official Right-of-Way Maps** - Official maps are used to spatially identify rights of way that must be preserved in a growing community. One of the causes of increased traffic is a static transportation grid that forces more cars onto the same

roads. Areas where public utilities should be located to serve the public are identified, allowing landowners to plan accordingly. By planning areas of Flathead County where roads, trails and public utilities should be built to serve a growing community, the acquisition of rights-of-way can occur over time during the development process, rather than all at once through an expensive and undesirable condemnation process. An official map that plans for essential road, trail and public utility corridors would serve to eliminate requests for right-of-way easements on a project-by-project basis. Developers and landowners would consult the "official map" during the project planning process to determine whether any rights of way will be requested by Flathead County over time or as part of the review. Standards for county execution of road, trail, or utility construction once a certain amount of right of way is acquired should be included to insure that rights-of-way are used in a timely manner.

PART 4: Existing Land Use Instruments

Subdivision Review

The subdivision of land in Flathead County is and will continue to be regulated by the Flathead County Subdivision Regulations. Subdivision review implements the Growth Policy by ensuring healthy, safe and compliant development practices that do not unreasonably impact the residents of Flathead County. The regulations undergo periodic review to ensure continued compliance with the Montana Code Annotated as well as the policies cited above; the most recent revision went into effect on April 1st, 2011.

Local government review of subdivision is required under 76-3-501 M.C.A. Pursuant to 76-1-601(3)(h) M.C.A., growth policies in the State of Montana are required to contain statements explaining how the governing body will define, evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria identified in 76-3-608(3)(a) M.C.A. Accordingly, the Growth Policy should identify:

- **How the governing body will define impacts** - Spatial thresholds and criteria will be established and listed to define the impact of both major and minor subdivisions on the elements listed specifically in 76-3-608(3)(a) M.C.A. These thresholds and criteria will be included in the subdivision regulations and subject to public review.

- **How the governing body will evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions -** Each of the thresholds and criteria that are listed as definitions will be stated as presumptions of impact if the definition is met. All development applications meeting the definitions will be required to present evidence to overcome the presumption of impact. The governing body will consider evidence presented by the applicant and determine whether the applicant has overcome the presumption. This method of evaluating and making decisions

regarding the impact of proposed subdivisions places the burden of proof on the applicant, not the residents or representatives of Flathead County.

- **How the governing body will conduct public hearings on proposed subdivisions -** The Flathead County Planning Board, an authorized agency of the governing body (76-1-101 M.C.A.), will conduct public hearings compliant with the requirements of 76-3-605 M.C.A. Meetings will generally be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order, and will contain the following items, not necessarily in this order:

    1. Reading of the public notice for hearing.
    2. Approval of minutes.
    3. Report by staff.
    4. Presentation by applicant/representative.
    5. Agency comments.
    6. Public comments.
    7. Staff/Applicant rebuttal**.**
    8. Board questions of staff, applicant.
    9. Motion.
    10. Second to motion.
    11. Board discussion, questions.
    12. Action on the motion.
    13. Public comment on any matters not specifically on the public notice for hearing.
    14. Old business.
    15. New business.
    16. Motion to adjourn
    17. Second to the motion.
    18. Action on the motion.

Zoning

Land use zoning in existence at the time the Growth Policy is adopted shall remain in place unless modified by an approved land use application. Current and future zoning districts may include, but are not limited to the following use classifications:

- Agriculture
- Timberlands
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public
- Corridor
- Planned Unit Development Overlays
- Neighborhood plan specific zoning in existence at the time of adoption of this document.

Neighborhood Plans

Flathead County has a long tradition of recognizing Neighborhood Plans to be the most grass root form of local participation and influence. All Neighborhood Plans that were adopted as part of the 1987 Master Plan are hereby incorporated as addenda to the Flathead County Growth Policy. Neighborhood Plans created or updated between the adoption of the 1987 Master Plan and the 2007 Growth Policy were similarly recognized as formal addenda to the 2007 document, and the same goes for plans created or updated between 2007 and the 2012 Growth Policy update (reference Chapter 11 of this document for a detailed list of recognized Neighborhood Plans). Existing neighborhood plans adopted under the Growth Policy should be reviewed for consistency with the provisions of Chapter 11 of this document, as well as the goals and policies found throughout. Implementation of neighborhood plans must be subsequently reviewed for consistency in promoting the goals and policies of the plan, especially as a plan is updated or revised over time.

PART 5: Possible Land Use Instruments

The following are suggested as potential instruments for use by Flathead County in implementing the Growth Policy. Each has its own benefits and can be utilized in specialized circumstances to achieve desired results.

Special Consideration Areas

Areas of Flathead County with unique situations pertaining to public health, safety and general welfare will be treated with special consideration. Each area will be delineated using criteria open to public scrutiny and subject to the health, safety and general welfare goals of the Flathead County Growth Policy. Special consideration areas should include, but not be limited to:

- Glacier International Airport
- Glacier National Park
- Gateway areas
- Flathead County Landfill
- Designated floodplain
- Lakes and lakeshore protection areas
- Wetlands
- Critical wildlife habitat

Regulations applicable to "Special Consideration Areas" should be the minimum necessary to mitigate the impact of growth and development. Special consideration areas should not be misconstrued to prohibit development, but should be used to create impact mitigating standards and/or incentives to promote appropriate and compatible development in these areas.

Capital Improvement Plan

Flathead County must use a systems approach to identify and prioritize maintenance and infrastructure improvements relative to all other county and regional service delivery programs and needs. A comprehensive capital improvement plan (CIP) including, but not limited to, buildings, roads, public services and facilities as well as parks and recreation areas must be created to compare needs with existing and future sources of revenue. Most CIPs are based on performance and identify what improvements and programs are needed to provide a level of service goal or to meet public demands and expectations.

A typical CIP document involves a short term (five year) and long term (total) list of facilities and needs. The CIP is used to develop an annual budget and to determine funding gaps to maintain a certain level of service or performance. A CIP should contain an administrative section that prioritizes projects based on goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy, and a fiscal plan to identify costs for planning, design and construction of each CIP project. Identifying project costs and scales assists coordination of financial arrangements as well as construction timelines. Prioritizing capital projects aids the planning process by identifying areas that will have infrastructure capacity to accommodate certain types of growth.

Impact Fees

During the 2005 legislative session, Senate Bill 185 was passed enabling jurisdictions in Montana to utilize impact fees to mitigate actual impacts on the local infrastructure resulting from development. Before Flathead County can utilize impact fees, a study must be completed to determine the actual fiscal impact to local facilities and services of each lot in a new development. To meet the established goals of the Flathead County Growth Policy, impact fees shall be assessed that are justified, reasonable and accurate.

Special Improvement Districts

Special improvement districts establish a way for those residents who will benefit from an improvement to community infrastructure to pay for the improvement without burdening all residents. The authorization to create rural improvement districts (districts outside of incorporated areas) comes from 7-12-2102 M.C.A. State law clearly establishes the projects and purposes for which improvement districts may be created. Flathead County can create rural improvement districts for infrastructure improvements that will benefit a limited number of county residents and are specifically authorized in 7-12-2102 M.C.A.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing is an implementation tool that utilizes future revenue generated by a public improvement project to secure up-front financing. Tax increment financing is

authorized for a variety of projects in 7-15-4282 M.C.A., and any use of tax increment in rural Flathead County must comply with all relevant state statutes**.**

Performance / Impact Zoning

Adopted under traditional zoning laws, this program regulates the impact of a use rather than the use itself. For example, there would be no strictly residential, commercial or industrial zoning districts. Instead, a developer would have to comply with a series of prescribed performance standards that would address the amount of traffic generated, the number of access points, the amount of dust, odor or smoke emitted, fire protection, height, setbacks, views, landscaping and screening, sewer and water plans, drainage, etc. resulting from a proposed development This type of zoning has been utilized to implement certain existing neighborhood plans.

Development Rights

Development rights may be considered a commodity that can be bought and sold. Some communities have set up systems to facilitate the transfer of these rights. The systems have proven difficult to use and may not be well suited to an area the size of Flathead County, particularly without the participation of the incorporated areas and without County-wide zoning in place. These systems will evolve over time and it may become advisable for the county to consider this as an option for the future.

Community Character Based Land Use Systems

Community character based land use systems attempt to define and map general land use types, such as urban, suburban and rural. They then go on to describe the type of development that may be compatible with each land use type, in terms of size and density but not in terms of use. A fundamental objective of this type of system is to preserve the character of an area and enhance it where possible; to allow development, but to assure that development is consistent with character. Community character based land use systems establish standards and criteria for land development that will maintain and enhance specific character types (urban, suburban and rural) in designated areas. These systems have been successfully utilized in Wyoming, Washington and Colorado, areas that are also concerned with maintaining the identity of rural communities (see Chapter 1: The Character of Flathead County).[1]

PART 6*:* Monitoring Implementation

Implementation of the Flathead County Growth Policy must be monitored for the document to succeed in serving the public. Monitoring compliance with goals and policies of the document, as well as execution of the implementation timeline, is a critical component of the document.

[1] Duerksen, Christopher & James Van Hemert. True West: Authentic Development Patterns for Small Towns and Rural Areas. American Planning Association; Planners Press, 2003.

Growth Policy Update

At a minimum of every five years, the Planning Board shall prepare a draft revised Growth Policy. The revised Growth Policy should include updated demographic and housing statistics, existing characteristics and projected trends. Market fluctuations, environmental events, shifts in custom and culture, and all other changes in the community should also be documented. Goals and policies should be revised as needed to accurately reflect the present day needs of Flathead County, and new goals and policies suggested to capture evolving trends. The update should include a review of implementation techniques, identifying new techniques needed to implement goals and policies as well as those implementation techniques no longer relevant or appropriate and that should be eliminated.

Public meetings shall be held to present revisions to the public and gather public opinion. After a thorough public engagement process, the document shall be forwarded to the Planning Board for consideration (or following the appropriate process as determined by current state statute). The Planning Board shall consider revisions and make changes as needed before making a recommendation to the County Commissioners.

PART 7: Growth Policy Amendments

A plan must be allowed to function as intended before an accurate measure of its effectiveness may be made. However, all plans must have a degree of flexibility. Various events could potentially create a situation where certain goals, policies and/or implementation techniques are no longer adequate or appropriate. If this occurs prior to the regularly scheduled updates, the Flathead County Growth Policy may be amended. Amendments may be proposed by initiative from governing bodies or citizens. It is also contemplated that an Initial Amendment shall be needed to correct any oversights, flaws or unintended consequences that become apparent as the Growth Policy is put in place. Additionally, it is assumed that from time to time changes will need to be made to the Officially Adopted Maps. Amendments shall be adopted by the following methods.

Initial Amendment

The Initial Amendment shall be proposed to the County Commissioners by vote of the Flathead County Planning Board in the seventh month following adoption of this Growth Policy by the County Commission. This amendment shall correct any perceived flaws and oversights in the document, remedy any unintended consequences and include final, or updated, versions of maps and other items referenced in the Growth Policy. The Planning Board shall also call for written submissions for inclusions in the Initial Amendment from the public. All such submissions shall be received prior to the end of the fifth month after this Growth Policy has been officially adopted. A public hearing or hearings on the Initial Amendment shall be conducted by the Planning Board prior to its recommendation to the County Commissioners for adoption.

The Flathead County Planning Board completed an initial amendment to the Growth Policy document in December of 2007. The amendment included the adoption of an implementation plan (Appendix 'C') offering a detailed analysis of the 262 policies found within the document.

Amendments Initiated by Governing Bodies

To continually protect and serve the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare of all residents of Flathead County, planning staff may, at the request of the County Commissioners or majority vote of the Planning Board, initiate an amendment to the Flathead County Growth Policy. Amendments shall be subject to standard public review procedures including public notice of hearing in a newspaper of record, preparation of findings of fact, planning board hearing and recommendation and decision by the governing body. Findings of fact shall be based on criteria for growth policy amendments found later in this chapter.

Citizen Initiated Amendments

Circumstances may arise when residents in Flathead County feel the growth policy is no longer adequately protecting the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (pursuant to 76-1-106 M.C.A.), and may feel revisions are warranted. If this occurs, an application requesting a specific revision may be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Office for consideration. Such written request for revision must address the criteria outlined later in this chapter, and will be reviewed by the Planning Board and County Commissioners as a plan amendment.

Map Changes

Officially adopted maps are essentially "snapshots in time" of the county. As such, it will become necessary to amend those maps to reflect actual changes over time. Other types of changes may also become advisable. Map changes should be considered by the Planning Board on a quarterly basis, or as staff time and resources permit. Possible changes to the Officially Adopted Maps may be suggested in writing to the Planning Office at any time for consideration during the next regularly scheduled 'Map Change'. Such suggestions must include verifiable evidence necessitating the proposed change. As part of the 2012 Growth Policy update, all Officially Adopted Maps will be available in digital format on the Flathead County Planning and Zoning website, ensuring the public has continual access to the maps – as well as the corresponding text - of the document. Keeping the maps in digital format will also increase the frequency at which they may be updated in the future.

Growth Policy Amendment Criteria

The following criteria shall be used when considering amendments to this document:

- Does the amendment affect overall compliance of the growth policy with 76-1-601, M.C.A.?
- Is the amendment based on existing characteristics and/or projected trends that are substantially different from those presented in the most recent update?
- Does the amendment create inconsistencies within the document?
- Does the amendment further protect and comply with the seven elements of the public's vision for the future of Flathead County?
- Has the proposed amendment undergone a sufficient process of county-wide public participation and review?

CHAPTER 11: NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

Introduction

Montana state law allows any county or municipality in Montana to prepare a growth policy, pursuant to 76-1-106(1) M.C.A. While the growth policy is designed to be a comprehensive policy document, it may contain more site specific neighborhood plans pursuant to 76-1-601(4). Each neighborhood plan must be consistent with the growth policy. Land use decisions guided by a neighborhood plan should reflect a community's vision of how they intend to grow in the future. In the absence of a neighborhood plan, land use decisions are guided by the growth policy and existing regulatory documents, as applicable. The intent of this chapter is to provide a general framework to facilitate the preparation, revision and update of neighborhood plans in Flathead County.

Goal

G.45 A clear majority of landowners and residents desiring a neighborhood plan in areas of the County presently without a neighborhood plan have the ability to develop a neighborhood plan.

Policies

P.45.1 Develop expedited and simplified subdivision and development review processes for lands within the jurisdiction of an approved neighborhood plan that has been reviewed for consistency with the growth policy.

P.45.2 Develop a guide to assist landowners and residents who desire neighborhood plans to develop a plan that implements the character of the neighborhood and fulfills the needs identified by the community.

P.45.3 Ensure a clear majority of both landowners and acreage represented within the established boundary of a neighborhood plan [described in Step 1 of the neighborhood planning process] are in support of a proposed neighborhood plan by following the process outlined in this chapter. Steps 1 through 6 of the neighborhood planning process provide a mechanism by which the Planning Board can recommend denial of a plan to the commissioners due to lack of support if a clear majority of landowners within the planning area boundary do not support the plan.

P.45.4 Ensure checks and balances throughout the neighborhood planning process by establishing an option whereby a plan adopted by the County Commissioners may be repealed should written protest be submitted within 90 days following the adoption date by 40% of landowners within the neighborhood plan area whose names appear on the last completed assessment role, or by landowners representing 50% of the acreage included within the neighborhood plan boundary.

P.45.5 Establish a Commission-approved advisory committee for each approved neighborhood plan, comprised of landowners and residents representing diverse elements of the plan area.

Goal

G.46 Honor the integrity and purpose of existing neighborhood plans, respecting the time, effort and community involvement that has taken place.

Policies

P.46.1 Ensure previously existing neighborhood plans remain in effect until revised by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners by incorporating those existing plans into the Growth Policy as addenda deemed consistent with the existing Growth Policy.

P.46.2 Enable the Flathead County Planning Board and the Planning and Zoning Office to periodically review existing neighborhood plans to determine whether the County and the landowners in the neighborhood plan area should update the neighborhood plan.

P.46.3 Initiate a neighborhood plan amendment and/or update when the County Commissioners approve a recommendation by the Flathead County Planning Board that a neighborhood plan should be updated.

P.46.4 Apply expedited subdivision and development review processes to existing neighborhood plan areas.

PART 1: Neighborhood Plans in General (See Goals 45 and 46).

The Flathead County Growth Policy contains existing characteristics, projected trends, goals and policies for county wide issues. Neighborhood plans provide more detailed information regarding land uses, policies and issues relevant to that specific neighborhood or geographic area. They guide the community from present to future land use through patterns of development consistent with the vision of the community as well as goals, policies and maps.

The size of an area contained in a neighborhood plan is dependent on the community interest, character, physical and environmental features, as well as institutional and regulatory boundaries. The boundaries of a neighborhood plan area may change over time as revisions, annexations or other actions by cities or other governmental agencies occur. Refer to Step 1 of the planning process below for more on establishing new neighborhood plan boundaries.

Neighborhood plans may contain a variety of elements that work toward identifying, preserving and protecting local characteristics that define a community while planning for and accommodating inevitable growth. Neighborhood planning involves citizens, landowners, local stakeholders, community organizations and businesses who work collaboratively to address future land uses and service delivery. Neighborhood plans provide an opportunity to foster a sense of community by identifying current trends and projections for the future. Generally speaking, a neighborhood plan should consider the elements found within the growth policy [pursuant to 76-1-601 M.C.A.], as appropriate and where applicable given the varied size and character of communities in Flathead County. Elements that may be included in a neighborhood plan (as applicable) are listed below, in no particular order:

- Authorization and background
- Plan area boundaries
- Essential community characteristics
- Community vision
- Existing conditions:
    - Land uses
    - Population
    - Housing needs
    - Economic conditions
    - Local services
    - Public utilities and facilities
    - Natural resources and the environment
    - Transportation
    - Sand and gravel resources
    - Land ownership (public/private)
- Projected trends for the elements listed above
- Issues and opportunities
- Goals and policies
- Land use categories
- Existing and future land use map(s)
- Coordination statement
- Implementation strategy
- Monitoring plan (or goals and policies)
- Support information
    - Maps, graphs, charts and tables
    - Other appendices as necessary
- Amendment procedures

PART 2: The Neighborhood Planning Process (See Goal 45)

The neighborhood planning process outlined below applies to communities pursuing a new neighborhood plan following the adoption of this growth policy. Refer to Part 4 of this chapter for more on the review of existing neighborhood plans.

On January 13th, 2010 the Flathead County Commissioners adopted a general policy statement clarifying the process a community should follow when initiating a new neighborhood plan. The policy statement provides guidance to members of the public when requesting County assistance in the development of a new neighborhood plan, to ensure the planning process is followed and encourage a high level of public participation in the planning process itself. The following identifies the steps to be followed to initiate a new neighborhood planning process:

1) Community members approach the Commissioners to request the Planning Offices' assistance informing the community about neighborhood plans, the planning process and what is involved in the creation of a new neighborhood plan.
2) Should the Commissioners approve the request, the Planning Office then provides information to the community through a series of educational meetings/workshops on neighborhood plans and the planning process. Over the course of these meetings planning staff will gauge the level of support for the creation of a new neighborhood plan based on written comments, surveys, verbal feedback and other forms of quantitative information gathering.
3) If there is adequate interest in beginning the neighborhood planning process, and the Planning Office has sufficient resources and personnel to devote to the effort, planning staff will approach the Commissioners to request further resources be devoted to assisting the community in developing a neighborhood plan. The Planning Office will develop a work plan specific to the community's request with the support and approval of the Commissioners. The approved work plan will include periodic updates to the Commissioners to ensure transparency in the process, and keep the governing body abreast of any developments as the neighborhood planning effort progresses.
4) The neighborhood planning process moves forward following the six steps outlined in this chapter of the Growth Policy.

The creation of a new neighborhood plan consists of six general steps. They include:

1) Initial neighborhood plan organizational meeting;[1]
2) Base-lining existing conditions;
3) Drafting the community vision, characteristics and goals;
4) Preparing the draft plan;

[1] A reasonable effort should be made to publicly notify all landowners within a proposed planning area of the initial meeting, including posting notice on the County's online calendar, in the local newspaper(s), in a variety of public places in and around the community, and mailing written notice of the initial meeting to each of the landowners in the proposed planning area using a County-generated mailing list.

5) Plan approval and adoption; and
6) Ongoing monitoring the implementation of the plan.

It is imperative that each step of the process outlined above allow ample opportunity for public input and engagement; this process begins with full notification of the affected residents and landowners. The neighborhood planning process – and public involvement strategy - is summarized by Figure 10.1 found in the following pages. It is anticipated County planning staff will work with communities to provide guidance and assistance throughout the planning process. The success of the planning effort depends on the amount of meaningful public participation.

Organizational meetings (**Step 1**) are needed to determine community interest in the neighborhood planning process and define the geographic area to be included. During these initial meetings a steering committee will be formed, with membership representative of the land ownership within the proposed neighborhood plan area. Community ownership and buy-in of the organizational framework at the front end of the process is especially critical. To be successful, the entire planning process should be inclusive and transparent by allowing all residents and the general public the opportunity to participate. Results from this initial step should be a clear definition of the neighborhood planning area under consideration as well as an outline of the organizational approach to be used to generate the plan.

The boundary of the neighborhood plan area should be established by the community members during the initial organizational meetings. Plan areas should be large enough to guide and accommodate multiple types of growth, but small enough to be identified as "neighborhoods" where residents share common interests, needs and goals. Neighborhood plan areas that are too small will not be able to identify areas appropriate to accommodate necessary growth and a variety of land use types, while neighborhood plan boundaries that are too large are more likely to encompass multiple groups with unique interests and goals that might have greater difficulty reaching a consensus during the planning process.

"Neighborhoods" should consist of residents who similarly identify with a particular area of Flathead County, and who are most likely to be influenced by future growth in that area. For example, residents living in Kila are only minimally affected by growth in Marion. Somewhere between the two areas is a boundary separating those who identify themselves as living "just east of Marion" and "just west of Kila." That cultural boundary would serve as a logical starting point for establishing the neighborhood plan area boundary for either of these locales. Cultural boundaries may cover a smaller geographic area with a high population density (such as "Lakeside"), or may cover a larger area with a more dispersed population (such as "Lower Valley"). Either way, these factors are important to consider when discussing neighborhood plan boundaries with affected community members.

Step 2 of the process involves research and mapping to establish baseline data, otherwise known as existing conditions. Baseline data sets the tone of a plan by establishing current

conditions and identifying areas of constraint or special opportunity. Existing land uses and development density patterns (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, forest lands, etc.) need to be identified and mapped, along with public facilities and infrastructure (e.g. streets, utilities, schools, parks, etc.). Any physical, topographical or environmental constraints (e.g., floodplains and high groundwater, steep slopes, geo-hazard areas, wetlands, etc.) should also be identified as part of the baseline process. This may include any limiting resources such as groundwater availability, access and/or utility constraints, which may affect land use densities and configurations. State, federal and tribal lands that fall outside the jurisdictional planning authority boundary should be identified and mapped as well. Finally, baseline data should acknowledge applicable provisions of the Growth Policy and any regulatory documents that must be considered in the development of a plan. Once the baseline conditions have been established, the planning process can move forward.

The community's vision and goals are formalized in **Step** 3 of the neighborhood planning process. The vision statement expresses the aspirations and goals of the community, identifying what an 'ideal' future might look like for a neighborhood. It should state how the neighborhood's worthwhile qualities are to be protected while allowing for growth and development. The vision will guide important decisions in the formulation of the plan, so it must be widely agreed upon and supported by members of the community. Goals should be developed that support the vision, and these goals should express the community's perspective on issues such as land use, development density, transportation, preservation, affordable housing, implementation and others addressed by the Growth Policy. Each goal will require associated policies and action items that will lead to achievement. Combined, these elements will support the vision and address pressing issues and opportunities as identified by the community.

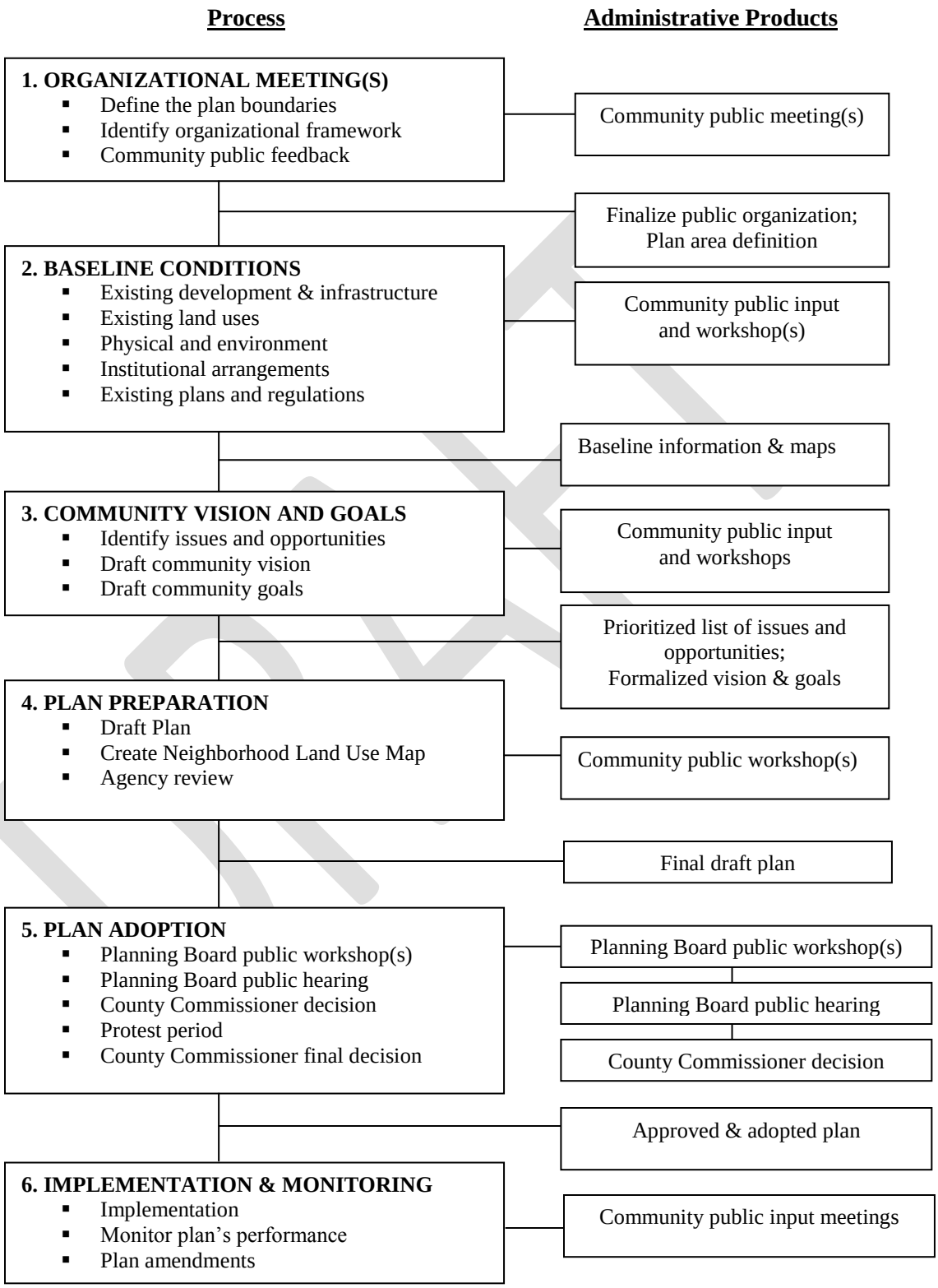
Step 4 is the finalization of the draft plan utilizing the goals, policies and action items, as applicable. Development guidelines and standards will be addressed. A Neighborhood Plan Map is required to spatially portray planned land uses (refer to Part 3 of this Chapter). The land use map should interrelate with and clearly reflect the plan's text, goals and policies. The plan should also include an implementation section that establishes a monitoring process to evaluate the plan's performance and identify when there is a need for plan revisions, amendments and updates. Procedures for amending the plan, similar to those found in the Growth Policy, must be included. The final draft of the neighborhood plan document should be submitted to public agencies and service providers for review and comment. After comments received have been addressed, the final draft plan should be submitted to the Flathead County Planning Office for formal consideration.[2] As part of the formal review process, written notification of the draft plan's completion and status will be mailed by the County Planning Office to all landowners within the plan boundary area appearing on the most recent tax assessment list.

[2] Formal consideration of the plan requires that an application and fee – when applicable - be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Office, whereby a file is created and a Planning Board public hearing date is set.

The approval and adoption process is **Step 5**. The Planning Board will hold a public workshop - or multiple workshops - to become familiar with the draft plan, followed by a public hearing during which time the Planning Board will review the document in its entirety, listen to public comment and make a recommendation on the draft plan to the Flathead County Commissioners. After the Planning Board public hearing, the draft plan - with recommendation(s) from the Planning Board - shall be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final consideration. There is typically a public comment period following their action before a final decision is reached. A 90-day public protest period follows the Commissioner's final decision.

The final step, **Step 6**, implements the plan and monitors its effectiveness. Periodic adjustments may be made to plan components. Private, parcel driven amendments without full consideration of the integrity of the neighborhood plan should be discouraged, and the plan's amendment process should make this clear. However, all neighborhood plans (both existing and new) should contain clear and fair procedures for considering a privately initiated amendment. At minimum, any revisions to the plan - publicly or privately initiated - should follow the steps outlined in Part 4 of this Chapter.

Figure 11.1
Overview of Neighborhood Planning Process



PART 3: Land Use Categories (See Goal 45)

Neighborhood plans should accommodate growth and guide it toward areas of the community that have been designated as appropriate. In Step 2 of the process outlined in Part 2 of this chapter, the community identifies areas both appropriate and inappropriate for growth. Land categories should be used to designate where growth should occur based on this information. Land categories are indicative of where certain land types, uses and densities are appropriate in order to protect public health, safety, morals, convenience, order or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106 M.C.A.).

Neighborhood plans might not incorporate every land category contained in this chapter. However, it is intended that neighborhood plans use as many categories as are appropriate to accommodate all facets of growth unique to a planning area. After Step 2 of the process outlined above, the local community should have a better idea of where growth should go based on criteria such as appropriate roads, efficient access to county services, commercial needs and environmental constraints. The process of designating land categories to guide growth toward appropriate areas should be a part of the public process undertaken in conjunction with Step 3 and 4 outlined in Part 2 above. The three-step process outlined below will be used to identify combinations of land type (Step A), land use (Step B) and land use intensity (Step C).

Existing plans must similarly accommodate and guide all appropriate types of growth; however, existing plans do not have to follow the categorization methods outlined below. See Part 4 of this chapter for more on the review of existing neighborhood plans.

Step A: Designate the general land type.

Neighborhoods should begin by creating a map that designates where the following general land types would be most appropriate. A community must accept some level of additional growth as a reality, and collectively decide where that growth would be most appropriate and best accommodated. Again, not all land types will be utilized by every plan, and will depend on unique circumstances and the existing character of an area. A community should decide where the following land types would be most appropriate based on the factors identified in Step 2 of the neighborhood planning process. Land types include:

> REMOTE – Remote land is mostly undisturbed from its natural state. There are few roads and access is generally limited. Examples are large wetlands and swamps, forests, mountainsides and meadows. Remote land is generally characterized by very little development of any kind and the intensity of use is very low. Limited industrial activities could be found in areas with appropriate resources (gravel extraction, timber or agricultural processing).
>
> RURAL – Rural Land is pastoral countryside and usually incorporates a variety of agricultural or silvicultural uses and small to medium sized woodlots. Average

density is low and large tracts of land common. Residential subdivisions are unusual. Roads are occasionally gravel. Limited industrial activities could be found in areas with appropriate resources (gravel extraction, timber or agricultural processing).

SEMI-RURAL – Semi-rural Land is still largely pastoral countryside, but it includes more non-agricultural uses and pockets of higher density. Semi-rural Land has a predominantly rural feel though it has more intense land use and tracts tend to be medium sized. Residential subdivisions and commercial developments are scattered and in the distinct minority. Roads are paved. Limited industrial activities could be found in areas with appropriate resources (gravel extraction, timber or agricultural processing).

SUBURBAN – Suburban Land is mostly residential, though it is characterized by large lots (as opposed to tracts) and can have commercial centers that create small community focal points and serve to reduce traffic. Road interconnectivity allows more efficient transportation. Neighborhoods have roadways constructed to handle anticipated volumes of residential traffic, are located relatively convenient to emergency service, and have appropriate access to water and efficient septic drainfields.

VILLAGE URBAN – Village Urban Land is a combination of high density residential and commercial land uses. The area is usually fairly small and commercial enterprises are typically located on a single street. Industrial uses are typically confined to appropriate areas. This land type would designate a strong desire to see new or improved public facilities such as sewer, water, curb and gutter as well as local services such as fire and ambulance. Neighborhoods have roadways constructed to handle higher volumes of residential and commercial traffic, convenient emergency services, and appropriate access to community water and sewer systems.

TOWN URBAN – Town Urban Land is a larger area of high density residential and commercial land uses. There may be several streets primarily dedicated to commercial uses, with industrial uses still confined to appropriate areas. This land type would have existing public facilities and services and a strong desire to see those improved and increased. Neighborhoods have roadways constructed to handle the highest volumes of residential and commercial traffic, emergency services, curb and gutter, storm water systems and access to public water and sewer systems.

Step B: Assign appropriate uses in each land type.

Begin with each designated land type. Based on future access to facilities and services, existing environmental constraints, future community needs (such as gravel, public lands access, etc.) and the established goals of the community, designate and map land uses within each land type. For example, intersections or streets with the best visibility and

accessibility should typically be mapped for commercial land uses, while areas near recreation and schools should typically be mapped for residential land uses. Plans should incorporate as many of the uses as is appropriate based on local and county-wide needs outlined in the Growth Policy. Utilization of PUD density bonuses may be appropriate in certain land use categories. Land use types are described as follows:

PUBLIC FACILITIES - 'Public Facilities' designates areas for new or existing public facilities such as parks, public golf courses, government buildings and complexes, schools, hospitals, police and fire stations, and other uses considered public or quasi-public such as libraries, churches and public utilities. Great care should be given when considering the location of these facilities. Future land use and transportation patterns will be influenced by the location of this type of land use. While various types of public facilities may be appropriate in almost every land type, problems can arise when they are located in close proximity to non-compatible uses.

GOVERNMENT- 'Government' designates lands under state or federal land management agency administration. Examples include lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, U. S. National Park Service, U.S Corps of Engineers, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. It should be noted this list is not exhaustive and may contain other state and federal agencies as necessary.

TRIBAL – 'Tribal' includes areas controlled and managed by Native American Indian tribes. These lands may be part of a Reservation or Tribal Trust Land.

FOREST LAND – 'Forest Land' designates privately owned lands that will be primarily used for commercial silvilcultural activities, with the exception of Christmas tree production (which is considered an agricultural use). This use primarily includes contiguous land in parcels larger than 15 acres that are capable of producing timber for harvest in commercial quantities, and are producing timber unless the trees have been removed through harvest or by natural disaster, including but not limited to fire.

Single family residential clustering and PUD density bonuses may be appropriate for this category when such development allows for the preservation of some forest land acreage, providing that such development is located outside of sensitive environmental areas and can meet MT DEQ standards.

AGRICULTURAL LAND – 'Agricultural Land' designates privately owned lands that will be primarily used for agricultural purposes. This use promotes the continuation of agricultural practices, including but not limited to the growing and harvesting of crops, hay and grains as well as livestock production. This category is intended to protect agricultural land from encroachment of intense residential and commercial uses. Animal feedlots, horticultural plantations and nurseries,

Christmas tree farms and other agrarian operations are all compatible with this land use designation, as is limited residential.

Single family residential clustering and PUD density bonuses may be appropriate for this category when such development allows for the preservation of some agricultural land acreage, providing that such development is located outside of sensitive environmental areas and can meet MT DEQ standards.

RESIDENTIAL LAND – 'Residential' designates lands that will be primarily utilized for residential uses and ancillary purposes. Residential clustering and PUD density bonuses may be appropriate for this category when lots are arranged so as to minimize visual impact or preserve sensitive environmental features. Manufactured housing must be considered and allowed in areas where appropriate. Residential lands should have adequate access to roads, parks, basic commercial services, local schools and employment centers wherever possible.

AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST INDUSTRIAL – 'Agricultural and Forest Land Industrial' designates parcels of land in Rural, Semi-Rural and, in limited instances, Remote land type areas that are suited for a specific and appropriate industrial use. This could include parcels that contain known resources for mineral extraction. It could also include parcels that have existing industrial uses considered appropriate, such as grain and feed operations and processing plants. Normally there would be a density buffer created to preclude problems associated with adjacent, incompatible uses.

BUSINESS INDUSTRIAL – 'Business Industrial' applies to areas of industrial use and provides general locations for new and existing industrial development, normally in proximity to major transportation facilities and with existing or anticipated access to appropriate water and sewer facilities. The uses should be reviewed for safety and aesthetics when adjacent to other dissimilar uses or when visually impacting neighborhoods. Examples include, but are not limited to, manufacturing and material processing centers; mineral extractive processing facilities when not in proximity to residential areas; local and regional product distribution centers, etc.

AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LAND COMMERCIAL – 'Agricultural and Forest Land Commercial' designates parcels of land in Rural and Semi-Rural land type areas that are suited for a specific and appropriate low density commercial use. It would include parcels that have existing commercial uses that are considered appropriate to agriculture and forestry uses such as equipment sales and repairs, feed stores, riding arenas, etc.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL – 'Neighborhood Commercial' designates areas suitable for low density retail and service commercial uses that primarily serve local patrons and do not include more intensive general commercial uses. "Access to commercial services" mentioned throughout this Growth Policy refers

to this type of land use. Examples include neighborhood grocery stores, small professional business offices, barber and beauty shops, restaurants, gas stations and other similar neighborhood retail and service uses.

Developments in this land us type should be sized and designed to fit the surrounding neighborhood and community character. Mixed-use developments are appropriate when scaled to match the local character (such as 2nd story apartments over small-scale businesses mentioned above). Such areas should be developed as nodes around important intersections or existing focal points and not configured in a "strip" commercial pattern. Any development along a major roadway would be subject to County guidelines for highway corridors.

GENERAL COMMERCIAL – 'General Commercial' designates suitable land for higher intensity retail and service commercial uses that serve a broader community and tourist economy. These uses include, but are not limited to, shopping centers, banks, restaurants, professional office centers, and other larger retail and service uses. Hotels, motels, campgrounds and RV parks are all generally suitable in this category. Mixed commercial-residential uses where the residential portion is subordinate to the commercial development would also be appropriate. Commercial developments should be configured as centers or nodes and "strip" commercial configurations should be avoided. Only communities with significant daily traffic and population densities should consider this category as appropriate.

Step C: Assign appropriate intensities to individual land uses.

The third and final step is to determine the appropriate intensity of land use and assign a corresponding density. Intensity considerations are primarily for residential and commercial land uses. Appropriate intensities are determined by focusing on elements such as buffers between incompatible land uses, encouraging a diverse base of residential and commercial lot sizes, and locating higher densities closer to adequate roads, emergency services and commercial centers adequate to serve them. Land intensities are described as follows:

LARGE TRACT – 'Large Tract' allows for a maximum of one dwelling unit per forty (40) acres. It intended to control the intrusion of incompatible uses in Remote and Rural land types including, but not limited to, residential development. Clustering or PUD bonuses are available.

MEDIUM TRACT – 'Medium Tract' allows for a maximum of one dwelling unit per twenty (20) acres. It intended to control the intrusion of uses in Remote and Rural land types that are not compatible with those environments including, but not limited to, residential development. Clustering or PUD bonuses are available.

SMALL TRACT – 'Small Tract' allows for a maximum of one dwelling unit per ten (10) acres. It intended to control the intrusion of uses in Remote and Rural

land types that are not compatible with those environments including, but not limited to, residential development. Clustering or PUD bonuses are available.

LARGE PARCEL – 'Large Parcel' allows a maximum of one dwelling unit per five (5) acres. This land density category is intended to promote low residential densities in suitable areas. The predominant residential lifestyle is detached single-family dwellings, which are either full-time or seasonal in nature. Multiple family dwellings are not appropriate in this category.

SMALL PARCEL – 'Small Parcel' allows a range of one dwelling unit per one (1) acre to one dwelling unit per five (5) acres. This density category is intended to promote detached single-family residential development at medium densities and promote areas within unincorporated Flathead County that are already developed with similar densities. Multiple-family dwellings are not appropriate in this category.

LARGE LOT – 'Large Lot' permits a range of single-family development on half acre to one (1) acre lots. This category is intended to be in proximity to public services. Multiple-family dwellings are not appropriate in this category. Residential development is intended to be in conjunction with public or community water systems.

SMALL LOT – 'Small Lot' permits a range of single-family and multiple-family residential development densities, including duplexes, townhomes and apartment complexes ranging from two (2) to six (6) dwelling units per acre. Such residential development is intended to be in conjunction with public or community water and sewer systems. Mixed commercial and residential uses may be appropriate when the commercial uses are ancillary to the residences.

HIGH USE – 'High Use' permits a range from six (6) to eighteen (18) dwelling units per acre. Residential uses within this category include single and multiple-family dwellings including duplexes, townhomes, trailer courts and apartments. Such residential development is intended to be in conjunction with public or community water and sewer systems. Mixed commercial and residential use complexes can be appropriate when the commercial uses are ancillary to the residences.

LIGHT BUSINESS – 'Light Business' allows commercial and industrial uses that are limited in size to no greater than 2,500 sq. ft. per establishment and a total of 10,000 sq. ft of total development size. Parking areas are restricted to a maximum of 20 spaces per establishment.

MEDIUM BUSINESS – 'Medium Business' allows commercial and industrial uses that are a maximum of 5,000 sq. ft. per establishment and a total of 20,000 sq. ft. of total development size. Parking areas are restricted to 30 spaces per establishment.

HEAVY BUSINESS – 'Heavy Business' allows all sizes of commercial and industrial enterprises. There are no restrictions on sizes of parking areas.

PART 4: Existing Plans (See Goal 46)

There are 19 approved neighborhood, local or regional land-use plans within the unincorporated areas of Flathead County. The intent of these plans is to capture the vision of local communities and provide more specific guidance for future development. Some of these plans are old and may require revision or updating to reflect the current conditions and changing visions of the neighborhood areas.

The following is a list of plans that have been previously adopted by Flathead County and are hereby incorporated into the Growth Policy as addenda to it, along with the most recent date the plan was adopted by Flathead County.

Table 11.1
Existing Plans and Dates of Most Recent Adoption

Plan	Date most recently adopted/amended
Ashley Lake	10/14/2011
Bigfork	06/02/2009
Canyon	05/17/1994
Columbia Fall City-County Master Plan	08/28/1984
Helena Flats	09/13/2005
Kalispell City-County Master Plan	02/06/1986
Labrant-Lindsey Lane	04/07/1998
Lakeside	12/1/2010
Little Bitterroot Lake	01/24/1996
North Fork	06/12/2008
Quarter Circle/LA Ranch	10/26/2005
Riverdale	02/21/2008
Rogers Lake	04/16/1997
South Woodland/Green Acres	04/02/1997
The Amended Stillwater Neighborhood Plan	11/05/2003
Two Rivers	06/28/2005
West Valley	04/09/1997
Whitefish Area Trust Lands	06/08/2005
Whitefish City-County Master Plan	02/06/1996

These neighborhood, local or regional land-use plans have unique characteristics, community visions, goals and policies. Some of these plans are implemented through a single residential zoning district, such as Ashley Lake or North Fork. Others use a more traditional approach, combining multiple land use categories to reflect the land use characteristics of a community (such as Bigfork). In order to provide for adequate public

participation, review of the existing plans listed above should follow the process outlined below.

1. **Guidance from Planning Board and Commissioners**: The Flathead County Planning Board and Flathead County Board of Commissioners will prioritize and guide the review of existing plans in Flathead County and offer guidance to planning staff accordingly.
2. **Public Workshops:** As the revised draft is being created, interactive workshops will be conducted covering concepts and solutions being considered for incorporation into the plan. Workshops may allow staff, landowners and residents living within the neighborhood plan's boundaries to discuss and refine ideas before they are presented in the revised draft.
3. **Comment on Draft:** After the document is created, a draft version will be released for review and comment. Electronic versions shall be available online and paper versions available at the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office. The public will have an adequate amount of time (no less than 30 days) to read and comment on the plan, prior to formal consideration by the Planning Board.
4. **Planning Board Review and Revision:** The Flathead County Planning Board shall hold a public workshop(s) as well as a public hearing on the plan and review and revise the draft plan as the Board deems appropriate.
5. **Final Public Review and Comment:** A final, revised version of the plan will be forwarded to the Flathead County Commissioners for their consideration. After the commissioners pass a resolution of intent to adopt the plan, the public will have an opportunity to read and comment on the final, revised plan, the timeline for which shall be established by the Commissioners.

PART 5: Neighborhood Plan Implementation and Monitoring

Following the creation and approval of a neighborhood plan, a land use advisory committee should be established. The committee should consist of residents and land owners within the plan area who represent a cross section of the community. The function of the committee is to provide insight and recommendations on land use applications and other planning issues affecting their particular community with input from the public.

The land use committee should facilitate implementation as identified in each respective neighborhood plan. Implementation occurs through regulatory documents such as official maps, subdivision, zoning, flood plain and/or lakeshore regulations. The committee should assist planning staff, the Planning Board and the Commissioners in reviewing and commenting on these regulations. Setting up the implementation section of the plan is critical to the success of the ongoing planning process.

Existing neighborhood plans should be reviewed and evaluated periodically to determine whether a plan continues to represent the vision and goals of a community and, if not, whether it should be updated accordingly. When an existing neighborhood plan

undergoes an update, it is reasonable to assume that any corresponding implementation tools – such as a zoning district– would also be reviewed and undergo an update to reflect changes made to the neighborhood plan document. It is important to note that while a neighborhood plan may be implemented through the creation of a zoning district, a neighborhood plan revision and/or update is a separate process; changes to an existing zoning district which may implement a neighborhood plan must follow the process for a zoning text and/or map amendment outlined in Section 76-2-205 M.C.A. This separate zone change process involves a series of public hearings before both the Planning Board and County Commissioners, and allows ample time for public participation and comment, similar to the neighborhood plan update process. However, amendments to an existing zoning district would only occur after an update to a neighborhood plan has been reviewed and approved by the Commissioners, and would not be considered as part of the neighborhood plan update following the process(es) outlined in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 12: STATEMENT OF COORDINATION

Introduction

The Growth Policy does not have sole jurisdiction over all lands within Flathead County; there are multiple planning jurisdictions present throughout the County. Lands under the jurisdiction of the National Forest Service, National Park Service, Salish-Kootenai Confederated Tribes, or cities of Whitefish, Columbia Falls and Kalispell are not subject to the goals and policies of the Flathead County Growth Policy. However, growth in one area of Flathead County has the potential to impact other areas of the valley as people, goods and services move between jurisdictions. It is essential that Flathead County have a plan for coordinating with other jurisdictions on land use issues pertinent to protecting the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106 M.C.A.).

Goal

G.47 Growth and development around Columbia Falls that respects the cultural, geographic and historic heritage of the city while providing essential facilities and services that protect and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the natural and human environment.

Policies

P.47.1 Uphold the provisions of the existing interlocal agreement between Flathead County and the City of Columbia Falls.

P.47.2 Maintain communication on planning issues adjacent to the interlocal agreement boundary.

P.47.3 Review the provisions of the interlocal agreement for adequacy, accuracy and relevancy annually, and revise as necessary.

P.47.4 Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Columbia Falls.

Goal

G.48 Growth and development around Kalispell that respects the cultural, geographic and historic heritage of the city while providing essential facilities and services that protect and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the natural and human environment.

Policies

P.48.1 Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell appropriate for high density, urban development.

P.48.2 Share plans for guiding growth away from hazardous and/or unhealthy lands.

P.48.3 Identify areas most appropriate to be served by Kalispell or county sewer and water services. Share plans for extension of sewer and water facilities to increase the predictability of the community development process.

P.48.4 Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell appropriate to preserve through open-space development design incentives or acquisition of land for natural and/or recreation areas.

P.48.5 Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell likely to be annexed and appropriate for development to urban density, service and facility standards.

P.48.6 Discourage urban-density development that lacks urban services *and* facilities.

P.48.7 Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Kalispell.

Goal

G.49 Growth and development around Whitefish that respects the cultural, geographic and historic heritage of the city while providing essential facilities and services that protect and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the natural and human environment.

Policies

P.49.1 Promote County representation of those residents outside the City of Whitefish, while giving consideration to both the interests of those residents as well as the growth needs of the City during county planning processes.

P.49.2 Request comments from the City of Whitefish agencies on subdivision, zoning and other land use issues within 2 miles of city limits and give consideration to those comments during the county review process.

P.49.3 Protect and preserve the many unique opportunities present in the natural and human environment surrounding the City of Whitefish.

P.49.4 Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Whitefish.

Goal

G.50 Communication and coordination during the development process, where appropriate, that respects the cultural heritage and jurisdictional integrity of the Flathead Indian Reservation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Policies

P.50.1 Develop an intergovernmental agreement clarifying and codifying all jurisdiction, communication and coordination issues on lands within both the Flathead Indian Reservation and Flathead County as well as tribally-owned lands outside the Flathead Indian Reservation.

P.50.2 Communicate on development occurring near and/or on lands designated as culturally significant to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

P.50.3 Provide for cultural clearance of development sites in Flathead County where defined Indian artifacts are uncovered during development, as part of the intergovernmental agreement.

Goal

G.51 Federal and state land management that considers and respects the custom and culture of Flathead County residents.

Policies

P.51.1 Actively participate in the process of planning for federal and state lands, communicating regularly on issues of importance to Flathead County residents and providing input to state and federal agencies on the effectiveness of existing plans.

P.51.2 Regularly review and update the accuracy and relevance of the "Flathead County Natural Resource Use Plan, Custom and Culture Document."

P.51.3 Pursue a "statement of coordination" with state and federal land management agencies, clarifying and codifying relevant jurisdictional issues including, but not limited to, fire response, fuel reduction, emergency services, road usage and access, water resources, timber, agriculture, noxious weeds and recreation access.

P.51.4 Consider relevant state and federal planning documents when reviewing development proposals that will impact federal or state lands.

PART 1: Municipal Jurisdictions (see Goals 46 through 48)

Columbia Falls

Columbia Falls is a growing community facing many challenges and opportunities in the years ahead. Many changes are occurring adjacent to city limits in areas that culturally and geographically identify with the City of Columbia Falls. It is appropriate that the City of Columbia Falls act to protect the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106 M.C.A.) in these areas. Under authorization by the Interlocal Cooperation Act (7-11-104 M.C.A.), the Flathead County Commissioners signed an interlocal agreement on January 12th, 2005, granting the City of Columbia Falls planning jurisdiction over an designated area adjacent to the existing city limits. The interlocal agreement contains provisions for future cooperation, coordination and communication between parties and an annual meeting to review the boundaries of the agreement.

Kalispell

Kalispell continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Flathead County, having experienced population growth nearing 40% between 2000 and 2010.[1] With a large portion of that growth taking place through annexations, the City of Kalispell is rapidly expanding into formerly rural areas of Flathead County. This transition from rural or suburban to urban land uses has affected both the City of Kalispell and Flathead County. The City of Kalispell's Annexation Policy (adopted by Resolution No. 5484A on March 7, 2011) offers multiple options for annexation from the County into the City limits. Annexation may occur through the process of direct annexation, a petition of waiver of right to protest annexation, the creation of an annexation district or a City Council directed annexation of a wholly surrounded area. Following annexation, the City may immediately provide urban services such as law enforcement, rapid emergency response, street cleaning, solid waste pickup, public sewer and water facilities, parks, and building safety oversight; however, different annexation options enable a variety of scenarios that may not result in all of these service options being immediately available to an annexed area. While annexation may be a welcome option for County residents interested in urban services and development potential, many residents of Flathead County are not interested in being enveloped so quickly by a rapidly growing city. Conversion to high density residential or commercial land uses results in a variety of impacts and additional needs of residents. Annexing and/or developing lands simply because sewer and water lines can be engineered to reach them does not always serve the health, safety and welfare of both new and existing residents. Over the past decade the

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 PL 94-171, March 2011; Census 2000 Summary File 1, 2001.

City of Kalispell has annexed over 4,000 acres of land,[2] expanding the City's jurisdiction over delivery of public services such as emergency response, police and fire protection, and public water and sewer services; this rapid expansion of service area has the potential to result in a reduced level of service for both new and existing City residents. The City's growth and expansion into areas formerly located within the County's jurisdiction highlights the need for these two jurisdictions to work collaboratively on issues of land use so these impacts may be anticipated and addressed accordingly.

It is essential that the City of Kalispell and Flathead County coordinate and cooperate on issues of growth into rural areas. Some development that occurs under the jurisdiction of Flathead County should meet urban standards to prepare for inevitable annexation. Other development in rural areas should preserve rural character, whether annexed or not, to provide a healthy, natural environment for future generations of city and county residents. Coordination and cooperation between Kalispell and Flathead County would lead to easier identification of lands appropriate for certain types and densities of development, now and in the future.

Whitefish

The City of Whitefish has a unique character and economy based on a history of railroading and tourism. Over the past decade real estate and construction have emerged as additional drivers of the Whitefish economy, although their influence has been tempered following the economic downturn beginning in 2008. As the city continues to grow and expand, the Whitefish economy depends in part on maintaining it's unique "mountain ski resort" character. However, some of the major drivers of the Whitefish economy that are closely linked to the character of the town are actually located just outside the city limits, including the Whitefish Mountain Resort, Lost Coon Lake, Blanchard Lake and many of the lakefront properties along Whitefish Lake itself. When economic success is inextricably linked to preserving and maintaining the unique character of a municipality and its immediate surroundings, it is important for land use planning and implementation efforts in the County to give consideration to the municipality's growth planning as well as the desires of residents living within those areas.

During the process of planning for lands adjacent to the City of Whitefish, it is imperative both the City and the County work together to protect the quality of life of current residents while anticipating future growth patterns of the city and the ability of County government to provide services and facilities to accommodate these needs.

[2] Conversation with and supporting documentation provided by Sean Conrad, Senior Planner, City of Kalipsell on 11/22/2011.

PART 2: Tribal Jurisdictions (see Goal 49)

The Flathead Indian Reservation contributes approximately 28,296 acres to Flathead County.[3] Approximately 24,315 acres of this total are owned by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and are not under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. Fee lands owned privately by a member of any tribe are not under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. During the writing of the 2006 Growth Policy, Flathead County Planning and Zoning staff met with planners from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Much of the discussion centered on understanding jurisdictional issues pertaining to tribal lands. It was obvious during that meeting that both Flathead County and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes would benefit from an intergovernmental agreement codifying jurisdictional issues.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes are interested in protecting and preserving their rich heritage, and Flathead County is in a position to aid that interest. Opportunities are available for coordination and cooperation during the development process on issues such as wetlands, floodplains, cultural protection, subdivision, road naming etc. on non-tribal owned lands within the Flathead Indian Reservation and Flathead County. Growing development pressures throughout Flathead County may eventually impact the small percentage of lands held by tribal interests. Given this likehood, it is better to be prepared with knowledge and understanding rather than wait to address the issues piecemeal as they arise.

PART 3: Federal and State Jurisdictions (see Goal 50)

Federal and state lands contribute a substantial percentage of the overall acreage of Flathead County (see Chapter 2: Land Uses). Land use planning on federal and state lands is the jurisdiction of the federal and state government, respectively. Plans created to manage federal or state lands for the best interest of all citizens have the potential to impact the local environment and economy in a variety of ways. While residents of one county or area may not dictate management practices on public lands, it is essential that local residents communicate the local consequences of federal and state management practices. Flathead County's role should be to educate federal and state planners and decision makers about local impacts related to land management practices on public lands. Flathead County created a document to fulfill this roll in the summer of 2005 [adopted by Resolution No. 1777C]. Entitled the "Flathead County Natural Resource Use Plan, Custom and Culture Document", this document was written to explain the importance of natural resources to the residents of Flathead County, and was intended to be used by federal and state planners in consideration of local needs. By communicating these local needs, Flathead County can actively protect the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare of its residents, pursuant to 76-1-106 M.C.A. The "Custom and Culture Document" was last amended on February 7th, 2008, and continues to undergo review and revision to ensure the plan remains an accurate and relevant portrayal of citizen interests in Flathead County.

[3] Natural Resources Information System, February 2011. Tribal & BLA land ownership.

APPENDIX A: BASELINE ANALYSIS

Introduction

A 26% growth rate in Flathead County during the 1990s and continued rapid growth has emphasized the necessity to update the current Flathead County Master Plan. To comply with Montana State statutes, specifically the adoption of Senate Bill 97, Flathead County has updated and replaced the existing Master Plan with a Growth Policy. Section 76-1-601 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and Senate Bill (SB) 97 requires a Growth Policy to include maps and text describing jurisdictional areas, information on land use, population, housing, economic conditions, local services, public facilities and natural resources.

"Comprehensive planning" is a broad attempt at understanding the past and present situation in a community. The purpose of the Baseline Analysis Appendix to the Growth Policy is to provide the public with information regarding social and economic trends and an overview of existing conditions.

PART 1: Flathead Valley History

Approximately 12,000 years ago, the glaciers of the last Ice Age created the lakebed of Flathead Lake. Human activity at Flathead Lake dates back at least 5,000 years. The Salish, Kootenai and the Pend d' Orielle tribes came from the Pacific Northwest to live near Flathead Lake thousands of years ago.

The United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 that extended from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains. The area included the land in Montana east of the Continental Divide. Land to the west of the divide remained in the Oregon Country which had been claimed and defined by Euro Americans in the late 1700s.

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, fur traders trapped to supply the European demand for fur and traded goods with the Native Americans in the Mission Valley and other portions of northwestern Montana. Throughout most of the 1800s, Pend d' Oreille, Kootenai, Salish and members of other Native American tribes lived in or passed through northwest Montana. The Mission Valley was the "lower" Flathead Valley and the Flathead Valley was known as the "upper" Flathead Valley.

The Flathead Indian Reservation, located at the south and west end of Flathead Lake, was created in 1855 by the Stevens Treaty. Most Native Americans were forced to move to the reservation, opening up the area to increased white and non-native settlement.

Between 1857 and 1860, the British and American government surveyed the Canadian/American International boundary (the 49th parallel). Fur trading was the mainstay for most early non-native occupants of the region until the discovery of gold in British Columbia in 1860. The discovery of gold in Canada brought miners, freighters and others in hope to prosper through northwest Montana. A few settled in the upper and lower Flathead

Valley to begin raising cattle, horses and to farm. Forest still covered the valley floor. Farmers and ranchers began clearing timber from the valley bottom to create farmland suitable for raising livestock and produce.

During the mid and late 1800s, exploitation of natural resources prompted enactment of several laws including the Timber and Stone Act of 1878 that was an attempt to control timber harvest and quarrying on public lands. The law was ineffective as it allowed wealthy individuals and corporations to purchase large land holdings for a minimal price. Much of the public land converted to private and corporate ownership because of the Timber and Stone Act. Having the land taken out of public ownership allowed these corporations and/or individuals to harvest timber and hold the land for speculation.

Years of over-hunting, over-trapping and over-fishing caused big game, fish and furbearer populations to drop to historic lows during the 1890s and early 1900s. This resulted in additional regulations to limit the number of species that were allowed to be harvested.

The first mapping of Flathead Valley occurred in the early 1870s. Montana was not yet a state, but the area that is now the State of Montana had a population of about 2,500. There were very few people living in the Flathead area until the first significant in migration of white settlers to northwest Montana which occurred in 1883, following the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad line to Ravalli, north of Missoula.

The area north and west of modern day Kalispell was the first area settled in the upper Flathead Valley. The settlement of Ashley, an early settlement near today's Meridian Road and Seventh Street West in Kalispell, consisted of a few residences, general store, post office, blacksmith shop, saloon and drugstore. Another of the earliest settlements was Demersville, established by Jack Demers in 1887, along the Flathead River approximately 3 miles southeast of today's Kalispell at the "head of navigation" of the Flathead River. Demersville had a store, post office, town hall, hotel, stable, saloons, real estate offices, a weekly newspaper, church and a temporary military outpost.

Montana became a state in 1889. By this time, several other smaller communities had been established throughout the upper valley, including Somers, Creston, Bigfork, Montford, Selish, Egan and Kila. By 1890, Flathead County, which included present day Lincoln and Lake Counties, had a population of about 3,000. Plans to extend the railroad line from St. Paul to Seattle continued to bring people to the valley. Farmers and loggers settled in addition to the first land speculators. The anticipated coming of the railroad through Marias Pass started a construction boom in the valley and initialized the establishment of the town of Kalispell. Kalispell was established in March of 1891. The railroad was completed through the pass and the first construction train arrived in Kalispell in January of 1892. The westerly extension of the railroad brought many immigrants into the Western United States, which significantly contributed to the settlement of the "Upper" Flathead Valley.

In 1893, Flathead County was created out of Missoula County, which included all of northwestern Montana, including what is presently Lincoln and Lake Counties. Kalispell

was declared the county seat the following year. The Flathead County Courthouse was constructed in Kalispell in 1903.

The Flathead and Lewis and Clark Forest Reserves were created in 1897. This is now a major portion of Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest. The Forest Service, created in 1905, took over the management of these lands from the General Land Office. Glacier National Park was established five years later in 1910.

Columbia Falls and Whitefish were also settled in anticipation of the railroad crossing the continental divide. The residents of each city were hoping to be located at the railroad division point. The original town site of Columbia Falls was platted during the 1890s but was not incorporated as a city until 1909. The City of Whitefish was established in 1903 after the railroad was extended from Columbia Falls to Whitefish. In 1904, the railroad division point was relocated to Whitefish. Kalispell became the governmental and trade center while Whitefish became a railroad industry community. Columbia Falls was a community supported mainly by the timber industry.

Wood products were in high demand into the early 1900s and lumber mills throughout the valley were operating at capacity. Construction of new sections of railroad increased demand for wood products for railroad ties and housing for workers. In 1901, the Great Northern Railway contracted with lumberman John O'Brien to build a lumber mill at the head end of Flathead Lake. The mill later, in 1906, became the Somers Lumber Company that produced railroad ties, which included the treatment process. Timber was the first product to be exported from the area after the railroad was completed.

During the last decade of the 1800s and early 1900s, several other lumber companies were established to supply the needs of the railroad. In 1891, State Lumber Company was established and operation began in 1906 near the Whitefish River. During the late 1890s, F.H. Stoltze came to the Flathead Valley. Stoltze had been building stores along the Great Northern railroad line as it was constructed through North Dakota and Montana. In 1909 Stoltze, Edward Konantz, William Kiley and W.C. Neffner formed Enterprise Lumber Company. Between 1910 and 1930, Stoltze also formed Empire Lumber Company. Both the Enterprise and Empire Lumber Companies were constructed and operated in the Kila area. In 1918, State Lumber Company moved operations from along the Whitefish River to the Half Moon site northwest of Columbia Falls. Construction of the F.H. Stoltze mill also began in 1918 at the Half Moon site and began operation in 1923. F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company acquired State Lumber Company in 1935. Several other lumber companies began operating including the Kalispell Lumber Company.

Prior to the arrival of the railroad, transport of goods within the valley was accomplished mostly by ferries and barges on the Flathead River. The east and west sides of the valley were connected only by ferries until the "Old Steel Bridge" was constructed across the Flathead River east of Kalispell in 1895. Existing roads consisted mainly of wagon trails that were impassible much of the time due to weather conditions. After the railroad moving the mainline to Whitefish, roads were being improved to move goods to the railroad for shipping. The first automobiles arrived in the valley by rail in 1905. The railroad

encouraged development along its route and after the establishment of Glacier National Park in 1910, the railroad served to promote tourism as well.

Lincoln County was formed in 1909 and Lake County was formed in 1923, both out of the original Flathead County, substantially reducing the size of Flathead County.

During the early 1920s to the beginning of World War II, federal monies stimulated efforts to construct and improve roads and highways. The highway over Marias Pass was completed in 1930 and the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park was completed in 1933. The highway connecting Missoula to Kalispell was completed in 1932. Improvements to the road and highway infrastructure provided jobs for thousands of workers during the early depression years and significantly opened up the Flathead Valley to tourism and other types of development. Accessibility increased when the Flathead County Airport was completed in 1943. The name was changed to the Glacier International Airport, although the call letters, FCA, are still used.

By 1940, the timber industry had transitioned into mechanized logging methods and the depression had brought decreased demand for wood products. Several smaller mills ceased to operate and others greatly reduced production.

With the onset of World War II in December of 1941, men were enlisting in the Armed Services and women began entering the workforce performing jobs formally done by men. It is estimated that 30,000 Montanans enlisted between 1941 and 1944.

Demand for agricultural goods greatly increased during the war years and the years following. Much of the fertile land in the valley bottom had been harvested of timber and converted to farmland. Nearly one-fourth of the workers in Flathead County worked in agriculture and livestock production accounting for over 40 percent of gross income in the valley.

Following the war, major economic generators began to spread throughout the county including increased demand for agricultural products, power generation, tourism and a renewed demand for wood products.

In 1944, due to wartime demand for power, Congress authorized the construction of a 34-mile long reservoir with a 564-foot high dam and hydroelectric plant. Construction began in 1948 on the first major federal dam built since the beginning of World War II. The Hungry Horse Dam was constructed 5 miles southeast of the South Fork of the Flathead River's confluence with the main stem of the Flathead River. The dam and reservoir sites were surrounded by National Forest lands thus creating a great recreational amenity for the Flathead area and the entire region, are as well serving the demand for power generation. Construction of the dam, reservoir and power plant provided thousands of jobs and initiated the development of the small communities of Hungry Horse, Coram, Martin City and Columbia Heights. Completed in late 1953, the Hungry Horse Dam continues to provide power benefits for the entire Pacific Northwest region.

Clearing the timber for the reservoir also created vast supplies of timber to be processed at local mills. In addition to several other mills already operating in the valley, D.C. Dunham moved the D.C. Dunham Lumber Company from Minnesota to Columbia Falls in 1945 and renamed it to Plum Creek.

Big Mountain Ski Resort opened in 1947 marking the beginning of a new tourism industry in the valley. Tourism now surpassed the railroad industry as the primary industry i the Whitefish area and had become a major contributor to the valley's economy. In addition, a period of major industrial development was about to begin that would have major impact and benefits far outside of the area.

In 1952, one year before dam was to be completed Anaconda Copper Mining Company announced that they would build its $45,000,000 aluminum reduction facility two miles downstream from the new Hungry Horse Dam. The facility began operation in August of 1955 and has undergone several expansions and technological improvements since it was constructed.

The 1950s through the 1970s experienced significant expansion of the wood products industry. The early 1980s however, brought an economic slowdown to the timber industry in northwest Montana. Some small lumber mills ceased to operate due to decreasing timber supply from public lands because of environmental concerns and changing policies for management of public lands.
Despite the slowdown in the wood products industry, the Flathead Valley has continued to grow significantly through the 1980s to the present time.

Structural shifts of recent decades in the global and national economy play a key role in economic conditions of a local economy. National and regional trends show increases in the service sector, education and health care, tourism, communications and electronics. Locally, the Flathead Valley has experienced significant expansion in all of these sectors.

In 1967, Flathead Valley residents recognized a need for localized higher education. The Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) was established, filling that requirement. FVCC has moved and expanded with the demands that continued growth placed on the school. There was an additional development added at FVCC in 2006.

In 1979, Veratech, a corporation established in California in 1978, moved operations to Kalispell and was renamed to Semitool. The company had two employees when it moved to valley. Semitool develops and manufactures equipment for use in fabrication of semiconductor devices worldwide. In 1985, the company moved to a new 60,000 square foot facility on West Reserve Drive north of Kalispell, where most of its manufacturing takes place. During various times of the year, Semitool employs over 1,000 people.

Through the 1990s, the valley experienced accelerated growth, which continues. As the agricultural and the wood products industry continues to decline, the coming of shopping

malls, large retail stores, expansion of medical facilities, tourism, real estate and retirement opportunities appear to be sustaining the economy of the valley.

Sources and Suggested Reading
Flathead County Library, Montana Historical Society,
Montana Historical Society Publication, "Looking Back: A Pictorial History of the Flathead Valley, Montana" by Kathryn L. McKay

PART 2: Land Uses

Flathead County is located in the northwestern corner of Montana and is the third largest county in Montana encompassing approximately 3,361,230[1] acres or 5,252 square miles. Surrounded by mountains on the north, west and east sides and bordered by Flathead Lake to the south, the valley itself is approximately 15 miles wide and 20 miles long. The Continental Divide defines the east boundary and the Canadian American International Border is the northern boundary of the county.

Flathead County is centrally located between several major cities. Spokane is approximately 200 air miles to the west or about a 4-hour drive from Kalispell. Calgary in Alberta, Canada lies north within 200 air miles. Missoula is approximately 100 miles south and Great Falls, 150 miles to the east. Glacier International Airport is also centrally located in the valley and the three incorporated communities of Flathead County. U.S. Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 93 connects the valley to Interstate 90 to the south and Interstate 15 to the east.

The land in Flathead County is managed by four entities: federal government, state government, Salish-Kootenai tribal government and private property owners.

Federal Lands

The Federal government manages approximately 78.6% of the total land in Flathead County. The USDA Forest Service is responsible for management of National Forests (including wilderness areas) and Flathead County contains portions of four National Forests and two Wilderness Areas. Flathead National Forest (including portions of the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas) has approximately 1,875,545[2] acres within Flathead County that contribute nearly 55% of the total county acreage. Other National Forests that have lands within Flathead County are Kootenai, Lewis and Clark and Lolo (totaling approximately 115,390[3] acres). Combined, the National Forests and Wilderness Areas contribute approximately 59% of the total acreage of Flathead County.

National Forests are not the only land in Flathead County managed by the federal government. Totaling approximately 1,008,306[4] acres, Glacier National Park is split

[1] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[2] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[3] Montana Natural Resource Information System
[4] National Park Service, Glacier National Park

between Flathead County and Glacier County. Approximately 635,214[5] acres of Glacier National Park contribute 19% of the total land mass of Flathead County. Other Federally managed lands in Flathead County include the Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge (7,885 acres[6]), Swan River National Wildlife Refuge (1,568 acres[7]) and the Flathead, Batavia, McGregor Meadows, Smith Lake and Blasdel Waterfowl Production Areas (totaling 5,189 acres[8]). Combined, Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas contribute an additional 14,642 acres of land in Flathead County.

State Lands

The State of Montana manages a substantial acreage within Flathead County. Lands managed by the DNRC Trust Lands Management System account for approximately 129,670 acres of Flathead County. Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages another approximately 3,208 acres.

Tribal Lands

The Flathead Indian Reservation encompasses approximately 29,864 acres of Flathead County. Approximately 24,315 acres of this total are owned by the Salish/Kootenai Confederated Tribes and are not under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. Another approximately 3,024 acres of the Flathead Indian Reservation within Flathead County are non-tribal owned private fee lands.[9] Any non-tribal owned fee lands not owned by members of any Indian tribe would be under the jurisdiction of the Flathead County Growth Policy. An additional 2,520 acres of Flathead County within the Flathead Reservation are state-owned lands.

Private Timber Land

A substantial portion of the private property in Flathead County is used for timber production. The three largest corporate timber landowners, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber, Plum Creek and Montana Forest Products together account for approximately 9.2% (310,000 acres) of the total land area in Flathead County. Land owned by the three largest corporate timber operations represents approximately 52.7% of the private land in Flathead County. Many small operations exist as well throughout Flathead County contributing additional acreage to the private timberlands category. Although many of the private timberland owners generously allow public access to their land, these lands remain private. Private timberlands provide multiple positive benefits for Flathead County. In addition to the economic aspects of timber production and material products, these timberlands provide watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and other values.

[5] National Park Service, Glacier National Park
[6] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/losttrail/
[7] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/swan/
[8] http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/wmd/
[9] Some of these lands could be owned by individual Tribal members.

Agricultural Land

In the 21st century, a substantial portion of the land in Flathead County is still used for agriculture. In 2002, approximately 40% of the private land (234,861 acres) in Flathead County was being farmed.[10] There were approximately 1,075 individual farms, with the majority of these farms (78%) being under 179 acres in size. Over half the farms in Flathead County had annual sales of less than $2,500.00. These numbers indicate that a large portion of the farms in Flathead County are small hobby farms and are not the primary source of income for the residents. However, in 2002 there were approximately 98 farms that were over 500 acres in size and approximately 115 farms that had annual sales of over $50,000. These farms are more likely to be the primary occupation of the landowner and represent a substantial portion of the acreage in Flathead County.

Industrial Land

Flathead County currently has approximately 194,660 privately owned acres with regulated land use[11]. Many of these lands are located around or between the business centers of Flathead County[12]. Of the 194,660 privately owned acres with regulated land uses, only 311 acres are specifically designated for uses commonly defined as industrial. A limited quantity of land results in higher prices and creates difficulties for businesses seeking efficient locations.

Commercial Land

In 2001, there were 3,279 private, non-farm businesses in Flathead County employing approximately 29,075 people.[13] Only two years later (2003), there were 3,594 private non-farm establishments employing approximately 29,906 people.[14] Current land use regulations allow commercial uses in a variety of designated areas. It is difficult to define exact acreages of existing commercial designations because of varying definitions of commercial uses between zoning districts. There are approximately 938 acres of "Business" zoning. An additional approximately 500 acres are designated "Business Resort". An additional 392,771 acres of private property in Flathead County exists on which land use activity is unregulated by Flathead County.

Residential Land

In 2005, 535 new residential lots came on the market in rural Flathead County (see Table AA.2.1). The number of lots created in 2005 represents 1,928 new acres of residential land from 2004.

[10] USDA 2002 Census of Agriculture
[11] This includes some Federal and State land that is included in the North Fork Zoning District
[12] Primarily Bigfork, Kalispell, Evergreen, Whitefish and Columbia Falls
[13] http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30/30029.html
[14] http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/cbpnaic/cbpsect.pl

Table AA.2.1
Flathead County Lots Created: 2000-2005 [15]

Year	Lots Created[16]	Total Acreage Subdivided[17]
2000	260	3,030
2001	326	1,659
2002	517	3,386
2003	592	2,081
2004	894	2,644
2005	535	1,928
Total	**3124**	**14,731**
Average per year	521	2,455

Flathead County contains a variety of growth density designations, some initiated by the County and some initiated by the citizens. Some areas are covered by neighborhood plans, such as The Canyon, West Valley, Lakeside and Bigfork, while other areas are designated in accordance with the existing Flathead County Master Plan. Flathead County currently contains approximately 305,670 acres of land with density designations[18]. Table AA.2.2 shows the acreages with density designations in Flathead County from 1980 to present. All areas of Flathead County were undesignated in 1970.

Table AA.2.2
Lands Currently Regulated 1980-2005

Year	Total Acreage Zoned	Percent change
1980	44,230	--
1990	60,844	38
2000	305,318	401
2005	305,670	0

It is not known how many dwelling units are contained in each designation, making it nearly impossible to determine full development potential. Many areas are not currently fully developed, leaving potentially thousands of acres that could be developed.

PART 3: Open Space Land Uses

Conservation Easements

To protect sensitive areas, a landowner may choose to put land into a conservation easement. Conservation easements permanently prohibit unlimited residential or commercial development, subdivision and uses or practices that would be harmful to agricultural, wildlife, scenic values, or other important values that the land currently sustains. A conservation easement is recorded with the deed to the property and remains

[15] Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office subdivision database.
[16] Number of lots does not include lots created using an exemption from subdivision review such as family transfer or court ordered split.
[17] Acreages do not include land divided using an exemption from subdivision review such as family transfer or court ordered split.
[18] This includes all acreage that is under the jurisdiction of a neighborhood plan and does not include scenic corridor or city zoning districts. This number includes some federal and state lands that are within the jurisdiction of neighborhood plans.

in force regardless of future changes of ownership. Conservation easements allow landowners to continue owning and using their land and to sell it or pass it on to their heirs. A conservation easement does not have to provide public access, or include an entire property nor does it preclude all use or development.

Some of the major areas recently protected by conservation easements include McWennegar and Weaver Sloughs and Foys Bend. These areas have long been recognized for their multiple conservation values. The wetlands areas protect water quality and provide valuable wildlife, waterfowl and fish habitat. The easements protect about 1,470 acres, which include a significant amount of prime farmland.

In late 2000, The Nature Conservancy negotiated an agreement with North Fork landowner, Tom Ladenburg for a 1,227-acre conservation easement on the Rocky Bar O, the only working ranch in the North Fork. Approximately 512 of the ranches 1,800 acres were already protected under an easement with the U.S. Forest Service. This property is the largest tract of private land in the North Fork, representing nearly 10% of the private property in the area and lies adjacent to the North Fork of the Flathead River mainly on river bottomlands. The easement includes open hay meadows, riparian areas and forestlands. The Rocky Bar O Ranch easement provides prime wildlife habitat and protects a critical travel route for wolves and bears as well as elk, deer, moose, mountain lions and other wildlife that travel from the river bottom to the mountains of Glacier National Park. The North Fork has the highest density of grizzlies recorded in the lower 48 and as many as four wolf packs, including the original "magic pack" which was the first naturally occurring wolf pack to repopulate the area on its own.

Another easement of great significance was recorded by Plum Creek in 2000 near McGregor and Thompson Lakes and in the Thompson River corridor. The easement lies mostly in Lincoln and Sanders County with 13,519 acres in Flathead County.

It is difficult to track and calculate the total area of Flathead County that is protected by conservation easements. Several organizations and agencies deal with and negotiate conservation easements in Flathead County. A consolidated list is not available. Three main organizations negotiate these easements, which include the Montana Land Reliance, Flathead Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy.

Conservation easements are filed through the Flathead County Planning Office as well as through negotiation with the Montana Land Reliance, the Flathead Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy. Table AA.3.1 shows the location of the majority of these easements.

Table AA.3.1
Conservation Easements listed with Flathead County – partial list

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS
1981	KALISPELL-WEST FOYS LAKE	HARRINGTON & BIBLER	FLATHEAD COUNTY	60	FOREST, GRASSLAND, LAKE, PUBLIC RECREATION
1986	KALISPELL-EAST EGAN SLOUGH	ROBOCKER	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	40	RIPARIAN & WETLAND HABITAT
1988	WHITEFISH-WEST WEST OF CITY	BATTIN	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	20	RARE PLANT SPECIES
1988	WHITEFISH WEST WEST OF CITY	MURDOCK	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	116	RARE PLANT SPECIES
1989	WHITEFISH-WEST WEST OF CITY	STOLTZE	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	80	RARE PLANT SPECIES
1990	KALISPELL-EAST FLATHEAD RIVER EGAN SLOUGH	ROBOCKER	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	507	WETLAND, AQUATIC PLANT COMMUNITIES
1990	KALISPELL-NORTH STILLWATER RIVER & GRANDVIEW DR	CARLSON	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	19	RIPARIAN HABITAT, RIPARIAN PLANT SPECIES
1993	KALISPELL-SOUTH LAKESIDE & FLATHEAD LAKE	DRESCHER	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	38	BALD EAGLE NESTING SITE
1993	COLUMBIA FALLS EAST & FLATHEAD RIVER	BUCHANAN	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	22	PLANT, WILDLIFE & WATERFOWL HABITAT
1993	KALISPELL-WEST FOYS LAKE-EAST	BIBLER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	358	AGRICULTURAL, WILDLIFE HABITAT
1993	KALISPELL-EAST	ROBOCKER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	124	PLANT, WILDLIFE & WATERFOWL HABITAT
1993	WHITEFISH OLNEY-UPPER STILLWATER	HORN	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	940	WETLANDS, PLANT & WILDLIFE HABITAT
1993	COLUMBIA FALLS POLEBRIDGE NORTH TRAIL CR	MARX	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	154	RIPARIAN & WETLAND HABITAT
1994	KALISPELL - SE BIGFORK-WEST FLATHEAD LAKE	HENDRICKSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	30	AESTHETIC/SCENIC, WILDLIFE & WATERFOWL HABITAT
1994	WHITEFISH-WEST WEST OF CITY	MURDOCK	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	59	RARE PLANT SPECIES
1994	COLUMBIA FALLS POLEBRIDGE-NORTH	FREDERICK	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	31	RIPARIAN & WETLAND HABITAT

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS
1995	BIGFORK-EAST SWAN RIVER	WILSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	36	FLOODPLAIN & WETLAND HABITAT
1995	COLUMBIA FALLS-NORTH, BLANKENSHIP	KEEVA	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	220	FOREST, WILDLIFE & WATERFOWL HABITAT
1995	KALISPELL-EAST, OLD STEEL BRIDGE	NELSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	220	RIPARIAN & WETLAND HABITAT
1996	KALISPELL-SOUTH, LOWER VALLEY/SOMERS	CUMMINGS	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	50	PASTURE & WETLAND HABITAT
1996	KALISPELL-EAST, OLD STEEL BRIDGE	PETERSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	64	FLOODPLAIN & WETLAND HABITAT
1996	KALISPELL-WEST, FOYS LAKE	BIBLER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	94	PASTURE & LAKE, WATERFOWL HABITAT
1996	KALISPELL-EAST, CRESTON-EGAN SLOUGH	NOYES	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	20	PRIME FARMLAND, WETLAND HABITAT
1996	KALISPELL-NORTH, STILLWATER RIVER	KOENIG	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	530	AGRICULTURAL
1996	KALISPELL-EAST, OLD STEEL BRIDGE	NELSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	25	AGRICULTURAL, RIPARIAN & WETLAND HABITAT
1996	WHITEFISH-EAST, HASKILL BASIN	ADAMS	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	40	FOREST, WETLAND HABITAT
1997	KALISPELL-EAST, FAIR-MONT EGAN	ROBOCKER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	104	AGRICULTURAL, FOREST
1997	KALISPELL-EAST, CRESTON-MANY LAKES	HAUTH	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	10	FOREST, WETLAND HABITAT
1997	KALISPELL-WEST, SMITH LAKE-ASHLEY CR	BAXTER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	86	AGRICULTURAL, WETLAND HABITAT
1997	KALISPELL-WEST, TRUMAN CR	HUTTEN	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	50	FOREST, AGRICULTURAL, CREEK
1997	KALISPELL-WEST, ROGERS LK	PISK	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	105	STREAMS, FOREST, AGRICULTURAL
1997	KALISPELL-WEST, BALDY MTN	MITCHELL	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	20	STREAMS, FOREST, AGRICULTURAL

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS
1997	WHITEFISH-WEST, TALLY LK	SULLIVAN & FLOWERS	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	60	FOREST, AGRICULTURAL, WILDLIFE HABITAT
1997	KALISPELL-EAST, FLATHEAD RIVER-EAST	NELSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	60	FLOODPLAIN, WETLAND HABITAT, AGRICULTURAL
1997	KALISPELL-EAST, FLATHEAD RIVER-FOYS BEND	INGHAM	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	234	FOREST, WILDLIFE, EAGLE, WETLAND HABITAT
1997	KALISPELL-EAST, CRESTON-FOOTHILLS RD	BEAR PAW PROPERTIES	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	140	FOREST, WILDLIFE HABITAT
1997	COLUMBIA FALLS-NORTH, POLEBRIDGE-TRAIL CR	BISSELL & MACE	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	10	FOREST, RIPARIAN HABITAT
1998	KALISPELL-EAST, CRESTON-LAKE BLAINE	WHITNEY	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	109	AGRICULTURAL, FLOODPLAIN, WETLAND HABITAT
1998	KALISPELL-NORTHWEST, WEST VALLEY-RHODES DRAW	BREEN	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	40	FOREST, AGRICULTURAL
1998	WHITEFISH-SOUTHWEST, BLANCHARD LAKE	HEBERLING	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	20	AGRICULTURAL, FOREST
1998	KALISPELL-EAST, FLATHEAD RIVER-EGAN SLOUGH	ROBOCKER-EBERTS	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	25	AGRICULTURAL
1998	KALISPELL-NORTH, STILLWATER RIVER-GRANDVIEW DR	CARLSON	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	7	SCENIC, OPEN SPACE
1998	KALISPELL-WEST, FOYS LAKE	PISK	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	97	FOREST, GRASSLAND, LAKE, PUBLIC RECREATION
1998	WHITEFISH-WEST, TALLY LAKE RD	GILMORE	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	20	WETLAND HABITAT
1998	KALISPELL-SOUTH, LOWER VALLEY-SOMERS	SIDERIUS	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	120	AGRICULTURAL, WATERFOWL & WETLAND HABITAT
1998	KALISPELL-EAST, STEEL BRIDGE RD	PETERSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	24	FLOODPLAIN & WETLAND HABITAT
1999	KALISPELL-SOUTH, LAKESIDE-SOUTH, FLATHEAD LAKE-WESTSHORE	GRISWOLD-SMITH	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	17	WILDLIFE, FISHERIES HABITAT, UNDEVELOPED SHORELINE
1999	WHITEFISH-NORTH, E EDGEWOOD DR	PATTERSON GROUP	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	65	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS
1999	KALISPELL-SOUTHEAST, LOWER VALLEY	HEINE & BALLARD	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	194	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	BIGFORK-NORTHEAST, ECHO LAKE-EAST	DODSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	72	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	WHITEFISH-EAST	STEINER-BRYANT	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	294	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	KALISPELL-SOUTH, AIRPORT ROAD	WALLNER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	43	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	KALISPELL-SOUTH, AIRPORT ROAD	WALLNER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	25	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	KALISPELL-SOUTHEAST, LOWER VALLEY	CUMMINGS	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	71	AGRICULTURAL LAND, OPEN SPACE
1999	BIGFORK-NORTHEAST, BROWNS GULCH	WILKINS	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	57	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
1999	BIGFORK-EAST, SWAN RIVER	WILSON	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	11	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, RECREATIONAL RIVER FRONTAGE
1999	KALISPELL-WEST, STAR MEADOWS	COHEN	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	200	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
1999	KALISPELL-WEST, MCGREGOR MEADOWS	OWENS & HURST	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	160	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
2000	BIGFORK-EAST, SWAN RIVER	WHITNEY	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	143	RECREATIONAL, SELECTIVE TIMBER HARVEST
2000	CORAM-ADJACENT TO EXPERIMENTAL FOREST	RHODES	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	24	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT, WATER RESOURCES
2000	CORAM-ADJACENT TO EXPERIMENTAL FOREST	JORDAN & PINTER	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	36	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT, WATER RESOURCES
2000	KALISPELL-NORTHEAST, BLACKMER LN	ARNONE	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	50	WILDLIFE AND BIRD HABITAT
2000	WHITEFISH-SOUTHEAST, BLANCHARD LAKE	ALEXANDER	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	38	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
2000	WHITEFISH-NORTH, IRON HORSE	IRON HORSE @ WHITEFISH	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	72	OPEN SPACE, NATURAL TIMBER LAND

YEAR	AREA	GRANTOR	GRANTEE	ACRES	HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS
2000	WHITEFISH-SOUTH, U S HWY 93 & MT HWY 40	WATKINS & GREER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	60	OPEN SPACE, PROTECTION FROM DEVELOPMENT
2000	KALISPELL-WEST, MCGREGOR LAKE-WEST, SOUTH OF HWY 2	PLUM CREEK		13,520	OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
	KALISPELL-SOUTHEAST, FENNON SLOUGH	SOWERWINE	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	160	FLOODPLAIN & WETLAND HABITAT
2000	WHITEFISH - WEST, SOUTH OF STAR MEADOWS	GRATCH	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	160	OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE AND BIRD HABITAT, WETLANDS
2000	KALISPELL - EAST, McWENNEGER SLOUGH	SMITH	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	100	AGRICULTURAL, HUNTING, FISHING AND RECREATIONAL
2000	KALISPELL - SOUTH, WEST OF AIRPORT RD	BIBLER	MONTANA LAND RELIANCE	386	AGRICULTURAL, OPEN SPACE, WETLANDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT
2000	KALISPELL-NORTH, WEST OF GN AIRPORT	HARRISON	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	16	OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
2000	WHITEFISH-WEST, STILLWATER RIVER	CORNELL	FLATHEAD LAND TRUST	30	SCENIC OPEN SPACE, WILDLIFE HABITAT
2000	COLUMBIA FALLS-NORTH, POLEBRIDGE / HAY CREEK	GAITIS	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	63	OPEN SPACE, CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITAT INC GRIZZLY BEAR
2000	POLEBRIDGE-NORTH / TRAIL CREEK	HEGER	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	50	OPEN SPACE, CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITAT INC GRIZZLY BEAR
2000	POLEBRIDGE-NORTH / TRAIL CREEK RD	GUYNN	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	105	OPEN SPACE, CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITAT INC GRIZZLY BEAR
	TOTAL ACRES THROUGH 2000			**21,460**	

Source: Montana Land Reliance 2006

PART 4: Lands Unsuitable for Development

Floodplains

Flooding causes more property damage in the United States than any other type of natural disaster. In fact, it is estimated that flooding causes 90 percent of all property losses from natural disasters in the United States.

The presence of floodplain in Flathead County is perhaps the greatest impediment to growth and development. The Flathead Valley is a floodplain on a glacial scale. The

valley floor is rich in sediments deposited by floods over the ages. The dynamic nature of the Flathead River and its tributaries is evident by the numerous oxbows and sloughs that were created by the river and then abandoned as the rivers migrated. The relatively flat terrain of the valley floor also manifests itself in the sinuous nature of the rivers that wind through the valley to Flathead Lake. The meandering pattern of the river is a result of bank erosion on the outside bends and subsequent deposition on the insides.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not identified all of the floodplain in Flathead County but most of the Flathead River corridor and the valley bottom have been mapped. Approximately 10-15% of the valley area of Flathead County is designated as 100-year floodplain. An additional 10-15% of the valley bottom is designated or as 500 year floodplain. Most of the floodplain is located along the Flathead River corridor, between Columbia Falls and Flathead Lake. Areas of 100-year floodplain are also present along the Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers (see Map 2.7).

The 100-year floodplain defines an area covered by a flood of such intensity that it would, on average, occur once every one hundred years; and the 500-year floodplain, every 500 years. Described another way, a 100-year flood event has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year.

Historically, flooding has shaped much of the Flathead Valley floor. The Flathead Valley has experienced five (5) severe flood events. These occurred in 1894, 1926, 1948, 1964 and 1975 and 1995. During the 1964 flood, families were evacuated from their homes, livestock drowned and property damage was excessive.

The 1975 flood in Evergreen was estimated to be a 25-year flood event. Officials at the time estimated property damage in excess of two million dollars and news stories reported that over 200 mobile homes were either flooded or pulled from high water areas in the Evergreen area. The 1964 flood was much more extensive. The flows through Columbia Falls on the Flathead River were 25 percent higher than a 500-year flood event. The flood was triggered by torrential rains that swept through the mountains and valley during a period of unseasonably high spring temperatures that were already causing a rapid thaw of an unusually high spring snow pack.

This late June event was caused by an unusually high snow pack, a cool spring with little snow melt, followed by unseasonably high temperatures and a brief stretch of heavy spring rains. Again, in 1974 and 1975, spring runoff caused a flood measuring slightly less than a 100-year event as spring runoff inundated low-lying areas in the valley. Property loss and damage was severe.

100-year floodplains offer numerous benefits to the property and community by:

- Providing flood storage and conveyance;
- Reducing flood velocities and potential for erosion;
- Absorbing large volumes of water gradually releasing it to adjacent streams or water bodies during low flow periods;

- Recharging wells and aquifers by holding water long enough to allow it to percolate into underlying soils;
- Supporting vegetation that acts as a flood buffer and stabilizes the shoreline;
- Enhancing water quality by absorbing sediments, toxins and nutrients;
- Providing habitat for millions of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians

The floodway fringe is a lower hazard area that would be inundated by a 100-year flood. A 100-year flood is used as the basis of floodplain mapping prepared by FEMA. A 100-year flood can be expected to occur once in a 100-year period or more appropriately, statistically has a 1% chance of occurring each year. Construction is allowed in the floodway fringe by special permit and must meet established regulations. The Flathead City-County Health Department, which issues permits for all on-site sewage disposal systems, does not allow a system in or within 100 feet of a designated 100-year flood plain.

Current national floodplain management standards allow for: floodwater to be diverted onto others; channel and over bank conveyance areas to be reduced; essential valley storage to be filled; or velocities changed with little or no regard as to how these changes affects others in the floodplain and watershed. The net result is that through our actions we are intensifying damage potentials in the floodplains. This current course is one that is not equitable to those whose property is impacted and not economically sustainable.

The Association of State Floodplain Managers and the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers support local accountability and active management of the floodplains through outreach and education. Both organizations support the "No Adverse Impact" policy that is meant to ameliorate negative impacts associated with floodplain development.

“No Adverse Impact Floodplain Management” is a managing principle that is easy to communicate and from a policy perspective tough to challenge. In essence, No Adverse Impact floodplain management is the action of one property owner does not adversely affect the rights of other property owners, as measured by increased flood peaks, flood stage, flood velocity and erosion and sedimentation. No Adverse Impact Floodplains could become the default management criteria; unless a community has developed and adopted a comprehensive plan to manage development that identifies acceptable levels of impact, appropriate measures to mitigate those adverse impacts and a plan for implementation. No Adverse Impact could be extended to entire watersheds as a means to promote the use of retention/detention or other techniques to mitigate increased runoff from urban areas.

Local floodplain regulations are adopted and enforced locally, but are authorized by the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 and the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973. Prior to these acts, flood insurance was nearly non-existent for private property owners. When local communities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), private property owners are then eligible to obtain flood insurance.

Flathead County began participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) September 5, 1984. By participating in the NFIP, the County (and the three municipalities) has adopted Floodplain Regulations to identify all areas within Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). With the adoption of the regulations, they have also adopted Flood Insurance Studies (FIS), which form the basis of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). These documents are used primarily in determining actuarial flood insurance rates and secondarily to assist the local jurisdictions in their efforts to promote sound floodplain management.

FEMA is currently undergoing a comprehensive nationwide map modernization process. This process involves working with local communities and state officials, contracted consultants and the public. The result of this process is to produce digital maps and may include some detailed study on a limited number of waterways. Flathead County has been identified as a priority community that is in need of significant map modernization. This process began in 2004 and will likely continue through October 2007.

Flathead County currently participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) and is recognized as a Class 9 community. This recognition is based on the regulations and management that has been in place and results in property owners throughout the county in enjoying a 5% discount on their flood insurance premiums. Proactive management of the floodplain could result in a classification of 8; and a 10% discount in flood insurance rates.

High Groundwater

Groundwater is water that fills pores and cracks in rocks and soil. Groundwater sustains lake levels, provides for base flows in streams and is a major source of domestic water. Groundwater comes from precipitation and condensation that enters the soil and is susceptible to depletion in quantity and degradation of quality.

Groundwater flows beneath the surface of the earth, generally moving down hill following the contours of the land. It moves toward a point of discharge, which is usually a lake, stream, spring or a well.

The depth to groundwater varies with seasons and precipitation levels. Many areas experience seasonally high groundwater levels, usually in the spring, which limits land use. The areas are commonly near floodplains, alluvial deposits and swamps, which places limitations on septic tanks, basements and road building.

An aquifer is a water-bearing layer of permeable rock, sand or gravel. The thickness and depth of an aquifer vary with its location. The quantity of water a rock can contain depends on its porosity or the amount of open space and cracks between grains. Water movement in rock depends on the permeability, or ability to transmit or allow water to flow. Aquifers are recharged or filled by precipitation and infiltration from streams. Recharge is greatest in late spring when snow melts and there is runoff from the mountains.

A significant amount of area with seasonally high ground water and/or frequent flooding can be found throughout the Flathead River corridor and the valley bottom that is also experiencing development pressure (see Map 2.5). Much of the development in the area south of Kalispell in the Lower Valley area is occurring where the depth to groundwater is less than 15 feet. Homes that are being constructed in this area are on individual water and septic systems. Since there is a direct connection between the aquifer and the Flathead River and Flathead Lake, activity that substantially or incrementally changes the natural integrity of the floodplains and their aquifers will have a direct and pervasive impact on surface water quality. The groundwater supply in this area feeds directly into the aquifer and Flathead Lake. High-density development in the Lower Valley area has the potential to degrade the water quality of Flathead River and Flathead Lake, as well as the groundwater that supplies and recharges domestic water wells in the area.

Four major types of aquifers have been identified in the Flathead Valley. (Flathead River Basin Steering Committee, 1983 and Konezeske, 1968)

1. The Precambrian Bedrock Aquifer is found in hilly areas. Water is trapped in fractures of Precambrian rock and provides a source for domestic water. This includes a fractured limestone area located northwest of Flathead Lake extending north from Rollins to Whitefish Lake.

2. A Pleistocene Artesian Aquifer is found under most of the valley floor and consists of unconsolidated sand and gravel over laid by thick layers of glacial till and sediments. Two zones of sand and gravel have been identified, one deep and one shallow. Many wells extend 200 to 400 feet into the deep aquifer. This aquifer is recharged along the mountain front east of the valley by precipitation and steam seepage.

3. Pleistocene Perched Aquifers are separated from the artesian aquifers by an impermeable layer of clay, till and gravel. The perched aquifers are found in dune and lacustrine sand, glacial drift and glacial outwash. They are small in area extent and water yield. Recharge is by precipitation and stream seepage.

4. A Floodplain Aquifer is located under the floodplains of the Flathead, Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers. It is described as a 30-foot deep, 5-mile wide bed of sand and gravel. Recharge is by precipitation, infiltration from streams, percolation from irrigation water and seepage from high groundwater. Flows range from a few gallons per minute (gpm) in the sand, to as much as 2,000 gallons per minute in gravel deposits.

The major aquifer in the Flathead valley is shallow alluvial aquifer, often referred to as the Evergreen Aquifer and is located between the Flathead River to the east and Whitefish River to the west and between Badrock Canyon to the north and the confluence of the Flathead and Whitefish rivers to the south. The depth to the water table in this area is generally less than 50 feet and for much of the area less than five feet (see Map 2.5).

Slope / Topography

The topography of the land affects almost every aspect of development. Land can be too level 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 and lot orientation and density. Problems that usually occur because of slope can be grouped under three headings shown in Table AA.4.1.

Table AA.4.1
Slopes

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 mudflows, 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, 0 to 10 percent slopes are well suited for most types of development. Slopes that are 11 to 25 percent are suitable for some types of development, but engineering constraints and problems are more prevalent. Slopes over 25% consistently exhibit one or more problems of grade, erosion or failure. Any development in this range should be closely scrutinized.

Slope and density adjacent to wild lands should also be considered when a project is proposed. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has developed guidelines for fire protection adjacent to wildland residential interface development. General guidelines to meet the defensible space recommendations are:

1) Slope 0%-20% - A minimum of 1 acre for a structure to be placed on land in forest fuels.

2) Slope 21%-30% - A minimum of 1.5 acres for a structure to be placed on land in forest fuels.

3) Never build structures in forest fuels where the slope is greater than 30%, at the mouth of a canyon, in a ridge saddle, or in any other extreme fire hazard area.

(Source: July 1993 Fire Protection Guidelines for Wildland Residential Interface Development)

The distance between structures directly affects how fast a wildfire can spread. Local governments, developers, homeowners and responsible fire authorities should consider base spacing and density, dependent on slope and fuels in the area of the structures.

Slope is generally not a major concern in Flathead County. Most steep slopes occur in the public and corporate timberlands surrounding the valley bottom, as well as in Glacier National Park. The valley bottom, where most development is likely to occur is generally level to moderately sloping. Approximately 75 % of Flathead County has slopes over 25% of which most is in the mountainous National Forest and National Park lands surrounding the valley (see Map 2.6).

Wetlands

There are many different types or classifications of wetlands. Wetland preservation is beneficial to many species of plants, birds, mammals and invertebrates. They also serve as retention areas for overflowing rivers, lakes and streams, thus reducing flood and erosion damage in other areas.

In 1977, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) began the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), a systematic effort to classify and map America's remaining wetlands. The NWI defines wetlands according to the "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States", a system that describes wetlands by analyzing soil types, hydrology and vegetation. According to this system, wetlands are defined as land that is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems, where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For this classification, wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes: (l) at least periodically, the land supports mainly hydrophytes (aquatic plants), or (2) the substrate is mainly moist un-drained (hydric) soil, or (3) the substrate is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season each year.

The US Department of Agriculture developed a Food Security Act in 1985 and under this act is a Wetland Conservation Provision, commonly known as "swamp buster". This provision disqualifies farmers for U.S. Dept of Agriculture program benefits if they produce an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after December 23, 1985, when the Food Security Act was enacted.

Map 2.9 shows Flathead County wetlands as inventoried in the National Wetlands Inventory. Areas designated as wetlands have restrictions regarding development and some activities require a permit. Landowners and developers should contact the local planning officials and the Army Corps of Engineers to determine if wetlands are present before proceeding with projects in wetland areas.

PART 5: Demographics

Flathead County is rich in agriculture, open space and natural resources. It is also experiencing dynamic and sustained population and economic growth and prosperity. Population growth is attributed to two primary factors: 1) natural change and, 2) net migration. The most notable feature of Flathead County's demographics is the accelerated population growth since 1990.

Population

According to U.S. Census Bureau annual estimates, the State of Montana had an estimated population of 926,865 as of July 1, 2004. Since the 2000 Census was taken, the population of the state has increased by 24,670 people. Flathead County is now the third most populated county in Montana at the 2004-estimated population of 81,217, representing an increase of 6,746 since the 2000 Census. These estimates show that Flathead County has absorbed 27% of the total increase in the population of the entire state since the 2000 Census and 17% since 1990. NPA Data Services, Inc. projects that the population of Montana will reach 1,148,162, Flathead County's population will increase to 112,516 and that 10% of Montana residents will reside in Flathead County by 2025 (see Table AA.5.1).

Table AA.5.1
Population Growth

	1990	2000	2004	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Flathead County	59,218	74,471	81,217	81,996	89,675	97,127	104,713	112,516

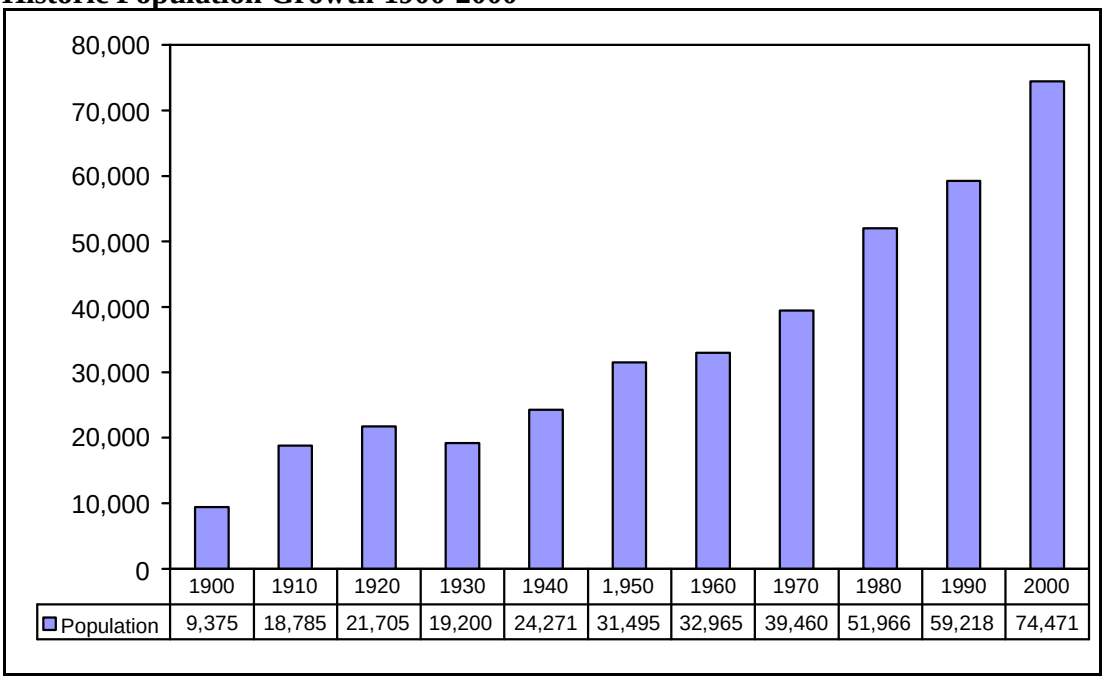
Source: U.S. Census, NPA Data Services, Inc.

Population Growth

There were only a few non-native settlers in the area prior to the opening of Flathead Lake and River to navigation and commerce in the early 1890s. The opening of the lake and river also opened the valley to substantial in-migration of settlers. The extension of a rail line to Kalispell in 1902 resulted in another population surge, doubling the population of the Flathead area to 18,785 by 1910. Within Flathead County, most of the population resided in the City of Kalispell. From 1910 to 1920, the county's population continued to grow to 21,705, adding 2,920 people to the resident population. By 1930, because of the Great Depression, the population decreased to 19,200. However, the timber industry, agriculture and commerce provided the economic foundation for sustained growth and development well into the 1960s. Between 1930 and 1960, the population increased by 13,765 people due in part to large Federal Public Works projects such as the Hungry Horse Dam. Timber, agriculture and the county's regional setting for retail and business activities continued to provide the economic base as well as emerging environmental tourism and service industries.

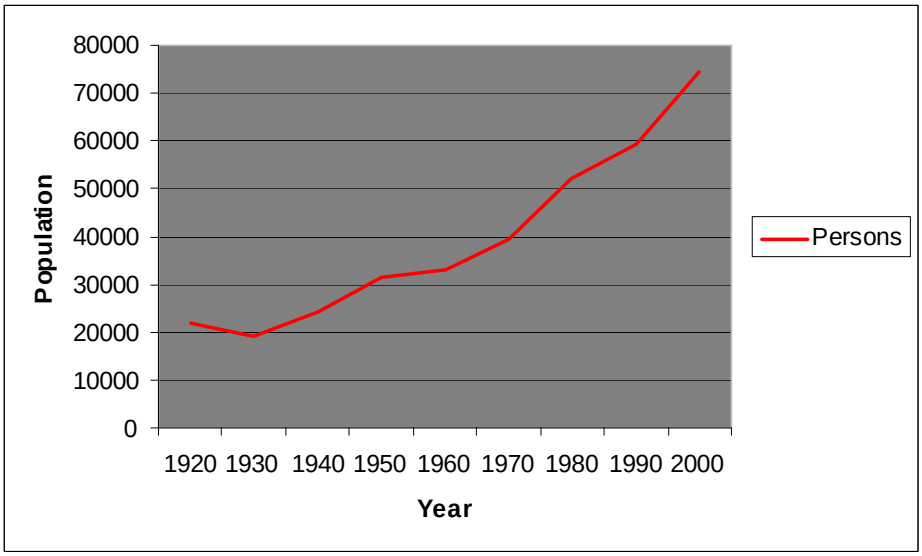
Population growth in Flathead County, including its cities, over the past 100 years has been significant and dynamic as shown in Figure AA.5.1 and Figure AA.5.2. With the exception of the period of 1920 to 1930, area growth has generally exceeded 10% for each decade. Only the period of 1950 to 1960 experienced a single digit population growth of 5%. In total, the population growth for the last 100 years was approximately 65,096 people, which translates into a seven-fold population increase in the County.

Figure AA.5.1
Historic Population Growth 1900-2000



Source: U.S. Census

Figure AA.5.2
Population Growth 1920-2000



Source: U.S. Census

The population boom of recent time began in the 1970s when population growth accelerated dramatically. The largest growth rate for any 10-year period since 1900 was the ten-year period between 1970 and 1980, which experienced a 32% increase in population from 39,460 to 51,966 residents. This growth lessened during the 1980s to

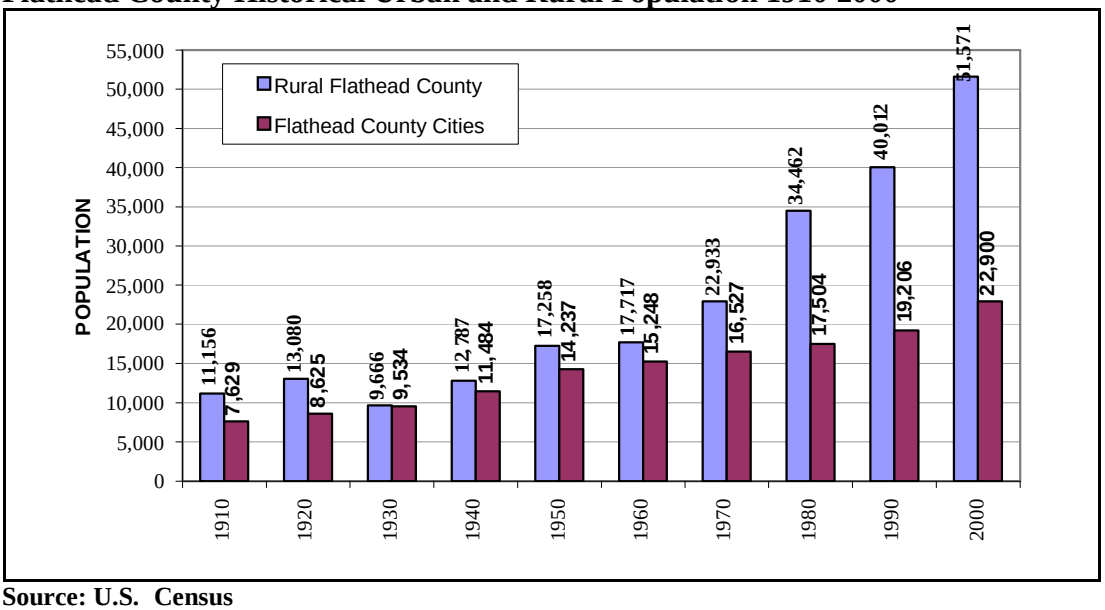
14% as the population increased by 7,252 people. From 1990 to 2000, the growth in population resumed its post 1970 charge with a 26% increase, resulting in a 2000 population of 74,471 people[20].

Since 2000, Flathead County's population has increased at a relatively constant rate of approximately 2% per year. Between 2000 and 2005 the U.S. Census estimates a population increase from 74,471 to 83,172[19] people, representing roughly a 12% increase over the first five years of the decade. This growth rate is consistent with the growth experienced between 1990 and 2000.

Urban and Rural Population Growth

Approximately 69% of the population in Flathead County resides outside of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish (see Figure AA.5.3). This is an increase from 1990 when 68% of the population in the County lived outside of the cities. However, recent data shows that the growth in the cities between 2000 and 2004 has notably increased (see Table AA.5.2). The combined populations of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish equates to approximately 35% of the total 2004 population of the county; an increase of 4% since 2000. The city of Kalispell in particular comprised approximately 21% of the total population in the County in 2004. Kalispell and Whitefish each experienced a growth rate of approximately 22% between 2000 and 2004, while Columbia Falls grew at a rate of 15% over that same period. These growth rates outpace the overall county growth rate of 12% during 2000 to 2004[19].

Figure AA.5.3
Flathead County Historical Urban and Rural Population 1910-2000



Source: U.S. Census

Table AA.5.2

[19] 2004 American Community Survey Data Profile Highlights, US Census

Flathead County Urban and Rural Population 2000-2004

	2004 ESTIMATE	2000 POP	NUMBER INC 00-04	% INC 00-04	1990 POP	NUMBER INC 90-04	% INC SINCE 1990
KALISPELL	17,381	14,223	3,158	22.2%	11,917	5,464	45.8%
WHITEFISH	6,151	5,032	1,119	22.2%	4,368	1,783	40.8%
COLUMBIA FALLS	4,180	3,645	535	14.7%	2,921	1,259	43.1%
RURAL	53,505	51,571	1,934	3.7	40,012	13,493	33.7%
COUNTY TOTAL	**81,217**	**74,471**	**6,746**	**9.1%**	**59,218**	**21,999**	**37.1%**

Source: U.S. Census

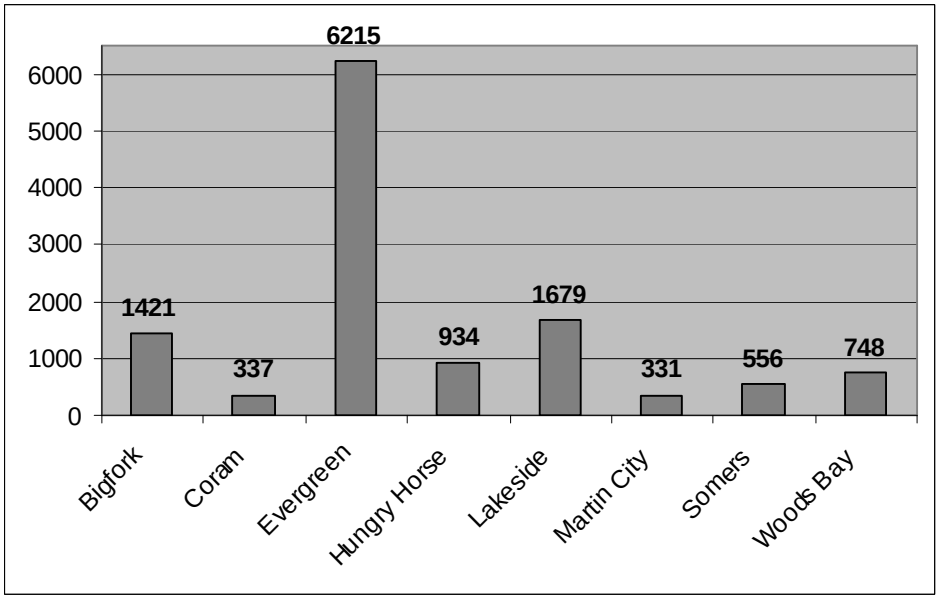
Census Designated Places

Nearly 16%[20] of the County's population living outside of the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish are located in Census designated places, as shown in Figure AA.5.4 and Map 3.1. Census Designated Places (CDPs) are delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of population that are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated.

There are currently eight CDPs in the County. These include the communities of Bigfork, Evergreen, Lakeside, Somers, Hungry Horse, Martin City, Coram and Woods Bay. Evergreen, Bigfork and Lakeside have had the greatest increases in population. The community of Bigfork nearly doubled in population with an 83% increase between 1990 and 2000. The population of Evergreen, which is adjacent to the city of Kalispell, has increased in population by 51% and the population of Lakeside has increased by 77 % during the same ten-year period. Somers has increased in population by 75%[20] over that same period. The most significant increases in population, concerning rural communities, are occurring where vital public services such as public sewer and water facilities are available.

[20] 2000 US Summary File 1, US Census 2000

Figure AA.5.4
Census Designated Places - 2000



Source: U.S. Census

Several other communities throughout the county that are not designated as CDPs are experiencing growth as well. These communities are more scattered and development is less dense. Residents in these communities are self reliant with individual water and sewer facilities. These communities include Marion, Kila, Ferndale, Creston and West Glacier. The more remote communities such as Polebridge, Olney and Essex have not experienced the rapid growth that the more accessible communities in the county are currently undergoing.

Table AA.5.3 provides population and housing unit comparisons within the three incorporated cities and the Census Designated Places in Flathead County. The total population of the rural areas includes the Census Designated Places.

Table AA.5.3
Flathead County Cities and Census Designated Places Population 1990 and 2000

	2004 Pop Estimate	2000 Census Pop	2000 Housing Units	1990 Census Pop	1990 Housing Units
KALISPELL	17,381	14,223	6,532	11,917	5,537
WHITEFISH	6,151	5,032	2,652	4,368	2,259
COLUMBIA FALLS	4,180	3,645	1,470	2,921	1,227
TOTAL URBAN	**27,712**	**22,900**	**10,654**	**19,206**	**9,023**
BIGFORK CDP	**	1,421	962	775	555
CORAM CDP	**	337	337	257	119

EVERGREEN CDP	**	6,215	2,532	4,109	1,635
HUNGRY HORSE CDP	**	934	404	507	256
LAKESIDE CDP	**	1,679	956	949	621
MARTIN CITY CDP	**	331	163	305	135
NIARADA CDP (partial – spans 3 counties)	**	50	22	**	**
SOMERS CDP	**	556	263	317	142
TOTAL IN CDPS	****	**11,523**	**5,639**	**7,219**	**3,436**
REMAINDER OF RURAL	53,505	40,048	18,480	32,793	14,520
TOTAL RURAL	**53,505**	**51,571**	**24,119**	**40,012**	**17,956**
COUNTY TOTAL	**81,217**	**74,471**	**34,773**	**59,218**	**26,979**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Seasonal Population

Census population numbers do not accurately account for seasonal fluctuations in population. Seasonal residents require all the local services and infrastructure that full time residents require.

Although there is no precise way to calculate seasonal population, estimates can be derived using several indicators, such as electrical hookups and consumption, increased traffic, waste generation and law enforcement and emergency service calls. Particular communities have higher numbers of seasonal populations. Although it has proven difficult to quantify, the population of the County could be in significant excess of 83,172 persons as estimated by the US Census.

Demand is strong in the County for second home ownership as well as for seasonal, recreational, occasional use and vacation housing. Those housing units dedicated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use have been identified and quantified in the 2000 US Census. The 1990 Census indicates that there were 2,517 housing units in Flathead County that were occupied for occasional use. In 2000, that number rose to 3,570, a 42% increase. During the same period the total number of housing units in the county increased by 29%[21].

State Trends

A regional look at population trends and estimates show that 33 of 56 Montana counties lost population between 1990 and 2000. This pattern appears to be continuing into the present decade. The majority of counties with declining population are in the eastern half of the state. Table AA.5.4 provides a comparison of counties in Montana with a population in excess of 10,000 people.

Table AA.5.4
Montana Population Trends 1990 - 2004
Montana Counties with a 2004 estimated population over 10,000
(listed ascending by population estimate)

	2004 EST	2000 CENSUS	NUMBER INC / DEC 00-04	% CHANGE 00-04	1990 CENSUS	NUMBER INC / DEC 90-04	% CHANGE 1990-2004
MONTANA	**926,865**	**902,195**	**+24,670**	**2.7%**	**799,065**	**+127,800**	**+16%**
YELLOWSTONE	134,717	129,352	+5,365	+4.1	113,419	+21,298	+18.8%
MISSOULA	99,018	95,802	+3,216	+3.4%	78,687	+20,331	+25.8%
FLATHEAD	**81,217**	**74,471**	**+6,746**	**+9.1%**	**59,218**	**+21,999**	**+37.1%**
CASCADE	79,849	80,357	-508	-0.6%	77,691	+2,158	+2.8%
GALLATIN	75,637	67,831	+7,806	+11.5%	50,463	+25,174	+49.9%
LEWIS AND CLARK	57,972	55,716	+2,256	+4.0%	47,495	+10,477	+22.1%
RAVALLI	39,376	36,070	+3,306	+9.2%	25,010	+14,366	+57.4%
SILVER BOW	33,093	34,606	-1,513	-4.4%	33,941	-848	-2.5%
LAKE	27,919	26,507	+1,412	+5.3%	21,041	+6,878	+32.7%
LINCOLN	19,101	18,837	+264	+1.4%	17,481	+1,620	+9.3%
HILL	16,376	16,673	-297	-1.8%	17,654	-1,278	-7.2%
PARK	15,791	15,694	+97	+0.6%	14,484	+1,307	+9.0%
GLACIER	13,508	13,247	+261	+2.0%	12,121	+1,387	+11.4%
BIG HORN	13,005	12,671	+334	+2.6%	11,337	+1,668	+14.7%
FERGUS	11,539	11,893	-354	-3.0%	12,083	-544	-4.5%
CUSTER	11,454	11,696	-242	-2.1%	11,697	-243	-2.1%
SANDERS	10,945	10,227	+718	+7.0%	8,669	+2,276	+26.3%
JEFFERSON	10,857	10,049	+808	+8.0%	7,939	+2,918	+36.8%
ROOSEVELT	10,660	10,620	+40	+0.4%	10,999	-339	-3.1%

Source: U.S. Census

Growth Factors

Population growth or decline is attributed to two factors: 1) natural change and 2) net migration. Measurements of these two factors illustrate trends over time and are important when planning for the needs of future populations. The combination of the two factors indicates the overall condition and health of the community. Natural change is the difference between births and deaths. Between 2000 and 2004, Flathead County experienced a net increase of 1,214 people due to natural change, representing approximately 18% of the total population growth. Migration patterns are responsible for the remaining 82% of the population increase; approximately 5,577 people relocated to the County from elsewhere during the four year period.

Migration

Migration patterns have always been a major factor affecting the population of an area. The Census Bureau generates a special data series on migration that shows a variety of demographic information on persons moving in and out of geographic areas.

Statewide, the 2000 Census indicated that almost as many people had moved out of Montana since 1995 as had moved into the state. It is currently cumbersome to obtain information regarding out-migration. It can be assumed that there is some level of out-migration from Flathead County, but it is certainly not at the statewide rate. While many counties in eastern Montana are losing population, Flathead County is rapidly increasing in population. The increase over the past two decades in Flathead County indicates that many more people are moving in than are leaving the valley. This trend appears to be continuing at even a more rapid rate as indicated by Census estimates of in-migration since 2000.

Census data indicates if people lived in the same county or state 5 years prior to each Census release. Table AA.5.5 provides information for in-migration between 1990 and 2000. Table AA.5.6 shows 2004 Census estimates of population change as it relates to the natural increase in population and in-migration since 2000.

Table AA.5.5
In-Migration 1990-2000
Montana and Flathead County *(Includes age 5 and older only)*

	1990	% of pop	2000	% of pop
MONTANA				
Lived in a different County, State or Country 5 years prior	164,848	22.2%	195,434	23.1%
Lived in Montana 5 years prior	634,217	77.8%	706,779	76.9%
Total	**799,065**		**902,213**	
FLATHEAD COUNTY				
Lived in a different County, State or Country 5 years prior	11,311	20.5%	15,347	21.9%
Lived in Flathead County 5 years prior	47,907	79.5%	59,124	79.1%
Total	**59,218**		**74,471**	

Source: U.S. Census

Table AA.5.6
Estimated In-Migration 2000-2004
Montana and Flathead County *(Includes age 5 and older only)*

April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004	Montana	Flathead County	% of Montana total change
Total Population Change	+24,670	+6,746	27%
Births	46,230	4,135	9%
Deaths	35,951	2,921	8%
Net Natural Increase	**10,279**	**1,214**	**12%**
Net Internal Migration	**+13,041**	**+5,433**	**42%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Cumulative Estimates of the Components of Population Change for Counties in Montana: (CO-EST2004-04-30)

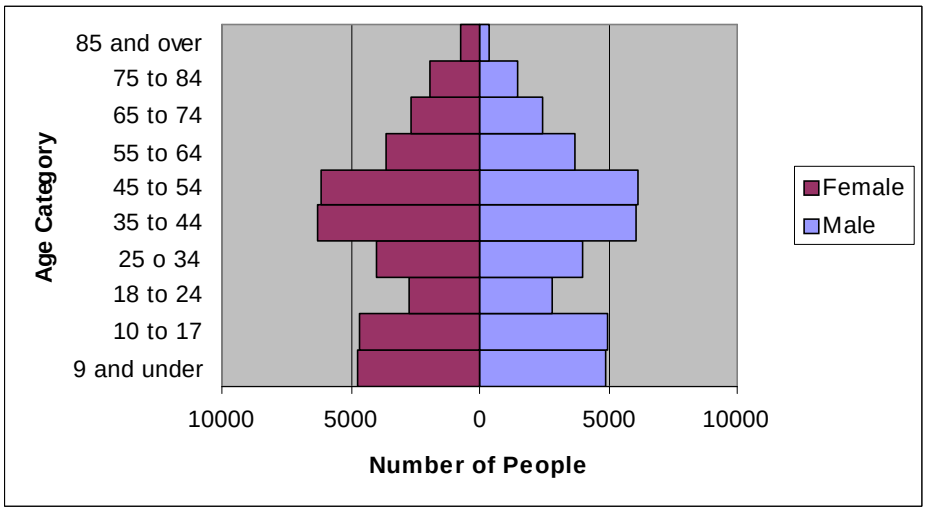
The majority of the estimated population increase since 2000 in Flathead County can be attributed to in-migration. Natural increases only account for about 18% of total population increase in the county since the 2000 Census.

More detailed information about in and out migration in Flathead County and Montana can be found at: the Montana Department of Commerce, Census and Economic Information Center. http://www.ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/ Additional detailed data on all population components can also be found on the U.S. Census Bureau website at: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en.

Population Characteristics

In 2000, the county's male-female ratio was nearly equal to one; meaning there were approximately equal numbers of males and females in the population as shown in Figure AA.5.5 and Table AA.5.7. Although not charted, U.S. Census Bureau historic data indicate that the near even proportion of gender has remained constant since the 1970s. The ethnic composition of Flathead County is rather homogenous. In 2000, approximately 96% of the population was White, with the remaining 4% reflecting those of one or more other races. Those of two or more races comprised 1.5% of the population, followed by American Indian and Alaska Native, which comprised 1.1% of the population. Persons of Asian descent amounted to 0.5% of the population, those of some other race made up 0.4% and African Americans totaled 0.2% of the population[20].

Figure AA.5.5
Flathead County Gender and Age Composition - 2000



Source: U.S. Census

Male-Female Ratio

The male-female ratio is a significant factor in analyzing migration patterns and the work force composition of an area.

The 2000 Census shows that there was an almost equal ratio of 49.7% male and 50.3% female population in Flathead County. This ratio is similar to the statewide figures with a 49.9% male and a 50.1% female population. Census data from 1950 to 2000 indicate that Flathead County and Montana have both had a stable and nearly equal male-female population ratio. Prior to and during the 1940s, state and county numbers indicate that there were approximately 6% more men than women. The increase in the female population since the early 1950s can most likely be attributed to the assumption that the economic outlook and incentive for families to settle in the area was much improved with the beginning of construction of Hungry Horse Dam, the aluminum plant and several lumber mills.

Table AA.5.7
Flathead County and Montana
Male and Female Population 1980-2000

	2004 estimate	% of pop	2000	% of pop	1980	% of pop
Montana						
Male	462,265	49.9	449,480	49.8	392,558	49.9
Female	464,600	50.1	452,715	50.2	394,132	50.1
Total	**926,865**	**100**	**902,195**	**100**	**786,690**	**100**
Flathead County						
Male	40,339	49.7	36,911	49.6	25,827	49.7
Female	40,878	50.3	37,560	50.4	26,139	50.3
Total	**81,217**	**100**	**74,471**	**100**	**51,966**	**100**

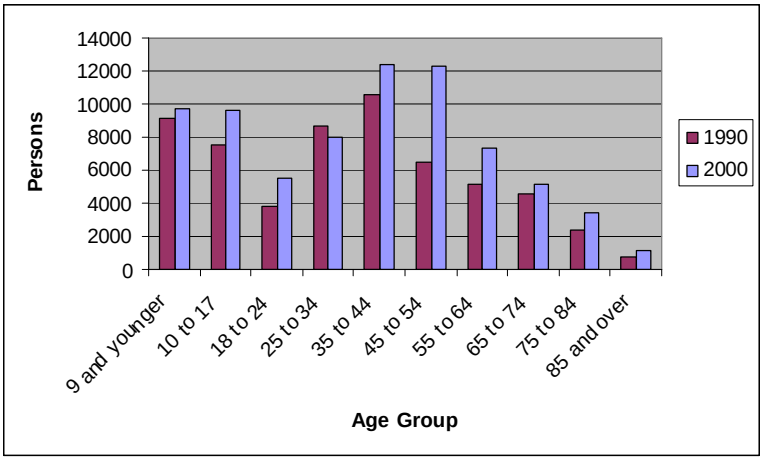
Source: U.S. Census

Age Group Trends

As shown in Figure AA.5.6, all age groupings increased in population during the 1990-2000 decade. The only exception was the ages of 25 to 34, which experienced an approximate 8% decline. The largest population gain and percent increase occurred in the 45 to 55 age-bracket at an increase of 5,760 people representing an 88% increase over the decade. The second largest increase occurred in the 85 and over age bracket at 48%, followed by both those in the 55 to 64 and in the 18 to 24 age brackets which each increased by 44%. The 18 to 24 age group appears to be recovering slightly from an overall 24% decline between 1980 and 2000; however, this group remains to be the smallest segment of the population under the age of 64. The smallest increase in any age group occurred in the 9 years and younger group, which increased at a rate of 5% over the decade[21].

[21] US Census 2000; US Census 1990

Figure AA.5.6
Change in Population of Age Groups from 1990 to 2000



Source: U.S. Census

The evaluation of age group trends is an essential component in the planning process. The evaluation of age group structure establishes the makeup of the work force and the community's need for public facilities such as schools, day care facilities, churches, public transportation, parks, medical and long-term care facilities. It can also be valuable for determining if and what type of retail establishments can be supported or may be needed.

Montana continues to see growth in its older population. Those in the 65 and older group have the higher percentage increase since 1980, increasing by almost 89%. The group with the least increase since 1980 is the group under age 5, only increasing by 12% over the 24-year period. The number of persons aged 85 and over increased by 29% since 2000. Women in the 85 and over group outnumber the men of the same group by more than 3 times.

The trends in age group compositions are presented in Table AA.5.8, Figure AA.5.7 and Table AA.5.9, providing past and current estimates. The data presented in these Tables originates from different sources and may have slight discrepancies from data presented in previous tables. However, these numbers are only intended to show trends. Variations are due to data being acquired from several different sources.

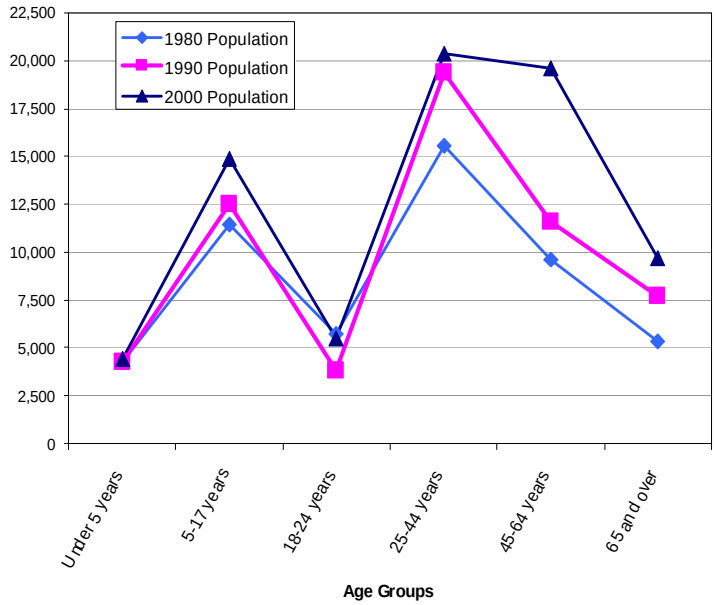
Table AA.5.8
Age Groups
Flathead County 1980-2000

AGE GROUP	1980	% of pop	1990	% of pop	2000	% of pop	% change 80-00
Under 5 years	4,271	8.2	4,278	7%	4,415	5.9%	+3.4%
5-17 years	11,422	22.0	12,522	21%	14,872	19.9%	+30.2%
18-24 years	5,696	11.0	3,827	6%	5,508	7.4%	-3.3%
25-44 years	15,572	30.0	19,336	33%	20,381	27.4%	+30.9%
45-64 years	9,629	18.5	11,560	20%	19,639	26.4%	+4%

65 and over	5,376	10.3	7,695	13%	9,656	13%	+78.9%
Total	51,966		59,218		74,471		+43.3%
Median Age	29.7		35.3		39.0		+31.3%

Source: Population Estimates Program Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau; Montana Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) Basic Demographic Trend Report 1980-2000

Figure AA.5.7
Age Groups
Flathead County 1980-2000



Source: U.S. Census

The data in Table AA.5.9 is based on the 2004 American Community Survey conducted each year since the 2000 Census. The Census Bureau applies statistical procedures that introduce some uncertainty into data for small population groups. The 2000 Census and subsequent American Community Survey estimates have further identified age groups within the previous 65 and over group. For documentation on the ACS design, estimation methodology and accuracy see: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/accuracy2004.pdf.

Table AA.5.9
Age Group Estimates
Flathead County 2000-2004

AGE GROUP	2000 Census	2001 ACS	2002 ACS	2003 ACS	2004 ACS	% of Total	% change 00-04	% change 80-04
Under 5 years	4,415	4,396	4,301	4,518	4,784	6%	+8%	+12%
5-17 years	14,872	14,635	14,200	13,612	13,840	17%	-6%	+21%
18-24 years	5,508	6,394	6,631	7,965	8,029	10%	+46%	+41%
25-44 years	20,381	19,771	19,170	19,512	20,137	25%	-1%	+29%
45-64 years	19,639	20,769	22,214	22,917	23,411	29%	+19%	+43%

65-74	5,102	5,102	5,290	5,471	5,645	7%	+11%	
75-84	3,421	3,315	2,938	3,051	2,761	3%	-19%	
85 and over	1,133	742	1,351	1,213	1,465	2%	+29%	
Total 65 and over	9,656	9,159	9,579	9,735	9,871	12%	+2%	+84%
Total	**74,471**	**75,124**	**76,095**	**78,339**	**80,072**		**+7.5%**	**+54%**

Source: American Community Survey 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004; Population Estimates Program Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau; Montana Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) Basic Demographic Trend Report 1980-2000

In 1980, Flathead County had approximately 8% of its population in the pre-school age group, 22% school age; 60% working age and about 10% in the retirement age group. Since 1980, significant changes have occurred in Flathead County. Similar changes can be noted throughout the entire nation.

The pre-school population has increased only slightly over the past 25 years, compared to the remaining age groups. This is noticeable nation wide by declining birthrates. The aging baby boom generation has moved out of child-rearing age and there has been a decline in the birthrate in succeeding generations. Since the 2000 Census, the number of pre-school children in Flathead County appears to be on the rise with an over 8% increase since 2000.

Population in the school age group of 5 to 17 years appears to be on the decline. Since 2000, this age group has declined by 6%, unlike the previous trend represented by the 30% increase between 1980 and 2000. This may once again be a reflection of declining birthrates, family size and aging population.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the number of persons between 18 and 24 had slowly declined. However, that trend also appears to be turning around showing a 46% increase of population in this group since 2000. This may be attributed to expanding technology and increased occupational and educational opportunity. A significant population in this age group previously left the valley for education and the opportunity for higher paying jobs than the Flathead Valley could offer.

According to American Community Survey (ACS) 2004 estimates, the working age population in Flathead County, which includes those aged between 18 and 64, represents 64% of the county's total population.

The most notable trend over the past 24 years has been the increase in retirement age people in Flathead County. In 1980, people in the retirement age group accounted for 10% of the population. That group now represents about 12% of the total population. Even though this 2% increase seems non-significant, it is the percentage increase over the past 24 years that reflects the true picture. The number of people in Flathead County that are age 65 and over increased by almost 84% between 1980 and 2004. The increase can be partially attributed to similar trends of increased life expectancy and aging population that are prevalent throughout the United States. Perhaps more importantly, Flathead County and northwest Montana have become retirement destinations as well as desirable locations for seasonal or second and third homes for out of state residents.

Median Age

Census 2000 data determined the median age of the population in Flathead County to be 39 years. The median age of the female population was slightly higher at 39.6 years than the male population at 38.3 years. The median age in Flathead County has increased by almost 10 years in the last two decades (see Table AA.5.10).

It is interesting to note that the median age of all Flathead County residents is significantly higher than that of the three municipalities in Flathead County and of all Montana residents. The median age of Montana residents is higher than the median age of the entire population of the United States and the median age of Flathead County residents is significantly higher than that of the United States (see AA.5.8). The higher median age in rural Flathead County also suggests that retirees are choosing to live in rural areas of the county.

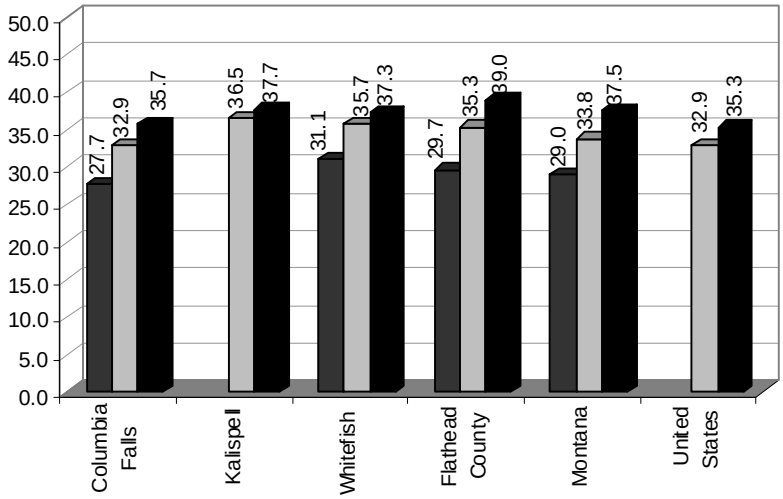
The trend of increasing median age in Flathead County is expected to continue as the existing population ages and as people migrate to the area.

Table AA.5.10
Flathead County, Municipalities & Montana
Median Age 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000	% change 90 to 00	% change 80-00
Montana	29.0 yrs	33.8 yrs	37.5 yrs	10.9%	29.3%
Flathead County	29.7 yrs	35.3 yrs	39.0 yrs	10.5%	31.3%
Kalispell	32.4 yrs	36.5 yrs	37.7 yrs	3.3%	16.4%
Whitefish	31.1 yrs	35.7 yrs	37.3 yrs	4.5%	19.9%
Columbia Falls	27.7 yrs	32.9 yrs	35.7 yrs	8.5%	28.9%

Source: Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: U.S. Census 1980, 1990 and 2000

Figure AA.5.8
Median Age Comparisons
Flathead County, Municipalities, Montana and the United States
1980, 1990 & 2000



Source: U.S. Census

Ethnic Composition

The ethnic composition of a community can have significant effect on social and cultural environments that prevail within a community. The ethnic composition of the Flathead County is predominantly white (see Table AA.5.11). The Native American population forms the largest single non-white component of the population. Since 1970, there have been only slight fluctuations in the Native American population in Flathead County. This can be attributed to the fact that there is only a small amount of sparsely populated Flathead Indian Reservation land in the southern portion of the county. These stable numbers are in contrast to the changes occurring at the national level where the "other" category, which includes all other races, has seen dramatic change increasing from 18.9% to 24% of the entire U.S. population between 1990 and 2000.

Table AA.5.11
Ethnic Composition Comparison
Flathead County & Montana 1990-2000

	1990	% of pop	2000	% of pop	% change 90-00
Flathead County					
White	57,897	97.8	71,689	96.3	-1.5
American Indian	858	1.4	856	1.1	-.3
Other	463	.8	1,926	2.6	1.8
TOTAL	**59,218**	*100*	**74,471**	*100*	
Montana					
White	741,111	92.8	817,229	90.6	-2.2

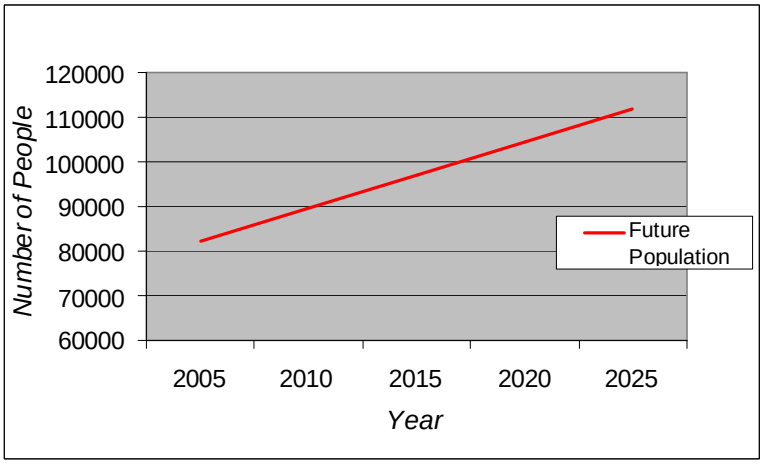
American Indian	47,679	6.0	56,068	6.2	.2
Other	10,151	1.2	28,916	3.2	2.0
TOTAL	**799,065**	*100*	**902,213**	*100*	

Source: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics for Montana, Flathead County & Columbia Falls, U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000

Population Projections

Projections are estimates illustrating plausible courses of future population change based on assumptions about future natural change and net migration patterns. These projections are trends established from existing population data as shown in Figure AA.5.9. The projected population for 2025 is 111,740 representing an increase of 37,269 people from the 2000 population. The projection shows that the total population is likely to increase by 50%. Based on existing natural change and net migration, this projected population will be due primarily to net migration and to a lesser extent by natural change.

Figure AA.5.9
Flathead County Population Projections– 2005 through 2025



Source: NPA Data Services, Inc, 2002

Population Density

An analysis of population and housing density is important in determining the need for additional services and the cost to provide services. The higher the density, the more cost effective it is to provide services. However, when any type of development occurs a considerable distance from local services, it can cost more for government to provide services than the revenue it may generate. Careful consideration needs to be given to these issues when local officials review development proposals that are far from local services.

Outside of the vast amount of National Forest, National Park and State lands, development is occurring almost everywhere in Flathead County. For the most part, high-density development is occurring close to local services, such as public utilities, maintained streets, hospitals and medical facilities and shopping. It is often cost effective

for developments that are within a reasonable distance to a municipal water and sewer supply, to annex into the municipality to receive these services, allowing for a higher density, than would be allowed in a rural area. This often leaves islands that are not within the municipality, but also creates opportunity for infill development. This type of growth has and is occurring adjacent to and near the three municipalities of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls. Kalispell has seen dramatic expansion on the north and west, Whitefish to the south and east and Columbia Falls is expanding to the west.

Development in the rural areas of the county has also been fast paced over the past two decades. A naturally occurring pattern is that the closer to local services that a development is, the higher the density. Rural residential development requires at least one acre per residence if on a private water and sewer system. There are several public Sewer and Water Districts throughout the county that will accommodate higher density. Several rural areas where services are available are experiencing development pressure and increasing population. Among these areas are the communities located on or near Flathead Lake and include Bigfork, Lakeside and Somers.

Maps and digital data were created by the Montana State Library, Natural Resources Information System (NRIS) from the 2000 U.S. Census data to display general population densities per square mile (see Map 3.2). The original data was smoothed and the highest resulting density in each kilometer grid cell was assigned to the cell. The actual population density at a given location may be much lower or higher, if the location is in an area farther from or closer to most of the people in a Census Block. These digital files have been downloaded and densities were reclassified to provide additional density levels and enhanced mapping capabilities needed for analysis to complete the Flathead County Growth Policy and Baseline Data.

It is important to note that since the 2000 Census and when the above data was created does not represent the current density. A significant amount of development has occurred in some areas of the county since the 2000 Census. These areas would include the continued growth adjacent to the municipalities and the communities of Bigfork, Lakeside, Somers and Marion and the surrounding vicinities.

PART 6: Housing

As housing costs often constitute the largest single monthly household expenditure, the affordability of housing is a major factor in community growth and development. A common definition of "affordable housing" is housing that costs no more than 30% of the households gross annual income. Households paying in excess of 30% of their income for housing costs are considered cost-burdened and may have difficulty meeting the costs associated with common necessities such as food and transportation[22].

Home prices in Flathead County have increased dramatically at a pace not matched by the increase in household incomes. The average home value in Flathead County

[22] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

increased 116.4% between 1990 and 2000, more than doubling the cost of the average house while the average household income increased by 42.7% over the same period of time[23].
As the disparity between average income and average housing prices continues to remain, the impacts of housing affordability will continue to shape the growth and development the County.

General Affordability

Calculating the annual household income needed to afford the median-value home in a given area provides a snapshot of the current housing affordability.

Using the standard definition of affordability, the Table AA.6.1 illustrates the annual household income needed to afford the median-value home in Flathead County. The Table assumes a 10% down payment, 30-year fixed mortgage, a monthly payment that is 30% of a household's income, 7% interest rate, 1.2% tax rate and a normal insurance charge.

Table AA.6.1
Housing Affordability in Flathead County

Year	Median Home Price in Flathead County	Annual Household Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price
1990	$64,206[24]	$18,401
2000	$138,950[25]	$39,823
2001	$126,000[25]	$36,112
2002	$136,000[25]	$38,978
2003	$159,000[25]	$45,569

After determining the annual household income needed to afford the median home price in the County, Table AA.6.2 compares this to the actual median household incomes for the same periods provides insight as to whether the average home is affordable to the average household.

Table AA.6.2
Actual Costs of Housing Affordability in Flathead County

Year	Annual Household Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Median Flathead County Household Income (U.S. Census)
1990	$18,400	$24,145 (1989)[26]
2000	$39,823	$34,466
2003	$45,569	$34,360

[23] U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000
[24] American Factfinder, US Census 1990
[25] *Economic and Demographic Analysis of Montana, Volume III: Housing Profile*; Montana State University, 2005
[26] American Factfinder, US Census 2000

The median housing price between 1990 and 2000 increased by approximately 116%. More recently, the annual change in median housing price between 1998 and 2003 has varied significantly as shown in Table AA.6.3.

Table AA.6.3
Median Home Prices – 1998 through 2003

Year	Median Home Value[25]	Annual Percent Change
1998	$110,000	---
1999	$108,000	-1.8%
2000	$138,950	28.7%
2001	$126,000	-9.3%
2002	$136,000	7.9%
2003	$159,000	16.9%

The average yearly increase in median home prices over the period of 1998 to 2003 equaled 8% and if annual median housing prices were to increase at 8% each year, the price in 2010 would equal approximately $272,498, requiring a minimum median household income of $78,098, a 127% increase from 2003, to afford a median priced home.

Rental housing is often a more affordable option for those without the ability to own a home. The average gross rent in 2000 equated to $484, which would require a minimum yearly income of approximately $19,360 if the gross rent were to equate to exactly 30% of the occupants' monthly income.

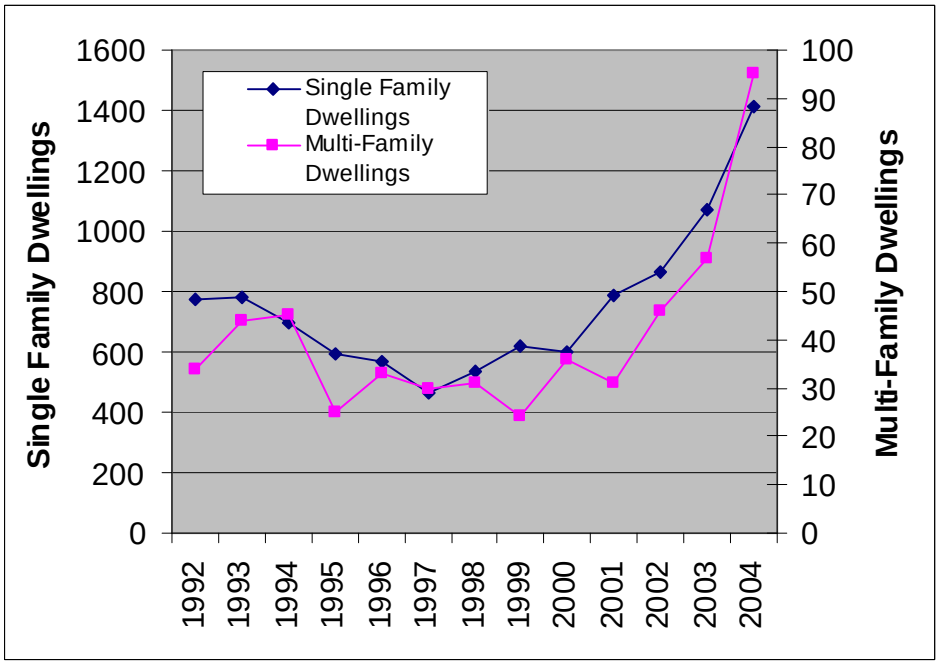
Housing Stock

The majority of homes in the County are one-unit, detached structures; this constitutes 68.5% of the homes in the county. Manufactured or mobile homes are the second most dominant housing type, comprising 16.2% of the housing stock. Multi-family housing, comprised of 2 units or more, accounts for 12.5% of the housing stock. The remaining 0.3% of housing is provided by recreation vehicles, boats, vans and other mobile types[27]

The number of housing units in the County has steadily increased over recent years see Figure AA.6.1. The total housing units in 2000 equaled 34,773 and grew to 36,077 in 2004, a 4% increase[28]. Units are the individual living quarters and include single-family homes, individual condominium units and individual apartments meaning that a multi-family dwelling is comprised of several housing units.

[27] US Census Bureau. *Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000.* Census 2000.
[28] Population Division, US Census Bureau. *Table 4: Annual Estimates of Housing Units for Counties in Montana: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 (HU-EST2004-04-30).* July 21, 2005.

Figure AA.6.1
Construction of Single-Family and Multi-Family Dwellings 1992-2004



Source: U.S. Census

Housing is either rented or owned. Housing types as defined by the Montana Department of Commerce are either residential or commercial. Residential housing are those homes that can be purchased as individual units and include mobile homes, condominium units and single-family homes. Commercial housing mainly refers to multi-unit rental properties including apartments, duplexes, mixed-use structures and townhouses[29].

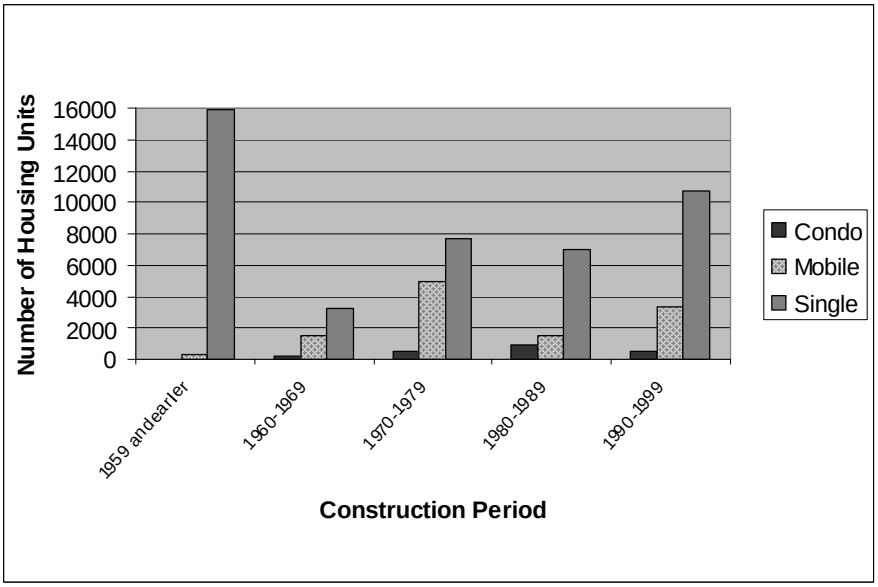
The 2000 overall vacancy rate for the available rental and owner-occupied housing units was nearly 15% or 5,186 units, however approximately 69%, or 3,570 units, of those units were designated as seasonal, recreational, or for occasional use. Therefore, the actual vacancy rate in 2000 for non-seasonal housing was 7% for rental units and 1.7% for owner-occupied.

In 2000, of the 29,588 occupied housing units, 26.7%, or 7,190 units, were renter-occupied while the remaining 73.3% were owner-occupied meaning that the rate of homeownership was 73.3%. Caucasian householders had the highest homeownership rates in the County, equaling approximately 73.6%, while African American householders had a homeownership rate of 65.2% and American Indians/Native Alaskan householders experienced a homeownership rate of 59.2%[30].

[29] Center for Applied Economic Research. *Housing Conditions Study*. 2002. Montana Department of Commerce: Billings, MT.
[30] http://housing.mt.gov/Includes/CP/PDF/CP_E&D-VOL-III.pdf

The majority of single-family homes in Flathead County were constructed prior to 1960 as seen in Figure AA.6.2. The second largest period of new home construction occurred between 1990 and 1999 when 10,780 homes were built, equaling approximately 24% of the total home construction in the county prior to the year 2000. Manufactured or mobile homes experienced a peak in construction during the period of 1970 to 1979, while the majority of condominiums in the county were constructed between 1980 and 1989[29].

Figure AA.6.2
Construction of Residential Housing per Period



Source: Montana Department of Commerce

The Montana Department of Commerce 2005 Housing Condition Study rates the physical condition of residential housing – condominium units, mobile homes and single-family homes – as excellent, very good, good, average, fair. Flathead County has 37% of the existing stock in the state. 42% of condominium units were give the top rating of excellent. In total, 87% of the residential housing units in Flathead County were rated as average or above. Below average rating of fair, poor, very poor, or unsound were given to 4% of single-family homes and 49% of mobile homes in the County[29].

Commercial housing, which offers units for rent and often refers to multi-family structures, is rated for condition as good, normal, fair, poor, or very poor. Nearly 93% of the housing classified as commercial in Flathead County rates as either normal or good[29].

Currently, no county building department exists and therefore no building permits are issued for structures erected in the unincorporated areas of the County. The quality of new housing, including workmanship and construction materials and the safety of these structures is not monitored by the county at this time.

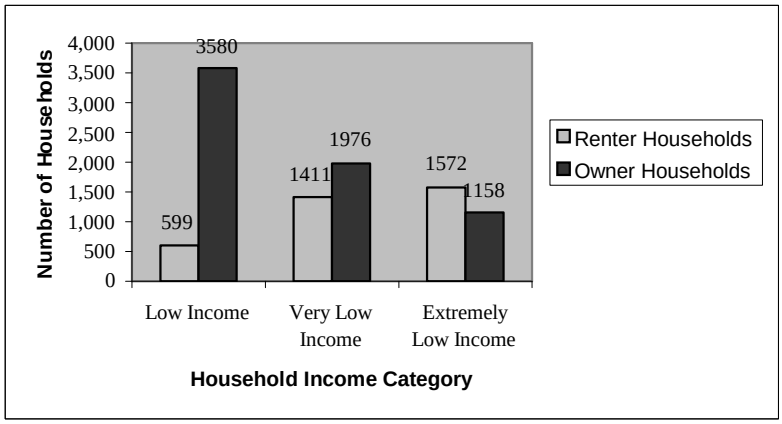
Special Consideration Groups

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development sets standards based on median family income (MFI) for assessing low-income housing needs. Three classifications are used when discussing low-income households and are defined as follows:

Extremely low income - those households with an income of 0% to 30% of the MFI
Very low income – those household with an income of 31% to 50% of the MFI
Low income – those households with an income of 51% to 80% of the MFI

Figure AA.6.3 shows the number of renter and owner households in the County by income category for low, very low and extremely low-income households.

Figure AA.6.3
Low-Income Households in 2000 – Renter vs. Owner



Source: Montana Housing Needs Assessment, Montana Department of Commerce 2004

HUD also defines types of low-income households as small related, large related, elderly and other households, in addition to special needs households that have members with mobility impairment, disabilities, or a drug or alcohol addiction. Elderly and special needs households in particular are comprised of a large portion of the low-income housing population. Over half of both elderly and special needs households are considered low-income and these groups are anticipated to increase as the population ages[25].

Homeless persons are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and have a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised shelter for temporary living accommodation, an institution providing a temporary accommodation, or a public or private place not designed for sleeping[31]. Two homeless shelters are located in Flathead County, both within the city of Kalispell. The Samaritan House provides shelter for the homeless with 20 beds for men, eight beds for women and four family units. In 2005, the shelter provided temporary living accommodations for 1,061 people. The Ray of Hope is a homeless shelter providing 20 beds total and

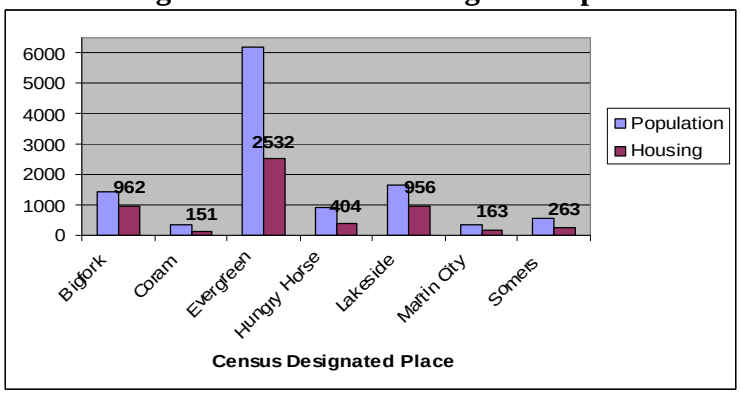
[31] http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode42/usc_sec_42_00011302----000-.html

providing temporary accommodations 175 people in 2005. In total, the two homeless shelters serving the County provided temporary nighttime accommodations to 1,236 people in 2005.

Location of Housing

Costs associated with the location of housing can be significant. The cost of transportation to and from destinations such as home, work and school, increases as the distance increases. The same is true for the cost of serving homes located further from public services such as police and fire protection, solid waste collection and public sewer and water services. The average travel time to work for Flathead County commuters is 19 minutes, which coincides with the fact that more than half of the housing in the County in 2000 was located in areas designated as rural. Rural refers to areas outside of incorporated places, outside of US Census Designated Places and with a population of fewer than 2,500[32]. Although the majority of housing is located in the rural areas, the unincorporated rural communities have the largest concentrations of housing, excluding the cities of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls. The communities of Bigfork, Coram, Evergreen, Hungry Horse, Lakeside, Martin City and Somers are identified as Census Designated Places; the housing and population in these communities is shown in Figure AA.6.4.

Figure AA.6.4
Census Designated Places – Housing and Population in 2000



Source: U.S. Census

PART 7: Parks and Recreation

The growing popularity and demand for parks and recreational opportunities are in proportion to the dynamic growth and development of Flathead County. The public desires more opportunities for passive and organized sport programming. Greater access to water-based recreation is also a growing priority. The Department of Parks and Recreation is currently responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of a wide range and variety of parks and recreation facilities. Although the existing parks and

[32] http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urdef.txt

recreation system offers recreational opportunities for individuals, families and group users, it must also be dynamic to meet changing public needs and desires.

The department currently maintains 37 parks and recreation facilities and one cemetery totaling approximately 383 acres. The facilities can be categorized by function. Of the 37 park sites, 20 are land-based parks, 14 sites are water-based parks and four are special use parks. Table AA. 7.1, Table AA.7.2 and Table AA.7.3 list the parks in each category.

Land-based parks account for 97 acres that vary from 1/3 of an acre to 24 acres with an average area under five acres. There are 20 ball fields, one volleyball court, four basketball courts and multi-purpose fields among other amenities; most offer picnic area and playgrounds for children.

Table AA.7.1
Existing Land-Based Parks and Recreation Facilities

Park	Acres	Facilities
Aero Lane Park	1.0	Ball field
Ben Williams Park	5.0	Volleyball/picnic/playground
Carlyle Johnson Park	14.0	Ball fields/soccer/playground/picnic
Conrad Sports Complex	15.0	Ball fields/basketball/playground/picnic
Country Estates Park	3.7	Grass field
Evergreen Lions Park	3.4	Ball field/basketball/picnic/playground
Green Acres Park	1.5	Picnic/playground
Happy Valley Park	24.0	Playground
Hillcrest Park	7.0	Ball fields/multi-use fields/playground
Hilltop Terrace Park	1.9	Picnic/playground
Kokanee Bend Park	4.2	Ball field/picnic/playground/horseshoe
Lake Hills Park	4.1	Not developed
Martin City Park	1.6	Ball field/playground/picnic
Meadow Hills Park	2.9	Picnic/playground
Mission Village Overlook Park	1.6	Picnic/playground
North Haven Park	1.1	Picnic/playground
Potoczny-Bigfork Park	0.3	Grass field
Silver Shadow Park	1.0	Ball field/playground/picnic
Sliter Park	2.0	Picnic/playground/stage
Sunrise Terrace Park	2.2	Playground/picnic

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

Table AA.7.2
Existing Water-Based Parks and Recreation Facilities

Park	Acres	Facilities
Bigfork Boat Dock Park	--	Benches/picnic (Swan River)
Blankenship/Max Edgar Park	8.3	Boat ramp (Echo Lake)
Blue Grouse Park	4.3	Boat ramp/dock/picnic (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Flathead River Ranchettes Park	2.7	Boat ramp/picnic (Flathead River)
Foys Lake Park	--	Boat ramp/dock/swim area/picnic (Foys Lake)
Kelsey/Cummings Dam Park	1.2	Boat ramp/picnic (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Kings Loop Park	2.0	Fishing Access (Whitefish River)
Lakeside – Adams Park	--	Boat ramp (Flathead Lake)
Lakeside – Bierney Creek Park	--	Boat ramp (Flathead Lake)
Lazy Bay Park	3.2	Dock (Whitefish Lake)
Leisure Island Park	137.2	Boat ramp/picnic (Flathead River)
Little Bitterroot Lake Park	1.2	Lake access (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Somers Swimming Park	2.0	Swim area/picnic (Flathead Lake)
Whitefish Boat Park	0.5	Boat dock/picnic (Whitefish Lake)

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

Table AA.7.3
Existing Special Use Parks

Park	Acres	Facilities
Demersville Cemetery	--	Cemetery/Historic Site
Foys Community Center	2.0	Community center building
Herron Equestrian Park	118.0	Horse stalls/dressage/picnic/x-country skiing
Hungry Horse Island Park	3.3	Monuments

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

There are 14 water-based parks, covering 163 acres, offering access to lakes and rivers for boat ramps, docks and for fishing. These waterfront public accesses areas are especially important due to the increasing private shoreline development and the increasing popularity with water-based recreation. The average size of water based parks is about 12 acres, although most of the Leisure Island Park is undeveloped and in a natural state. Excluding the Leisure Island Park natural area, the average size is approximately two acres. These water based facilities offer access to three rivers and six lakes.

The four special use facilities account for 123 acres. Special use facilities are dedicated for specific or single-purpose recreational activities and serve a limited population, such as the Herron Equestrian Park. Herron Equestrian Park also offers camping, biking cross-county skiing, rugby and other multi-purpose organized activities. The Demersville Cemetery receives maintenance only.

Current Level of Service

Level of service is one tool used to baseline existing parks and recreational infrastructure relative to population. Flathead County's population in 2004 was estimated to be slightly less than 82,000. The population of the unincorporated area of the county was estimated

at 53,505. Based on the unincorporated population the county offers approximately 7.2 acres of total recreational areas per 1,000 residents. Park space per 1,000 population is shown on Table AA.7.4 for each of the park types.

Table AA.7.4
Park Space Level of Service

Park	Number	Acres	Average Size	AC/1,000 population
Land-Based	20	97	5	1.8
Water-Based	14	163*	12*	3.0
Special Use	3	123	41	2.3
Overall	37	383	10	7.2

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

State and Federal Recreation Areas

In Flathead County, there are numerous parks and recreation areas under federal and state management. These facilities offer a wide diversity and outstanding all-season outdoor recreational amenities for all county residents. Major recreational facilities and administering agencies are listed in Table AA.7.5.

TABLE AA.7.5
Federal & State Recreation Areas

Facility	Area	Management Agency
Glacier Nat'l Park	635,214	US National Park Service
Flathead National Forest	1,875,545	US Forest Service
Kootenai National Forest		US Forest Service
Lewis & Clark National Forest		US Forest Service
Lolo National Forest		US Forest Service
Lost Trails National Wildlife Refuge	7,885	US Fish & Wildlife
Swan River National Wildlife Refuge	1,568	US Fish & Wildlife
Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area	5,189	US Fish & Wildlife
Wayfarers State Park	67	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish Lake State Park	11	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish State Trust Lands	13,000	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

The primary distinction between federal and state recreation areas and county recreation areas is programming. Parks under county administration offers active organized sport activities (e.g. softball, volleyball, soccer and football, etc.) while federal and state lands promote unique outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, fishing and hunting. The importance of federal and state lands for recreation is tied to custom and culture of Montana residents and visitors for outdoor activities. Flathead County seeks to provide recreational opportunities that are an alternative to those activities found on federal and state lands public lands and to ensure public access to federal lands and water bodies.

PART 8: Economy

Economic Composition

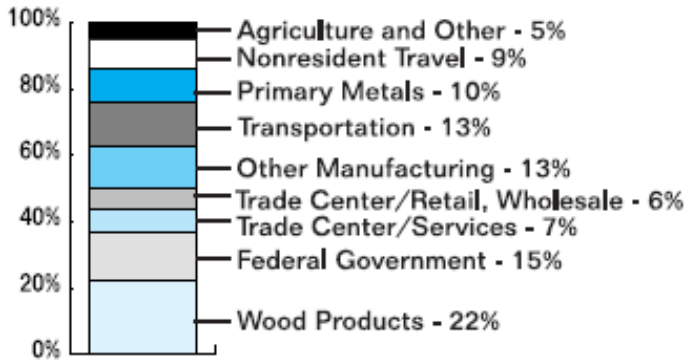
The Flathead Valley was historically a natural resource based economy. Logging, mining and commodities production have decreased in importance over time and what is emerging is a diverse economy that is particularly strong in a variety of retail trade and service industries. The County economy has experienced significant restructuring over the past twenty years as employment, labor earnings and sales have witnessed enormous increases in the services and retail trade sectors, far out-shadowing sectors with slower or negative growth. The natural amenities contributing to the character in Flathead County has attracted many small business and technology companies, which are becoming more prevalent in light of the new knowledge-based, globalized economy. Population growth, bringing demand for goods and services, has triggered this economic change.

Several indicators can be used to evaluate the trends in sectors and sub-sectors of the economy. Wages and incomes, employment and sales are some of the indicators that show changes over time. All of these indicators are discussed throughout the Chapter to contrast past and current trends and to provide a snapshot of today's economy. The amount of data detailing the Flathead County economy is extensive; however, consistent information for inter-sector comparisons per year is not always available. Information in this chapter describes both basic and non-basic sectors. Basic sectors are those which are entirely dependent on export of their goods or services and examples of which are agriculture, manufacturing and retail trade, while non-basic sectors are dependent on local consumption of goods and services and include sectors such as healthcare and education.

The County has grown in population over the past two decades. However, the growth in indicators such as wage income has vacillated between 1970 and 2000. For basic economic sectors, manufacturing of wood products, primary metals refining and high-tech account for approximately 45% of the economic base of the county. Other large elements in the economy are the federal government, which includes the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Park Service, transportation including railroads and non-resident travel as shown in Figure AA.8.1.[33]

[33] Outlook for Flathead County, Montana's 2005 Economic Outlook

Figure AA.8.1
Wage Income for Basic Economic Sectors – 2000 through 2003



Source: Outlook for Flathead County, Montana's 2005 Economic Outlook

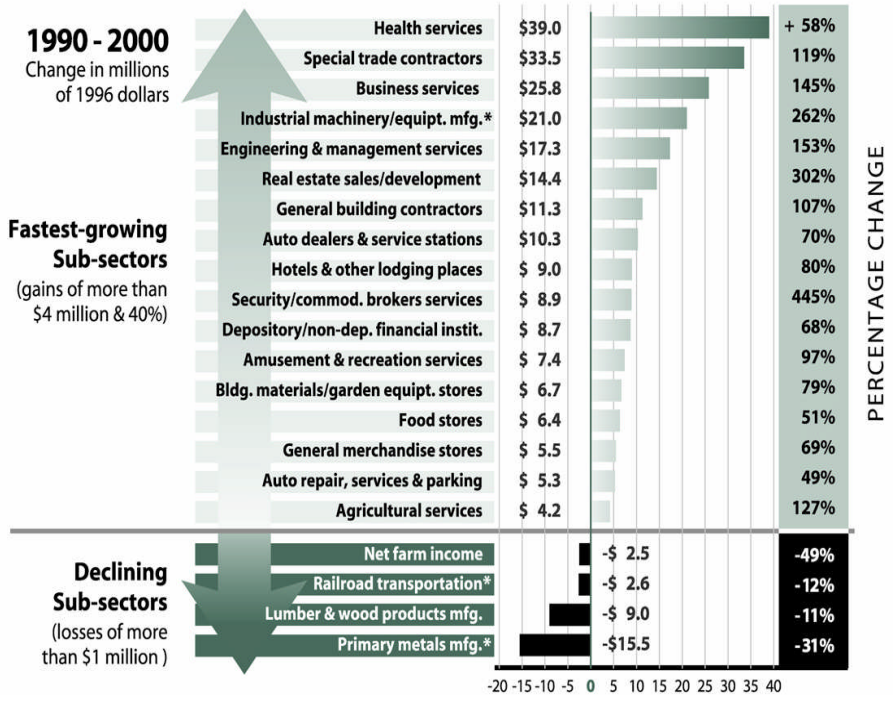
The economic sectors detailed in the US Economic Census provide data for standard sectors in the County economy (however, construction is not included). From the Census information, the total increase in sales for all sectors equaled 6% over the five-year period, increasing from $2.24 million to $2.40 million during that period. Retail trade were the largest portion of the sales in the County equaling over $1 billion in 2002, while manufacturing sales totaled nearly $646 million and health care and social assistance equaled $278 million[38].

Services and Retail Trade

Goods and services are provided in the service and retail trade sectors. Retail trade includes a plethora of business categories from hardware stores to used car dealers to florists, while services include banks, property management, lawyers, travel agencies and schools.

Increases in sales per sector between 1997 and 2002 showed that educational services sector with includes elementary, secondary and trade schools increased the most significantly with a 262% growth, closely followed by health care and social assistance with 257% growth. The sectors of administrative and support and waste management and remediation services; arts, entertainment and recreation; and real estate and rental leasing experienced notable increases at 112%, 94% and 92%, respectively[38]. Overall, the services and retail trade sectors witnessed remarkable growth between the previous two US Economic Censuses. The labor earning in the private non-basic sectors, many of which are service and retail trade sectors, have shown significant growth as detailed in Figure AA.8.2.

Figure AA.8.2
Labor Earnings by Sub-Sector – 1990 through 2000



Source: Gateway to Glacier: The Emerging Economy of Flathead County; National Parks Conservation Association, 2003

Construction

Home construction has increased with population growth. Since 1990, the increase in both single-family and multi-family has been considerable. This has been reflected in the number of employees in the construction sector. In 1998, the construction industry employed 1,925 persons in 427 establishments, by 2004 this number had increased to 3,090 persons and 743 establishments, a 61% increase in employment and a 74% increase in the number of establishments over the six year period[34]

Manufacturing and Agriculture

Manufacturing includes sub-sectors such as sawmills, breweries, dairies and foundries. Major manufacturing industries in the county include Semitool and the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant. Manufacturing has begun to decline in importance as growth has provided alternative job opportunities. A decline in manufacturing of 18% was the only US Census-documented decreased in sales for any sector in 2002.

Agricultural sales appear to be steady with a decline in the number of active farms and ranches. Flathead County ranks fourth in the state for the number of total farms and ranches equaling 1,075 in 2005, which is a 2% decline from 1997. The total market

[34] 1998 County Business Patterns (NAICS), US Census Bureau; Labor Market Information for Flathead County, Montana Department of Labor and Industry, 2004.

value of production for all agriculture equaled over $30 million in 2002, an 8% increase from 1997. The average market value of production per farm totaled $28,384 in 2002, a 10% increase from 1997. The County ranks first in the state for sales of mint for oil, nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod products and llamas, in addition to ranking second in sales of cut Christmas trees.[35]

Tourism

Flathead County is a "Gateway Community" providing access to Glacier National Park. Visitors to Flathead County create a demand for goods and services provided by several sectors. Lodging, transportation and fuel, food and drink and retail items are the goods and services for which tourists spend money. In 1998, 29% of expenditures by visitors were on retail trade, lodging comprised 20% of spending and restaurant/bar spending accounted for 19%[36]. Total expenditures in Flathead County by tourist in 1998 equaled $145 million, 10 % of total tourist expenditures in the state of Montana. The total expenditures by visitors to the County grew by more than $1million in 2002, equating to over $146 million[37]. Two of the fastest growing sub-sectors of the County economy in 2000 were hotels and lodging which ranked ninth and amusement and recreation, which ranked twelfth.

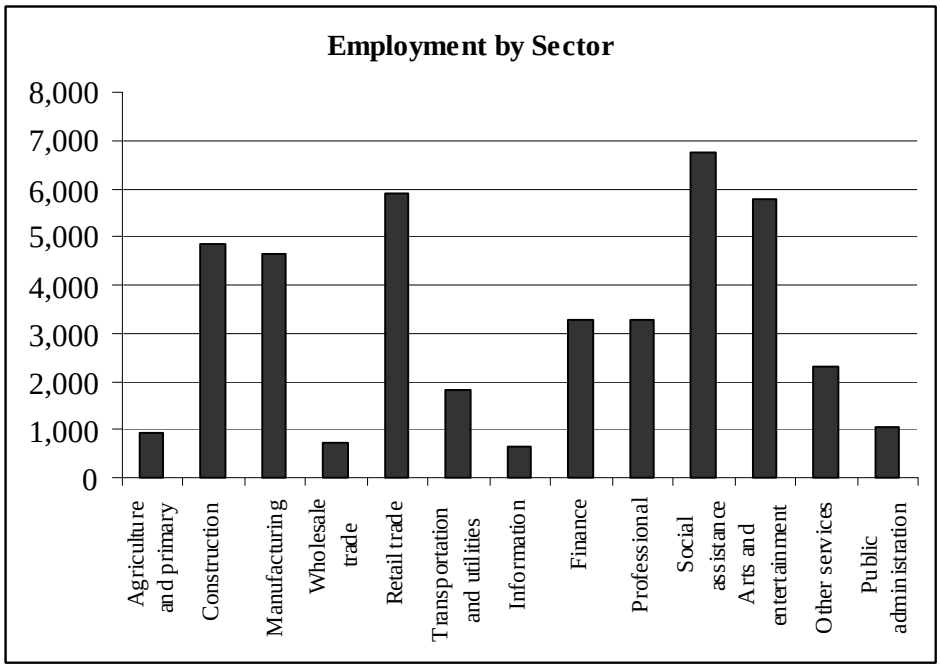
Tourist spending is an important inflow of money into Flathead County economy. As such, the character of the area and visitor attractions play an important role. People mainly visit Flathead County to experience Glacier National Park, with 74% of visitors surveyed giving the Park as the attraction which brought them to the area. Mountains, rivers, open space and wildlife were the next most important attractions to those who were surveyed, all features of the natural environment that make the County unique and a desirable destination.

Employment

From 1990 to 2000, 15,700 new jobs were created, which was an increase of nearly 50%. Dramatic increases occurred between 1980 and 2000 in areas of services and in retail trade.

[35] *2002 Census of Agriculture County Profile*; National Agricultural Statistics Services, US Department of Agriculture
[36] McMahon, Kim. *Regional Non-Resident Spending in Montana;* Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana, 2000
[37] Nickerson, Norma and Jim Wilton. *Niche News: Flathead County Visitor Characteristics*; Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana, 2002

Figure AA.8.3
Employment by Sector – 2005



Source: US Census

Approximately 35,707 persons were employed in private and public firms in 2004. Employment is spread out over several sectors as shown in Figure AA.8.3. The sector with the largest number of employees is that of retail trade with 5,551 employees, followed by government, accommodation and food services and healthcare and social services. Those sectors with the least number of employees are management of companies and enterprises with 92, mining with 190 and utilities with 193**.**

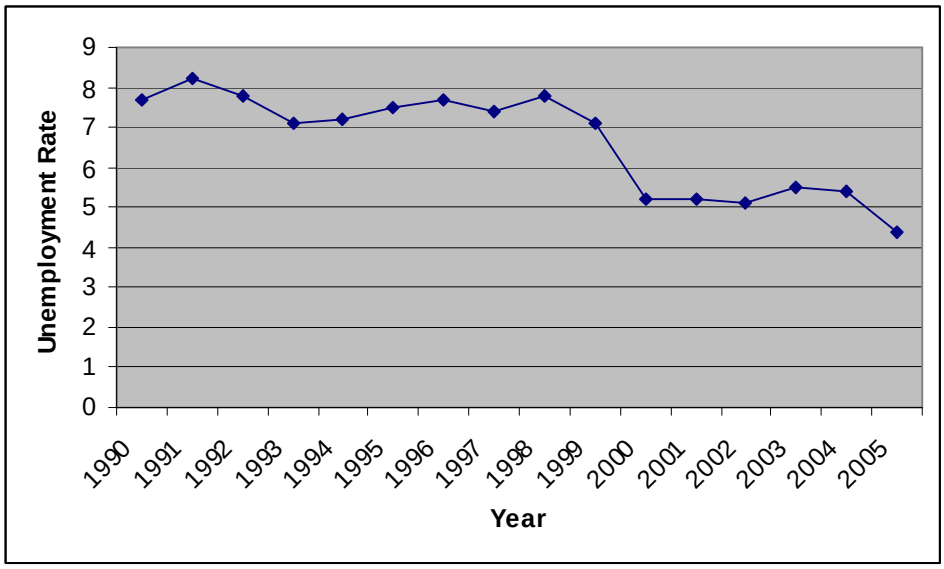
Growth in the service and retail sectors which includes retail trade and finance, insurance and real estate, has notably increased to meet the growth in population. Service and retail trade sectors witnessed a 57% employment growth during the 1990s. The types of occupations that increased in number were mainly high quality jobs such as those in the areas of health care, engineering and management services and business services. Service and retail occupations accounted for over 70% of the labor earnings during the 1990s. Between 1997 and 2000, the number of employees in health care and social assistance increased by 257%, followed by arts, entertainment and recreation with an increase of 74% and employees in administrative and support and waste management and remediation services which increased by 70%.[38]

[38] US Economic Census 1997, 2002

Unemployment Rates

Flathead County is experiencing an historically low unemployment rate as seen in Figure AA.8.4. The Flathead County Job Service Workforce Center reports 600 job openings, as compared with 400 in spring 2005. Businesses in the service and retail trade sectors are experiencing difficulty hiring and maintaining dependable employees; however, with the growth in these sectors, employment opportunities have considerably risen.

Figure AA.8.4
Unemployment Rate – 1990 through 2005



Source: Unemployment Rates and Labor Force Statistics; www.ourfactsyourfuture.org

Wages

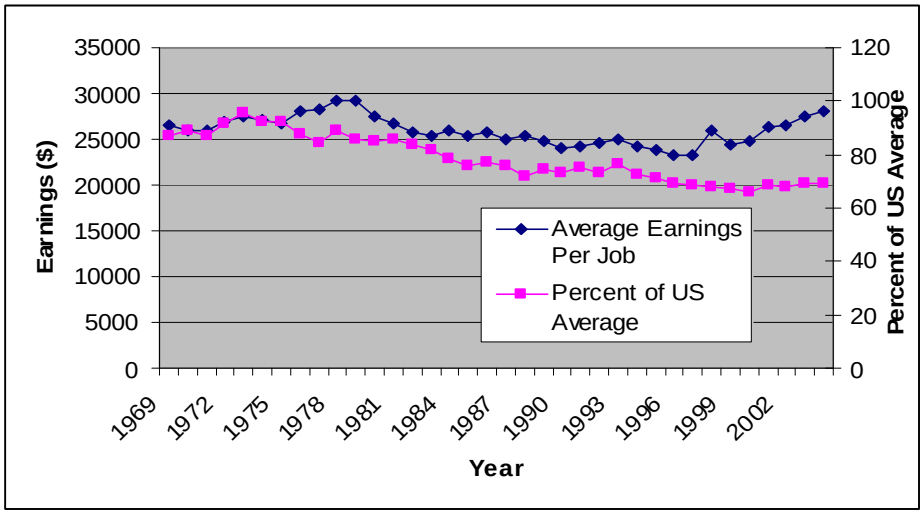
Although Flathead County wages are rising, they are far from meeting the average national average. Flathead County employers pay less than US employers on average, but are more competitive with average wages for Montana across numerous sectors[39]. Wages rose by 7.4% from 2003-2004. Per capita personal income in 2004 was $28,598 placing Flathead County as 10th highest in the state

The increasing cost of living in Flathead County has a large influence on what is a 'livable wage' or in other words a wage that covers the costs of basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, healthcare and insurance. The cost of housing in the County as discussed in Chapter 3 is a major factor when determining a livable wage as this cost in particular has risen dramatically over the past decade. Approximately 51%of private businesses offer medical benefits[39]. Small businesses that have four or fewer employees offer medical plans only 47% of the time. In addition, only 20% of the employers in the County provide pension plans and 41% offer a 401(k) or savings plan[39].

[39] Davis, Gregg, PhD and Lynette Smith. Flathead County Wage and Benefit Survey; Center for Business Information and Research, 2005

Although wages as a whole have generally been on the increase since the later part of the 1990s, when compared to the United States, the average earnings per job in Flathead County have steadily declined against the national average as shown in Figure AA.8.5. In the early 1970s, the earnings per job in the County were comparable to those nationwide, when in 1973 the average earnings per job in the County were over 95% of the national average. By the year 2004, the average earnings per job had dropped below 70% of the national average.

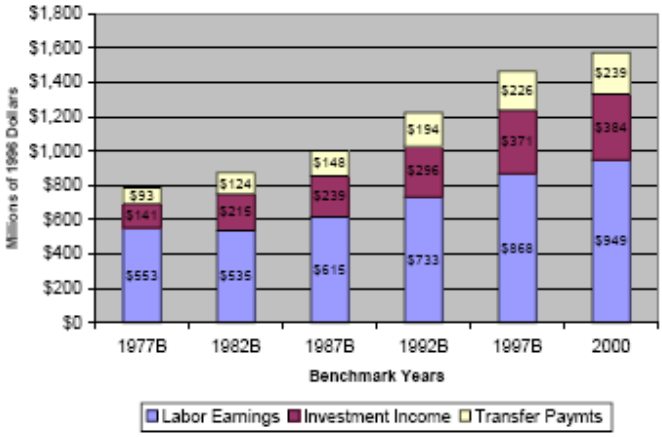
Figure AA.8.5
Average Earnings per Job – 1969 through 2004



Source: Flathead County and Montana: Average Earnings per Job, 1969-2004; Northwest Income Indicator Project.

The County has witnessed an increase in non-wage incomes, which include income from investments and transfer payments, such as social security, as the County population of 40 to 60 year olds has grown. In 2000, 60% of incomes were wage-based a 10% decrease from 1990. Nearly 25% of all income in the County came from investments such as dividends, capital gains and interest. The remaining15% of all income came from transfer payments sources such as social security, Medicare and Medicaid. Figure AA.8.6 shows the income composition in the County from 1977 through 2000, comparing wage and non-wage incomes.

Figure AA.8.6
Wage vs. Non-Wage Incomes – 1977 through 2000



Source: National Parks Conservation Association, 2002

Workforce

There is a large number of vacant positions indicating that employers are experiencing difficulty when hiring and retaining dependable employees. The lack of sufficient workforce in Flathead County produces concerns about education, training and employee recruitment, in addition to the gender gap in employment.

The majority of Flathead County residents 25 years or older have some college education, with 5% holding a 2-year associate degree, 18% holding a 4-year bachelors degree, 6% with graduate or professional degrees and 29% with some college but no degree. However, this equates to 63% of the population with no more than a high school diploma. The education trend is similar to that in the entire state of Montana. In 2000, male workers comprised 54% of the workforce with female workers comprising the remaining 46%. Men held more jobs in labor-intensive industries such as manufacturing and construction and in retail trade while more women held positions in education, healthcare and finance and insurance[40].

Business Characteristics

The majority of businesses in the county are small businesses alluding to the fact that entrepreneurship is significant in the area. Advanced telecommunications infrastructure and transportation has allowed new business opportunities in the County. The attraction of the area offering a high quality of living is an advantage in enticing the relocation or start-up of high-tech and value-added businesses, as these businesses produce high value goods with low environmental impact. Non-employee businesses, or small businesses that sustain only the business owner, are prevalent and compose a notable part of the Flathead County economy.

[40] www.censusscope.org

Approximately 3,986 individual private businesses operated in the County in 2004, 91% of which are small businesses with one to 19 employees[41]. Construction firms are the most numerous with 743 construction businesses, which include construction of buildings, heavy and civil engineering construction and special trade contractors. Retail trade is the second most numerous in regard to number of establishments with 534 businesses including motor vehicle and parts dealers, furniture and home furnishing stores, gasoline stations and general merchandise stores. Professional and technical services, accommodation and food services and other services are the next most numerous sectors concerning number of businesses as shown in Table AA.8.1.

Table AA.8.1
Number of Establishments per Sector - 2004

Industry	# of establishments
Construction	743
Retail trade	534
Professional and technical services	358
Accommodation and food services	324
Other services	317
Healthcare and social assistance	304
Administrative and waste services	207
Real estate and rental and leasing	205
Finance and Insurance	200
Manufacturing	186
Transportation and warehousing	130
Wholesale trade	121
Arts, entertainment and recreation	115
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	101
Information	76
Educational services	29
Mining	18
Management of companies and enterprises	11
Utilities	9
Total private businesses	3986

Source: Labor Market Information for Flathead

Larger employers comprise a much smaller segment of the Flathead County economy. In 2000, twenty-four businesses employed between 100 and 499 employees, while only three businesses employed 500 or more employees[41]. Some of the top private employers in the County are shown in Table AA.8.2.

[41] 2000 County Business Patterns for Flathead, MT; US Census 2000

Table AA.8.2
Top Employers in 2004

Industry	Employer
Utilities	Century Tel, Flathead Electric
Services	Glacier Bank, Kalispell Regional Medical Center
Retail Trade	Wal-Mart, Smith's Food & Drug
Manufacturing	Semitool, Inc, Columbia Falls Aluminum
Construction	Rocky Mountain Contractors, Schellinger Construction

Source: Labor Market Information for Flathead County; Montana Department of Labor and Industry, 2005

Facilities and Infrastructure

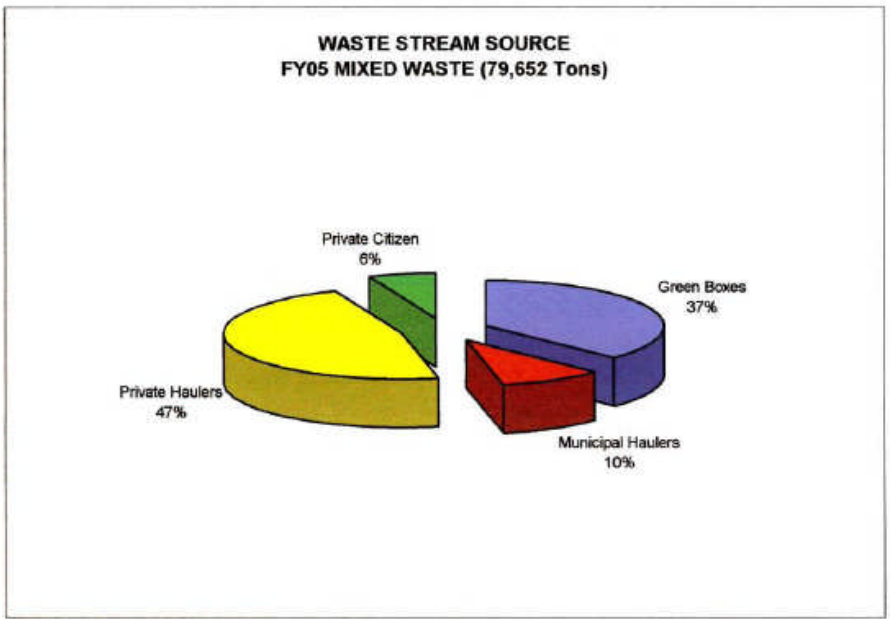
Adequate business facilities and public infrastructure are necessary to promote a healthy business climate. Successful business communities often rely upon designated business districts to promote close proximity of businesses and services. Advances in transportation and communication technologies have enabled businesses to thrive in more remote areas of the nation. Important transportation infrastructure for the County economy includes Glacier National Airport, road networks and the railroad lines while utilities such those providing high speed internet and phone services are also essential. For an overview of land use considerations for commercial development please see Chapter 2 and for more information on public facilities and infrastructure in the County, please refer to Chapter 7.

PART 9: Solid Waste

Solid waste disposal is provided by the Flathead County Solid Waste District. The District provides refuse collection, disposal services, hazardous waste collection and recycling opportunities to all County residents.

The Flathead County landfill is located five miles north of the city of Kalispell on US Highway 93 and is permitted for waste management activities on approximately 80-acres, with a total of 275-acres dedicated for current and future waste management needs. The facility operates six days a week and permits rural county residents to drop off waste at the county landfill or dispose of household refuse at one of the 12 containers or "green box" sites. Container sites are located in the communities of Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Coram, Creston, Denny's, Essex, Kila, Somers, Olney, Nyack, Marion and Lakeside (see Figure AA.9.4). Refuse accumulated at these sites is hauled by the District to the Flathead County landfill. As shown in Figure AA.9.1, waste travels to the landfill via four methods: individual private citizen haul, contracted private company haulers, municipal haulers and green box disposal. Contracted private hauling companies are the most utilized method, followed by green box disposal, municipal haulers and individual private citizen haul.

Figure AA.9.1
Waste Disposal in 2005

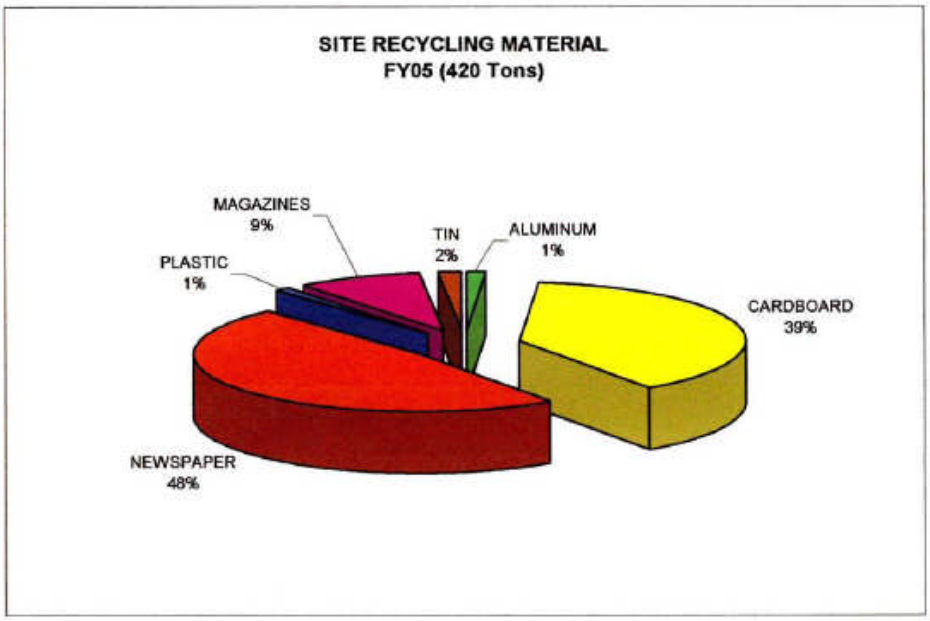


Source: 2005 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

Recycling

The Solid Waste District funds the county WasteNot consumer education program to increase awareness of solid waste issues, with emphasis on recycling, waste reduction and safe disposal of household hazardous waste. In the county, recycling programs provides opportunity to recycle cardboard, newspaper, tin and aluminum and plastic bottles and milk jugs Recycling containers are available at the Flathead County Landfill and the Columbia Falls, Coram, Kila, Creston, Bigfork and Lakeside collection sites. The District maintains a contract with the Valley Recycling Center for the recycling of household recyclable materials. As is shown in Figure AA.9.2, the most frequently recycled material is newspaper, followed by cardboard, magazines, tin, aluminum and finally plastic; glass recycling is not currently offered. In addition to recycled household materials, lead batteries, used oil and materials from appliances and junk vehicles can be recycled.

Figure AA.9.2
Materials Recycled in 2005



Source: 2005 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

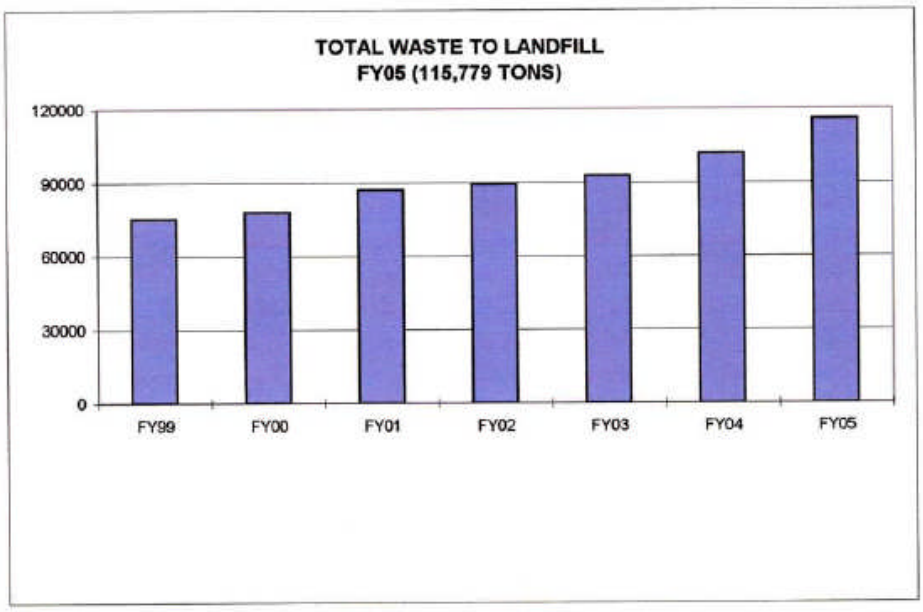
The Solid Waste District maintains a household hazardous waste program (HHW) that collected over 8,000 gallons of household hazardous waste in 2005. Residents can dispose of HHW at no cost while small businesses have the opportunity to dispose of HHW once a year for a fee. Household hazardous waste is collected and transported to a hazardous waste facility where it is either recycled or disposed of properly. Much of the household hazardous waste in the county is not disposed of properly; the District estimates that Flathead County residents dispose of between 80 and 240 tons of hazardous products in their garbage on an annual basis.

The Solid Waste District is funded through an annual assessment of $74.54 per household and a "per volume" of waste fee assessment for businesses. Additionally, a pay-as-you-throw tipping fee of $28.75 per ton is assessed for commercial haulers that haul waste directly to the landfill. In 2005, the District generated $4,014,085 through assessment fees and $1,148,827 though pay-as-you-throw fees. The total revenues for the District in 2005 totaled $5,440,712; the total expenditures equaled $6,055,770, with over $2 million in funds transferred to the expansion and closure trusts.

As growth in the County has steadily continued, it is reflected in the volume of waste collected and disposed of in the landfill (see Figure AA.9.3). The District has witnessed a 40% increase in the tons of refused hauled from the container sites between 2000 and 2005. The total tons of refuse disposed of per month at the landfill have increased from 8,275 tons to 9,869 tons from 2004 to 2005, resulting in a 19% increase over the past year. The summer months result in the largest volume of waste disposal, with a 500 ton per day disposal rate. The increase in waste disposal during the summer can be attributed

to the influx of visitors and seasonal residents during this time. The total amount of waste disposed of in the landfill in 2005 equaled 115,779 tons[42].

Figure AA.9.3
Total Waste Disposal at Landfill – 1999 through 2005

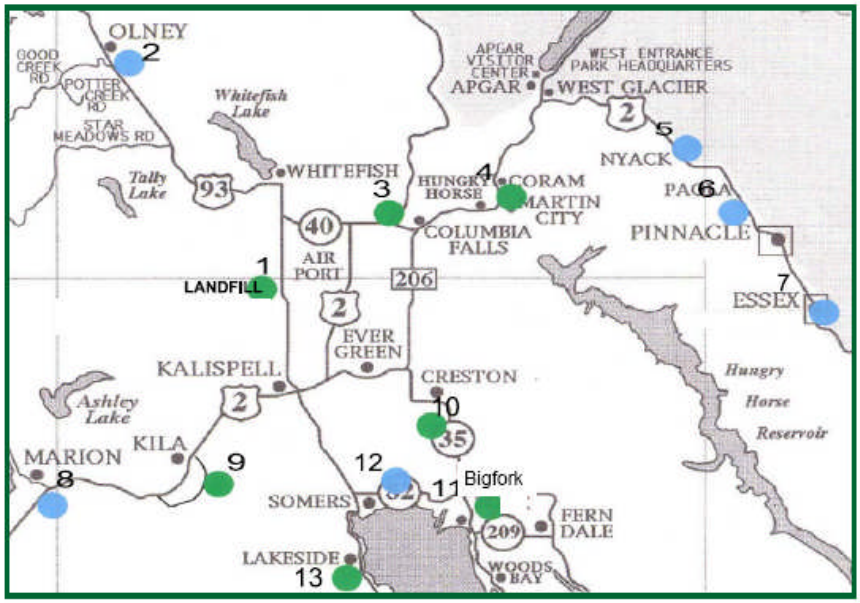


Source: 2005 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

The increasing amount of refuse being collected from the containers sites has resulted in an increase in wildlife attraction to the container areas, including attraction of bears and large game and a visual degradation of the sites due to litter and lack of appropriate screening. In addition, the illegal dumping of business wastes has also increased. The increase of individual households hauling refuse to the landfill and to container sites has resulted in litter along transportation routes because the refuse is improperly covered or secured and in increased traffic congestion at the container sites and landfill.

[42] 2005 Solid Waste Report, Flathead County Solid Waste District

Figure AA.9.4
Solid Waste Sites



1 • LANDFILL—4098 US Highway 93 North, Kalispell
2 OLNEY—Highway 93 West
3 • COLUMBIA FALLS—Truck Route
4 • CORAM—Highway 2 East
5 NYACK—Highway 2 West
6 DENNY'S—Highway 2 East
7 ESSEX—Highway 2 West
8 MARION—Highway 2 East
9 • KILA—Kila Road
10 • CRESTON—MT Highway 35 (Broeder Loop Rd.)
11 • BIGFORK—MT Highway 83
12 SOMERS—MT Highway 82
13 • LAKESIDE—Blacktail Road

• Sites with Recycle Containers
Contracted with Valley Recycling— 257-2574

Flathead County Solid Waste District
Dave Prunty, Director
4098 Highway 93 North

Source: Flathead County Solid Waste District

PART 10: Public Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment

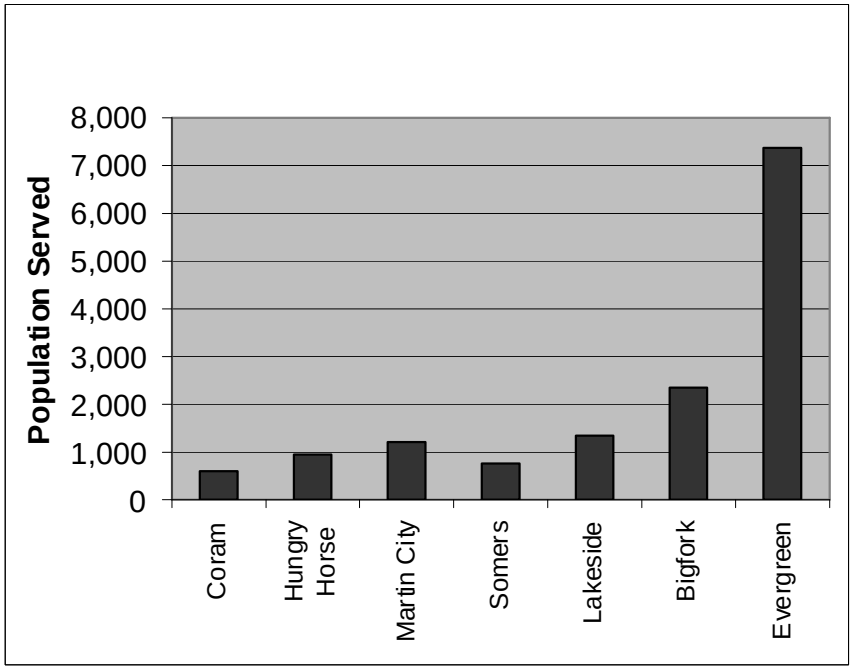
County Water and Sewer Districts

The majority of development in the unincorporated areas of the county utilizes individual septic systems and individual water wells. However, 26 water and/or sewer districts have been established to serve larger scale development or rural communities. The ability to provide public sewer and/or public water services is a major factor influencing the potential density and type of development in a community as the necessary land area for septic systems and individual water wells is no longer a limiting factor.

Major Districts

Seven major water and sewer districts as seen in Figure AA.10.1 serve entire unincorporated communities, half of which provide both water and wastewater treatment services. These water and sewer districts in the communities of Bigfork, Coram, Evergreen, Hungry Horse, Lakeside, Martin City and Somers each serve between 600 and 5,500 residents and businesses. The Coram, Hungry Horse and Martin City Districts offer public water services only; no public sewer treatment is available. The Bigfork and Lakeside Districts operate their own sewer treatment facilities, while Somers contracts with Lakeside for sewer treatment and Evergreen contracts with the City of Kalispell for sewer treatment services.

Figure AA.10.1
Major County Water and Sewer Districts in Unincorporated Areas



Source: U.S. Census

As hundreds to thousands of residents are served by these systems, protection of their drinking water sources is vital to public health. Assessments of the susceptibility to potential contamination for public water sources are accomplished by evaluating the land uses in three zones or regions surrounding the wells. The Control Zone, which is the most critical area because it is the land located directly over and around the well, is defined as the area within a 100-foot radius of the well. The Inventory Region is either the land area within a 1,000-foot (for wells in confined aquifers) to 1-mile radius (for conservative estimates) of the well or the area which is within a three year groundwater time of travel, whichever is larger. The Recharge Region is the entire portion of the aquifer or an area that contributes water to the local aquifer and often includes the entire watershed area.

Coram, Hungry Horse, & Martin City

The Coram, Hungry Horse and Martin City County Water and Sewer Districts are located in areas that are not currently experiencing the same high growth rates as the communities of Bigfork, Lakeside, Somers and Evergreen that each grew by over 50% between 1990 and 2000[43]. The contrast in growth rates can be attributed to several factors, one of which is the lack of public sewer system in Coram, Hungry Horse and Martin City. Because these three districts do not provide a public sewer system, residents in these communities are forced to use individual or multi-user septic systems.

The Coram Water and Sewer District serves the fewest number of residents and businesses, providing water to 600 persons. The Hungry Horse Water and Sewer District utilizes two wells to provide 943 persons at residences and businesses with drinking water and is the largest county water and sewer district, in terms of population served, which does not offer sewer treatment services. The Martin City Water and Sewer District utilizes two wells to provide water services to approximately 300 full-time and 200 transient persons at residences and businesses.

In particular, source water delineation and assessment for Hungry Horse and Martin City reveal threats to drinking water quality and well susceptibility to these threats. As the two communities are within close proximity to each other, analysis of their Control Zone shows that no apparent threats exist in this area. In the Inventory Region threats include individual septic systems, underground storage tanks/leaking underground storage tanks (UST/LST), large capacity septic systems, major travel corridors such as US Highway 2, an RV septic dumpsite and the Hungry Horse Dam Town old dumpsite. In the Recharge Region, potential contamination sources are US Highway 2, Great Northern Railroad Line, West Glacier wastewater discharges and underground storage tanks. The susceptibility to potential contamination for the drinking water systems is shown in Table AA.10.1.

Table AA.10.1
Drinking Water Source Susceptibility to Potential Contamination – Hungry Horse & Martin City

Potential Contamination Source	Hungry Horse	Martin City
Individual septic	Very High	High
Large septic	Very High	High
US Hwy 2	Very High	Very High
Old dumpsite	High	N/A
RV dumpsite	Very High	N/A
UST/LUST	Moderate	N/A
RR Line	Low	Low

Source: Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report, Source Water Protection Section, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2004

[43] US Census 2000

Somers

The Somers Water and Sewer District utilizes two wells and a 100,000 gallon elevated reservoir to provide drinking water for approximately 765 persons at residences and businesses and maintains a contract with the Lakeside Water and Sewer District for 45,000 gallons per day of wastewater discharge. The Somers district currently utilizes 70 percent of the allowed daily capacity for wastewater discharge.

The source water delineation and assessment report for the Somers District reveals no significant potential contaminant sources in the control zone and domestic wells and individual septic systems as potential contamination sources in the inventory zone. Hydrocarbons from service stations, Somers Marina, the old dumpsite, the Great Northern Tie Treatment Plant and individual septic systems are sources of contaminants in the Recharge Zone. The most significant potential contaminant source noted in the report is the Great Northern Tie Treatment Plant in the Recharge Region[44]. Table AA.10.2 lists several potential sources of contamination and the public water system's susceptibility to contamination.

Table AA.10.2
Drinking Water Source Susceptibility to Potential Contamination – Somers

Potential Contamination Source	Somers
Domestic Wells	Low/Moderate
Domestic Residences	Low
Septic Systems	Low

Source: Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report for the Somers County Water and Sewer District Public Water System; Land and Water Consulting, Inc., 2003

Because Somers maintains a contract with the Lakeside District for wastewater treatment, they are limited in expansion in terms of effluent flow by the Lakeside District. A large portion of the area that is serviced by the Somers District is within high groundwater areas in close proximity to the Flathead Lake, the 100-year floodplain and wetland areas, making expansion of public sewer facilities fundamental to growth.

Lakeside

Estimates for the number of Lakeside County Water and Sewer District customers approximate that between 800 and 1,340 persons at residences and businesses are served by the district. This district provides drinking water through two separate well systems and provides sewer treatment services. The Lakeside district has increased in the number of new sewer service customers by nearly 20% and new drinking water service customers by 45.5% between 2000 and 2005.

The source water delineation and assessment report for the Lakeside District identified vandalism and careless use of domestic products by nearby residents as potential sources

[44] Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report for the Somers County Waster and Sewer District Public Water System; Land and Water Consulting, Inc., 2003

of drinking water contamination in the Control Zone. The susceptibility of contamination from these sources is moderate to high as the Control Zone is developed with residential uses. Potential drinking water contamination threats in the Inventory Region are domestic wells and individual septic systems, hydrocarbons from service stations, spills or accidents on US Highway 93 and leaks in the sanitary sewer mains. In the Recharge Region, the Montana Department of Transportation gravel pit, former sewage lagoons, Blacktail Mountain Ski Area, former US Air Force radar station and the former Kalispell Air Force Station pose potential contamination threats. Table AA.10.3 details the susceptibility to potential contamination from multiple sources.

Table AA.10.3
Drinking Water Source Susceptibility to Potential Contamination – Lakeside

Potential Contamination Source	Lakeside
US Hwy 93	Low
PWS Wells	Moderate
Service Stations	Low/Moderate
Underground Vault (TCE)	Low/Moderate
Residences	Low
Domestic Wells	Low
Sanitary Sewer Main	Low

Source: Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report for the Lakeside County Water and Sewer District Public Water System; Land and Water Consulting, Inc., 2003

A fourth well formerly utilized by the District has since been abandoned after it became contaminated with Trichloroethylene (TCE) from a vault located twenty feet from the well. Additionally, three hydrocarbon spills have occurred in the past 10 years - the Lakeside Exxon release in 2000, a release at Burrheads Gas Groceries and Grub in 1999 and a release at Lakeside School in 1997.

Bigfork

The Bigfork County Water and Sewer District provides customers with drinking water and sewer treatment service. Two wells provide the drinking water to 2,350 persons at residences and businesses. Approximately 47,000 feet of gravity sewer pipe connects customers to the sewer treatment facility. The sewer treatment facility utilizes an advanced wastewater treatment system, discharging treated effluent into the Swan River and Flathead Lake, while the remaining sludge is stored in retention tanks during the winter months and land application during the remainder of the year

The source water delineation and assessment report for the Bigfork District identified no potential source of drinking water contamination in the Control Zone and determined that individual septic systems and large capacity septic systems are potential contaminant sources in the Inventory Region. Potential sources of contamination in the Recharge Region are Montana Highways 35 and 26, underground storage tank/leaking underground storage tanks (UST/LUST), Montana Department of Transportation maintenance

facilities and a particular storm water discharger. The susceptibly of the source wells for contamination by several of the potential sources is described in Table AA.10.4.

Table AA.10.4
Drinking Water Source Susceptibility to Potential Contamination – Bigfork

Potential Contamination Source	Bigfork
Large Capacity Septic Systems	High
Cropland	Low
Septic Density	Very Low
Highways and Other Roadways	N/A
MDT Maintenance Facilities	N/A
UST/LUST	N/A

Source: Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report for the Bigfork County Water and Sewer District Public Water System; Source Water Protection Section, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, 2005

Evergreen

The Flathead County Water and Sewer District #1 - Evergreen is commonly referred to as the Evergreen Water and Sewer District. This district provides water and sewer services to approximately 7,372 persons at residences and businesses. Nine wells and a 1 million gallon above ground storage reservoir provide drinking water in the Evergreen service area. The Evergreen Water and Sewer district maintains an agreement with City of Kalispell for the treatment of wastewater.

Due to the fact that the Evergreen District utilizes nine separate well sources, the potential contaminant sources may not be a threat to every well, but do pose a potential threat to at least one well. In the Control Zone, the only potential source of contamination is from hydrocarbons for the standby generator located in one of the pump houses. The potential sources of contaminants in the Inventory Region are raw or inadequately treated sewage, spills from accidents on US Highway 2 or Burlington Northern Rail tracks, an abandoned oil refinery site, the former Kalispell Pole and Timber Company site, livestock pasture, spills from service stations and microbial and other contaminants from a slough/pond. The Recharge Region includes the entire Flathead Valley floor that encompasses a multitude of land uses and activities and thus potential contamination sources[45].

Expansion of the Evergreen District concerning sewer treatment is limited by its agreement with the City of Kalispell. Currently the new sewer hookups are only permitted for those properties within the existing boundaries of the Evergreen District. The ability to increase service outside of the current District boundaries will require permission from the City of Kalispell.

[45] Source Water Delineation and Assessment Report; Evergreen Water District, 2003

District Health-Based Violations

Drinking water quality for water and sewer districts is overseen by the State of Montana. Health-based violations have been issued for several of the major districts. Each violation was issued because the source exceeded the allowable concentration of total coli form (TCF) which is a bacterium commonly found in soil or vegetation and can be the result of fecal contamination[46]. The presence of coli form often requires a water boil alert when the violation issued in order to protect the public health. Table AA.10.5 list the health-based violations incurred by several districts.

The Coram County Water and Sewer District has received three health-based violations for total coli form levels, one in 2000 and two in 2001. The Hungry Horse County Water and Sewer District has been issued one health-based violation for the presence of total coli form in the water supply in 2000. The Martin City County Water and Sewer District has received no health-based drinking water quality violations.

The Somers District was issued one health-based violation in 1997 for total coli form levels in the drinking water supply. No health-based violations for drinking water quality have been issued for the Lakeside District. The Bigfork District has been issued one health-based violation for total coli form in the drinking water supply in 2001.

The Evergreen Water and Sewer District has received one health-based violation in 1996 for total coli form levels in the drinking supply. No further violations of this type have been issued for the District.

Table AA.10.5
Health-Based Water Quality Violations by District

District	Contaminant	Violation Date
Coram	TCF	2000
Coram	TCF	2001
Coram	TCF	2001
Hungry Horse	TCF	2000
Somers	TCF	1997
Bigfork	TCF	2001
Evergreen	TCF	1996

Minor Districts

The remaining 19 county water and wastewater treatment systems listed below serve large subdivision areas, not entire communities. Many of the smaller county water and sewer districts were established for serving one or two large subdivisions and often provide only water services. These systems are often comprised of one or two wells providing drinking water and several are serviced by a county or city sewer district. The

[46] http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/icr/gloss_path.html

number of full-time residents that these districts serve is approximately between 20 and 400.

- Big Mountain County Sewer District (sewer only)
- Eagle Ridge Estates County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Essex County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Flathead County Water District #8 (Happy Valley – water only)
- Foys Lakeside County Water District (water only)
- Glacier Ranch County Water and Sewer District (inactive - water and sewer)
- Green Tree Meadows HOA County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Happy Valley Area B County Water District (water only)
- Kelsey County Water District (water only)
- Lakeshore Heights County Water District (water only)
- Meadow Hills County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Meadow Lake County Water and Sewer District (water and sewer)
- Panoramic Mountain River Heights County Water District (water only)
- Pleasant View Homesites County Water and Sewer District(water only)
- Ranch County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Smith Lake Vista County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Stillwater Estates County Water and Sewer District (water only)
- Village County Sewer District (consolidated into the Kalispell system)
- Wapiti Acres County Water and Sewer District (water only)

PART 11: Transportation Planning

States are required to conduct continuing, comprehensive and collaborative inter-modal statewide transportation planning that facilitates the efficient, economic movement of people and goods in all areas of the state, including metropolitan areas. Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are governed by Federal law (23 USC 134 and 135). Applicable state and local laws are required if Federal highway or transit funds are used for transportation investments. Federal planning regulations are codified in 23 CFR 450. Title 60 of the Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) governs administration of Montana State Highways.

The quality and quantity of transportation within a community can restrict or enhance growth and development. Transportation helps shape an area's economic health and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity through accessibility to land. The performance of the transportation system affects such public policy concerns as air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, "smart growth," economic development, safety and security. Transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining and financing the area's transportation system in such a way as to advance the area's long-term goals. Because transportation

infrastructure necessarily precedes development, current transportation planning will shape future growth.

Transportation planning examines travel and transportation issues and needs, which typically includes a demographic analysis of the community, as well as an examination of travel patterns and trends. The process includes an analysis of alternatives to meet projected future demands and for providing a safe and efficient transportation system that meets mobility needs without creating adverse impacts to the environment or the general character of an area. The analysis includes all types of transportation, including road systems, air and rail, mass transit, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In small communities and rural areas there is no federally designated body to do transportation planning. In some states, planning for these areas is undertaken by the State Department of Transportation. In rural Montana and Flathead County, these functions are performed by rural planning organizations or local governments.

Because a transportation system can have a substantial impact on an area, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), requested a document be prepared to serve as a primer for board members and other transportation decision makers. A report created by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides government officials and transportation service providers with an overview of transportation planning. The report provides a basic understanding of the key concepts, but is not intended to provide details of each policy issue. This report is available electronically at the following website: www.planning.dot.gov and will be updated periodically to include additional topics or information.

PART 12: Roads Transportation

Flathead County is connected to interstate routes by U.S. Highway 93 and U.S. Highway 2. The closest junction to Interstate 90 is 110 miles south of Kalispell. As such, the county is isolated and driving times are long to get to proximate urban areas. To the west, U.S. 2 connects to U.S. Highway 95 that connects to Interstate 90 into Spokane. One hundred fifty miles east of Kalispell, U.S. 2 connects to Interstate 15 traveling north to Calgary and south to Helena and Wyoming. U.S. Highway 93 and U.S. Highway 2 intersects in downtown Kalispell. U.S. Highway 93 runs south from Kalispell to Missoula where it connects to Interstate 90. To the north, U.S. 93 goes through Eureka to Canada. By road, Flathead County is not directly connected to major urban centers such as Spokane, Missoula, Great Falls, Billings and Calgary via interstate. There is, however, US and state highway connectivity.

The Flathead County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for maintaining non-private roads outside of the three cities in Flathead County and is under the direct control of the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners. Department responsibilities cover a large geographic area, including to the Canadian border on the north, Essex to the northeast, Ferndale and Bigfork to the east and south, Lakeside and Niarada to the south, Thompson River and Pleasant Valley and Olney to the west.

The Road and Bridge Department, under a Superintendent, has a total staff of 68. Office staff consists of seven employees, including a Shop Supervisor, an Office Administrator, a Right-of-Way Specialist, an Office Assistant III and 2 Office Assistant II staff. The Flathead County Road and Bridge Department is always on call and responds to requests from the Sheriffs Department, Montana Highway Patrol and Fire and Emergency Services. Staff performs their duties in three sub-departments.

The Flathead County Road Department has adopted and is in the process of implementing the PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating) system as the first step in gravel and paved road management. As resources have been available, the department has begun evaluation of Flathead County roads using the PASER system that was developed at the University of Wisconsin. The PASER system is widely used by facility and property managers across the country to assist with evaluating the condition of pavements including parking lots. The system describes varying types of defects and provides a simple system to visually rate pavement condition.

The rating system uses a 1 to 10 scale to rate all roads. There are basic scoring criteria used with the PASER system for gravel and paved roads. More detailed criteria on ratings are available by contacting the Flathead County Road Department.

Gravel roads are intrinsically difficult to evaluate because their condition can change literally overnight. Heavy rains and local heavy traffic can dramatically change the surface characteristics of gravel roads from one day to the next. In addition, routine maintenance activities, such as one pass from a road grader, could improve the surface conditions of a gravel road significantly. Gravel road evaluation, therefore, should be based on major factors such as: road cross section, drainage and adequacy of the gravel layer.

Paved roads have a less variable nature and a given treatment will correct problems into the future. In the management of paved roads, surface condition is important. Each rating in the PASER system for paved roads will suggest a procedure to rehabilitate the road surface. These may range from routine patching to overlay or reconstruction. The rating does not dictate the final maintenance or rehabilitation technique, however. Safety, future traffic projections, original construction and pavement strength must also be considered. These considerations may dictate a more comprehensive rehabilitation than the rating alone suggests.

Using local road funds more efficiently requires good planning and accurate identification of appropriate rehabilitation projects. The Flathead County Road Department will use the PASER system to make decisions based on the objective condition of a road. Combined with other data such as traffic counts and projected growth, PASER will allow the Department to use funds where they can do the most good for the most road users. Assessing roadway conditions is an essential first step in this process. Each roads PASER ratings can be used directly by local officials and staff in the development of future projects. They can be combined with additional testing and data collection in a more comprehensive pavement management system.

The transportation network of a community should provide a means of safe and efficient internal circulation as well as facilitating through traffic. The State and Federal Highway Transportation has developed highway and street classifications that can be used to assist in planning, designing, constructing, maintaining and operating a street system within communities. Flathead County has developed a classification system that is more general, having categories of "arterial" or "collectors". Classification of county roads is incomplete at this time. Transportation planning for a community should utilize classifications that are consistent with those used by the state. Consistency allows for better data analysis. As transportation studies occur, roads and streets should be classified into the categories that are relative to their functionality.

Recommended classifications include:

1. Rural Interstate
2. Urban Interstate
3. Rural Principal Arterial
4. Rural Minor Arterial
5. Rural Major Collector
6. Recreational
7. Urban Principal Arterial
8. Urban Minor Arterial & Collector

Interstates and Major Arterials are intended to move a high volume of traffic at moderate to high speeds and provide access to a regional transportation network. These include Federal and State Highways that provide a connection between communities. Major Arterials that service Flathead County include:

- U.S. Highway 2
- U.S. Highway 93
- Montana Highway 40
- Montana Highway 206

A Minor Arterial is intended to move traffic at moderate speeds from one major part of a community to another or to and from the major arterial system. Under the current Flathead County classification system, major and minor arterial streets and/or highways are symbolized with heavy red lines.

Collectors are intermediate or secondary streets, intended to move local traffic at low to moderate speeds from neighborhoods to adjacent neighborhoods or transfer traffic to the arterial system. Many streets and roads in Flathead County serve as collectors. With recent rapid population growth, many local streets are now functioning as collectors. The Flathead County GIS (Geographic Information Systems) geo-database classifies Flathead County streets and roads into several categories. The database is incomplete and local streets that may be acting as collectors may not be classified as such. Updating and completing street classifications in Flathead County could be implemented into the PASER inventory and scoring procedure.

Local streets are minor streets intended to serve individual sites and generally provide access to collector streets but do not provide direct access to the arterial system. Most other streets that are not shown as arterials or collectors are currently considered local streets.

More information can be obtained from the Flathead County Road Department at: http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/road/index.html

Traffic Counts

Providing safe and efficient street and road maintenance and planning for transportation needs of the future requires periodic traffic counts on highways and streets. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) monitors traffic periodically on State and Federal Highways and the Flathead County Road Department monitors traffic on Flathead County roads twice a year at various locations.

Table AA.12.1 of the U.S. Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP 2000) provides basic information on number of commuters to work, means of transportation and travel time to the workplace. A comparison is made between the most recent and the previous decennial census.

Table AA.12.1
Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP 2000)

Table 1. Profile of Selected 1990 and 2000 Characteristics						
Geographic Area: Flathead County, Montana						
Subject	**1990 Census**		**Census 2000**		**% Change 1990 to 2000**	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
POPULATION						
Total population	59,218	100.0	74,471	100.0	15,253	+25.8%
In households	58,383	98.6	73,317	98.5	14,934	+25.6%
In group quarters	835	1.4	1,154	1.5	319	+38.2%
HOUSEHOLD SIZE						
Total households	22,856	100.0	29,694	100.0	6,838	+29.9%
1-person household	5,551	24.3	7,439	25.1	1,888	+34.0%
2-person household	7,927	34.7	11,060	37.2	3,133	+39.5%
3-person household	3,556	15.6	4,517	15.2	961	+27.0%
4-person household	3,561	15.6	4,011	13.5	450	+12.6%
5-or-more-person household	2,261	9.9	2,667	9.0	406	+18.0%
Mean number of persons per household	2.55	(X)	2.47	(X)	-0.09	(X)
VEHICLES AVAILABLE[1]						
Total households	22,856	100.0	29,694	100.0	6,838	+29.9%
No vehicle available	1,185	5.2	1,328	4.5	143	+12.1%

1 vehicle available	6,020	26.3	8,299	27.9	2,279	+37.9%
2 vehicles available	9,642	42.2	12,525	42.2	2,883	+29.9%
3 vehicles available	4,300	18.8	5,224	17.6	924	+21.5%
4 vehicles available	1,196	5.2	1,690	5.7	494	+41.3%
5 or more vehicles available	513	2.2	628	2.1	115	+22.4%
Mean vehicles per household	2.00	(X)	1.99	(X)	-0.01	(X)
WORKERS BY SEX[1]						
Workers 16 years and over	24,966	100.0	34,045	100.0	9,079	+36.4%
Male	13,686	54.8	18,615	54.7	4,929	+36.0%
Female	11,280	45.2	15,430	45.3	4,150	+36.8%
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK						
Workers 16 years and over	24,966	100.0	34,045	100.0	9,079	+36.4%
Drove alone	18,732	75.0	26,229	77.0	7,497	+40.0%
Carpooled	3,146	12.6	4,139	12.2	993	+31.6%
Public transportation (including taxi)	39	0.2	136	0.4	97	+248.7%
Bicycle or walked	1,530	6.1	1,574	4.6	44	+2.9%
Motorcycle or other means	176	0.7	246	0.7	70	+39.8%
Worked at home	1,343	5.4	1,721	5.1	378	+28.1%
TRAVEL TIME TO WORK						
Workers who did not work at home	23,623	100.0	32,324	100.0	8,701	+36.8%
Less than 5 minutes	1,550	6.6	2,041	6.3	491	+31.7%
5 to 9 minutes	4,707	19.9	5,578	17.3	871	+18.5%
10 to 14 minutes	5,462	23.1	6,518	20.2	1,056	+19.3%
15 to 19 minutes	4,239	17.9	5,579	17.3	1,340	**+31.6%**
20 to 29 minutes	4,175	17.7	6,348	19.5	2,173	**+52.0%**
30 to 44 minutes	2,463	10.4	4,225	13.1	1,762	**+71.5%**
45 or more minutes	1,027	4.3	2,035	6.3	1,008	**+98.1%**
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	16.2	(X)	19.0	(X)	2.8	(X)
TIME LEAVING HOME TO GO TO WORK						
Workers who did not work at home	23,623	100.0	32,324	100.0	8,701	+36.8%
5:00 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	3,977	16.8	6,466	20.0	2,489	+62.6%
7:00 a.m. to 7:59 a.m.	7,986	33.8	11,135	34.4	3,149	+39.4%
8:00 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.	4,984	21.1	6,164	19.1	1,180	+23.7%
9:00 a.m. to 9:59 a.m.	1,516	6.4	1,923	5.9	407	+26.8%
10:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.	985	4.2	1,308	4.0	323	+32.8%
12:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	3,677	15.6	4,230	13.1	553	+15.0%
12:00 a.m. to 4:59 a.m.	498	2.1	1,098	3.4	600	+120.5%

1See the entry for this item in the Technical Notes in the root directory or state subdirectories (filename: tech_notes.txt).
(X) Not applicable. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census of Population and Housing, 1990 and 2000 long-form (sample) data.

The above table has deficiencies in that the accelerated growth that has occurred since 2000 is not reflected. Nor does it consider the impact of second home residents that data estimates to be 20-30% more than the 2000 census population.

The County Road and Bridge Department also conducts traffic counts on county roads using automatic traffic counter from the Montana Department of Transportation. These are raw counts so the data were added; using the state factors, to convert the raw counts to Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counts. Since the sampling methods for the state and county road department are not the same, comparisons between county and state data cannot be reliably made. However, comparisons between county roads can be used.

Sixteen of the most active county roads were sampled; the raw data converted to AADT and percent increases per year computed (see Table AA.12.2). The period for most of the county roads is much less than the state. Most periods are from 1997/8 to 2004/5 rather than the 1990- 2004 period used for state data. The results are below.

Table AA.12.2
Flathead County Traffic Counts

		Early ADT	Sample			Late ADT	Sample				
Road	Type **	Mo/ Yr	ADT	Factor	AADT	Mo/Yr	ADT	Factor	AADT	# yrs	% inc / yr
Bierney Crk Rd	C	May 98	933	0.88	821.04	Jul 05	1427	0.80	1141.60	8	4.88
Boon Rd	C	May 98	390	0.88	343.20	Jul 05	668	0.80	534.40	8	6.96
Cemetery Rd	A	Jun 99	753	0.77	579.81	Sept 05	1246	0.81	1009.26	7	10.58
Cemetery Rd	A	Apr 97	681	0.95	646.95	Jul 03	1249	0.73	911.77	7	5.85
Jellison Rd	C	Jul 01	153	0.80	122.40	May 05	490	0.88	431.20	5	50.46
Jellison Rd	C	May 98	205	0.88	180.40	May 05	1121	0.88	986.48	8	55.85
JP Rd	C	May 97	456	0.88	401.28	May 05	1506	0.88	1325.28	9	25.58

Kila Rd	A	Apr 97	1098	0.95	1043.10	Sept 05	1960	0.81	1587.60	9	5.80
LaBrandt Rd	C	Nov 97	307	0.93	285.51	Sept 04	515	0.85	437.75	8	6.67
McCaffrey Rd	C	Nov 97	354	0.93	329.22	Sept 04	564	0.85	479.40	8	5.70
Pioneer Rd	C	May 98	398	0.88	350.24	May 05	1322	0.88	1163.36	8	29.02
Rocky Cliff Rd	C	Apr 97	629	0.89	559.81	Sept 05	1132	0.85	962.20	9	7.99
Stillwater Rd	C	Apr 97	480	0.89	427.20	Aug 03	961	0.82	788.02	7	12.07
Valley View Dr	C	Apr 97	397	0.89	353.33	Sept 05	1518	0.85	1290.30	9	29.46
W Springcreek Dr	A	Apr 97	948	0.95	900.60	Jun 02	1522	0.77	1171.94	6	5.02
W Valley Dr	C	Apr 97	581	0.89	517.09	Aug 03	867	0.82	710.94	7	5.36
** A-rural minor arterial											
C-rural major collector											

Source: Flathead County Road and Bridge Department

Table AA.12.2 shows the same general pattern as the state traffic counts. In 1997, only one of the sample roads had an AADT of over 1000; in 2004/5, seven of the same roads had AADTs of over 1000.

The primary arterial corridors with AADTs over 10,000 are.

- US2 between Columbia Falls and Kalispell
- US93 between Whitefish and Kalispell
- SH35 between Big Fork and Kalispell

Secondary arterial corridors with AADTs of over 5,000 but less than 10,000 are:

- US2 east of Columbia Falls
- SH40 between Whitefish and Columbia Falls
- US2 west of Kalispell
- US93 south of Kalispell
- SH83 east of Big Fork

Tertiary arterial corridors with AADTs less than 5,000 are:

- US93 north of Whitefish
- SH206 between US2 and SH35
- SH82 between SH35 and US93
- Whitefish Stage between SH40 and Kalispell

To gain a better idea of traffic patterns in the county the Long Range Planning Task Force committee organized the valley floor area into sixteen "traffic sheds." Traffic sheds are similar to water sheds and show geographic areas where the traffic uses similar patterns. For each traffic shed, highly traveled "collector" roads were determined using traffic count data. A collector is a road that connects local access roads to the main arterials. Since traffic patterns indicate that most travel is done to Kalispell, distance to the US2/US93 intersection was measured for each traffic shed. The distance was split between collector mileage and corridor mileage. The impact that the growth of 100 households would have on each shed was computed as well as the vehicle miles traveled (VMT)[47] over collectors. VMT provides an estimate of the impact on travel that each collector represents; the higher the VMT the larger the impact on the county road system[48]. The results of the traffic-shed analysis are shown on Table AA.12.3.

Table AA.12.3
Traffic Shed & Corridor Information
Flathead County Montana- February 2006

						Daily		
North East Sector			Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Veh mi for	Coll	
Traffic Shed	Collector	AADT	Total (mi)	Coll Rd	Corr Rd	100 hshld	VMT	Corridor
Teakettle								
	Lake 5 Road at US2	475	35	2	33	17500	950	US2E
	SH 486 N of CF	711	22	8	14	11000	5688	US2E
Half Moon	Half Moon Rd N of US2	1885	18	5	13	18000	9425	US2E
WF Stage	WF Stage N of Meridian	2640	8	8	0	8000	21120	
Helena Flats	Rose Crossing E of US2	1247	8	3	5	8000	3741	US2E
Columbia Mtn								
	SH 206 N of SH35	4070	13	6	7	6500	24420	SH35
	Col Falls Stg N of SH35 (Note 1)	1000	12	6	6	6000	6000	SH35
						Daily		
South East Sector			Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Veh mi for	Coll	
Traffic Shed	Collector	AADT	Total (mi)	Coll Rd	Corr Rd	100 hshld	VMT	Corridor
Echo Lake								

[47] VMT is computed by multiplying AADT times the length of the road section in miles.
[48] Most of the collectors are county roads but a few, example SH206 and US93, are state roads.

	Lk Blaine Rd E of SH35	2673	19	10	9	9500	26730	SH35
	Echo Lk Rd at SH83	1678	27	4	3	13500	6712	SH35
Big Fork E	Swan Rvr Rd S of SH83	874	24	2	22	24000	1748	SH35
Big Fork W	Holt Dr W of Chapmn Hill	1244	23	2	21	23000	2488	SH35
Foys Canyon								
	Foys Lake Rd	?	7	7	0	3500		
	Airport Rd	?	8	8	0	4000		
Lakeside	US93 S of SH82	8310	16	1	15	16000	8310	US93S
Lower Valley								
	Fairmont Rd S of SH35	796	7	2	5	3500	1592	SH35
	Lwr Val Rd E of Willow Gln	1822	9	6	3	4500	10932	US93S
						Daily		
South West Sector			Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Veh mi for	Coll	
Traffic Shed	Collector	AADT	Total (mi)	Coll Rd	Corr Rd	100 hshld	VMT	Corridor
Ashley Lk		986						
	Batavia Ln frm Ashley Lk	493	18	12	6	18000	5916	US2W
	Batavia Ln frm Kienas	493	9	3	6	9000	1479	US2W
Marion	Pleasant Valley Rd	1288	25	3	22	25000	3864	US2W
Truman Crk	Truman Crk Rd (Note 2)	648	17	7	10	17000	4536	US2W
						Daily		
North West Sector			Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Dist to Kal	Veh mi for	Coll	
Traffic Shed	Collector	AADT	Total (mi)	Coll Rd	Corr Rd	100 hshld	VMT	Corridor
KM Ranch								
	Church Dr E of Frm to Mkt	453	13	6	7	6500	2718	
	KM Ranch Rd	270	11	3	8	5500	810	US93N
Lost Creek	Rhodes Draw	109	14	7	7	14000	763	US93N
Notes:								
1. AADT estimated								
2. AADT from Spring Hill Rd included								

Source: Flathead County Long Range Planning Task Force

Motor Vehicle Accidents

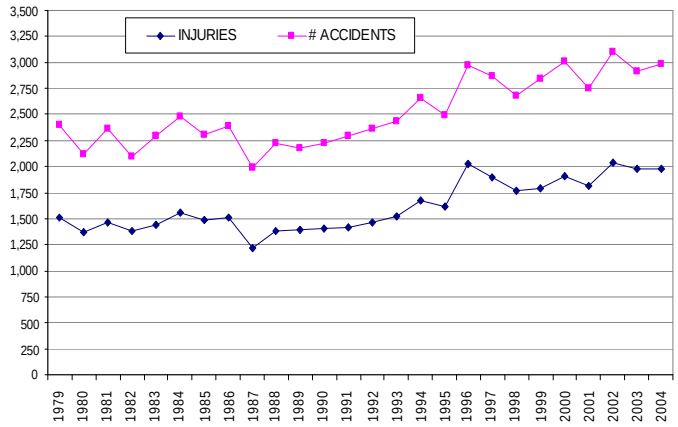
Looking at the numbers in the previous section and the rapidly growing population, it is not surprising that the number of motor vehicle accidents in Flathead County is also increasing.

Captain Clancy King of the Kalispell Division of the Montana Highway Patrol provided some general information in early December, showing the increasing occurrence of motor vehicle accidents in and around Flathead County (see Table AA.12.4).

In the Flathead, Lake and Lincoln Counties, the Montana Highway Patrol has an average of 2 or 3 troops working rotating and overlapping shifts. There are 13 Montana Highway Patrol officers assigned to the Flathead Valley. These officers occasionally provide assistance in Lake and Lincoln Counties, as well. Between 1973 and 2005, the legislature did not approve any increase in the number of MHP officers statewide and assignments were moved as they became vacant. The Kalispell Division added only one additional officer who was moved to Kalispell in 2003 after a Libby Trooper retired. The 2005 legislature finally approved a labor increase that will become effective in 2007 and is the first increase since 1973.

Table AA.12.4
Flathead County Motor Vehicle Accidents and Injuries

YEAR	# OF MVAs	FATALITIES	INJURIES
1979	1,506	21	898
1980	1,368	17	751
1981	1,467	19	898
1982	1,377	5	723
1983	1,443	17	846
1984	1,552	25	928
1985	1,490	15	820
1986	1,505	10	880
1987	1,223	22	771
1988	1,382	19	837
1989	1,391	14	786
1990	1,399	16	828
1991	1,419	16	871
1992	1,461	17	900
1993	1,525	13	908
1994	1,679	7	976
1995	1,612	11	887
1996	2,024	14	951
1997	1,894	18	979
1998	1,771	17	906
1999	1,796	12	1,048
2000	1,905	14	1,103
2001	1,816	21	940
2002	2,032	14	1,072
2003	1,973	22	937
2004	1,977	19	1,007



Finances

Property tax is the primary financial support for the county road system. Although residential growth has increased the tax base, the cost of operating the Roads Department, which includes fuel and supplies, has also seen a significant increase. This has negated any increase in the tax base, allowing inflation to diminish tax dollars and the department's ability to maintain previous levels of service. Approximately 3.4% of each dollar of county tax revenue goes to the Road and Bridge Department. In other words, if a homeowner paid $1,000 in property taxes, approximately $34 would go to the Road and Bridge Departments.

Rural Special Improvement Districts (RSID) are essentially the use of property taxes but have the advantage that the improvement district is directly benefiting the properties paying the extra assessment.

Although supported by Montana State law, developer contributions, such as impact fees, have been used but not consistently. The county has no set policy for obtaining financial support from developers.
Maintenance districts are used by cities but they are not allowed for counties. County districts, if authorized by the state, could be formed for a special purpose, such as maintaining roads. The district assessments could only be used for the maintenance of roads in the district.

Equipment

The County Shop, another sub-department of the Flathead County Road and Bridge Department, currently operates and maintains over 450 pieces of vehicles and equipment with the use of a Preventative Maintenance program. The equipment repair shop consists of 13 mechanics, technicians and welders. The Road and Bridge Departments alone have over 250 vehicles and pieces of equipment, including 15 motor graders, 22 dump truck and sanders, 25 other miscellaneous trucks, tractors, flatbeds, distributors, etc., a fleet of pickups, shop trucks, welding and maintenance vehicles, 15 pup trailers, 13 other trailers

including flatbeds, lowboys, belly dumps, tilt trailers, sign and culvert trailers and more. The shop maintains over 200 vehicles in other departments of county government.

The Flathead County Shop also keeps track of the costs per unit and makes upgrades as the budget allows. The Shop Supervisor oversees the budget and bidding process for all Road and Bridge vehicles and equipment purchased, plus the bids on gas & diesel, tires, propane and any other contract purchases. The County Shop continues to work on and maintains the premises of the Flathead County Road & Bridge complex, as well as several satellite buildings, to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

PART 13: Flathead County Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The Montana Department of Transportation "TranPlan 21 2002 update Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Policy Paper" reported that in Flathead County, approximately 1,574 of the working population over the age of 16, bicycled or walked to work in 2000, compared to 1,530 in 1990. This indicates an increase of workers bicycling or walking to work. Transportation to work is the only systematic data available at the state level and does not include the use of pedestrian facilities by those under 16 years of age or those who are not working that walk or bicycle for recreational purposes or other activities. However, as trails are built in Flathead County, they are utilized. It is common to see a families biking together on the Meridian Rail Trail or a group of cyclist racing down the Somers trail.

Flathead County and the municipalities have recently been requiring new subdivisions to provide an easement for future bicycle and pedestrian facilities or to construct the facilities. There is no current consolidated inventory of where these easements exist. Planning for future bicycle and pedestrian facilities must include an inventory of these resources.

Flathead County Planners and City Planners and local volunteer organizations cooperatively seek ways to create a bicycle and pedestrian trail network in Flathead County. The County and the three cities of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls all actively pursue Federal funds to accomplish constructing new facilities and to enhance and connect existing facilities. Flathead County and the three cities, independently have received allocations every year since 1992 for projects covered by federal Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) funds.

Table AA.13.1
CTEP Funds allocated to Flathead County

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
$226,668	$241,970	$289,180	$236,419	$234,951

Total obligated for projects	Total available for new projects
$2,678,869	$271,391

Source: TEA-21

Table AA.13.2
Flathead County CTEP Project Summary

Project No.	Project Name	Total $	Federal $	Local $
STPE 15(23)	Fairmont Pedestrian and Bike Path	$133,085	$106,468	$26,617
STPE 15(24)	Grand Avenue Walkway in Bigfork	$133,450	$106,760	$26,690
STPE 15(26)	Lone Pine Path SW of Kalispell	$74,492	$59,594	$14,898
STPE 1-2(82) 115	Smith Valley Rail Trail	$224,293	$194,195	$30,098
STPE 15(27)	Somers Rail Trail	$122,036	$105,659	$16,377
STPE 6799(14)	Meridian Rail Trail	$191,422	$153,138	$38,284
STPE 6728(1)	Edgerton Bike Path	$240,589	$192,471	$48,118
STPE 6799(22)	Kalispell Trail Connection	$237,416	$59,594	$14,898
STPE 15(25)	Swan River Bike/Ped Trail	$136,409	$118,409	$18,306
STPE 15(42)	Red Bridge Columbia Falls	$0	$0	$0
STPE 1-2(111)116	Great Northern Rail Trail	$479,894	$415,494	$64,400
STPE 15(48)	Helena Flats Bike/Ped Trail	$422,370	$365,689	$56,681
STPE 15(53)	River Road Path Columbia Falls	$0	$0	$0
STPE 15(52)	Farm to Market Road Path	$165,183	$143,017	$22,166
STPE 15(59)	Lakeside to Somers Trail	$193,992	$167,959	$26,033
TOTAL PROJECTS		**TOTAL**	**TOTAL**	**TOTAL**
15		**2,754,631**	**$2,334,101**	**$420,530**

Three trails have been recommended by the commissioners and have been submitted by Flathead County for CTEP funding for 2005. These projects include: Evergreen Sidewalk from Helena Flats to the Evergreen Junior High, the Sam Bibler Memorial Trail and the Smith Lake project of the continuing Rails to Trails of NW Montana.

Additional detailed information on these projects, as well as current and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, can be obtained by contacting the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department, or the Flathead County Parks and Weed Department.

Table AA.13.3
CTEP Funds allocated to the City of Kalispell

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
$67,545	$72,105	$79,754	$65,203	$64,798

Total obligated for projects	Total available for new projects
$830,212	$32,059

Source: TEA-21

Table AA.13.4
City of Kalispell CTEP Project Summary

Project No.	Project Name	Total Cost $
STPE 6701(4)	Meridian Road Walkway	$129,870
STPE 6799(10)	North Main Street and Lawrence Park Trail	$58,608.20
STPE 6799(11)	Woodland Park Access	$58,034.45
STPE 6799(15)	1996 Lawrence Park Trail & Bridge Crossing	$377,953.55
STPE 6799(21)	1997 Woodland Park Trail	$88,486.70
STPE 6799(23)	Meridian Trail Connection	$250,605
TOTAL PROJECTS 6		**TOTAL $963,557.90**

Source: TEA-21

Additional detailed information on these projects, as well as current and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, can be obtained by contacting the City of Kalispell Parks and Recreation Department.

Table AA.13.5
CTEP Funds allocated to the City of Whitefish

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
$24,578	$26,429	$28,217	$23,068	$22,295

Total obligated for projects	Total available for new projects
$174,601	$137,936

Source: TEA-21

Table AA.13.6
City of Whitefish CTEP Project Summary

Project No.	Project Name	Total Cost $
MT 15(67)	3 miles of Whitefish Area Trails (ongoing)	$1,511,920
STPE 15(28)	Riverside Park Trails	$153,684.99
STPE 15(45)	Whitefish Area Parks Landscaping & Beautification	$250,775.69
TOTAL PROJECTS 3		**TOTAL $1,916,380.68**

Additional detailed information on these projects, as well as current and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, can be obtained by contacting the City of Whitefish Parks or Public Works Department.

Table AA.13.7
CTEP Funds allocated to the City of Columbia Falls

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
$16,675	$17,801	$20,439	$16,710	$16,606

Total obligated for projects	Total available for new projects

$292,710	$45,189

Source: TEA-21

Table AA.13.8
City of Columbia Falls CTEP Project Summary

Project No.	Project Name	Total Cost $
STPE 15(38)	** Talbot Road Trail	$166,565.94
STPE 15(30)	Columbia Falls Sidewalks	$55,084
STPE 15(43)	4th Ave W and 6th St Path	$36,896.96
STPE 15(63)	4th Ave N Path	$34,136
TOTAL PROJECTS 4		**TOTAL $292,682.90**

Additional detailed information on these projects, as well as current and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, can be obtained by contacting the City of Columbia Falls Public Works Department.

PART 14: Public Transportation

Eagle Transit – Public Transit for Flathead County

Twelve cities in Montana have local public transportation. Most have the capability to transport elderly and/or disabled passengers. In Kalispell, Eagle Transit makes several scheduled stops at specific locations daily, Monday through Friday. The company provides service in Whitefish and Columbia Falls as well. The system is capable of transporting the general public, elderly and disabled population. For more information on schedules and routes, contact Eagle Transportation at 758-5728.

Eagle Transit received a mill levy from the voters of Flathead County in 2005 for $123,825.00. This amount is 25% of the 2005-2006 budget.

SNOW Bus – shuttle to Big Mountain Resort from Whitefish Montana

The SNOW Bus operates during the ski season of the Big Mountain Resort and transports people to the resort from Whitefish. The bus is free to the passengers. In 2005-2006, it cost approximately $210,000 to operate and is paid for by the member businesses of the Big Mountain Commercial Association. The SNOW Bus provides over 40,000 passenger rides during its time of operation. Residents use the SNOW Bus for getting around town as well as to the resort.

Taxi Service

There are five taxi companies in the Flathead Valley. They are A-B Taxi, DC Cab, Flathead Glacier Transportation, Great Northern Taxi and Kalispell Taxi. All companies have a 50-mile limit from the base of operations in which to operate per the Montana Public Service Commission. Wild Horse Limousine operates a private charter car service

in the area. There is also a shuttle to Blacktail Ski Area once a day from Kalispell, but is strictly a chartered ski bus.

Intercity and Charter Bus Service

Currently, three private bus companies provide scheduled service between cities in Montana. These include Greyhound, Powder River Trailways and Rimrock Trailways. They serve communities along major highways and connect to all larger cities in Montana as well as destinations outside of the state. Greyhound has stops at Kalispell, Whitefish and Lakeside. The Rimrock Trailways bus leaves Whitefish each morning en route to Missoula and returns in the afternoon. There are no full service bus terminals in Flathead County. As a rule, no ticketing, baggage, or package express service is offered at stop locations.

In addition, there are three private charter bus companies in the Flathead Valley. They are Brown Bear Charters, Flathead Glacier Transportation and Rocky Mountains Transportation.

PART 15: AIR TRANSPORTATION

There are four FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) approved airports in Flathead County. These include Glacier Park International Airport, Kalispell City Airport, Whitefish Airport and Ferndale Airfield. Several major commercial airlines, as well as private charter services operate out of these facilities.

Federal airport certification regulations [Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 139 (14 CFR Part 139] establishes certification requirements for airports.

Glacier Park International Airport

Glacier Park International Airport began service in 1942 as the Flathead County Airport. The airport is centrally located on U.S. Highway 2 between Kalispell and Columbia Falls. In 1970, the airport was designated as a port of entry for international flights and the name was changed from Flathead County Airport to Glacier International Airport. By 1991, the airport was servicing almost 130,000 passengers per year. In 2004, the annual passenger enplanements were 178,334.

Glacier Park International Airport is a Class I airport. A Class I airport means an airport is certificated by FAA to serve scheduled operations of large air carrier aircraft that can also serve unscheduled passenger operations of large air carrier aircraft and/or scheduled operations of small air carrier aircraft.

Several lighted runways accommodate approximately 62,990 aircraft operations per year, including commercial, transient, local general and air taxi/jet aircraft operations. There are 162 aircraft based at the field, facility.

Major commercial airlines providing service out of the airport include, American West, Big Sky, Northwest, Alaska/Horizon and Delta/Skywest Airlines. These commercial airlines have scheduled daily flights in and out of Glacier International Airport and Edwards Jet Center provides airline charter service and Flathead Glacier Transportation provides shuttle service to and from the airport. Car rentals and taxi service are available at the terminal. Limousine service is also available to transport anywhere in Western Montana as well as Canada and Idaho and Washington.

Additional FAA data including geographic information, communications, runway surface, lighting and coordinates, operational statistics, ground support and instrument approach procedures can be found at: www.**glacierairport**.com.

Kalispell City Airport

The Kalispell City Airport is a public airport, owned by the City of Kalispell and is located about one mile south of the downtown area. This airport does not accommodate large air carrier aircraft, so it does not have an FAA class rating. The 3,600-foot long asphalt runway is lighted with two radio towers. There are 64 aircraft based on the field, some in hangars and operations average 105 aircraft per day.

The airport has been the subject of several studies over the last 25 years including a Feasibility Study done by Morrison and Maierle, Inc., in 1999, resulting in airport redesign by Robert Peccia and Associates. Increasing development and existing land use in the airport vicinity has raised safety and security concerns. The Feasibility Study by Morrison and Maierle, Inc. identified several issues to be addressed including runway length and alignment, the KGEZ radio tower, security, funding for improvements, surrounding land use and land acquisition. Efforts are ongoing to address the issues identified in the study and to bring the facility into compliance with FAA standards to upgrade the to a B-II Utility Airport. This classification means it can accommodate aircraft having approach speeds of 91 knots or more, or less than 121 knots and having wingspans of at least 49 feet, but less than 79 feet. Currently, the airport has a "provisional" status. More information on the study and the re-design of the airport can be obtained by contacting either of these firms or the City of Kalispell.

Additional FAA data including geographic information, communications, runway surface, lighting and coordinates, operational statistics, ground support and instrument approach procedures can be found at: http://www.kalispell.com/city_airport.

Whitefish Airport

The Whitefish Airport is a public airport, owned by Flathead County and is located about one mile east of Whitefish. The airport does not accommodate large air carrier aircraft. The airport has a 2,560-foot long turf runway that accommodates an average of 20 aircraft operations per week. The runway is unlighted. Approximately 67% of operations are local general traffic and about 29% is transient general traffic. There are 3 single engine aircraft based on the field. Additional FAA data including geographic

information, communications, runway surface, lighting and coordinates, operational statistics, ground support and instrument approach procedures can be found at: http://www.airnav.com/airport/S58S

Ferndale Airfield

The Ferndale Airfield is also a public airport. The land is owned by Flathead County but is privately operated and is located approximately 3 mile northeast of Bigfork. This airport has a 3,500 foot long unlighted runway and does not handle large aircraft. In winter months, delayed snow removal may make the runway inaccessible. The Ferndale Airfield accommodates an average of 29 aircraft operations per day. Additional FAA data including geographic information, communications, runway surface, lighting and coordinates, operational statistics, ground support and instrument approach procedures can be found at: http://www.airnav.com/airport/53U

In addition to the public airports, there are several private landing fields in Flathead County. These facilities are for private use and no further information is available.

PART 16: Railroads

The railroad is an important transportation corridor for the Flathead Valley. Amtrak supplies daily eastbound and westbound passenger service aboard the Empire Builder, which runs between Seattle/Portland and Chicago along the Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad line. Connections to the Amtrak Passenger System are available in Whitefish and West Glacier. A limited amount of agricultural and commercial shipping in and out of the Flathead occurs along the same route with a spur into Kalispell.

PART 17: Education

Flathead County has 19 public elementary, 4 high school districts and Flathead Valley Community College. In addition, there are seven private elementary, one private faith-based high school and three therapeutic boarding schools. Home schooling is also an option for 13% of Flathead County residents.

Enrollments have fluctuated as the demographics of the county have changed. Examining the period of 2000-2005, the enrollment at West Glacier Elementary decreased 42%, while the enrollment at Swan Valley increased 17.61%. Overall enrollment for all public elementary schools in the county has increased by 6.57%.

Enrollment at private elementary schools has decreased 5.46% overall for 2000-2005, while private high schools are up. The therapeutic boarding schools continue to have increasing enrollment every year.

Flathead Valley Community College is a two year college that offers residents educational opportunities for advancement to a four-year college, career enhancement and life long learning. A graduate of FVCC can obtain an Associate of Arts, Associate of

Science and Associate of Applied Science degrees or a certificate in a variety of programs.

Public schools receive funding based on enrollment numbers. The Average Number Belonging (ANB) of a school district depends on two official enrollment counts reported in October and February of each school year. The 2005-2006 school year enrollments (ANB) will not be finalized and available until late June 2006. School funding comes from property tax revenue in the state general fund, state and county aid and district school levies. General fund voted levies, building reserve levies and bond issue levies require voter approval.

Public Schools

Flathead County has 19 public elementary and 4 high school districts. Flathead County public schools have highly qualified teachers and many have won national honors. Students score above the national average in all curricular areas and several are Presidential Award winners in Math and Science at both the elementary and high school levels.

The Montana Office of Public Instructions "No Child Left Behind" report card webpage provides information on various education indicators required by the new federal education law. Custom reports can be generated for specific schools and districts as well as on a statewide basis. Information is provided on student academic performance for math and reading tests, the "adequate yearly progress" status and highly qualified teachers for all of Montana's schools and districts. http://www.opi.state.mt.us.

Enrollment in most public elementary schools has been generally decreasing since 1992 (see Table AA.17.1 and Figure AA.17.1). School districts like West Valley, Somers and Deer Park are seeing increases in enrollment with increased development in rural communities. High school enrollment increased significantly during the early and mid 1990s and dropped off slightly between 1998 and 2001. High school enrollment appears to be increasing once again (see Table AA.17.2 and Figure AA.17.2), also probably due to the recent rapid growth in the general population. Figure AA.17.3 shows enrollment over time for both public and private schools.

Table AA.17.1
Public Elementary School District Enrollment 1992-2005

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	% change 92-00	2002	2004	2005	% change 00-05	% change 92-05
Bigfork	595	544	579	562	545	-8.4%	468	498	492	+5.1%	-17.4%
Cayuse Prairie	242	238	239	212	204	-15.7%	176	166	173	-1.7%	-28.5%
Columbia Falls	1,733	1,719	1,815	1,720	1,712	-1.2%	1,666	1,640	1,596	-4.2%	-7.9%
Creston	89	96	92	71	86	-3.4%	73	66	66	-9.6%	-25.8%
Deer Park	93	99	122	114	121	+30.1%	112	107	113	+0.9%	+21.5%
Evergreen	752	746	676	702	713	-5.2%	748	760	769	+2.8%	+2.3%
Fair-Mont Egan	169	158	160	162	154	-8.9%	149	144	128	-14.1%	-24.3%
Helena Flats	211	213	208	202	189	-10.4%	210	194	202	-3.8%	-4.3%
Kalispell	2,620	2,554	2,584	2,443	2,380	-9.2%	2,427	2,476	2,518	+3.7%	-5.9%
Kila	135	144	154	131	132	-2.3%	118	140	141	+19.5%	+4.4%
Marion	107	113	117	128	116	+8.4%	114	114	112	-1.8%	+4.7%
Olney Bissell	107	114	98	91	74	-30.8%	66	79	73	+10.6%	-31.8%
Pleasant Valley	9	6	8	8	4	-55.6%	0	5	4	+100%	-55.6%
Somers	424	502	552	502	535	+26.2%	519	526	531	+2.3%	+25.2%
Smith Valley	163	173	154	155	148	-9.2%	146	180	173	+18.5%	+6.1%
Swan River	145	184	168	154	142	-2.1%	148	172	167	+12.8%	+15.2%
West Glacier	65	53	63	56	50	-23.1%	45	32	29	-35.6%	-55.4%
West Valley	281	293	305	322	327	+16.4%	312	357	369	+18.3%	+31.3%
Whitefish	1,294	1,375	1,403	1,336	1,279	-1.2%	1,183	1,199	1,197	+1.2%	-7.5%
TOTAL	9,234	9,324	9,497	9,071	8,911	-3.5%	8,680	8,855	8,853	+2.0%	-4.1%

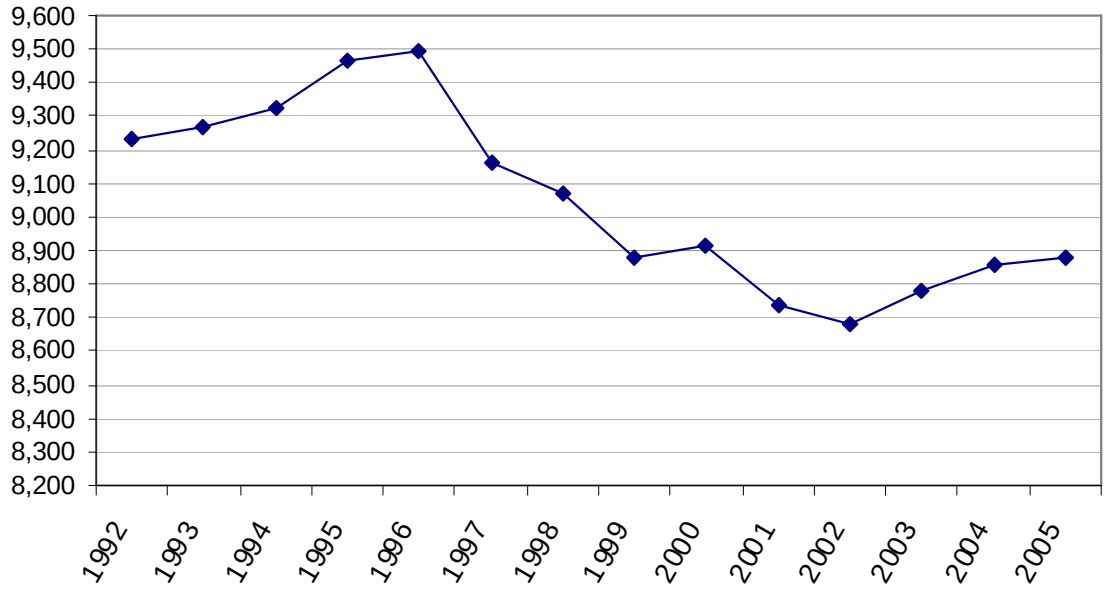
Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Table AA.17.2
Public High School District Enrollment 1992-2005

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	% change 92-00	2002	2004	2005	% change 00-05	% change 92-05
Bigfork	350	354	379	388	367	+4.8%	391	366	375	-4.1%	+7.1%
Columbia Falls	750	829	927	922	880	+17.3 %	877	863	862	-1.7%	+14.9 %
Kalispell	2,057	2,178	2,359	2,481	2,425	+17.9 %	2,452	2,466	2,494	+1.7%	+21.2 %
Whitefish	587	606	657	649	697	+18.7 %	697	742	725	+4.0%	+23.5 %
TOTAL	**3,744**	**3,967**	**4,322**	**4,440**	**4,369**	**+16.7 %**	**4,417**	**4,437**	**4,456**	**+0.9 %**	**+19.0 %**

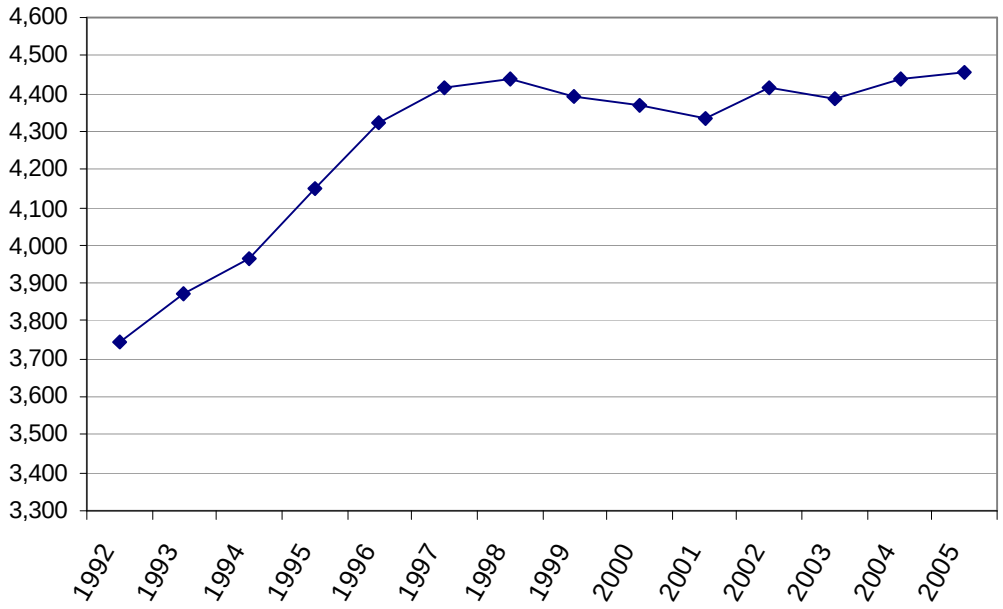
Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Figure AA.17.1
Public Elementary School District Enrollment 1992-2005



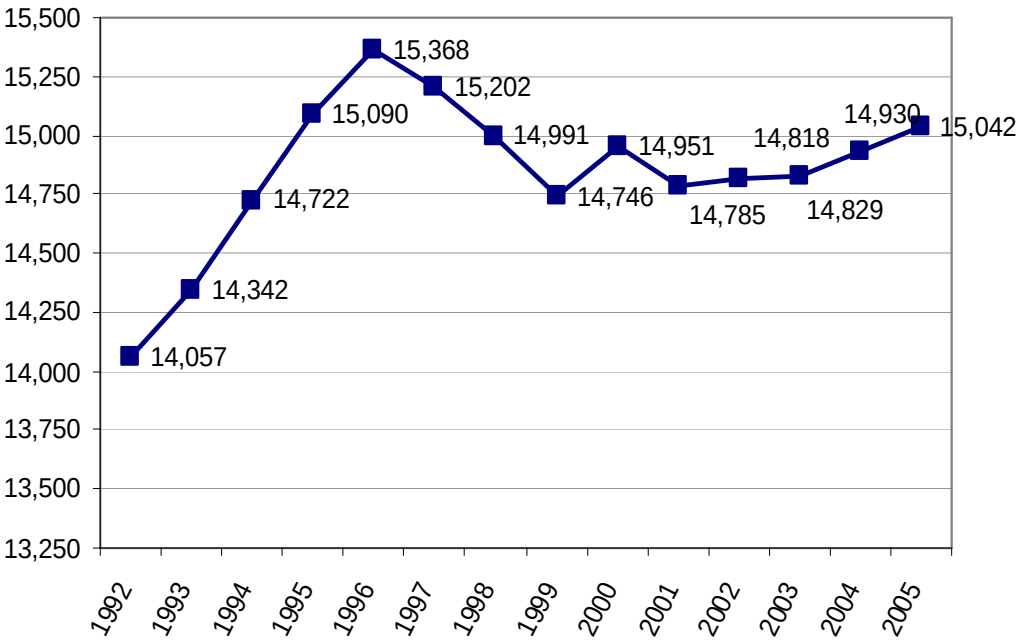
Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Figure AA.17.2
Public High School District Enrollment 1992-2005



Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Figure AA.17.3
Flathead County School Enrollment – Public and Private 1992-2005



Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Decreasing enrollment does not necessarily equate to decreased school expenditures. School districts have fixed costs and must maintain teacher accreditation, pension funds, facilities, libraries, transportation and special needs programs. Decreasing enrollment typically increases the cost per student (see Table AA.17.3), especially in isolated districts with low enrollment, such as Pleasant Valley, Olney/Bissell and West Glacier.

Detailed information regarding Flathead County school enrollment, budgets, expenditures and funding sources can be obtained from the Flathead County Superintendent of Schools website Schools Statistical Report 2005 located at: http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/schools/index.html.

Table AA.17.3
Per Pupil Expenditures
Flathead County Public School Districts 2000-2005

School District # & Name	Per Pupil Expend. 00-01	Per Pupil Expend. 01-02	Per Pupil Expend. 02-03	Per Pupil Expend. 03-04	Per Pupil Expend. 04-05	% change 00-05
1 West Valley (Elem)	$4,953.64	$5,166.57	$5,216.75	$5,117.93	$5,488.88	+10.8%
2 Deer Park (Elem)	$4,203.91	$5,032.38	$5,205.25	$5,750.21	$5,792.60	+37.8%
3 Fair-Mont-Egan (Elem)	$4,887.37	$5,016.24	$5,599.36	$5,610.99	$5,715.35	+16.9%
4 Swan River (Elem)	$5,667.84	$5,178.76	$5,194.70	$5,019.21	$5,343.06	-5.7%
5 Kalispell (Elem)	$5,495.15	$5,872.84	$5,878.46	$5,994.65	$6,023.71	+9.6%
5 Flathead (High)	$6,200.04	$6,326.04	$6,415.32	$6,703.69	$6,986.36	+12.7%
6 Columbia Falls (Elem)	$5,104.34	$5,479.50	$5,676.67	$5,762.90	$6,124.99	+20.0%
6 Columbia Falls (High)	$5,679.88	$5,559.01	$5,838.08	$6,158.08	$6,123.62	+7.8%
8 West Glacier (Elem)	$7,684.86	$8,073.68	$8,513.00	$8,510.50	$9,368.63	+21.9%
9 Creston (Elem)	$5,332.73	$5,363.91	$5,932.23	$5,414.14	$6,463.52	+21.2%
10 Cayuse Prairie (Elem)	$5,182.31	$6,030.30	$6,445.81	$6,676.14	$6,404.54	+23.6%
15 Helena Flats (Elem)	$5,063.76	$4,952.60	$4,915.93	$5,117.67	$5,877.60	+16.1%
20 Kila (Elem)	$5,112.98	$6,600.80	$5,776.03	$6,411.41	$5,599.79	+9.5%
27 Pleasant Valley (Elem)	$11,808.00	$9,782.40	NA	$11,503.75	$8,697.80	-26.3%
29 Somers (Elem)	$4,845.18	$5,169.36	$5,455.76	$5,574.83	$5,799.56	+19.7%
38 Bigfork (Elem)	$4,798.50	$5,310.67	$5,837.92	$5,666.00	$5,776.89	+20.4%
38 Bigfork (High)	$6,710.23	$6,496.79	$6,441.65	$7,083.16	$7,864.20	+17.2%
44 Whitefish (Elem)	$4,829.92	$5,373.65	$5,808.16	$6,266.93	$6,601.13	+36.7%
44 Whitefish (High)	$5,448.96	$6,271.67	$6,116.73	$6,636.22	$6,299.73	+15.6%
50 Evergreen (Elem)	$4,670.00	$5,034.05	$5,283.15	$5,747.76	$5,662.26	+21.2%
54 Marion (Elem)	$5,460.80	$5,607.75	$6,041.55	$6,127.93	$6,286.18	+15.1%
58 Olney/Bissell (Elem)	$6,472.73	$7,836.38	$7,699.39	$9,976.51	$7,239.41	+11.8%
89 Smith Valley (Elem)	$5,238.89	$4,758.74	$5,491.72	$4,806.71	$5,887.35	+12.4%
Average Expenditure per Elementary Student	**$5,126.77**	**$5,509.33**	**$5,715.23**	**$5,868.27**	$6,045.41	**+17.9%**
Average Expenditure per High School Student	**$6,018.30**	**$6,176.10**	**$6,255.93**	**$6,620.74**	$6,777.89	**+12.6%**

Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

New School Construction

Flathead High School enrollment has been far over its capacity for several years. The new Glacier High School, which is under construction on a 60-acre site, will provide added capacity. The facility is initially designed for 1200 students but is master planned

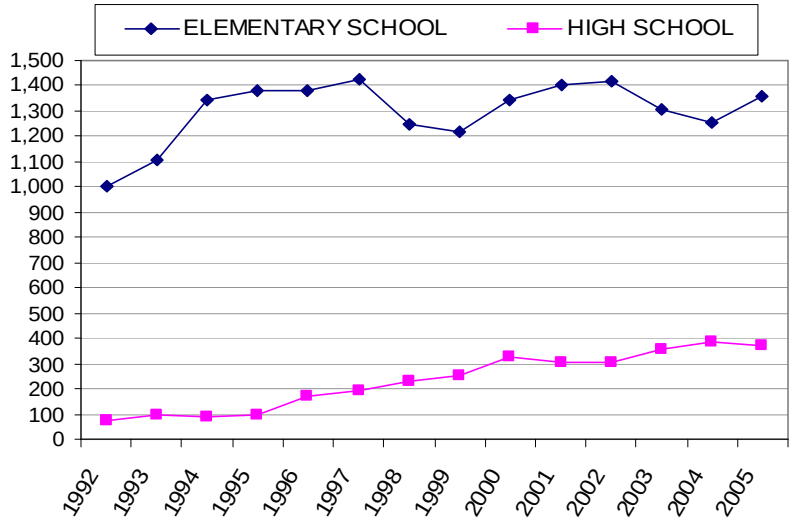
to accommodate up to 1500 students with future growth. Total project budget is $35,000,000. Glacier High School is expected to be operating by the fall of 2007. A major remodel of the Kalispell Junior High (Middle School) is also underway and will accommodate students from Linderman School, which will be closing.

Private and Home Schools

Several private and Christian schools in Flathead County offer alternatives to public education. These institutions are licensed by the state and utilize their own curriculum and teaching techniques. Licensed private schools fund themselves by charging a tuition fee for students. Some, such as the Hope Ranch, Turtle Bay, Summit Preparatory and the Montana Academy offer special services. These facilities offer counseling and education to students with behavior problems. Tuition for this type of specialized service is approximately $4,200 per month. Enrollment trends for private schools are shown in Table AA.17.4 and Table AA.17.5.

The number of elementary students which are home schooled has remained relatively steady while the number of high school students who are home schooled has increased (see Figure AA.17.4). Montana law defines a home school as the instruction given by a parent of his child, stepchild, or ward in his residence. Parents are free to select the type of curriculum from a collection of resources available from education sources. Montana does not require teacher certification to qualify the parent to home educate. The present home school requirements (20-5-109, MCA) were adopted by the legislature in 1983. In 1991, another section of law was added to Montana's statutes (20-5-111, MCA) which clarified the "responsibilities and rights of parents who provide home school and rights of a child in home school". The statute lists four areas which the home educating parent is "solely" responsible for; the educational philosophy of the home school, the selection of instructional materials, the time, place and method of instruction and the evaluation of the home school instruction.

Figure AA.17.4
Private and Home School Enrollment 1992-2005



Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Table AA.17.4
Private and Other Elementary School Enrollment 1992-2005

	92	**94**	**96**	**98**	**00**	**02**	**04**	**05**	**%** change
Cross Currants Christian	94	126	119	108	105	135	71	85	-9.6%
Stillwater Christian	119	169	199	199	207	202	208	216	+81.5%
Glacier Christian	51	52	45	25	25	41	12	10	-80.4%
Kalispell Montessori	81	90	81	93	93	110	116	111	+37%
St. Matthews	167	147	135	161	175	197	198	232	+38.9%
Trinity Lutheran	188	206	206	188	207	207	197	202	+7.4%
Valley Adventist	12	27	25	16	23	23	17	20	+66.7%
Other Private	17	17	13	15	1	6	4	**	
Home Schools	275	508	555	446	509	497	430	484	-9.6%
TOTAL	**1,004**	**1,342**	**1,378**	**1,251**	**1,345**	**1,418**	**1,253**	**1,361**	**+35.6%**

**** combined with Home Schools category for 2005**
Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Table AA.17.5
Private and Other High School Enrollment 1992-2005

	92	**94**	**96**	**98**	**00**	**02**	**04**	**05**	**%** change
Stillwater Christian	64	86	116	110	109	108	108	95	+48.4%
Star Meadows Hope Ranch					19	18	23	28	
Montana Academy				27	50	59	66	77	
Summit Preparatory School								52	
Valley Adventist Christian								3	
Other Private						4	59	**	
Home Schools	11	3	55	92	148	114	129	117	+964%
TOTAL	**75**	**89**	**171**	**229**	**326**	**303**	**385**	**372**	**+396%**

**** combined with Home Schools category for 2005**
Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction

Flathead Valley Community College

Flathead Valley Community College was established in 1967 when Flathead County voters created a community college district. In 1983, voters of Lincoln County created an extension center of FVCC in Libby to serve the residents of Lincoln County. In 1984 and 1985, the college added the Glacier Institute program in Glacier National Park. The campus is located at 777 Grandview Drive and along U.S. Highway 93 in Kalispell.

A decade of growth and new trends in postsecondary education has created the need for additional facilities. In 2005, the college purchased adjacent property and a 19.3 million dollar campus expansion is underway. New facilities will include an Occupational Trades Building and Arts and Technology Building. The buildings are scheduled to be complete in the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2007.

Enrollment has tripled since the college was established in 1967. FVCC offers two-year college programs, the first two years of a four-year college degree and occupational training. The facility provides college transfer, vocational-technical and community service classes, as well as adult basic education. Many courses are offered online. Table AA.17.6 and Figure AA.17.5 demonstrate general enrollment trends since 1967.

According to the FVCC economic impact fact sheet of October 2005, FVCC skills embodied in the present-day workforce increase regional income in the FVCC Service Area economy where the former students are employed by $38.6 million. Altogether, the economy in the FVCC Service Area owes nearly $50 million of its current labor and non-labor income to the past and present efforts of FVCC. This demonstrates FVCC as an engine of economic growth. For more information, see Section 4 - Economics or visit http://www.jobs-now.org.

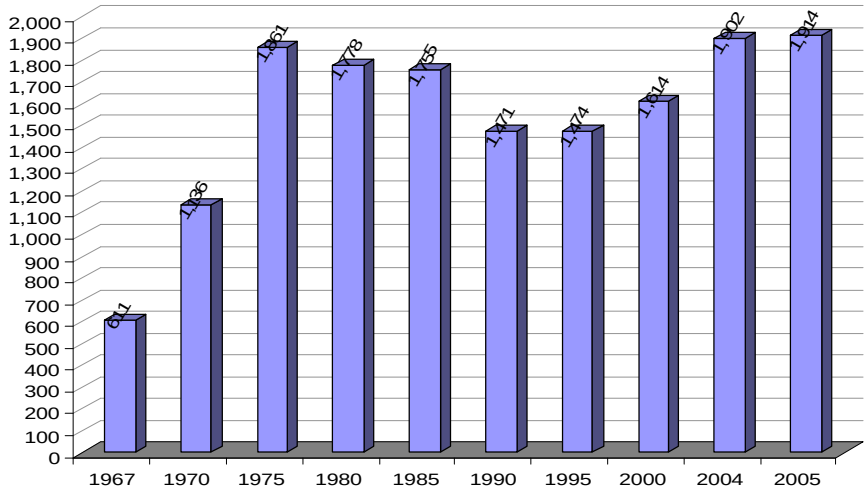
Table AA.17.6
Flathead Valley Community College Enrollment Trends 1967-2005

	2005	2000	1995	1990	1985	1980	1975	1970
Male	703	596	482	488	550	626	810	550
Female	1,211	1,018	992	983	1,205	1,152	1,051	586
Total	**1,914**	**1,614**	**1,474**	**1,471**	**1,755**	**1,778**	**1,861**	**1,136**
Full Time	856	667	743	689	542	489	772	578
Part Time	1,058	947	731	782	1,213	1,289	1,089	558
% Full Time	44.7%	41.3	50.4	46.8	30.9	27.5	41.5	50.9
% Part Time	55.3%	58.7	49.6	53.2	69.1	72.5	58.5	49.1
Average Credit Load	9.32	9.96	9.75	9.27	7.05	6.44	8.57	9.24
*FTE	1,200	964	958	909	825	763	1,063	699
Average Age	29.4	31.5	*	*	*	*	*	*
Flathead County Residents	1,711	1,460	1,340	1,314	1,513	1,579	1,603	*
Other Montana Residents	143	105	77	103	119	151	186	*
Non State Residents or Foreign	60	49	57	54	43	48	72	*
TOTAL	**1,914**	**1,614**	**1,474**	**1,471**	**1,755**	**1,778**	**1,861**	**1,136**

*** not available**

FTE – represents full-time equivalency. This is a measure used by all colleges and universities to measure enrollment. FVCC did not begin reporting enrollment on an FTE basis until the fall of 1970. Prepared by Faith Hodges, FVCC, December 2005

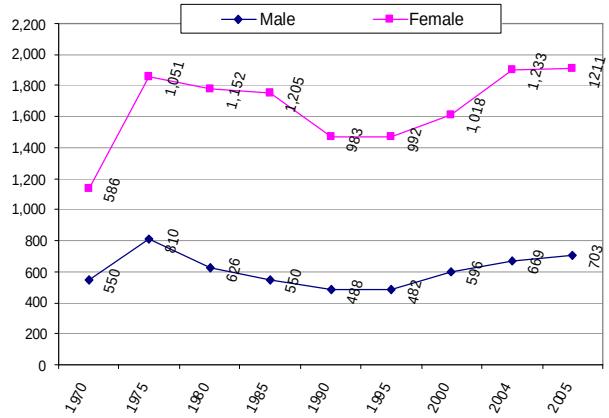
Figure AA.17.5
Flathead Valley Community College Enrollment Trends
1967-2005



Source: Flathead Valley Community College

Since Flathead Valley Community College began operation in 1967, female enrollment has been significantly higher than male enrollment (see Figure AA.17.6) and Flathead County resident enrollment far outnumbers that of out of county residents.

Figure AA.17.6
Flathead Valley Community College Enrollment Trends in Gender 1967-2005



Source: Flathead Valley Community College

PART 18: Fire and Wildfire

Fire response in Flathead County is covered by 16 volunteer fire departments. In the past five years, over 900 lots have been created in Flathead County. The fire departments are

liable for keeping up with the fast growing population. In addition, development continues to increase in rural high-risk fire areas that are far from services.

Many of the departments, such as Evergreen, are responsible for a high-density area equivalent to the surrounding municipal departments of Kalispell, Columbia Falls and Whitefish. The municipal and volunteer departments generally have mutual aid agreements to assist each other for better coverage.

Wildland/Urban Interface

Recent wildfire activity and development in rural areas adjacent to public lands has created wildland/urban interface concerns in Flathead County. The wildland/urban interface is described as the line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. To protect these areas, cooperative agreements have been signed between recognized Federal fire protection agencies and the State of Montana. Such agreements give general guidelines for the protection of all lands to the mutual advantage of the protection agencies entering into the agreement. Currently, cooperative agreements exist between the State and the United States Forest Service, the State and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State and the Bureau of India Affairs (BIA), Flathead Agency. A new Master Cooperative Agreement is being developed to include the State, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Following the 2000 wildfire season, Congress authorized funding within the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture to implement the National Fire Plan (NFP). The National Fire Plan is a long-term strategy for reducing the effects of catastrophic wildfire throughout the United States. The National Fire Plan provides authority for increases of fire suppression capabilities, rehabilitation and restoration of burned areas, reduction of hazardous fuels, community assistance and accountability to the public and Congress. NFP funding to states occurs under community assistance and is made available through the U.S. Forest Service, State and private forestry programs. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has responsibility for delivery of these programs on State and privately owned lands. Grant monies are available for such projects as community education in wildland/urban interface, fuel hazard reduction, equipment and training for County fire departments, homeowner and community action and defensible space home audits. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act requires that communities develop plans to qualify for grant monies. More information about grants and current projects can be found at http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire.

The Flathead Community Wildfire Fuel Reduction-Mitigation Plan was completed in March of 2005 and identifies the interface areas and prioritizes fuel reduction projects areas in Flathead County. It was developed as an appendix to the Flathead County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. Completion of this document paves the way for fuel reduction projects in Flathead County. The document was prepared for the Northwest Regional Resource Conservation and Development Area Incorporated, a non-profit organization and Flathead County, by GCS Research in Missoula. This comprehensive document includes over 50

maps including, fire history, communities at risk, wildland/urban interface areas, countywide priorities for fuel hazard reduction as well as risk assessment maps that show areas in Flathead County that have relatively high fire risks. Priority areas for wildfire protection and fuel reduction projects were identified through a public process with input from community members and rural fire departments. The complete document with maps of the priority areas countywide and by municipal and rural county districts is available online at www.co.flathead.mt.us/fcpz.

The uniqueness of the Flathead County landscape and intermingled land ownership creates dependence on rural fire departments for wildfire suppression in the wildland/urban interface, as these departments are often the first responders. While rural fire departments have traditionally been mainly responsible for protection of structures within their district, these rural fire departments are also responsible for wildfire protection within their district boundaries. The State (DNRC) has overlapping wildland fire suppression responsibilities in all of the rural fire districts in Flathead County. Most rural fire departments consist of volunteers with training mainly in dealing with structure fires. The State's overlapping responsibilities with rural fire districts assures adequate protection in rural fire districts.

Structure Fires

Structure fires within designated municipal and rural fire district boundaries are always the responsibility of that municipal or rural fire department. The National Park Service protects structures within Glacier National Park. The State is not responsible for engaging in structure fire suppression, nor is any Federal agency, except Glacier National Park. However, both State and Federal agencies will provide structure protection to areas that do not have other means of protection, if mutual agreements have been made between those agencies and the County.

PART 19: Municipal and Rural Fire Districts

As with all emergency services, response time to a fire location is critical. Response time includes travel time from home or place of employment to the fire location. The maximum response time in combination with other variables, determines the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) rating of a fire department or fire district. ISO ratings range from 1 – 10 with 1 being the best rating. ISO ratings are used by insurance companies to access risk. These ratings are important because, among other things, the insurance companies base their insurance premiums on them. The lower the ISO rating, the lower the homeowner insurance premium will be. All municipal and rural fire departments will have an ISO rating. Some will have more than one rating depending on the response time to a location.

Within Flathead County there are three municipal fire departments including the Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls Fire Departments. In addition, there are (17) Rural Fire Districts and (2) Fire Service Areas. Rural Fire Districts include Badrock, Bigfork, Big Mountain, Blankenship, Columbia Falls, Coram/West Glacier, Creston, Evergreen, Ferndale, Hungry Horse, Marion, Martin City, Olney, Smith Valley, Somers/Lakeside, South Kalispell and West Valley. Personnel and equipment from both municipal and rural

fire departments also respond to other emergencies, such as vehicle accidents, hazardous materials incidents and search and rescue. Departments have trained personnel to handle medical emergencies and provide advanced life support, as well.

Fire Service Areas are a relatively new form of fire protection and are usually responsible for protection outside of established fire districts. They are formed by submitting a petition to the County Commissioners and require the signature of 30% of the real property owners within the proposed area. These Fire Service Areas are usually formed when there are several large landowners in an area and because it is sometimes difficult to get the 50% or more of the owners of a majority of land to sign a petition to form a Rural Fire District. Fire Service Areas are supported by a tax on structures or improvements that would benefit. Fire Service Areas have no direct or implied wildland fire protection component. Only the Commissioners, by resolution, can decide on the boundaries and levels of service that will be provided. Unless a resolution specifies that wildland fire protection will be provided, it is not mandated that a Fire Service Area provide this service. Most FSAs will respond to wildland fire when it is within their boundaries as it is prudent to help stop the spread of wildfire before it involves the structures they are mandated to protect. There are (2) such Fire Service Areas in Flathead County. These are the Whitefish Fire Service Area and the Flathead County Fire Service Area.

Mutual Aid Agreements

Within Flathead County and amongst the municipalities and rural fire districts, a Mutual Aid Agreement currently exists, titled "Outside Aid Protective Assistance Contract". This agreement is intended to provide the ability for one or more jurisdictional areas to provide personnel and equipment to assist another in the event that one jurisdiction requests or as is necessary. This agreement includes all of the Municipal and Rural Departments and the Whitefish Fire Service Area. However, (4) of the Rural Fire Districts adjacent to the City of Kalispell declined signing the agreement. These Districts include West Valley, South Kalispell, Smith Valley and Evergreen.

In Flathead County, Municipal and Rural Fire Districts and the Flathead County and Whitefish Fire Service Areas encompass most of the private lands in the valley bottom and foothills. Most rural fire department personnel are volunteers, sometimes making availability a concern and mutual aid agreements between rural fire departments are critical for providing adequate fire protection.

City of Kalispell Fire Department

The Kalispell Fire Department is located in downtown Kalispell on First Avenue East. The new Station 62 is located near the intersection of Four Mile Drive and Highway 93, in the same vicinity as the Costco and Lowes stores. The Kalispell Fire Department currently has an ISO rating of 5. That rating is bound to go lower with the new station.

Station 62 will provide services to the rapidly growing north section of the city. Initial staffing of Station 62 will include four Firefighters/Paramedics with 24-hour coverage. Future staffing projections are for 8 Firefighter/Paramedics with 24-hour coverage. It is

estimated that personnel from this new station will respond to approximately 2000 calls annually, or about 50% of the current calls of the single downtown station. Response times will be reduced to 1-5 minutes in the north city area.

The Kalispell Fire Department averages 450 fire calls and 2,350 EMS calls per year. Call volume has increased dramatically in the past years due to a booming population increase in the Flathead Valley. Over the past four years, the Department has seen annual increases in responses ranging from 13% to 18%, which is directly related to the rapidly increasing population. Approximately 50% of total responses are for Emergency Medical Services outside of the city limits. Approximately 67% of responses within the city are for Emergency Medical Services with the remaining for fire, rescue and hazardous materials calls.

The Kalispell Fire Department has a compliment of three engines, an 85-foot ladder truck, two administrative vehicles and four ambulances. Employees of the Kalispell Fire Department are crossed trained in both fire and medical, providing an Advanced Life Support (ALS) service to the local community with Firefighter/Paramedics. Employees also provide the local community with fire prevention and education, rescue and have members involved with the City/County Hazardous Materials Team at the Technician level.

The Kalispell Fire Department currently employs 22 Firefighters and three administrative personnel and an Administrative/Billing Clerk. For more information visit http://www.kalispell.com/fire/ or contact the Kalispell Fire Chief.

Whitefish Fire Department

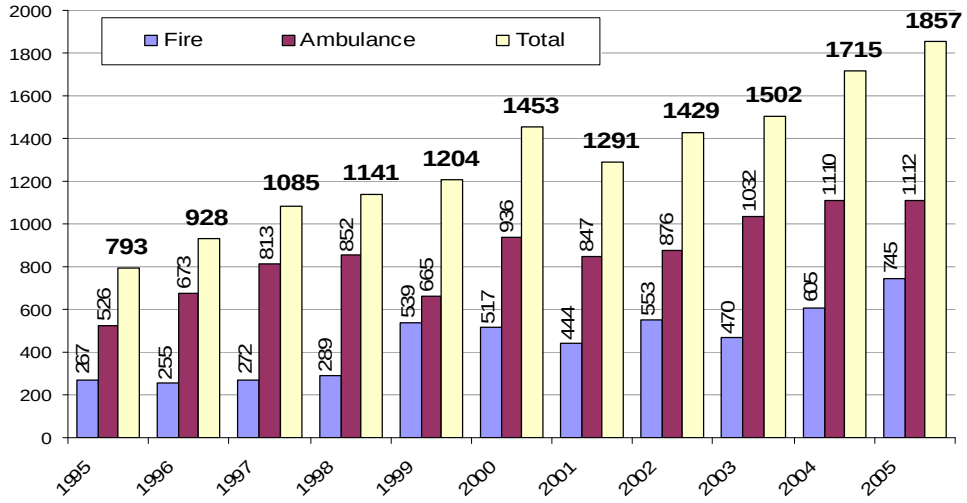
The Whitefish Fire Department provides service to both the area within the city limits as well as the rural Whitefish Fire Service Area, which encompasses approximately 100 square miles around the city. The department is full service, providing fire suppression, heavy rescue and emergency medical services with four advanced life support ambulances. The Department has two stations. The main station is in downtown Whitefish and the other is located out of town on the corner of Hodgson Road and Whitefish Stage Road.

Maximum response time for anywhere within the coverage area is about 20 minutes depending on road conditions and time of year. The current ISO rating for residences within the city or within 1,000 feet of a fire flow rated hydrant is an ISO 4. The rating for all other areas not in the city and/or within 1000 feet of a fire hydrant is rated ISO 8-B.

The Whitefish Fire Department currently has 10 paid firefighters and 15 volunteers. The paid department employees work 12-hour shifts, 7 days a week and include four Paramedics and two EMT personnel. All night responses are by call out and volunteer shifts. Four resident volunteer firefighters respond from Station #1 on day and night calls when not working their day jobs and if they are available. Nearly all, including the reserve personnel or volunteers, have training in emergency medical service and CPR.

During 2003, department personnel responded to 242 fire and 700 ambulance calls within the city and 228 fire and 332 ambulance calls in the rural areas. From January 1, to November 11, 2005, there were 500 fire and 755 ambulance calls in the city. Requests for assistance in the rural areas have remained steady over the past three years. Personnel responded to 202 fire and 227 ambulance calls outside of the city during the current year of 2005. Both fire and ambulance calls have more than doubled since 1995 as shown in Figure AA.19.1.

Figure AA.19.1
Whitefish Fire Department Response by Type 1995-2005



Source: Whitefish Fire Department

The Whitefish Fire Department is currently trying to secure funding for a new Fire Station in the city during the upcoming year and is looking for possible locations for additional rural stations. For more information contact: fire01@cityofwhitefish.org

City of Columbia Falls Fire Department

The Columbia Falls Fire Department provides fire protection to the city of Columbia Falls as well as the rural area surrounding the city, which is the Columbia Falls Rural Fire District. The main fire station is located adjacent to City Hall in downtown Columbia Falls. The Department serves a significant area from its downtown station as a well as the substation on U.S. Highway 2, located one mile south of the Highway 40 and U.S. Highway 2 (LaSalle) intersection. Even though the City of Columbia Falls has a population that may not warrant a paid department, the ***actual*** approximate population that the department serves is 12,000 including the Columbia Falls Rural Fire District. The population served warrants a paid department.

The maximum response time within the city is approximately 5 to 7 minutes for the ISO rating of 5. Outside of the city, there is an ISO rating of 5 with an average response time

of 7 to 14 minutes. The Highway 2/LaSalle substation significantly improved response time in the rural area of the Columbia Falls Rural Fire District.

According to information provided by the Fire Chief in December 2005, the department has 22 volunteers and a full time paid Fire Chief. The department would like up to 33 volunteers, indicating there is opportunity for the department to increase its membership and/or staffing. Within the department, there are 12 EMT-FR and 4 EMT-B certified firefighters with various endorsements.

Between the two stations, the department's equipment includes 4 Class A engines with from 500 to 1000 gallon water capacity, 2 Type 6 engines, a EMS Medium Duty Rescue vehicle with air cache and scene lighting, an EMS QRU Suburban, 2 Water Tenders with 2500 to 4250 gallon water capacity and a Command vehicle. The Flathead County Hazardous Materials unit is routinely housed and available at Rural Station #2.

Rural County Fire Departments

Rural Fire Department personnel are 99% volunteers. Most have wage paying jobs and may not always be able to respond as quickly as could a municipal Fire Department. As the demand for services increases with the population, volunteer organizations have assumed additional responsibilities including providing emergency medical services and responding to motor vehicle accidents.

All rural fire department members, including volunteers, are required to obtain a minimum of 36 hours of training each year. Many members participate in up to 150 hours of training annually. Volunteers are not compensated for their time either in responding to emergency calls or during training.

Housing in rural areas is generally distributed over a larger area with substandard road conditions, making response time longer. Most Rural Fire Districts have an ISO rating of ISO-5 to ISO-8.

Badrock Rural Fire Department

The Badrock Fire Department is located on Montana Highway 206 and Kelly Road east of Columbia Falls. The district encompasses approximately 18,144 acres or 28 square miles south and east of the Flathead River. For more information, contact the Badrock Fire Chief.

Bigfork

In 2005, the Bigfork Fire Department and Bigfork Quick Response Unit and Ambulance merged to provide services. Bigfork Fire & Ambulance is a volunteer organization and provides emergency medical care and fire and rescue services to the communities of Bigfork, East Lake Shore, Ferndale, Echo Lake and Swan Lake. Bigfork Fire and Ambulance has one main station and three substations. The main station is located on Highway 35 in Bigfork and houses a fully equipped engine and several fully equipped

Attack, Rescue, Utility and Ambulance units. Woods Bay satellite station is located in Woods Bay on Sylvan Drive and is equipped with an engine and a 2,200-gallon vacuum water tender. Echo Lake satellite station is located near Echo Lake and houses an engine and a 2,500-gallon vacuum water tender. The Bigfork Fire Department has an ISO rating of 6.

There are 44 personnel between the Medical and Fire divisions, 11 of which belong to both. Under the Fire Division, there are 28 volunteer firefighters, a paid part time Fire Chief, a paid full time Assistant Chief/Fire Marshall/Training Officer and a paid full time Administrative Assistant to both the Fire and Medical Divisions. The Medical Division is mostly volunteers with 26 medically trained personnel, a paid part time Office Assistant, a paid part time Training Assistant and a volunteer Assistant Chief/Medical.

The Bigfork Fire District encompasses over 22,000 acres of which over 8,000 acres were identified as priority areas for fuel hazard reduction in the Flathead County Community Wildfire Fuels Reduction-Mitigation Plan. The largest is the Echo Lake area because of the amount of fuels and the high density of homes. Heavy fuels and west facing slopes have also placed Swan Hill and the east shore of Flathead Lake on the list. A smaller area on Chapman Hill, north of Bigfork, was identified which has high-end homes and more development planned.

In 2005, Bigfork Fire District received federal grant monies for reducing fire hazards around homes to reduce potential property and home loss from wildfires. The grant is scheduled to end in June 2006. The money provides incentive for the home and property owners in the Bigfork, Ferndale and Swan Lake Fire Districts to reduce wildfire fuels on their private property. Accomplishments under this grant include homeowner assessments, thinning and pruning, chipping and slash piling and burning with focus on the identified priority areas. For more information on this program, please contact the Bigfork Fire and Ambulance organization or visit http://www.bigforkfire.com.

Big Mountain

Big Mountain Fire District encompasses about 1,443 acres. It is a relatively small area and includes all of the Big Mountain resort and residential area. Big Mountain Fire District has developed and actively maintains its own fire plan for its area of responsibility. The Big Mountain Fire District has an ISO rating of 6 where there are hydrants and 9 where there are no hydrants.

This district is relatively isolated and surrounded by public and private forestland. Access is limited. The Big Mountain Road is the only improved access to the resort area. This situation may limit the effectiveness of mutual aid for fire and emergency services. The value of structures is also very high. There have been two areas of concern identified within the district and include the Elk Meadows and the Glades subdivisions. These subdivisions are still in the development phase. In addition, the Big Mountain Road is being rebuilt and an emergency egress will then be available. For more information, contact the Big Mountain Fire Chief at 862- 3748.

Blankenship

The Blankenship Fire District encompasses approximately 6,662 acres or 10.4 square miles. The district lies west of the North Fork of the Flathead River approximately seven miles north of Columbia Falls. The area is surrounded by lands managed by the State, Forest Service and National Park Service. The North Fork valley has historically experienced periodic major stand replacing wildfires. Much of the area in the Blankenship Fire District was burned over in 1926 and 1929 then again in 2003 when the Robert Fire burned over the area.

The Department has concern over several items including water supply. The river is designated as a Wild and Scenic River which does not allow for installation of a hydrant and they have only one 1954 vintage Water Tender. Access is marginal in many areas with homes and Teakettle Road is in poor condition. Most homes in the district are within one-half mile of forested lands, which is considered the wildland urban interface. Priority areas for fuel reduction projects were identified by the department. These include the Spoon Lake area and a large area in the southern end of the district along the forks of the Teakettle Road. The department also feels that there is need for fuel reduction on the adjacent National Forest lands.

Blankenship Fire Department members are all volunteers. The Coram/West Glacier Fire District lies to the east of the river. The bridge allows access for mutual aid between the two rural fire districts. Adequate protection in this district requires effective implementation of existing mutual aid agreements between the Rural Fire Departments and State and Federal Agencies. For more information, contact the Blankenship Fire Chief at 387-4349.

Coram/West Glacier

The Coram/West Glacier Fire Department is a volunteer organization. The District encompasses about 9,902 acres or 15.5 square miles and lies east of the North Fork of the Flathead River and the Blankenship Fire District, along U.S. Highway 2. This district is surrounded by lands managed by the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service and has experienced periodic major wildfires. All of the area encompassed in the Coram/West Glacier Fire District was burned over by wildfire in 1910 and has regenerated into a mostly Lodgepole forest. A mature Lodgepole forest is susceptible to disease and wildfire. Advanced firefighting techniques prevented the Robert Fire of 2003 from crossing U.S. Highway 2 and burning the area again.

The Burlington Northern Railroad line runs through the district, creating concerns over access to almost 100 homes located west of the tracks. This is the only ingress and egress to these structures. It is possible for the railroad crossing to be blocked by a train at the time of call for emergency services to that area. The area west of the tracks has been identified as a priority area for fuel reduction, as well as the railroad crossing itself and one historical structure.

Adequate protection in this district also requires implementing existing mutual aid agreements between the other Rural Fire Departments, the State, the Forest Service and National Park Service. For more information, contact the Coram/West Glacier Fire Hall at 387-4298.

Creston

The Creston Fire District located east of Kalispell and north of Bigfork, is the largest rural fire district in Flathead County, encompassing approximately 53,547 acres or 84 square miles. The Creston Fire Department has 4 stations, located at 4498 Montana Highway 35, 2540 Montana Highway 35, 595 Lake Blaine Road and 3180 Foothill Road. The department also maintains a training facility at Lake Blaine Station

The Creston Fire Department is a 100% volunteer organization with a current membership of 32, of which 15 are trained medical personnel. All members are trained in CPR and in the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). The department provides basic life support and stabilization of a patient in emergency medical situations but does not have an ambulance to transport a patient.

Maximum response within the district is 8 to 9 minutes from time of dispatch. This response time gives the district an ISO rating of ISO-8. As additional water supplies are developed, the district will be asking for an assessment to lower the ISO rating which will reduce insurance rates to homeowners.

The Creston Fire Department has 7 fully-equipped engines including a 1996 Central States 2000 gallon capacity with a 1250 gallon per minute (gpm) pump and Compressed Air Foam, a 1992 Central States, 3000 gallon capacity with a 1250 gpm pump and a 1969 GMC, 800 gallon capacity with a 500 gpm pump used for wildland fire and backup. Additional engines include a 1984 Grumman, 1000-gallon capacity with a 750-gpm pump, a 2003 Compressed Air Foam engine with a 360-gallon capacity that is also used for light rescue, a 1999 Type 6 engine with a 350-gallon capacity and a 1992 Pierce, 750-gallon capacity Compressed Air Foam engine. The Creston Fire Department has the only 3 Compressed Air Foam engines in the valley. Compressed Air Foam is much more effective in firefighting than plain water. The engines carry a full array of emergency medical equipment including defibrillators. The equipment is housed at the four locations in Creston, Lake Blaine, Mountain Brook and Fairmont-Egan.

Approximately 30% of the Creston district is in the wildland urban interface. The Many Lakes area has been identified as an area of major concern by the department. The high-density development in the forested area has a one-way ingress and egress with narrow driveways and dead end streets. Foothill Road, Lindsey Lane, South Echo Lake, Bachelor Grade and Lake Blaine areas have all been identified as being heavily forested or having poor access, narrow and/or dead end roads and contiguous to National Forest lands. For more information, contact the Creston Fire Hall at 755-2760.

Evergreen

The Evergreen Fire District is northeast and adjacent to Kalispell. The District encompasses approximately 14,734 acres or 23 square miles. Evergreen Fire Department has one full time paid employee the remaining members are volunteers.

The Department provides mutual aid assistance to the adjacent and nearby rural fire districts, but does not respond to calls in the City of Kalispell.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service campground area on the Flathead River has been identified as an area of concern, due to limited or no access to the brushed in and swampy areas. The end of Bayou Road has homes behind a gated access. Plum Creek Mill and new subdivisions in forested areas have also been identified as possible problem areas.

For additional information, contact the Evergreen Fire Hall at 752-4636.

Ferndale

The Ferndale Fire District is located southeast of Bigfork and encompasses approximately 5,585 acres or 8.7 square miles in Flathead County. The district also includes a significant amount of additional area in the northeast corner of Lake County. Much of the district is in the wildland urban interface. Several areas of concern for possible fuel reduction efforts have been identified. Over 900 acres in the Bear Creek area in the east side of the district adjacent to National Forest lands is heavily forested and has high dollar homes on steep slopes with only one access road. A similar situation has been identified at the end of Tamarack Lane, to the south of Bear Creek. For more information, contact the Ferndale Fire Hall.

Hungry Horse

The Hungry Horse Fire District is located along U.S. Highway 2 and adjacent to and south of the South Fork of the Flathead River. The District is small encompassing only 808 acres, consisting mainly of the community of Hungry Horse itself. The Department is 100% volunteer. For more information, contact the Hungry Horse Fire Hall.

Marion

The Marion Fire District is located approximately 18 miles west of Kalispell on U.S. Highway 2 and generally includes the community of Marion and the private lands surrounding Little Bitterroot and McGregor Lakes. The District encompasses approximately 19,141 acres or 29.9 square miles. Department members are all volunteers. The ISO rating is 7.

The department has identified the McGregor Lake area as a priority area for fuel reduction projects, because the area is heavily timbered with a high density of older homes. The area borders Plum Creek lands, which is considered high risk and has

limited access with one way in and one way out. A grant to fund fuel reduction in this area is pending. A significant amount of new housing construction is occurring near Little Bitterroot Lake that also has limited access with one way in and one way out of the subdivision. Response time from the fire station to the north end of the lake is 10 to 15 minutes. Water supply is also a concern in the Little Bitterroot Lake area with poor access to the lake for drafting. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) have fire protection responsibilities surrounding the district. Adjacent rural Fire Departments have a considerable response time for providing mutual aid to the Marion department. For more information, contact the Marion Fire Hall at 854-2828.

Martin City

Martin City Volunteer Fire Department serves a population of approximately 800 and the District encompasses about 9 square miles. The Department operates out of one station located on Main Street in Martin City and has 22 volunteers. Major equipment include a 3,500 gallon Water Tender, one engine, capable of pumping 750 gallons per minute, a 1-ton four wheel drive Wildfire / Attack fire vehicle with a 250 gallon capacity Attack and a 1987 Chevy 1-ton four wheel drive extrication unit.

In addition to providing fire protection, Martin City houses the "jaws" unit for vehicle extrication for the canyon area. Department members often respond to the adjacent districts under Mutual Aid Agreements to assist to Quick Response Units and emergency medical situations. The Department has personnel trained in Advanced Life Support (ALS) and search and rescue and often assists in these types of activities within a 3,000 square mile area, including Badrock Canyon to the Continental Divide and into the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Canyon area emergency service providers are in close proximity of vast recreation areas such as Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest and are likely to be responding to more search and rescue calls than some of the other rural fire departments. For more information, contact the Martin City Fire Hall at 387-5378.

Olney

The Olney Fire District is located approximately 18 miles north of Whitefish and encompasses approximately 1,018 acres or 1.6 square miles. The district is totally surrounded by State and National Forest lands and isolated from the other rural Fire Districts. The district generally includes all private lands that are surrounded by State and Forestland. The Stillwater State Forest Headquarters is located in Olney and houses fire equipment and personnel and would provide the most efficient mutual aid to the Olney Fire District. Department members are all volunteers. For more information, contact the Olney Fire Hall.

Smith Valley

The Smith Valley Fire District is located west of Kalispell and encompasses approximately 35,449 acres or over 55 square miles. The Department has identified several areas of concern and possible fuel mitigation measures. Most areas were

identified because they are in the wildland/urban interface with poor access. Response time to areas with high housing density, fuel buildup and limited access to water supply are issues of concern. Addressing was also identified as a problem, especially in the Hoffman Draw area. The department provides mutual aid to other rural Fire Districts but does not respond to calls for assistance in the City of Kalispell. For more information, contact the Smith Valley Fire Hall at 752-3548 or email svlyfd@centurytel.net.

Somers/Lakeside

The Somers/Lakeside Fire District is located approximately 7 miles south of Kalispell. The District encompasses 27,474 acres or about 43 square miles. The department indicates that there is one-way access, steep slopes and fuel buildup in the Angel Point area and few homeowners have taken measures to protect their homes from fire. Fuel reduction also needs to be done in the Blacktail area. For more information, contact Somers/Lakeside Fire Hall at 857-3566.

South Kalispell

The South Kalispell Fire District is located south and east of Kalispell. The District encompasses 7,073 acres or over 11 square miles. Areas in the south section of the district have access and safety zone issues as well as access to water supply. Much fuel reduction work has already been done. The department has an ISO rating of 6 within a mile of the fire hall and 10 beyond one mile.

The department provides mutual aid to other rural Fire Districts but does not respond to calls for assistance in the City of Kalispell. For more information contact the South Kalispell Fire Hall at 257-2282 or email skvfd@in-tch.com

West Valley

The West Valley Fire District is located west and north of Kalispell. The District encompasses 43,051 acres or about 67 square miles. The department provides mutual aid to other rural Fire Districts but does not respond to calls for assistance in the City of Kalispell. The ISO rating is 7. For more information, contact the West Valley Fire Hall at 756-9878.

PART 20: Law Enforcement

Flathead County Sheriff

The Flathead County Sheriffs Department is responsible for protecting 5,098 square miles and 55,460 residents of the non-incorporated area of the county. They are dedicated to the protection of the people of Flathead County and the professional enforcement of local, state and federal laws. There are six divisions within the Sheriffs Department:

1. Patrol Division
2. Detective Division
3. Adult and Juvenile Division
4. Civil Division
5. Coroner
6. Crime Stoppers

Currently the Flathead County Sheriffs Department employs 118 people. However, only 48 of them are in "on the ground" law enforcement. This is a ratio of one law enforcement officer for every 470 residents. The remainder work as support, court or jail staff. The adult correctional facility employs 28 and the juvenile facility employs 12. The juvenile facility is regulated by the State of Montana and the ratio of staff to inmate is almost 1:1.

Federal and State law enforcement in Flathead County

FBI – The Federal Bureau of Investigation has over 27,000 Special Agents and Support Personnel in 65 Divisions, over 400 Resident Agencies and in 32 Foreign Liaison Offices throughout the world. The Salt Lake City Division covers the states of Utah, Idaho and Montana, making it geographically one of the largest divisions in the FBI.

Border Patrol – Eight additional Border Patrol positions were created after 9/11 for a total of 12.

Highway Patrol – The Montana Highway Patrol for Flathead County employs 16 full time officers and one support person. The dispatch is handled by the State of Montana Highway Patrol dispatch office in Helena.

City of Columbia Falls

The City of Columbia Falls police department employs 9 officers, 3 full time dispatchers and 3 part time dispatchers. The service area is approximately 12 square miles.

City of Whitefish

The City of Whitefish police department employs 14 full-time officers, 4 part-time officers, 4 full time dispatchers and 4 part time dispatchers. The service area is approximately 18 square miles.

City of Kalispell

The City of Kalispell police department employs 35 people. The service area is approximately 12 square miles.

PART 21: Utility Services – Communications, Electricity and Natural Gas.

County residents rely on many basic services, including utilities, which help define their quality of life and maintain their health and well-being. Utilities in Flathead County

include natural gas delivery, electricity and telecommunication services. These services are usually taken for granted, but coordination and conscientious planning for future growth must be established to assure service is uninterrupted and adequate.

Internet

Thirteen Internet Service Providers service the Flathead Valley. These include About Montana, Access Montana, Cyberport and Montana Digital. Bresnan Communications offers cable and cable internet connections. Satellite and wireless services are available, as well.

CenturyTel delivers advanced communications to Northwestern Montana. The company is a provider of consumer and business communications in rural areas and small to mid-size cities in 26 states. Century Tel offers dial-up and DSL internet service. Although Century Tel serves mostly rural properties, approximately 79% of the company's access lines are within 18,000 feet (over three miles) of a central office or remote terminal, which is the maximum distance to which DSL can be enabled. For more information on Century Tel services, visit the local Century Tel website at http://flathead.community.centurytel.net/index.cfm.

Telephone

Phone service is offered by CenturyTel, Bresnan Communications and AT&T. Bresnan and AT&T do not have traditional landlines. Instead, the service is conducted over cable or internet. In addition, there are three cellular companies in the Flathead Valley. They are Alltel Wireless, Verizon and Chinook Wireless.

The Flathead Valley is well connected and has advanced telecommunications media available.

Electrical Service

Flathead Electric Cooperative, Inc. (FEC) is a locally owned and operated cooperative and is the only supplier of both commercial and residential power to Flathead County. Flathead Electric Coop is the second largest electric utility in Montana with more than 44,500 members/customers. Over 3,800 miles of line serve the entire Flathead Valley and Libby. There were 2,189 new meters hooked up in 2005.

According to the 2004 FEC Annual Report, the Coop processed a record number of work orders and new services. Engineering released more than 2,700 jobs for construction taking in more than 125 new subdivisions. Underground cable replacement projects were completed in Desert Mountain, Kokanee Bend Subdivision, Rogers Lake Road and Peaceful Acres Subdivision. More than 416,000 feet of underground cable was installed, compared with 376,000 feet in 2003. Other projects completed in 2004 included U.S. Highway 93 from Four Corners to 13th Street in Kalispell, the Bigfork transmission rebuild, the Montana Avenue rebuild in Kalispell, design work for new substations in Lakeside and North Kalispell as well as a number of relocation projects related to

highway construction. Replacement of standard electric meters with automated meter reading units continued, allowing the meters to be read electronically from the FEC office. More than 5,500 old standard meters were replaced with new automated meters in 2004.

The 2004 report suggests that summer months are not the peak season anymore for new service requests, but rather there is year round demand and that the demand was expected to continue. For more information about Flathead Electric Cooperative, visit their website at: http://www.flatheadelectric.com/

Natural Gas Service

Northwest Energy is the only major supplier of natural gas to the Flathead Valley. There are 170,000 customers in Montana, with 70,500 square miles of service area. Pricing for natural gas is approved by the Montana Public Service Commission and is deregulated.

PART 22: Public Services

Hospitals

The Kalispell Regional Medical Center (KC) employs over 1,500 and is the largest private employer in Flathead County. The new hospital was completed in January of 1976 north of downtown Kalispell and has been expanding in size and services since its construction. The facility provides a full range of services including cardiac care and surgery, air ambulance, skilled nursing, cancer treatment, 24-hour physician and emergency room coverage, infant and maternity care, mental health and chemical dependency treatment, private care, home health and hospice services. The hospital had the nation's first rural hospital based helicopter ambulance service (A.L.E.R.T.) in 1975 and in 1987 installed Montana's first MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) machine.

North Valley Hospital located in Whitefish is also a full service health care facility. The median age of the population of Flathead County is increasing and recent rapid growth indicated the need for a new facility in Whitefish, in addition to the expansions of the KC. In May of 2003 North Valley Hospital and the North Valley Hospital Foundation, purchased 45 acres for the construction of a 72,300 square foot replacement hospital near U.S. Highway 93 and Montana Highway 40 on the southern edge of Whitefish. The new facility is expected to open in February of 2007.

The Montana Veterans Home in Columbia Falls is a facility intended to serve veterans in Montana. An expansion program completed in early 1984 increased the capacity of the facility to 150 residents. There are rooms for 65 nursing patients and 85 domicile resident rooms.

Both the Kalispell Regional Medical Center and North Valley Hospital are private entities, while the Montana Veterans Home is a federal facility.

Community and Environmental Health and Social Services

City-County Health Department

The mission statement of the Flathead City-County Health Department states, "to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy through collaboration, promoting stewardship of our resources and providing preventative health services to the community**."** The Flathead City-County Health Department promotes nutrition and physical activity programs, as well as workplace wellness programs.

The community health division addresses communicable disease control, such as TB, as well as health counseling, well child programs and educational programs. The Women Infant and Children Program is also administered by the health department. WIC is a special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children. It provides short-term, low-cost, preventative health services to families who are at risk due to nutrition related health conditions. In addition, a reproductive health clinic includes family planning, HIV and breast and cervical services.

City-County Environmental Health Department

The City-County Environmental Health Department provides the water and sanitation services, subdivision review, air quality services, to help provide a safer community in which to live.

Plans for public water and sewer projects are reviewed and sanitary surveys of public water supplies are conducted by this program. In addition, Sewage Treatment System Services deal with compliance with the Flathead County Regulations for Sewage Treatment Systems. Permitting, site evaluations and inspection of sewage treatment installations are the primary program activities.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality contracts with the Flathead County Environmental Health Department to review proposed subdivisions for compliance with the Sanitation in Subdivisions Act and related administrative rules. The program conducts reviews of subdivided lots less than 20 acres for provision of adequate water and sewer facilities.

Air Quality Services operates the outdoor air quality program, which includes collecting data from monitoring sites in Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls and administering the Flathead County Air Pollution Control Program. This program regulates open burning during those times of the year when it is allowed and issues daily burning restrictions based on data received from the monitoring sites and ventilation forecast. In addition, within the Control Districts of Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls, paving and dust mitigation of high volume traffic areas is required.

The indoor air quality program conducts mold spore samples by prescription and provides radon test kits ($5) as well as radon information to the community. Information

is provided to individuals who are interested in testing their homes, reducing radon levels in their homes and constructing homes that resist radon accumulation.

The Food & Consumer Safety Services program is responsible for inspection of food service and other food-related facilities, public accommodations, trailer courts, tourist campgrounds, swimming pools, spas and schools. Day care and assisted living centers are inspected in conjunction with the Community Health Division of the Health Department. Food facilities operating throughout the year are inspected biannually and seasonal operations are inspected at least once annually with additional follow-up inspections and visits done as needed.

Senior Services

The Area IX Agency on Aging serves people with the goal of enabling persons 60 years of age and older to lead independent, meaningful and dignified lives, by providing direct services, contracting for services and networking with the community to locate services.

Public Libraries

The Flathead County Library operates branches in 4 communities including Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Bigfork and Marion. The five members of the Flathead County Library Board of Trustees are appointed by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners to five-year terms. The Commissioners try to ensure that all geographical areas of the county are represented on the board. The library features an online searchable library catalog, magazine index and online books. A large collection of genealogical information is also available through HeritageQuest online and the Flathead County website at: http://www.flatheadcountylibrary.org/index.asp

Administrative Services

Planning Office

The Flathead County Planning & Zoning Office provides technical planning assistance to Flathead County. It is administered by the Board of County Commissioners. The primary responsibilities include assisting in all facets of long range Community and Neighborhood planning, Zoning Administration and Subdivision Review. The Flathead County Lakeshore Protection Program and Flathead County Floodplain Program are also administered by the planning office. The staff is available to talk about any aspect of development occurring in Flathead County.

It is the mission of the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office to provide professional planning assistance to the rural communities of Flathead County. The office serves the public interest by providing a forum for open dialogue, identification of issues and goals, creative problem solving, plan development and implementation. The office staff work to educate, coordinate and facilitate strategies that protect and maintain property values, public investment, built and natural environment and the quality of life. For more information, call (406)751-8200.

Clerk and Recorder

The purpose of the Flathead County Clerk and Recorders office is to preserve the history of the County through preservation of the recorded documentation of that history. The Flathead County Clerk and Recorders office is responsible for election information, birth and death certificates, lien filings, UCC filings, landownership documents and county commissioners' proceedings. For more information, call (406)758-5526.

Plat Room

The Plat room/Surveyors Office is the official source of land ownership information, as well as survey records for Flathead County. The Plat Room also has information about Montana Survey laws. The staff continually strive for the most current and accurate records to assure proper taxation. Addressing the non-corporate areas of the County is a function of the Plat Room/ Surveyors Office. They also handle change of owners address for tax purposes. This public record information can be accessed by anyone. Various area and district maps are available for a fee. For more information, call (406)758-5510.

PART 23: Natural Resources

Flathead County is rich in natural resources. Approximately 3% of the area of the county is water. There are over 40 lakes and 3 major rivers in Flathead County. Flathead Lake lies in both Lake and Flathead Counties and has nearly 200 square miles of surface area, 185 miles of shoreline and is the largest body of fresh water between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean, stretching 28 miles long and 16 miles at its widest point. Many of the county's lakes and rivers are surrounded by or adjacent to public lands providing for ample recreational opportunities. The surrounding mountains are mostly forested, much of which is federal or state managed land. The majority of the valley bottom is open because of extensive logging in the late 19th and early 20th century, to accommodate for agricultural use and other types of development.

Approximately 75% of the county's land area is public land, including Federal and State managed lands. Of these public lands, Glacier National Park encompasses approximately 968 square miles or 18% and National Forest land including designated wilderness areas, encompasses 2,751 or 52% of Flathead County. Montana State School Trust Lands cover approximately 204 square miles, or 4% of the county. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks manage about 1% of lands in the county. There are 45 square miles of The Flathead Indian Reservation in the southwest corner of the county encompasses 45 square miles or less than 1% of the county area. The remaining 25% of land in Flathead County is privately owned. The majority of non-corporate owned private lands are located in the valley bottom.

Corporate timberlands account for 36% of privately owned land and almost 9% of the total area of the county. Nearly 32% or 403 square miles is owned by Plum Creek Marketing and Stoltze Land and Lumber Company owns about 51 square miles or 4% of the private land in Flathead County. As the county's population increases and the wood products industry

declines, there is increasing pressure as well as financial incentive to develop corporate timberlands.

The weather is relatively mild as an area of climatic transition between coastal and continental. The weather ranges from moderately dry summer and autumn to moderately wet winter and spring. Precipitation ranges from 16 inches on the valley bottoms to more that 100 inches on the mountain tops. On the valley bottoms about half of the annual precipitation falls as snow, while up to 60 percent of the precipitation at the higher elevations is snow. Elevation ranges from about 3,000 feet above sea level on the valley floor, to over 7,000 feet at Big Mountain Ski Resort. Several mountains in Glacier National Park rise to over 10,000 feet. The average temperature is 27 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 74 degrees in July. Average wind velocities range from 5 to 6.8 mph, with the highest average in April and May.

PART 24: Flathead Watershed

The Flathead Basin encompasses the Swan River and the North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River. These rivers provide about 90%[49] of the water flowing through the Flathead Valley. The North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River drain the eastern portion of the Flathead Basin and merge at Columbia Falls to become the Upper Flathead River. The Whitefish River and Stillwater River drain the northwest part of the Flathead Basin and join the Upper Flathead River below Kalispell. The Upper Flathead River and Swan River are the two main tributaries that empty into the northeast corner of Flathead Lake. Water flows into and through the Flathead Lake are partially controlled by the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River and the Kerr Dam near the lake's outlet.

DEQ has divided the state into 91 watershed-planning areas. Flathead County crosses 15 watersheds but not all contribute flow to the Flathead Basin. Tributaries within the major watersheds that contribute flow into Flathead Lake are listed in Table AA.24.1.

[49] Flathead Basin Stewardship Index, 2002

Table AA.24.1
Basin area and discharge characteristics of major tributaries contributing flow through Flathead Lake

Tributary	Basin area km^2	Total volume[a] $m^3 \times 10^6$	Max flow m^3/sec	Min flow m^3/sec	Period of record years
South Fork Flathead River	4,307	3,190	1,310	0.21d	53
North Fork Flathead River	4,009	2,670	1,960	5.61	50
Middle Fork Flathead River	2,921	2,630	3,960	4.90	42
Swan River	1,881	1,040	252	5.47	29
Stillwater River	875	301	123	1.13	29
Whitefish River	440	172	45	1.08	30
Ashley Creek[c]	520	29	--	--	5
Flathead River at Lake Outlet	18,372	10,500	2,340	0.14[d]	74

[a] Average annual discharge, [b] For calculation of mean total volume, [c] Data collected by the Flathead Lake Biological Station, [d] Due to dam closure

Source: Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Rivers and streams in the Flathead basin create floodplain areas, riparian corridors and wetlands critical to water quality, wildlife habitat and fisheries habitat. Functional riparian corridors are important for filtering nutrients, trapping sediments, reducing flooding, stabilizing soils and providing habitat. Riparian corridors extend along the banks of rivers, streams and drainage ways where ground water and surface water mix.

Groundwater is an important resource in the Flathead Basin. Most of the residential and agricultural developments rely on groundwater wells for drinking water. Shallow aquifers provide water to the wells. Well-defined shallow aquifers include:

(1) the Delta region, between the north shore of Flathead Lake and the Flathead River;
(2) the Evergreen aquifer between the Flathead and Whitefish Rivers, which is the most developed shallow aquifer;
(3) the east side between the Flathead River and the foothills of the Swan Mountains; and
(4) the Lost Creek fan west of the Stillwater River near the Salish Mountains.

Most other places where shallow aquifers have been developed are along stream valleys.

Major threats to the water resources of the Flathead Basin include non-point source pollution where sediments and nutrients, in particular nitrogen and phosphorus, end up in

streams and lakes via storm water runoff or groundwater contamination. Water quality in the Flathead Lake is an important indicator of the health of the entire Flathead Basin. Research by the University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay shows that water quality in Flathead Lake has been declining since 1977. Flathead Lake was listed as an impaired water body by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality in 1996 and 2000.

Clean Waters

The waters from the majority of rivers and streams in the Flathead Valley ultimately, flow into Flathead Lake. The health of Flathead Lake is a good indicator of the health of the rivers, streams, lakes and surface water that flow into the lake. Among some of the major contributing waters to Flathead Lake are Whitefish Lake and the Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers, the North Fork, Middle Fork, South Fork and the main stem of the Flathead River and Swan River and Swan Lake.

Every two years the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) compiles a list of water bodies that fail to meet water quality standards. This document is known as the 303(d) list after the section of the Federal Clean Water Act that requires states to report impaired waters. The 303(d) list identifies the probable causes of impairment as well as the suspected sources of the pollutant. DEQ is required to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for all water bodies on the 303(d) list.

There are two sources of water pollution. Point sources are discharges from an identifiable outfall such as pipes or ditches. Point-source discharges are regulated by permits issued by the DEQ. Examples of point sources include municipal and public sewage treatment facilities, factories, some storm sewers and large livestock feedlots. Non-point sources are generally land extensive activities that do not require discharge permits. Non-point sources include agriculture and forestry activities, small construction projects, unregulated storm water discharges and individual septic systems. 90 percent of stream pollution and 80 percent of lake impairments in Montana come from non-point sources[50].

Flathead Lake Water Quality

Flathead Lake has been listed as a "water quality-limited water body" or "impaired" by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and therefore a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is required. A TMDL is the total amount of a pollutant that a water body may receive from all sources without exceeding water quality standards. A TMDL can also be defined as a reduction in pollutant loading that result in meeting water quality standards. Swan Lake is also a high priority water body for TMDL development. Whitefish Lake and the Stillwater River are each identified as moderate priority water bodies for TMDLs. Including the low priority water bodies on the list, the Flathead basin has 35 water bodies that require development of watershed specific plans draining into Flathead Lake (see Table AA.24.2).

[50] http://www.deq.state.mt.us/wqinfo/nonpoint/chapter2.pdf

Table AA.24.2
Flathead Basin Total Maximum Daily Load Priorities

Low priority - Ashley Creek (3 segments), Big Creek, Coal Creek, S. Fk. Coal Creek, N. Fk. Coal Creek, Flathead River, S. Fork (below dam), Goat Creek, Granite Creek, Hungry Horse Reservoir, Jim Creek, Lion, Logan Creek, Lake Mary Ronan, Morrison Creek, Ole Creek, Piper Creek, Red Meadow Creek, Skyland Creek, Spring Creek, E. Spring Creek, Squeezer Creek, Stillwater River, Sullivan Creek, Swift Creek, E. Fk Swift Creek, W. Fk Swift Creek, Whale Creek, Whitefish River

Moderate priority - Whitefish Lake. Stillwater River

High priority - Flathead Lake, Swan Lake

Source: Montana Department of Environmental Quality

More than twenty-five years of water quality monitoring show a steady decline in the water quality of Flathead Lake due to increases in nitrogen and phosphorus. The lake remains among the cleanest large lakes in temperate regions worldwide. Nevertheless, research shows that water quality in Flathead Lake has been steadily declining since 1977. Primary productivity, or the rate of algae growth, is increasing according to Flathead Lake Biological Station Director Dr. Jack Stanford and the amount of dissolved oxygen in water at the bottom of Big Arm Bay is declining.

Lake-wide blooms of pollution algae occurred twice in the past. In 1998, the amount of primary production was the second highest ever recorded. The levels of dissolved oxygen in Big Arm Bay were the lowest ever recorded and blooms of a pollution algae (*Anabaena Flosaquae*) were observed near shore. As nutrients increase (nitrogen and phosphorus), the number of algae and other organisms increase. As these organisms die, bacteria break down their remains using oxygen in the process. The result is that the oxygen supply in the water becomes depleted. Oxygen depletion is a recognized sign of water quality degradation. Similar oxygen sags, as they are called, have been identified in Swan Lake and Whitefish Lake. Nitrogen concentrations in the Stillwater and Flathead rivers were among the highest ever recorded.

The 303(d) List identified the probable causes of impairment as: nutrients, siltation, suspended solids, flow alteration, organic enrichment or low dissolved oxygen, algal growth, PCBs, metals, mercury and noxious aquatic plants. The main sources of pollution include runoff from development, old and poorly maintained septic systems, poor agricultural and timber harvest practices and air pollution.

Many factors other than nitrogen and phosphorus load influence alga growth in large lakes, including seasonal light availability, the strength of summer thermal stratification (i.e., depth of mixing during stratification) and food web interactions (i.e., availability of herbivorous zooplankton above the thermocline). Based on sound ecological science, nutrient loads must be reduced if the increasing trend in primary production is to be reversed and noxious algae (Anabaena) blooms reduced or prevented.

The Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS) has monitored water quality in Flathead Lake continuously since 1977. These studies have been the technical background for development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocation for the purpose of managing nutrient loads reaching Flathead Lake. Based on that research, the Flathead Basin Commission recommended the following interim targets for the protection of water quality in Flathead Lake: 1) annual primary production will not exceed 80 gC m^{-2} yr^{-1} (80 grams of carbon per square meter per year), 2) annual average chlorophyll *a* concentration shall not exceed 1 µg/L (1 microgram per liter), 3) no declining trend in oxygen concentrations in the bottom waters of the Lake, 4) no measurable blooms of *Anabaena Flosaquae* (or other pollution algae) and 5) no increase in the biomass of lakeshore periphyton.

Primary productivity experiments measure Flathead Lake's ability to grow algae. Long-term records of primary productivity in Flathead Lake are a good indicator of long-term changes taking place in water quality. An increase in algal production reflects a decrease in water quality. High numbers reflect lesser water quality while low numbers reflect higher water quality. Primary production in Flathead Lake in 2003 was the third highest value since monitoring began in 1977, exceeding the TMDL target value by 49%.

The mean annual chlorophyll *a* (the pigment in algae) concentration in 2003 was very near the long-term average. Although there were very dense bands of algae at about 18–20 m depth during the summer months (with the highest levels of chlorophyll ever measured in the Lake), the low values for winter resulted in an average for 2003 that met the TMDL target.

Profiles of dissolved oxygen in Flathead Lake during the late summer and fall of 2003 revealed a decline in oxygen concentrations with depth as the period of thermal stratification in the lake continued through early fall. Percent oxygen saturation dropped to 72.0 % (8.50 mg/L) near the bottom at the deepest midlake site and 76.0 % (8.56 mg/L) at the Ross Deep site in Big Arm Bay. Thermal stratification at Ross Deep did not persist beyond early September, thus oxygen levels did not reach the low levels observed in some prior years.

The TMDL interim targets recommend no measurable blooms of *Anabaena Flosaquae* (or other pollution algae) at the midlake deep site. Lack of sufficient funding since the TMDL targets were established has resulted in limited information concerning this particular target. No visible algal blooms were observed during the 2003 water year, but phytoplankton samples have not been examined microscopically to confirm this observation. Several samples from citizens at Lake Mary Ronan in late June 2004 confirmed the presence of *Anabaena Flosaquae* in dense accumulations along the shoreline. The TMDL interim targets also state that there shall be no increase in the biomass (mass) of lakeshore periphyton (the algae attached to rock surfaces). Long-term monitoring of periphyton biomass began in 1999. The mean chlorophyll *a* concentration at the East Shore "B" Beach site was 5.2 µg/cm 2 (micrograms per square centimeter of rock surface) in August 2003 compared to 1.2 in August 1987. However, at this early stage of monitoring (years: 1987, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003), it is not possible to determine

a trend in periphyton biomass. Continued monitoring is needed to assess natural variation.

During the 2003 water year, the Flathead Lake Biological Station was able to assess 4 of the 5 interim TMDL targets established for the protection of water quality in Flathead Lake. The mean chlorophyll *a* concentration in 2003 was right below the target value, but the dissolved oxygen target was not met (i.e., a decline in oxygen was observed) and primary production at midlake deep exceeded the target value by 49%. Continued monitoring of periphyton biomass will be necessary in order to assess a trend in that target parameter.

Table AA.24.3
Proposed Flathead Lake TMDL Targets

Primary production	80.0 g $C/m^2/yr$
Chlorophyll a	1.0 micrograms/l
Soluble Reactive Phosphorous (SRP)	<0.5 micrograms/l (BDL)
Total Phosphorous	5.0 micrograms/l
Total Nitrogen	95 micrograms/l
Ammonia (NH_3)	<1.0 micrograms/l
Nitrate/ Nitrite ($NO_{2/3}$)nitrogen	30 micrograms/l

No measurable blooms of Anabaena (or other pollution algae)

No oxygen depletion in the hypolimnion

Algal biomass measured as Chlorophyll a (on near-shore rocks) remains stable or exhibits a declining trend.

Source: Flathead Basin Commission

The response of the lakes primary production to nutrient (pollution) loading is complex. It involves light dynamics produced by seasonality and river turbidity. In addition, the external nitrogen and phosphorus (point, non-point and natural loading) and internal nutrient supply play a major role on lake water quality. Over the period of record, annual primary productivity has varied between 62 and 138 $gC/m^2/yr$ with a gradually increasing trend.

Phosphorus and nitrogen are nutrients that contribute to algae growth. Past efforts to reduce the amount of nutrients reaching Flathead Lake and its tributaries have been successful. Upgrading sewage treatment plants in the upper basin for phosphorus removal, connecting Evergreen to the Kalispell sewer system and banning domestic use of phosphorus-containing detergents have reduced the amount of nutrients reaching Flathead Lake from these sources.

The level of reduction needed to protect the Lake is commensurate with the levels achieved by wastewater treatment through implementation of the 1986 Flathead Lake Phosphorous Strategy. Community wastewater treatment plants have achieved the state mandated phosphorous limit of 1mg/L. All of the facilities in the basin meet or surpass this standard on an annual basis. The city of Kalispell routinely exceeds this standard, meeting levels closer to 0.2 mg/L for total phosphorous and has voluntarily undertaken active nitrogen removal. The wastewater treatment facilities have reduced pollution loading 70 to 90 percent.

Community facilities have also played a significant role in reducing non-point loading. Reductions in non-point loading through the development of new public systems (Lakeside/Somers) and the expansion of areas served by public systems such as the Evergreen, Big Mountain/ Whitefish Lake and Bigfork have played a major role in protecting water quality.

Storm Water Runoff

Polluted runoff, also known as non-point source pollution, is perhaps the greatest threat to water quality in the Flathead Basin. It is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As it moves, runoff picks up and carries natural and human-caused pollutants, finally depositing them into rivers, lakes and groundwater.

Croplands, livestock feedlots, golf courses, lawns, gardens, roadways, parking lots, construction sites, landfills, city storm sewers, logging operations, residential septic systems and erosion from streams, river-banks and lake shores are all sources of polluted runoff. Even airborne chemicals and particulates carried into our waters by rain or snow contribute to the problem.

The scattered locations of these pollutants and their often unpredictable dispersal make clean up efforts complex and often costly. This is because the waterways within a watershed are interconnected. Streams flow into rivers, which flow into lakes. There can be a connection between these surfaces waters and groundwater. A pollutant introduced in one area upstream can pollute the water downstream.

Meeting TMDL targets and allocations for Flathead Lake will most likely require reductions in nutrient loading in the Flathead River Headwaters and Whitefish and Swan Lakes as well as the rivers and streams that flow into and out of these lakes.

Floodplains

Flooding causes more property damage in the United States than any other type of natural disaster. In fact, it is estimated that flooding causes 90 percent of all property losses from natural disasters in the United States. Floods are the most common and costly natural catastrophe. In terms of economic disruption, property damage and loss of life, floods are “nature’s number-one disaster.”

The presence of floodplains in Flathead County (see Map 2.7) is perhaps the greatest impediment to growth and development. The topography of the county, which includes extremely mountainous areas, large lakes, several deep river valleys and the low valley floor, form a very complex drainage system and wide variation in climate.

Foothills and valley-bottom land make up approximately 20 percent of the county landscape. The relatively flat terrain of the valley floor also manifests itself in the sinuous nature of the rivers that wind through the valley to Flathead Lake. Glacier outwash underlies most of the area in the Flathead River Valley and forms floodplains and terraces adjacent to Flathead River and its tributaries.

Precipitation averages are generally higher in Flathead County than in other areas of Montana. Typically, the most sever flooding in Flathead County occurs in the spring and early summer months because of snowmelt and/or rainfall runoff. On rare occasions, ice jams cause some over bank flooding. In addition to the flooding along streams, shallow flooding periodically occurs in other isolated, developed areas Flathead County due to other factors. The mountains sometimes receive several hundred inches of snow annually. Low flows in the basin occur naturally during the winter months and floods normally occur in the spring during periods of rapid snowmelt. Runoff from snowmelt, occasionally combined with rainfall, provides high stream flows in the spring.

Historically, flooding has shaped much of the Flathead Valley floor. The Flathead Valley has experienced five (5) severe flood events. These occurred in 1894, 1926, 1948, 1964 and 1975 and 1995. During the 1964 flood, families were evacuated from their homes, livestock drowned and property damage was excessive.

The 1975 flood in Evergreen was estimated to be a 25-year flood event. Officials at the time estimated property damage in excess of two million dollars and news stories reported that over 200 mobile homes were either flooded or pulled from high water areas in the Evergreen area. The flows through Columbia Falls on the Flathead River were 25 percent higher than a 500-year flood event. The flood was triggered by torrential rains that swept through the mountains and valley during a period of unseasonably high spring temperatures, which were already causing a rapid thaw of an unusually high spring snow pack.

In 1974 and 1975, spring runoff caused a flood measuring slightly less than a 100-year event as spring runoff inundated low-lying areas in the valley. Property loss and damage was severe.

The 100-year floodplain is the land subject to inundation by one percent (1%) or greater chance of flood in any given year, i.e., the 100-year flood floodplain. Construction is extremely limited in these areas and requires state, federal and local permits. The floodway fringe further limits the amount of construction within this boundary. The floodway is the channel of a stream and the adjacent over bank areas that must be preserved in order to discharge a base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surfaces elevation more than one-half (1/2) foot. The Flathead City-County Health

Department, which issues permits for all on-site sewage disposal systems, does not allow a system in or within 100-feet of a designated 100-year floodplain.
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has not identified all of the floodplain in Flathead County but most of the Flathead River corridor and the valley bottom have been mapped. Approximately 10-15% of the valley area of Flathead County is designated as 100-year floodplain. An additional 10-15% of the valley bottom is designated or as 500-year floodplain. Most of the floodplain is located along the Flathead River corridor, between Columbia Falls and Flathead Lake. Areas of 100-year floodplain are also present along the Stillwater and Whitefish Rivers.

100-year floodplains offer numerous benefits to the property and community by:

- Providing flood storage and conveyance;
- Reducing flood velocities and potential for erosion;
- Absorbing large volumes of water gradually releasing it to adjacent streams or water bodies during low flow periods;
- Recharging wells and aquifers by holding water long enough to allow it to percolate into underlying soils;
- Supporting vegetation that acts as a flood buffer and stabilizes the shoreline;
- Enhancing water quality by absorbing sediments, toxins and nutrients;
- Providing habitat for millions of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians

The floodway fringe is a lower hazard area that would be inundated by a 100-year flood. Construction is allowed in the floodway fringe by special permit and must meet established regulations.
Current national floodplain management standards allow for: floodwater to be diverted onto others; channel and over bank conveyance areas to be reduced; essential valley storage to be filled; or velocities changed with little or no regard as to how these changes impact others in the floodplain and watershed. The net result is that through our actions we are intensifying damage potentials in the floodplains. This current course is one that is not equitable to those whose property is impacted and is not economically sustainable.

The Association of State Floodplain Managers and the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers support local accountability and active management of the floodplains through outreach and education. Both organizations support the "No Adverse Impact" policy that is meant to ameliorate negative impacts associated with floodplain development.

“No Adverse Impact Floodplain Management” is a managing principle that is easy to communicate and from a policy perspective tough to challenge. In essence, No Adverse Impact floodplain management is the action of one property owner does not adversely affect the rights of other property owners, as measured by increased flood peaks, flood stage, flood velocity and erosion and sedimentation. No Adverse Impact Floodplains could become the default management criteria. However, a community that has developed and adopted a comprehensive plan to manage development that identifies acceptable levels of impact, appropriate measures to mitigate those adverse impacts and a

plan for implementation. No Adverse Impact could be extended to entire watersheds as a means to promote the use of retention/detention or other techniques to mitigate increased runoff from urban areas.

Local floodplain regulations are adopted and enforced locally, but are authorized by the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 and the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973. Prior to these acts, flood insurance was nearly non-existent for private property owners. When local communities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), private property owners are then eligible to obtain flood insurance.

Flathead County began participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) September 5, 1984. The result is that the County (and the three municipalities) has adopted Floodplain Regulations to identify all areas within Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). With the adoption of the regulations, the county and municipalities have also adopted Flood Insurance Studies (FIS), which form the basis of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). These documents are used primarily in determining actuarial flood insurance rates and secondarily to assist the local jurisdictions in their efforts to promote sound floodplain management.

FEMA is currently undergoing a comprehensive nationwide map modernization process. This process involves working with local communities and state officials, contracted consultants and the public. The result is digital maps and may include some detailed study on a limited number of waterways. Flathead County has been identified as a priority community that is in need of significant map modernization. This process began in 2004 and will likely continue through October 2007.

Riparian Areas and Wetlands

Riparian areas are plant communities contiguous to perennial, intermittent and ephemeral rivers, streams or drainage ways. They have one or both of the following characteristics:

1) distinctively different vegetative species than adjacent areas; and/or
2) species similar to adjacent areas but exhibiting more vigorous or robust growth forms. (Adapted from USFWS, 1997)

Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturation soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas. (Federal Register, 1982)

In 1977, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) began the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), a systematic effort to classify and map America's remaining wetlands. The NWI defines wetlands according to the "Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States", a system that describes wetlands by analyzing soil types, hydrology and vegetation. According to this system, wetlands are defined as land that is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems, where the water table is usually at or near the

surface or the land is covered by shallow water. For this classification, wetlands must have one or more of the following three attributes:

(l) at least periodically, the land supports mainly hydrophytes (aquatic plants), or
(2) the substrate is mainly moist un-drained (hydric) soil, or
(3) the substrate is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season each year.

Wetland preservation is beneficial to many species of plants, birds, mammals and invertebrates. They also serve as retention areas for overflowing rivers, lakes and streams, thus reducing flood and erosion damage in other areas.

Only about 4 % of the state of Montana, has been identified as riparian and/or wetland habitat. Yet more than 40% of the state's mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish depend on the preservation of riparian habitat. About 1/3 of species in greatest need of conservation also require riparian habitats, according to the Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy prepared by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

The quality of Montana's blue ribbon streams are uniquely dependent on the riparian habitat that is commonly found along rivers, streams and lakes. These areas usually have a variety of riparian forbs, shrubs and trees such as cottonwood, alder, serviceberry, chokecherry and willow to keep them intact. There is often abundant wildlife and waterfowl as well as amphibious and unique plant life.

Riparian vegetation helps slow stream erosion, adds nutrients to the water, improves fish spawning habitat and helps to maintain cool water temperatures that many fish species require. Riparian habitat may be degraded when water diversions and dams prevent flooding or when wetlands are drained or filled. Harvesting of trees, noxious weed invasions, livestock over-grazing and human uses can also destroy riparian habitat. The main stem of the Flathead River, Stillwater River, Whitefish River and Ashley Creek and their associated backwater channels, spring creeks, wetlands and tributaries provide important wildlife habitat. Areas that still support intact natural stands of forest and shrubby vegetation are critical to retaining a variety of wildlife. These areas provide food as well as hiding and thermal cover and although these habitats may be intermingled with residential development and agricultural use, they remain important to wildlife species that depend on them.

Groundwater and Depth to Water Table

Groundwater is water that fills pores and cracks in rocks and soil. Groundwater sustains lake levels, provides for base flows in streams and is a major source of domestic water. Groundwater comes from precipitation and condensation that enters the soil and is susceptible to depletion in quantity and degradation of quality. Groundwater flows beneath the surface of the earth, generally moving down hill following the contours of the land. It moves toward a point of discharge, which is usually a lake, stream, spring or a well.

The depth to groundwater varies with seasons and precipitation levels. Many areas experience seasonally high groundwater levels, usually in the spring, which limits land use. The areas are commonly near floodplains, alluvial deposits and swamps placing limitations on septic tanks, basements and road building.

An aquifer is a water-bearing layer of permeable rock, sand or gravel. The thickness and depth of an aquifer vary according to location. The quantity of water a rock can contain depends on its porosity or the amount of open space and cracks between grains. Water movement in rock depends on the permeability, or ability to transmit or allow water to flow. Aquifers are recharged or filled by precipitation and infiltration from streams. Recharge is greatest in late spring when snow melts and there is runoff from the mountains.

The major aquifer in the Flathead valley is shallow alluvial aquifer, often referred to as the Evergreen Aquifer and is located between the Flathead River to the east and Whitefish River to the west and between Badrock Canyon to the north and the confluence of the Flathead and Whitefish rivers to the south. The depth to the water table in this area is generally less than 50 feet and for much of the area less than five feet.
A significant amount of area with seasonally high ground water and/or frequent flooding can be found throughout the Flathead River corridor and the valley bottom that is also experiencing development pressure. Much of the development in the area south of Kalispell in the Lower Valley area is occurring where the depth to groundwater is less than 15 feet. Homes that are being constructed in this area are on individual water and septic systems. Since there is a direct connection between the aquifer and the Flathead River and Flathead Lake, activity that substantially or incrementally changes the natural integrity of the floodplains and their aquifers will have a direct and pervasive impact on surface water quality. Groundwater supply in this area feeds directly into the aquifer and Flathead Lake. High-density development in the Lower Valley area has the potential to degrade the water quality of Flathead River and Flathead Lake, as well as the groundwater that supplies and recharges domestic water wells in the area.

Shallow aquifers are intrinsically susceptible to surface sources of contamination. The aquifer materials are highly permeable, allowing rapid movement of water (and any associated contamination) from the land surface to the aquifer. As the land surface in the valley becomes more developed, potential sources of point and non-point source contamination will increase.

Development of intermediate and deep aquifers has accelerated during the past 25 years. Between 1975 and 2000, at least 4,200 new wells (168 wells per year) were drilled, resulting in a more than four-fold increase in the total number of wells. Most wells completed in intermediate and deep aquifers are located along the east and northeast edges of the Flathead Valley.

PART 25: Fish and Wildlife Resources

Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Mountain forests, meadows, streams, lakes, valley rivers, wetlands and riparian corridors are aquatic and terrestrial habitats for wildlife. These wilderness areas are nesting sites for 310 species of birds including the threatened bald eagle. Terrestrial habitats include the endangered grey wolf and the threatened grizzly bear and lynx. Twenty-seven species of fish inhabit the aquatic ecosystems, which also provide habitat for nine species of amphibians and nine species of reptiles.[51]

Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest include federal wilderness, research natural areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers. These critical habitat areas provide large, relatively undisturbed blocks of open space important for wildlife migration corridors.

Conservation easements provide important aquatic and terrestrial habitat. A conservation easement permanently protects a designated property from development while the owner retains title and may continue using the land as it has been used traditionally. It is a voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and a qualified organization such as the Nature Conservancy, the Flathead Land Trust or the Montana Land Reliance.

These protected areas may play an increasing role in supporting critical habitats than in the past, due to the large amount of population growth and the loss of other habitat in adjacent landscapes.

The biggest threat to fish and wildlife is habitat loss. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are the primary agency responsible for the management of fish and wildlife populations. FWP jointly manage fish and wildlife habitats with the Salish and Kootenai Tribes within the Flathead Reservation. Throughout the year FWP, regulate fishing and hunting seasons for big game, upland game birds, web less migratory birds, waterfowl and furbearer. The white-tailed deer is the most popular big game animal pursued by hunters. The Montana Partners in Flight prepared the Montana Bird Conservation Plan to identify priority bird species and habitat most in need of conservation. Table AA.25.1 lists the Special Designated Wildlife Areas in the county.

[51] Flathead Basin Stewardship Index – 2002

Table AA.25.1
Special Designated Wildlife Areas in Flathead County

Name	Acres	Year Initiated	Management Agency
Flathead Waterfowl Protection Area	2,370	1971	FWS
Batavia Waterfowl Protection Area	510	1975	FWS
Smith Lake Waterfowl Protection Area	975	1973	FWS
Blasdel Waterfowl Protection Area	535	1987	FWS
McGregor Meadows Waterfowl Protection Area	799	1999	FWS
Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge	7,885	1999	FWS
Ray Kuhns Wildlife Management Area	1,530	1953-1986	FWP
Flathead River Wildlife Habitat Protection Area	220	1986-1999	FWP
Owen Sowerwine Natural Area	480	1970s	DNRC
Total	**15,304**		

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fish Species

The rivers, streams, reservoirs and lakes of Flathead County support native fish communities that are threatened from declining water quality and the introduction of non-native fish species. In the 1980s, a non-native population of mysis relicta, the opposum shrimp, had moved into Flathead Lake. The Flathead Lake Biological Station found the mysis relicta had consumed the food of kokanee salmon. The subsequent decline in kokanee salmon has eliminated a food source for bald eagles that migrated to the kokanee spawning grounds. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) fisheries biologists have conducted sinking and floating gill net surveys of Flathead Lake to assess shifts in species composition in 1983 (pre-mysis) and 1999. The surveys have shown a decrease in native westslope cutthroat trout from 23% of the catch in 1983 to only 5% of the catch in 1999, while northern pike minnow increased from 12% of the catch in 1983 to 25% of the catch in 1999. The kokanee salmon population significantly decreased in the late 1980s and has essentially disappeared from FWP catch surveys.

Wildlife Species

Of the total 3,361,230 acres that make up Flathead County, 82.5% of the land is managed by federal, state or tribal agencies (see Land Uses section). These public lands are home to a wide range of forest carnivores, big game species, osprey, eagles, upland game birds, migratory waterfowl, amphibians and reptiles.

Important wildlife species include grizzly and black bear, mountain lion, white-tailed deer, three species of mountain grouse and furbearers such as marten and wolverine. Big game species include black bears, mountain goats and lions, moose, elk, whitetail and mule deer. Elk and deer inhabit forested areas, while moose occupy wetland and riparian

areas. Highly important bear habitats occur along foothills of major valleys, particularly east Flathead Valley, Stillwater, Swan, Middle Fork and North Fork Valleys.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a list of all species classified as endangered, threatened, or candidate in Flathead County (see Table AA.25.2). Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened species are likely to become endangered in the near future. A candidate species are those for which there is sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support a proposal to list as endangered or threatened. The loss of a species to extinction can have irrevocable impacts on the ability of remaining species to survive.

Table AA.25.2
Endangered, Threatened and Candidate Species

Designation	Species Name
Endangered	gray wolf, whooping crane
Threatened	grizzly bear, bald eagle, Canada lynx, bull trout, water howellia, Spalding's Catchfly
Candidate	None

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species List, May 1, 2006

PART 26: Land Resources

Forestry

The USDA Forest Service is responsible for management of National Forests (including wilderness areas) and Flathead County contains portions of four National Forests and two Wilderness Areas. Flathead National Forest (including portions of the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas) has approximately 1,875,545[52] acres within Flathead County. Various species of trees found in the mid-elevation areas of these forests are Douglas fir, western larch, Lodgepole pine, western white pine, grand fir, western red cedar, western hemlock and Engelmann spruce. Various species of trees found in the higher-elevation areas of these forests are subalpine fir, whitebark pine and subalpine larch.

The three largest corporate timber landowners, F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber, Plum Creek and Montana Forest Products together account for approximately 9.2% (310,000 acres) of the total land area in Flathead County. Land owned by the three largest corporate timber operations represents approximately 52.7% of the private land in Flathead County (see Map 2.2).

The following table provides data regarding logging operations in Flathead County from 1998 and 2003. The purpose of this data analysis is to sample how an industry extracting natural resources from Flathead County is performing in the local economy.

[52] Montana Natural Resource Information System

The information was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau – County Business Patterns division. The businesses reporting employment and earnings are categorized according to the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS).

Table AA.26.1 shows logging businesses in Flathead County from 1998 to 2003 are a declining business sector. Logging businesses have declined in employment by -9%. In addition, annual earnings of logging businesses have declined from 9,515,000 in 1998 to 9,441,000 in 2003. The loss of employment has caused average annual earnings of workers to increase by 9%. Overall, logging operations in Flathead County have declined in employment and annual earnings.

Table AA.26.1
Flathead County Business Patterns for 1998-2003 - Logging

Industrial Code		Employment			
Ind. Code	Industrial Description	1998	2003	Change	98/'03%
11	Forestry, fishing, hunting and agriculture support	311	283	-28	-0.09

Earnings					
Annul.$'98	Annul.$'03	Avg.$'98	Avg.$'03	$change	$'98/'03%
9,515,000	9,441,000	30,595	33,360	2,766	0.09

Source: County Business Patterns :http://censtats.census.gov

Agriculture

Agriculture represents a portion of the historic culture in the Flathead Valley and as the economy changes in Flathead County, agriculture remains critically important toward maintaining economic diversity. In 2002, approximately 40% of the private land (234,861 acres) in Flathead County was being farmed.[53] There were approximately 1,075 individual farms, with the majority of these farms (78%) being under 179 acres in size.

Some of the major crops produced by farmers include wheat, barley, flax alfalfa, grain hays, silage and livestock pasture. Specialty crops such as seed potatoes, mint, lawn sod, canola, mustard, raspberries, strawberries, grapes and vegetable crops are also very important products.[54] Farms that utilize irrigation projects from rivers, streams and deep wells also produce wildlife habitats.

A primary concern of residents is the conversion of farmlands into developments. The conversion of these lands affects the rural community character, water quality, water supply and wildlife habitat.

[53] USDA 2002 Census of Agriculture
[54] Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy

Soils

Soils in the relatively flat portion of Flathead County north of Flathead Lake consist of two broad types. One is rocky and poorly drained and is underlain by unsorted glacial till. This is commonly used for timber production. The second general type soil is deep, well structured and well drained. It is underlain by deposits that have been reworked or sorted by running water and is the most productive in Flathead County.

The concept of hydric soils includes soils developed under sufficiently wet conditions to support the growth and regeneration of hydrophytes vegetation. Soils that are sufficiently wet because of artificial measures are included in the concept of hydric soils. Soils in which the hydrology has been artificially modified are hydric if the soil, in an unaltered state, was hydric. Some series, designated as hydric, have phases that are not hydric depending on water table, flooding and ponding characteristics.

Hydric soil lists have a number of agricultural and nonagricultural applications, including land use planning, conservation planning and assessment of potential wildlife habitat. A combination of the hydric soil, hydrophytes vegetation and hydrology criteria defines wetlands as described in the National Food Security Act Manual (Soil Conservation Service, 1994) and the Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory, 1987).

Surveys were completed in the upper Flathead valley for most of the valley bottom by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, soil survey. The majority of hydric soils are found along the Flathead River in the Lower Valley area, along Ashley Creek and Smith Lake and southeast of Whitefish. Much of the remaining soil types in the valley bottom have hydric inclusions and characteristics, especially prevalent along the Flathead River corridor. A complete list of hydric soils and soils with hydric inclusions in the Upper Flathead Valley with descriptions of soil characteristics is available at the Montana Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Geology and Minerals

The topography of Flathead County was formed during the ice ages when the enormous glacier that filled the Rocky Mountain Trench of British Columbia thinned as it spread southward through the Flathead Valley and into the Mission Valley. The Mission Range split the glacier sending one branch of ice down the Swan Valley and another to the southern end of Flathead Lake. When the glacier melted, it left a deep fill of sediment in the floor of the Flathead Valley.

The valley bottom is generally level to moderately sloping. Most steep slopes occur in the public and corporate timberlands surrounding the valley bottom, as well as in Glacier National Park. Approximately 75 % of Flathead County has slopes over 25% of which most is in the mountainous National Forest and National Park lands surrounding the valley.

At the beginning of the 1900s, coal and oil exploration with mining and drilling occurred in the North Fork. Currently, open-cut mining is primarily limited to sand, gravel and rock. Various types of gravel are in demand for road construction. Round rock is used for concrete and asphalt road construction. Crushed rock is used for fill and road surfaces.

Under the Metal Mine Reclamation Act (MMRA), "mining" is defined as the extraction of ores or minerals in commercial quantities for sale, beneficiation, refining, or other processing.

All open-cut sand and gravel operations must comply with applicable zoning regulations if the proposed mine site is in an area zoned as residential. An air quality permit from the DEQ is required for the operation of any mineral crushing or other processing plants. The Employment Relations Division of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry enforces mine safety regulations. The divisions Safety Bureau works with the mine operator and mining contractors who must report the name of the mine, the location of the mine, the name of the company and contractors operating the mine, the type of mining activity, the date mining activity will begin and other information.[55]

Currently, over 240 gravel pits are active, inactive, unknown, or reclaimed. 142 gravel pits are currently active and 25 are unknown.[56] Historically, county governments have put side rails on gravel pit operations, limiting hours of operation or requiring measures be taken to curb dust and noise pollution for pits near housing developments.

PART 27: Air Quality

Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency establishes air quality standards to protect public health, including the health of “sensitive” populations such as people with asthma, children and older adults. EPA also sets limits to protect public welfare. This includes protecting ecosystems, including plants and animals, from harm, as well as protecting against decreased visibility and damage to crops, vegetation and buildings.

Air quality problems in Montana are usually related to urban areas and mountainous topography or river valleys that are sensitive to temperature inversions. Particulate matter and carbon monoxide are the criteria pollutants that have the greatest adverse impact on Montana's air quality. Particulate matter generally comes from vehicles traveling on unpaved roads, sand and gravel from winter traction material and residential wood burning. Carbon monoxide comes primarily from motor vehicles and residential wood burning. Although industrial sources account for only a small part of carbon monoxide and particulate matter emissions in most communities, industries are the main sources of sulfur dioxide and lead pollution in Montana.

[55] Montana DEQ
[56] Flathead County Geographic Information System

The Flathead County Air Pollution Control Program requires the use of all available practicable methods to reduce, prevent and control air pollution in Flathead County. The Flathead County Air Pollution Control Plan regulates open burning, solid fuel burning, prohibited materials for wood or coal residential stoves and the Kalispell, Columbia and Whitefish Air Pollution Control Districts.

Congress states that one of the purposes of the Clean Air Act is "to preserve, protect and enhance the air quality in national parks, national wilderness areas, national monuments, national seashores and other areas of special national or regional natural, recreation, scenic or historic value".

In Glacier National Park, an extensive air quality-monitoring network exists for pollution and visibility conditions. As a Class I air shed, Glacier National Park is provided the greatest air quality protection under the Clean Air Act. This includes visibility and fluoride monitoring and a national atmospheric deposition network. Glacier's monitoring instruments are located mostly on the west side of the park. Seasonal vegetation collection associated with fluoride monitoring also occurs at various sites on the west side.

PART 28: Custom and Culture

For information on Custom and Culture, please see Flathead County Resolution No. 1777C – Natural Resource Policy

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

2011/2012 Growth Policy Update

Pursuant to Chapter 9, Part 6 of the originally-adopted Growth Policy document, and supported by Section 76-1-601(3)(f)(iii) M.C.A., the Growth Policy should be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. During the fall of 2010, the Flathead County Planning Board and, more specifically, Planning Board Sub-Committee "A", began discussing the Growth Policy update process and timeline in anticipation of the five-year deadline of April 2012. The following timeline begins with the initial public workshop the Planning Board used to hear public comment and address current Growth Policy content in need of updating or amending. The timeline summarizes all actions made by the Planning Board and County Commissioners and identifies the date, time and location of every public workshop, meeting or hearing related to the Growth Policy update process.

In addition to any press or Daily Interlake Daybook announcements, the time, date, location and agenda of all public workshops listed below were noticed on the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office's website a minimum of 48 hours in advance of each workshop. All public comments, evidence of public notice, meeting agendas, newspaper articles, draft documents, emails and minutes referenced below have been and are available for the public to review at the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell, MT as well as on the FCPZO website at the following link: http://flathead.mt.gov/planning_zoning/growth_resolution2015a.php

October 8, 2010	• **PRESS RELEASE** announces initial public workshop on Growth Policy update, scheduled for October 20, 2010.
October 18, 2010	• **ARTICLE** announcing the October 20, 2010 Planning Board public workshop appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
October 20, 2010	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** held from 6:00-9:00 PM in Conference Rooms A & B in the Earl Bennet Building, 1035 First Avenue West, Kalispell. The purpose of the workshop was to hear public comment regarding issues related to the five-year Growth Policy update, what chapters and information should be prioritized for review and updating.
October 21, 2010	• **ARTICLE** summarizing the outcome of the October 20, 2010 Planning Board public workshop appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
November 3, 2010	• **ARTICLE** summarizing the outcome of the October 20, 2010 Planning Board public workshop appears in *The Whitefish Pilot*.

November 17, 2010	• **PLANNING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE "A" MEETING** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. Planning Board members discussed comments received at the October workshop and drafted a scope of work, work plan and timeline for completing the Growth Policy update by April 2012.
December 8, 2010	• **PLANNING BOARD MEETING** beginning at 6:00 PM in Conference Rooms A & B in the Earl Bennet Building, 1035 First Avenue West, Kalispell. Sub-committee 'A' presented a draft work plan to the full Planning Board during Agenda Item 'F' – Committee Reports for discussion action. The Board voted unanimously to forward the Growth Policy Update Work Plan to the County Commissioners for consideration.
December 9, 2010	• **PLANNING DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY MEETING WITH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** beginning at 9:00 AM in the Commissioner's Chambers, 800 South Main, Kalispell. Director BJ Grieve presented the draft work plan to the County Commissioners and requested further guidance on beginning the update process. Commissioners authorized planning staff to work with the County Attorney to prepare a resolution for updating the Growth Policy in conformance with proposed work plan for 2011/2012.
December 13, 2010	• **ARTICLE** summarizing Commissioner's meeting on Growth Policy update appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
December 20, 2010	• **PLANNING DIRECTOR/COMMISSIONER MEETING TO DISCUSS DRAFT WORK PLAN/GROWTH POLICY UPDATE** was held beginning at 11:00 AM in the Commissioner's Chambers, 800 South Main, Kalispell. Draft work plan and resolution was discussed; it was decided at this time it would make more sense to wait to vote on the resolution until the newly-elected Commissioner was present (after the 1st of the new year).
January 3, 2011	• **CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION: REQUEST BY THE FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TO UPDATE THE FLATHEAD COUNTY GROWTH POLICY** beginning at 9:45 AM in the Commissioner's Chambers, 800 South Main, Kalispell. Commission voted unanimously to approve Resolution

	No. 2015P authorizing the start of the Growth Policy update process following the proposed work plan.
January 10, 2011	• **ARTICLE** announcing the start of the Growth Policy update process on January 12th, 2011 appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
January 12, 2011	• **ARTICLE(S)** announcing the start of the Growth Policy update process on January 12th, 2011 appear in both *The Bigfork Eagle*, *The Whitefish Pilot* and *The Hungry Horse News*.
January 12, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. ***Cancelled by Chair due to inclement weather.***
January 24, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
February 9, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
February 23, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
March 9, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
March 23, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
April 1, 2011	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing "checkpoint" public workshop scheduled for April 20, 2011.
April 6, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
April 18, 2011	• **ARTICLE** requesting public attendance and comments during the "checkpoint workshop" scheduled for April 20th, 2011

	appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
April 20, 2011	• **"CHECKPOINT" PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. Purpose of workshop is to review all edits and updates considered under Phase I of the approved Growth Policy Work Plan.
May 3 & 4, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for May 4th public workshop.
May 4, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
May 11, 2011	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing Phase II of the Growth Policy update process.
May 16 & 17, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for May 18th public workshop.
May 18, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
May 30 & 31, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for June 1st public workshop.
June 1, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
June 14 & 15, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for June 15th public workshop.
June 15, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
July 12, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for July 13th public workshop.
July 13, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.

July 15, 2011	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing "checkpoint" public workshop scheduled for July 27th, 2011.
July 24, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for July 27th public workshop.
July 27, 2011	• **"CHECKPOINT" PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. Purpose of workshop is to review all edits and updates considered under Phase II of the approved Growth Policy Work Plan.
August 4, 2011	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing Phase III of the Growth Policy update process.
August 8, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for August 10th public workshop.
August 10, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
August 23 & 24, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for August 24th public workshop.
August 24, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
September 7, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. ***Cancelled due to staff illness.***
Sept. 20 & 21, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for September 21st public workshop.
September 21, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
October 4 & 5, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for October 5th public workshop.
October 5, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the

	Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
October 19, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for October 19th public workshop.
October 19, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
November 1 & 2, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for November 2nd public workshop.
November 2, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
Nov. 8 & 9, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for November 9th public workshop.
November 9, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** immediately following the regularly schedule Planning Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell.
November 29, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for November 30th public workshop.
November 30, 2011	• **ARTICLE** on Growth Policy update winding down appears in *The Daily Interlake*.
November 30, 2011	• **PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. ***Cancelled due to staff illness.***
December 7, 2011	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing "checkpoint" public workshop scheduled for December 14th, 2011.
Dec. 13 & 14, 2011	• **DAYBOOK ANNOUNCEMENT** appears in *The Daily Interlake* for December 14th public workshop.
December 14, 2011	• **"CHECKPOINT" PUBLIC WORKSHOP** beginning at 6:00 PM in the Flathead County Planning & Zoning Conference Room, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell. Purpose of workshop is to review all edits and updates considered under Phase III of the approved Growth Policy

	Work Plan.
January 11, 2012	• **PLANNING BOARD MEETING** beginning at 6:00 PM in Conference Rooms A & B in the Earl Bennet Building, 1035 First Avenue West, Kalispell. **Action TBD…..**

2007 Growth Policy Document

The Flathead County Planning Board began the process of updating the 1987 Master Plan with a series of organizational workshops in the fall of 2002. It was decided that a series of "town hall meetings" would be the best way to distribute a survey, answer the public's questions about the growth policy, and learn what the people of Flathead County wanted to see in the document. The following timeline begins with the first "town hall meeting" that was held in the North Fork.

ALL public comments, meeting agendas, newspaper articles, papers, draft documents, emails and minutes referenced below are available for the public to review at the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office, 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell, MT.

November 12, 2002	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at Sonderson Hall in the North Fork. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
November 19, 2002	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Earl Bennett Building in Kalispell. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
December 3, 2002	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Columbia Falls City Hall. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
December 10, 2002	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the West Glacier Community Building. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
December 17, 2002	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Whitefish City Hall.

	Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
January 7, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Evergreen School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
January 14, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Bissell School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
January 21, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the West Valley School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
January 28, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Bigfork High School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
February 4, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Lakeside School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
February 11, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Smith Valley School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
February 18, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Somers School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.

February 25, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Creston School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
March 4, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Marion School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
March 11, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Canyon Elementary School. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public.
March 18, 2003	• **TOWN HALL MEETING** at the Olney Fire Hall. Planning Board met with members of the public to discuss ideas for a growth policy. Surveys were handed out consisting of questions submitted by members of the public. • 73 total responses were ultimately collected at all Town Hall meetings. Surveys and meeting minutes were used when drafting the growth policy.
July 7, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (Approval of minutes from this meeting occurred on July 30, 2003)
July 25, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (Approval of minutes from this meeting occurred on July 30, 2003)
July 30, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (Minutes from this meeting indicate workshops to be held August 6, 20 and 27, but no minutes of August 20 and 27 workshops exist).
August 6, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth

	Policy.
August 20, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
August 27, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
September 30, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
October 1, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
October 29, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
December 3, 2003	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (Minutes of this meeting were approved at January 21 meeting).
January 21, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
January 28, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (Minutes of this meeting approved at February 2004 meeting).
February 4, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
February 18, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
February 25, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize

	work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
March 3, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
March 17, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
March 24, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
June 2, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy. (minutes of this meeting approved at June 16 meeting)
June 16, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
June 23, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
June 30, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
July 7, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
August 4, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
September 1, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
September 22, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize

	work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
September 29, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
October 6, 2004	• Planning Board **WORKSHOP** to discuss and prioritize work being done to write the Flathead County Growth Policy.
November 3, 2004	• Planning Board moves to have staff prepare a **RFQ** for consultants "to assist the Flathead County Planning Board in preparing the Growth Policy…" and have the RFQ prepared by the next meeting (Nov. 10).
November 10, 2004	• Draft **RFQ** presented to Planning Board and approved to be forwarded to the Commissioners.
November 29, 2004	• Commissioners authorize **RFQ** for publishing on December 5 and 19. RFQ published in *Missoulian*, *Independent Record* and *Daily Interlake* as well as nationally on the American Planning Association website.
January 26, 2005	• **SELECTION COMMITTEE**, consisting of three members of the Flathead County Planning Board, meets and selects four most qualified applicants from submitted SOQs.
March 3, 2005	• **SELECTION COMMITTEE** meets to hear presentations by three selected consulting firms (fourth dropped out prior to presentations).
March 18, 2005	• **CONSULTANT** (Collins Planning Associates of Jackson, WY) is selected.
April 6, 2005	• **CONTRACT FOR SERVICES** with Collins Planning Associates is signed by Flathead County Commissioners. Contract provides for initial "issue identification" visit and creation of a "scope of work" document detailing process for creating a Flathead County Growth Policy.
May 09, 2005	• Consultants arrive for three-day "**ISSUE IDENTIFICATION**" visit. Meet with Commissioners,

	Long Range Planning Task Force, Planning Board and representatives from each of the neighborhood plans.
May 10, 2005	• **PANEL ISSUE MEETINGS** • 8:00 am- Transportation • 9:45 am- Public Health and Community Services • 12:45 pm- Mapping • 2:30 pm- Natural Resources • 6:00 pm- **PUBLIC** Issue Meeting
May 11, 2005	• **PANEL ISSUE MEETINGS** • 8:00 am- Education • 9:45 am- Economic Development • 1:15 pm- Emergency Services • 2:30 pm- Recreation • 3:45 pm- Existing Zoning, Floodplain and Lakeshore Regulations. • 6:00 pm Conclusion meeting with Planning Board.
May 31, 2005	• **SCOPE OF WORK** document received from Collins. Document calls for "Issue Papers" to present alternatives for addressing issues identified. Document also proposes a limited, advisory role for consultants in light of budget constraints. Document details work program that fits available budget and requires extensive "in house" work by staff.
July 5, 2005	• Commissioners **APPROVE CONTRACT** for consultant's services for "Option A" outlined in scope of work. Consultants will serve an advisory role to staff. Issue paper preparation and scoping meetings will occur concurrently.
August 29, 2005	• List of **271 "ISSUES" RELEASED** and public comment requested.
August 31, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on page A6 of the Daily Interlake covers the variety of ways that public will be encouraged to interact with the upcoming growth policy process. List includes meetings, website, email, mailings, phone numbers to call, flyers and workshops.
October 12, 2005	• **PRESENTATION** to local banks, realtors, and builders.
October 13, 2005	• **HOUSING ISSUE PAPER** released.

November 6, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on the front page of the Daily Interlake covers upcoming scoping meetings and gives schedule of all 21 meetings. • **POSTERS** hung county-wide in retail businesses, libraries and offices displaying schedule of scoping meetings. • **TELEVISION** coverage of scoping meeting schedule on "Wake Up" on KTMF.
November 10, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on the front page of the Bigfork Eagle covers upcoming scoping meetings and gives schedule of all meetings. • **GROWTH MANAGEMENT ISSUE PAPER** released.
November 16, 2005	• 7:00 am **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce Natural Resources Committee.
November 17, 2005	• **NATURAL RESOURCES ISSUE PAPER** released. • **EDUCATONAL PRESENTATIONS** to two Flathead Valley Community College classes. Approximately 20 students in each class.
November 27, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on the front page of the Daily Interlake covers upcoming scoping meetings and gives schedule of first four meetings. • **RADIO** spots appear on all Flathead radio stations advertising December 5 scoping meeting.
November 28, 2005	• Full page **ADVERTISEMENT** containing a schedule of all scoping meetings appears on Page A14 of Daily Interlake. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at the Olney Fire Hall. Written comments received from approximately 35 people in attendance.
November 29, 2005	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Bethany Lutheran Church in Bigfork. Written comments received from approximately 44 people in attendance.
November 30, 2005	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Somers School. Written comments received from approximately 41 people in attendance.

December 1, 2005	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm in the Glacier National Park Community Center in West Glacier. Written comments received from approximately 30 people in attendance.
December 5, 2005	• **RADIO** commercials appear on all Flathead radio stations advertising Dec. 5 scoping meeting. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Kalispell Junior High School. Written comments received from approximately 11 people in attendance.
December 6, 2005	• Full list of scoping meetings appear on www.flatheadevents.com **WEBSITE** • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at West Valley School. Written comments received from approximately 22 people in attendance.
December 12, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on page A11 of the Daily Interlake covers upcoming scoping meetings and gives schedule of five upcoming meetings. • **TELEVISION** covers growth policy on ABC-42. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 1:00 pm at Flathead Electric in Evergreen. Written comments received from approximately 38 people in attendance. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Evergreen Junior High School. Written comments received from approximately 20 people in attendance.
December 13, 2005	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Bethany Lutheran Church in Bigfork. Written comments received from approximately 9 people in attendance.
December 14, 2005	• 9:00 am **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to "Career Awareness" class at Flathead Valley Community College. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at West Valley School. Written comments received from approximately 21 people in attendance.
December 15, 2005	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Creston School. Written comments received from approximately 25 people in attendance.
December 16, 2005	• **COMMUNITY CHARACTER ISSUE PAPER** released.

December 29, 2005	• **NEWSPAPER** article on page A6 of the Daily Interlake covers public opinions presented at scoping meetings so far and gives schedule of four upcoming meetings.
January 3, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in the Westshore News covers upcoming January 9 meeting in Lakeside. • Scoping meetings continue to appear in the Daybook calendar in the Daily Interlake. • Schedule of January scoping meetings appears in the Interact section of the Daily Interlake. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 1:00 pm at the Earl Bennett Building in Kalispell. Written comments received from approximately 22 people in attendance. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Marion School. Written comments received from approximately 58 people in attendance.
January 5, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article about the January 9 and 17 scoping meetings appears on the front page of the Hungry Horse News. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 1:00 pm at North Valley Hospital in Whitefish. Written comments received from approximately 23 people in attendance. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at the Earl Bennett Building in Kalispell. Written comments received from approximately 14 people in attendance.
January 8, 2006	• **LEGAL NOTICE** of January 25 workshop appears in Daily Interlake.
January 9, 2006	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 1:00 pm at Moving Image in Columbia Falls. Written comments received from approximately 26 people in attendance. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Lakeside Chapel. Written comments received from approximately 49 people in attendance.
January 10, 2006	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Smith Valley School. Written comments received from approximately 47 people in attendance.
January 12, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article describing January 9 scoping meeting appears on page A9 of the Hungry Horse News. • **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at the North

	Valley Hospital in Whitefish. Written comments received from approximately 25 people in attendance.
January 16, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article on page A5 of the Daily Interlake reviews scoping meetings so far and gives schedule of 2 remaining meetings.
January 17, 2006	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Moving Image in Columbia Falls. Written comments received from approximately 18 people in attendance.
January 18, 2006	• **SCOPING MEETING** held at 6:00 pm at Swan River School outside Bigfork. Written comments received from approximately 25 people in attendance. • **TELEVISION** covers growth policy on KAJ.
January 24, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article covering January 25 joint Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force workshop appears on page A6 of the Daily Interlake.
January 25, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force reviewed scoping meetings and public comments received at meetings. 44 people in attendance. Draft growth policy outline and completion timeline is distributed.
January 26, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article covering final scoping meeting at Swan River School and discussing the upcoming process appears on the front page of the Bigfork Eagle.
February 3, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Flathead County farmers. 33 attended.
February 17, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Flathead County timber interests. 10 attended.
February 21, 2006	• 12:00 pm **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** on the Flathead County Growth Policy effort to approximately 170 members of the Kalispell Area Chamber of Commerce. • **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Flathead National Forest. Forest supervisor, public relations director and planning staff present.
February 22, 2006	• 1:00 pm **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to the

	North Fork Interlocal Agreement Meeting. Approximately 49 people attended. • 6:00 pm **JOINT WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force received a progress report and gave approval of the general direction the process was headed.
February 23, 2006	• 12:00 pm **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to a faculty luncheon at Flathead Valley Community College. Approximately 15 faculty members attended.
February 26, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article covering ongoing writing of draft growth policy appears on page A6 of the Daily Interlake.
February 28, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Columbia Falls City Manager and Flathead County planning staff. • **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Flathead County Solid Waste District and Flathead County planning staff.
March 3, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation and Flathead County planning staff.
March 8, 2006	• 10:00 am **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Kalispell management and Flathead County planning staff. • 12:00 pm **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Flathead Conservation Roundtable and Flathead County planning staff. • 3:00 pm **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Whitefish planning staff and Flathead County planning staff. • 4:00 pm **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with Whitefish growth policy steering committee and Flathead County planning staff.
March 24, 2006	• **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** scheduled for Flathead County real estate professionals. All members of NMAR were notified and 3 attended. Presentation was postponed.
March 28, 2006	• **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to the Lakeside Chamber of Commerce at Vista Linda south of Somers.
March 29, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with leadership of local property rights group.

March 30, 2006	• 12:00 pm **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to approximately 60-70 members of the Kalispell Rotary Club.
April 6, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with representatives of Flathead County schools.
April 7, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with representatives of public and private utility companies.
April 14, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with representatives of local surveying companies.
April 18, 2006	• 6:00 pm **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to the Flathead Builders and Industry Association. Approximately 150 people in attendance, presentation was approximately one hour long.
April 19, 2006	• 7:00 am **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to members of the "Business Network Inc." 23 people in attendance.
April 20, 2006	• **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to a Geography class at FVCC. Approximately 11 students present, presentation lasted 60 minutes.
April 25, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article covering April 26 joint Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force workshop appears on page A6 of the Daily Interlake.
April 26, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force first reviewed preliminary goals and policies and suggested changes. 35 people in attendance.
April 28, 2006	• **STAKEHOLDER MEETING** with representatives of local property rights groups.
May 31, 2006	• 6:00 pm **JOINT WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board/Long Range Planning Task Force reviewed draft goals and policies and suggested numerous revisions.
June 8, 2006	• 7:00 am **EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION** to the "Daybreakers Rotary Club." Approximately 50 people in attendance; spoke for 15 minutes and took 5 minutes

	of questions.
June 22, 2006	• 11:20 am Presentation to **COMMISSIONERS** summarizing the entire public process through recent completion of the draft growth policy and reviewing upcoming distribution and meeting schedule.
June 25, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in the Daily Interlake advertising day of availability and all methods to interact with draft growth policy.
June 27, 2006	• **PRESS RELEASE** announcing availability of Draft Flathead County Growth Policy sent to all radio, tv and newspapers in Flathead County.
June 28, 2006	• **DRAFT GROWTH POLICY** given to Planning Board
June 29, 2006	• Draft growth policy given to Commissioners • 11:00 am, draft growth policy available online • 5:00 pm, Email sent to 700+ recipients notifying that draft available online.
June 30, 2006	• Draft growth policy available in paper form at Flathead County libraries and Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office. • **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on page A5 of Daily Interlake.
July 2, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A4 of Daily Interlake.
July 3, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A7 of Daily Interlake.
July 4, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A7 of Daily Interlake.
July 5, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A7 of Daily Interlake.

July 6, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A7 of Daily Interlake. • **ADVERTISEMENT** of July 12 Bigfork open house appears in the Bigfork Eagle.
July 8, 2006	• **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page A7 of Daily Interlake.
July 9, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding open houses and comment opportunities.
July 10, 2006	• 9:10 am, 50 minutes of "KOFI Talk" on KOFI • 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Kalispell attended by 42 people.
July 11, 2006	• 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Evergreen attended by 20 people.
July 12, 2006	• 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Bigfork attended by 63 people. Advertisement of meeting appeared in the July 6 Bigfork Eagle.
July 13, 2006	• 6:00 pm, joint draft growth policy **WORKSHOP** between Planning Board and Long Range Planning Task Force to review first thoughts and comments. 8 members of public attended. • Most local **TV** and **RADIO** stations carrying news stories regarding availability of draft and schedule of meetings. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding subdued response to draft. • **ADVERTISEMENT** of draft availability and all upcoming open houses appears on Page 35 of Missoula Independent.
July 16, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding first joint workshop.
July 17, 2006	• 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Whitefish attended by 36 people.
July 18, 2006	• 9:00 am, meeting with agricultural landowners in Flathead County to discuss draft growth policy

	• 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Somers/Lakeside attended by 45 people.
July 19, 2006	• 6:00 pm, draft growth policy **OPEN HOUSE** in Columbia Falls attended by 8 people.
July 20, 2006	• 6:00 pm, joint draft growth policy **WORKSHOP** between Planning Board and Long Range Planning Task Force to review first thoughts and comments. 7 members of public attended. • **NEWSPAPER** editorial in Daily Interlake regarding growth policy. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Bigfork Eagle regarding July 12 open house. • **NEWSPAPER** editorial in Hungry Horse News regarding growth policy. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Whitefish Pilot regarding growth policy.
July 23, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears in Daily Interlake regarding upcoming events.
July 24, 2006	• **LEGAL NOTICE** of August 8 and 10 public hearings appears in Daily Interlake.
July 30, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** editorial in Daily Interlake regarding close of public comment on draft growth policy.
August 01, 2006	• 5:00 pm, close of written comment period. 625 paper copies of the draft were printed and distributed since June 28, 2006. Comments received from approximately 200 individuals and/or groups.
August 6, 2006	• Full page **ADVERTISEMENT** notifying of all public involvement so far, ways to read the draft, upcoming public hearings and upcoming process.
August 7, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears in Daily Interlake regarding public hearings to be held August 8 and 10.
August 8, 2006	• Local **RADIO** and **TV** advertise public meetings throughout the day. • **NEWSPAPER** article appears in Daily Interlake regarding public hearings to be held tonight. • 6:00 pm, **PUBLIC HEARING** at Red Lion Kalispell

	Center. Attended by approximately 152 people. 52 people spoke. 9 additional written comments submitted.
August 9, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears in Daily Interlake regarding topics public discussed at August 8 hearing.
August 10, 2006	• 6:00 pm, **PUBLIC HEARING** at Red Lion Kalispell Center. Attended by approximately 90 people. 55 people spoke. 19 additional written comments submitted. • **NEWSPAPER** article in the Missoula Independent regarding the content of the draft growth policy.
August 12, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears in Daily Interlake regarding public comments received at August 10 hearing.
August 17, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in the Bigfork Eagle regarding August 8 and 10 public hearings.
August 18, 2006	• All **PUBLIC COMMENTS** along with staff revision suggestions available for public review. Electronic (CD and Online) and paper copies available. • **CONSULTANTS COMMENTS** posted to the county website.
August 20, 2006	• **LEGAL NOTICE** of September 6 public hearing appears in Daily Interlake.
August 27, 2006	• **LEGAL NOTICE** of September 7, 12, and 14 workshops appears in Daily Interlake.
September 1, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding September 6 hearing on revisions suggestions.
September 2, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding consultant's review of growth policy.
September 3, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding public comments. • **LEGAL NOTICE** of September 19 workshop appears in Daily Interlake. • **LEGAL NOTICE** of September 7, 12, and 14 workshops appears again in Daily Interlake (also see August 27).

September 6, 2006	• 6:00 pm, **PUBLIC HEARING** on staff's revision suggestions. Attended by 66 people. 30 people spoke. 10 written comments submitted to Planning Board.
September 7, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
September 8, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding Planning Board beginning work on growth policy revisions.
September 10, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding the growth policy needing more time. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding zone changes being postponed until the growth policy is adopted.
September 12, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
September 14, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding open space provisions being removed from growth policy.
September 17, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding Planning Board supporting affordable housing. • **NEWSPAPER** editorial in Daily Interlake regarding growth policy.
September 19, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy. • **LEGAL NOTICE** of September 26 and 28 workshops appears in Daily Interlake.
September 21, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding speed at which draft will be reviewed.
September 26, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
September 28, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 4, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board

	reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 10, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 12, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 17, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 19, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 24, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
October 26, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
November 2, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy. • **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake updating public on workshop review process and status
November 9, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
November 12, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article on front page of Daily Interlake informing that final adoption of the growth policy will now officially take place in the new year, due to timing required for all actions.
November 14, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
November 16, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.
November 17, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding planning board deciding to hold a special meeting on December 11.
November 21, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy.

November 24, 2006	• **LEGAL NOTICE** of December 11 special meeting appears in Daily Interlake.
November 30, 2006	• 6:00 pm **WORKSHOP** held at which Planning Board reviewed and revised draft growth policy. Planning Board finished revising document, adopted Appendix A and cancelled meetings scheduled for Dec. 5 and 7.
December 10, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding special meeting to be held December 11 and highlighting some of the changes to the draft.
December 11, 2006	• 6:00 pm **SPECIAL MEETING** held by the Planning Board to pass a resolution unanimously recommending approval of the revised draft growth policy.
December 12, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in Daily Interlake regarding unanimous approval of resolution favorably forwarding the draft growth policy to the commissioners.
December 14, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article in the Hungry Horse News regarding unanimous approval of resolution favorably forwarding the draft growth policy to the commissioners. • Tentative Commissioner's review **SCHEDULE RELEASED** via email to over 600 people and all media outlets. Public service announcements will follow in Daily Interlake.
December 15, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** editorial in Daily Interlake thanking staff, citizens and especially planning board for all their work and effort in moving the growth policy forward.
December 18, 2006	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on page A6 of Daily Interlake summarizing Commissioner's review schedule released December 14 (see above). Dates, locations and times of meetings are given, as well as reference to tentative nature of schedule.
December 24, 2006	• 4" by 5.5" newspaper **ADVERTISEMENT** notifying public of commissioner's growth policy workshop appears in the Daily Interlake on page D3, opposite the Opinion page.
December 31, 2006	• 4" by 5.5" newspaper **ADVERTISEMENT** notifying

	public of commissioner's growth policy workshop appears in the Daily Interlake on page A15.
January 9, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake indicating that a meeting will take place that night for the commissioners to review the growth policy, and that public comment will be taken. • Commissioners hold a **WORKSHOP** meeting at which they review the growth policy as revised by the planning board, ask representatives of the planning board questions, and take public comment per open meeting laws.
January 10, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake reviewing the first workshop that was held and a summary of the Commissioner's review and public comment received.
January 13, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake covering changes to the Commissioner's review schedule. Same meetings, just rescheduled to give staff more time to review public comment.
January 18, 2007	• **STAFF REPORT** presented to Commissioners summarizing public comment on Planning Board's changes to draft growth policy received through January 11, 2007.
January 19, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake summarizing comments on the Planning Board's revisions to the growth policy and issues raised by public on morning of January 18 at Commissioner's morning general comment period.
January 23, 2007	• **COMMISSIONER'S WORKSHOP** to review draft growth policy and planning board's revisions. Commissioners proposed and made changes to revised draft growth policy.
January 24, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake summarizing work done by Commissioners at January 23, 2007 workshop.
January 29, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on the Valley page of the Daily Interlake discussing schedule of commissioners review events.

January 30, 2007	• **COMMISSIONER'S WORKSHOP** to review draft growth policy and planning board's revisions. Commissioners proposed and made changes to revised draft growth policy.
January 31, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake summarizing work done by Commissioners at January 30, 2007 workshop.
February 05, 2007	• **COMMISSIONERS PASS** resolution of intent to adopt final draft of Flathead County Growth Policy, beginning 30-day comment period.
February 06, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on page A6 of Daily Interlake covering passage of resolution of intent and announcing 30-day comment period. • **RADIO** stations carry notification of opening of 30-day comment period.
March 9, 2007	• 30-day final draft public **COMMENT PERIOD ENDS** at 5:00 pm. 145 individual comments and 2 petitions received.
March 19, 2007	• Flathead County **COMMISSIONERS APPROVE** Resolution #2015A adopting Flathead County Growth Policy • **TELEVISION** report covering adoption of growth policy.
March 20, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article appears on front page of Daily Interlake announcing adoption of new growth policy.
March 22, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** articles appear in Whitefish Pilot and Hungry Horse News announcing adoption of new growth policy.
March 29, 2007	• **NEWSPAPER** article in the Missoula Independent covers adoption of the Flathead County Growth Policy.

The growth policy process outlined above was finished with a series of 6 town hall meetings at which the public was encouraged to learn and ask questions about the new growth policy. Staff was available from 6:00 to 7:30 at each of the meetings listed below.

"50 for the Flathead"

March 26, 6:00 pm- Evergreen, Flathead Electric

March 27, 6:00 pm- Marion School Gym

April 9, 6:00 pm- Lakeside Chapel

April 17, 6:00 pm- Bigfork, Bethany Lutheran

April 24, 6:00 pm- Glacier National Park Community Building

May 1, 6:00 pm- Whitefish, Mountain West Bank

APPENDIX C: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

On March 19, 2007 the Flathead County Commissioners adopted the Flathead County Growth Policy. That document contained 50 goals and 262 accompanying policies that guide growth in Flathead County.* Chapter 10 of the document calls for the completion of an implementation plan to guide the prioritization and implementation of policies. The following is a detailed analysis of the 262 existing policies and the regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms needed to implement that Flathead County Growth Policy. This plan is non-binding and non-regulatory and can be modified as needed based on the availability of resources and public will.

PART 1: Re-categorization of policies.

An important first step in implementing the Flathead County Growth Policy is identifying the follow-up technique for each policy. The first part of this plan will re-categorize each policy as "Policy," "Action Item" or "Neither" and list the implementation method. A definition of each is provided below. Duplicate or similar policies are cross-referenced for convenience.

Definitions:

Policy: A specific but non-regulatory statement that directly guides a community towards meeting an established goal regarding the promotion of public health, safety, welfare and efficiency in the process of community development. Growth-related policies are frequently directly implemented with regulatory mechanisms.

Action Item: A statement providing guidance for future planning efforts and requiring a follow-up action such as creation of a subsequent, more detailed plan or educational outreach effort. Implementation of an action item (i.e. creation of an additional plan) can result in detailed policies regarding a specific issue.

Neither: The "policy" as stated in the Flathead County Growth Policy provides no specific growth guidance or direction for future planning efforts.

Implementation Method: A suggested way to apply the policy or action item to promote healthy, safe and efficient growth. Some methods may be administrative, some are regulatory while others necessitate additional planning efforts with an increased level of detail beyond that which can be offered by the county-wide growth policy.

* The 2011/2012 Growth Policy update now contains 51 goals and corresponding 262 policies.

POLICIES

Policy		Implementation Method
P.2.3	Recognize the potential for imprecisely surveyed parcels throughout Flathead County as a result of the original surveying methods used by the General Land Office. As a result, respect private property rights by allowing minimum lot sizes that enforce the spirit of density guidelines without punishing those who own slightly less than standard acreage units.	Zoning- allowance for percentage of minimum lot size to meet the requirement.
P.5.1	Match requirements of industrial land uses (such as human resources, adequate water supply, suitable road networks) and areas of Flathead County where those requirements can best be met.	Neighborhood Plans Industrial Zoning
P.5.2	Promote industrial parks and centers that take advantage of infrastructure and minimize impacts to the environment or adjacent land uses.	Neighborhood Plans Industrial Zoning
P.5.5	Restrict industrial uses that cannot be mitigated near incompatible uses such as residential, schools and environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, areas of shallow groundwater, etc.	Neighborhood Plans Industrial Zoning
P.6.1	Require internal, interconnected roads for commercial development and frontage roads where appropriate.	Commercial Zoning, combined with Official Right of Way map identifying areas to be reserved for frontage road. Subdivision Regulations. Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans
P.6.2	Restrict commercial development in unsafe, inaccessible, remote rural areas.	Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans

		Commercial Zoning
P.6.4	Require traffic impact analysis for all major commercial projects on major highways and arterials.	Subdivision Regulations
P.6.5	Conserve resources and minimize transportation demand by encouraging redevelopment and infill of existing commercial areas in the county.	Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Commercial Zoning
P.7.3	Encourage small-scale, impact-mitigated and compatible commercial developments in accessible, developing rural areas with good access and away from urban areas.	Commercial Zoning Overall Development Plans Neighborhood Plans
P.7.6	Encourage mixed use developments that share infrastructure requirements such as parking, pedestrian facilities, etc. and reduce traffic by promoting live/work situations where appropriate in Flathead County.	Commercial Zoning Possibly a new zone would need to be created to guide mixed use development. Overall Development Plans Neighborhood Plans
P.10.1	Discourage high density development within the 500-year floodplain.	Zoning Flathead County Floodplain Regulations. Overall Development Plans Neighborhood Plans
P.10.2	Discourage development within the 100-year floodplain that displaces floodwaters to neighboring properties.	Flathead County Floodplain Regulations. Subdivision Regulations
P.10.4	Restrict development directly on lands with steep slopes.	Development Predictability Map (DPM) Overall Development Plans

		Neighborhood Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.10.5	Protect wetlands and riparian areas. See Goal 38 and Policies 38.1 through 38.4.	Zoning Overlay Development Predictability Map. Subdivision Regulations
P.10.7	On lands that contain areas both suitable and unsuitable for development, encourage open space development design techniques to cluster dwellings away from hazardous and/or unsafe areas.	Overall Development Plans Neighborhood Plans Zoning with clustering incentives. Subdivision Regulations
P.12.5	Designate areas where mineral resource extraction is most appropriate and will have the least impact on other resources and land uses.	Zoning overlay- new zone to implement this policy and those identified in Mineral Resource Extraction Plan. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.12.6	Restrict sand and gravel operations in areas that pose a threat to water quality.	Mineral Resource Extraction Plan. Zoning overlay
P.12.7	Encourage progressive reclamation of mineral extraction operations.	Reclamation standards for zoning overlay in areas deemed appropriate for gravel extraction. Mineral Resource Extraction Plan.
P.13.3	Abide by all applicable FAA guidelines for safety around airfields.	Use zone developed for P.13.1 to implement FAA guidelines for structures,

		towers, etc.
P.13.4	Encourage the development of an airport-appropriate industrial/business center to provide convenient access to Glacier International Airport and serve a growing economy.	Industrial/Commercial Zoning. Neighborhood Plans
P.14.1	Identify a 1,320 foot buffer surrounding the landfill and designate this area only for those land uses compatible with current and future landfill activities. Compatible use types such as industrial should be encouraged in this buffer.	Zoning Neighborhood Plans
P.14.4	Encourage visually screened, wildlife resistant, centralized collection sites or contract hauling in new subdivisions.	Subdivision Regulations. Similar to P.26.2 and P.26.3
P.15.2	Provide services and facilities to support elderly and special-needs residents.	Utilize zoning to designate growth areas near bases of needed elderly services
P.16.1	Provide land use-based incentives and density bonuses for the promotion and development of affordable housing opportunities for a range of household types, family sizes, incomes, and special consideration groups.	Affordable housing incentives need such things as density bonuses through zoning, fee waivers and expedited review AND follow-up administration to ensure affordability of units once built.
P.16.3	Promote the development of affordable single and multi-family housing in areas of adequate service networks.	Neighborhood Plans Incentive zoning in appropriate areas. Subdivision Regulations Development Predictability Map (DPM)
P.17.1	Include provisions in the county zoning and subdivision regulations to promote affordable homeownership throughout the county	Text amendment to zoning regulations to create affordable housing incentive zoning.

		Subdivision Regulations
P.17.2	Incorporate density bonuses in zoning and subdivision regulations for developments offering affordable homeownership.	Same as P.16.1, P.16.3, P.17.1. Same implementation. Subdivision Regulations
P.17.3	Encourage mobile home parks as a form of affordable homeownership in areas with access to public sewer and water.	Similar to P.16.7. Neighborhood Plans Zoning to promote mobile home park development in appropriate areas. Subdivision Regulations
P.18.2	With the exception of water based parks, utilize subdivision park requirements to create and/or fund dedicated park sites of an optimal size of no less than five acres, to accommodate operation and maintenance costs.	Subdivision regulations, in cooperation with Flathead County Parks Board AND Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.19.3	Support "pocket parks" which are owned and maintained by Home Owner groups and Associations.	Subdivision Regulations- pocket parks are different than county parks. HOAs can maintain .5 acre parks, the county cannot and needs larger parks to make maintenance efficient.
P.21.1	Provide adequate land area designated for commercial and industrial use to promote affordability, creating entrepreneurialism and/or businesses relocation to Flathead County.	Commercial/Industrial Zoning Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.21.7	Support the continuation of traditional and existing industries to maintain economic	Zoning- create adequate land use designations that

	diversity.	support existing industries.
P.22.2	Promote business centers and industrial parks in areas served by sufficient infrastructure with consideration to proximity to population densities.	Commercial and Industrial Zoning. Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Similar to P.5.2.
P.22.3	Encourage the development of an airport industrial/business center to provide convenient access to Glacier International Airport and to foster a growing economy.	Almost EXACTLY the same as P.13.4. Industrial/Commercial Zoning.
P.23.2	Limit private driveways from directly accessing arterials and collector roads to safe separation distances.	Subdivision Regulations, with collectors and arterials defined in the Transportation Plan.
P.23.3	Encourage local (neighborhood) roads that access directly onto collector roads.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.23.4	Recognize areas in proximity to employment and retail centers as more suitable for higher residential densities and mixed use development.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.23.5	Protect public safety and allow safe travel by restricting development in areas without adequate road improvements.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.23.6	Support land use patterns along transit corridors that reduce vehicle dependency and protect public safety.	Revisit zoning regs regarding excessive parking requirements, pedestrian facilities, and mixed use structures.
P.23.9	Adopt urban road standards and designs	Similar to P.23.12

	consistent with city road standards in county areas adjacent to cities.	Official map to ID areas of urban densities, amend road standards to include "urban standards" and include spatial cross reference in subdivision regulations. Road Design Manual
P.23.12	Adopt urban transportation standards in areas developed to urban densities.	Similar to P.23.9 Official map to ID areas of urban densities, amend road standards to include "urban standards" and include spatial cross reference in subdivision regulations. Road Design Manual
P.24.2	Require County road improvements to mitigate impacts directly attributable to a subdivision or development as a necessary component of that development to preserve the carrying capacity of the roadway.	Impact fees. Subdivision Regulations
P.24.3	Require development projects to design local road systems that complement planned land uses and maintain mobility on arterial roads and highways.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.24.4	Require road easement dedications for identified areas of future connectivity as subdivision developments are proposed, to serve the present and future needs of the county residents.	Official Map, after defensible prioritization in Transportation Plan, then cross reference in Subdivision Regulations
P.24.5	Restrict signalized highway intersections to a minimum of one mile spacing outside of urban areas to promote mobility and ½ mile within urban settings such as Evergreen.	This is a policy, and can be accomplished by county land-use policy directing and locating uses that will need lights. Zoning can accomplish this. However, signal placement once an area is densely developed is

		a decision of MDOT.
P.25.1	Encourage developments that provides functional alternative modes of travel such as bicycle and pedestrian paths.	Subdivision Regulations Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans
P.25.4	Support the expansion of the Glacier International Airport to keep pace with the emerging demand for aviation services.	Utlize zoning to limit density around GPI.
P.26.1	Create design criteria for new development to ensure the safe, efficient, and effective collection and disposal of solid waste. Require all new subdivision site plans to be reviewed by the solid waste district and/or private hauler.	Subdivision Regulations
P.26.2	Encourage new subdivisions to establish centralized refuse and recycling collection sites within the development when curb-side pick-up is not feasible.	Subdivision Regulations Similar to P.14.4
P.26.3	Encourage new development to utilize contractor haul of refuse.	Subdivision Regulations Similar to P.14.4
P.26.7	Ensure that programs for junk vehicle collection and disposal are available and encourage stricter enforcement for existing laws.	Planning Staff can implement via enforcement assistance.
P.27.1	Encourage contract hauling in all new developments to reduce traffic and disposal burden at satellite container sites (green boxes).	Subdivision Regulations
P.28.1	Encourage high density development in areas that will be served by community sewer systems that treat to municipal standards.	Development Predictability Map- both to ID “high density” as well as regulate where it goes. Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans

P.28.2	Discourage development in areas not conducive to individual on-site sewage disposal systems because of flooding, ponding, seasonal high water tables, bedrock conditions, severe slope conditions or lack of access to a community sewage system.	Development Predictability Map to ID areas that are "not conducive" as well as regulate growth away from those areas. Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.28.6	Require technologically advanced wastewater treatment methods for individual septic systems where they are needed to protect water quality, such as areas close to surface water, areas with a high water table or other environmentally sensitive locations.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.28.8	Implement scientifically defensible protection zones for aquifers susceptible to potential contamination and limit land uses to low intensity development in these zones.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Water Quality Management Plan and zoning to implement.
P.28.9	Encourage land division served by public sewer facilities in areas of high groundwater as established by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.29.1	Ensure developments comply with state regulations to provide evidence that drinking water of sufficient quantity and quality is available in areas of proposed development.	Subdivision Regulations.

P.29.2	Promote the installation of community sewer and/or water services in areas where the quantity and/or quality of drinking water resources are threatened.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.31.4	Support multi-use of schools/parks and other community meeting places.	Zoning can be used to collocate mutually beneficial uses, such as high density residential near schools so school open space can be utilized by families during summers and off times. Neighborhood Plans
P.32.1	Require new subdivisions to have adequate on-site water capacity and recharge for fire protection.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.32.3	Recommend subdivisions located outside existing rural fire districts be annexed into the nearest district if possible.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.32.4	Ensure convenient access to and within all subdivisions for the largest emergency service vehicles.	Subdivision Regulations. Flathead County Road Standards.
P.32.5	Encourage two or more subdivision access points in areas of high and extreme fire hazard.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.32.6	Encourage subdivisions to either mitigate the impacts of delayed ambulance response times or limit density of development in identified rural areas.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Impact fees for emergency facilities. Subdivision Regulations
P.33.3	Support crime prevention through planning	Zoning and subdivision

	and community design.	regulations that create setbacks, lighting standards, emergency access etc. all assist crime prevention.
P.34.2	Coordinate with utility providers for co-location easements to ensure adequate easement access to all current and future utilities at the time of final plat.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.34.3	Promote land use patterns that permit logical, predictable and effective extension and integration of utilities.	Development Predictability Map, Neighborhood Plans and Overall Development Plans created in communication with utility providers. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.36.1	Require development to demonstrate compliance with local, State, Tribal, and Federal water quality standards, where applicable.	Subdivision Regulations
P.36.4	Require all public waste water treatment systems to meet applicable DEQ l discharge standards.	The subdivision review process can be used as a checkpoint ensure compliance with existing laws.
P.36.5	Identify and encourage land development practices that do not contribute to increases in Total Maximum Daily Loads.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Also, zoning and/or subdivision regulations that encourage buffers to reduce non-point source pollution.
P.36.6	Support non-point source pollution reduction within the Flathead Basin	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan

	watershed.	Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Also, zoning and/or subdivision regulations that encourage buffers to reduce non-point source pollution.
P.37.1	Encourage the development of innovative stormwater collection, detention and retention systems.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Subdivision Regulations.
P.37.4	Encourage constructed wetlands as part of on-site drainage plans to restrict untreated storm water from entering lakes, rivers, and streams.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Subdivision Regulations. Performance standards for zoned areas.
P.38.3	Discourage development in floodway or floodway fringe that may result in a net increase in the floodplain area.	Flathead County Floodplain Regulations. Subdivision Regulations
P.38.5	Discourage development that displaces floodwaters within the 100-year floodplain.	Flathead County Floodplain Regulations. Similar to P.38.3 Subdivision Regulations
P.40.2	Promote development into areas with public facilities or appropriate depth to groundwater to preserve water quality and water supply.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Zoning
P.40.3	Encourage rural residential densities or community wastewater treatment systems	Development Predictability Map

	in areas of high groundwater, as established by MT DEQ.	Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Zoning
P.40.4	Encourage rural low-intensity land uses in areas of high groundwater, as defined by the MT DEQ.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Zoning
P.41.2	Discourage unmitigated development in areas identified as critical wildlife habitat.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.42.1	Promote an active and environmentally responsible timber industry utilizing sustainable practices on private and public lands.	Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.42.2	Encourage agricultural practices and uses which protect natural resources and allow for productive use.	Agriculture Zoning in areas needing protection of natural resources. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.42.3	Recognize and respect the important history and heritage of hunting and fishing by encouraging development that creates new or preserves existing access to public lands and waters.	Subdivision Regulations
P.43.3	Encourage industrial and other land uses that do not degrade the Glacier National Park Class I air shed.	Canyon Neighborhood Plan Zoning
P.48.6	Discourage urban-density development that lacks urban services *and* facilities.	Subdivision Regulations.

		Zoning.
P.51.4	Consider relevant state and federal planning documents when reviewing development proposals that will impact federal or state lands.	Neighborhood Plans Subdivision Regulations.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item		Implementation Method
P.1.1	Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park on issues including, but not limited to, local economies, adjacent land development, road status changes, access to public lands, land use planning documents, public hearings, and noxious weed alleviation and control.	Statement of Coordination with Federal agencies.
P.1.2	Attempt to develop an intergovernmental agreement to codify jurisdiction issues with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on their land.	Statement of Coordination with Tribal government.
P.1.3	Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks on issues including, but not limited to, land use conversion, adjacent land development, land use planning documents, public hearings, trust land uses, public access for recreation, land acquisition and state exchanges of trust land with private and federal entities.	Statement of Coordination with DNRC and FWP. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.1.4	Attempt to develop strategies for the County to provide meaningful advice on land use issues to the appropriate Federal, State and Tribal agencies so the County can influence decisions, which are of vital interest to County residents on the 78.6% of land in the County controlled by those agencies.	Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy- Custom and Culture Document. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.1.5	Communication and coordination between MT DNRC Trust Lands staff and the county will allow for local and regional planning that respects the revenue generating needs and realizes the best use, be it development or recognized conservation opportunities.	Statement of Coordination with DNRC and FWP.

P.3.1	Develop an educational brochure that explains active use and management of timber lands and the impacts adjacent landowners can expect. Promote the document by distributing it to home buyers in Flathead County.	"Living Near Agricultural and Silvicultural Land Uses" booklet. Similar to P.4.1. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.3.2	Evaluate land uses and trends in agricultural and timber lands, and present ideas through research and discuss tools that could be used to encourage suitable development.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Neighborhood Plans.
P.3.3	Maintain flexibility of land use options to forest and agriculture land owners by focusing on mitigating the negative impacts of development.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Overall Development Plans
P.3.4	Develop equitable and predictable impact-mitigation for converting rural timber and agriculture lands to residential real estate.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Impact Fees Overall Development Plans
P.3.5	Identify reasonable densities for remote, rural development that do not strain the provision of services or create a public health or safety hazard.	Development Predictability Map (DPM). Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans
P.3.6	Identify and maintain benefits of private forest lands, including harvesting natural resources, water quality protection, wildlife habitat and traditional recreational values and ensure that conversion of private forest lands preserves as many of these benefits as is possible.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.3.7	Adopt techniques that mitigate the threat to public health and safety created by various	Subdivision Regulations and "Wildland Urban Interface"

	developments near the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)	(WUI) Zoning Overlay Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.3.8	Encourage federal and state agencies to actively manage timber lands to reduce fire hazard and increase positive local economic impacts of timber harvesting.	Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy- Custom and Culture Document.
P.4.1	Develop an educational brochure that explains agriculture and agricultural practices and the impacts adjacent landowners can expect. Promote the document by distributing it to home buyers in Flathead County.	"Living Near Agricultural and Silvicultural Land Uses" booklet. Similar to P.3.1. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.4.2	Identify lands most suited to agriculture (appropriate soils, access to water, shape and size of parcels etc.).	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans
P.4.3	Identify a desirable gross density for rural residential development that retains land values, preserves the agricultural character of the community and allows for efficient provision of government services (law enforcement, fire protection, transportation, etc.)	Development Predictability Map (DPM). Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans
P.4.4	Identify and encourage subdivision layouts that retain value of land without negatively impacting the rural character and agricultural activities.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Subdivision Regulations
P.4.5	Develop equitable and predictable impact-mitigation for converting agricultural lands to residential uses.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee

		Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Impact fees for county facilities impacted by rural development. Subdivision Regulations
P.4.6	Develop proposals for community-based incentives for farmers and forest landowners to maintain farms/forest in order to share the cost of preserving the custom, culture, and character of agriculture in Flathead County	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Neighborhood Plans. Subdivision Regulations
P.4.7	Create an agricultural/private timber lands board, with significant representation from the ag/timber community and the Flathead County Planning Board, to propose plans for conserving working farms and ranches, clean water and key wildlife habitat.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.4.8	If allowable, develop and adopt a Right to Farm/Harvest Ordinance and other policies as needed to support the viability of the agriculture/forestry industry in Flathead County.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee No county ordinances dealing with this issue are authorized under statute.
P.5.3	Identify trends in industrial land uses and determine the amount of land needed in the future at a variety of growth rates. Utilize these figures when determining land use regulations.	Growth Policy Amendment- Identify trends in text of document and modify P.5.3 into a policy based on those trends. Implement with Industrial Zoning. Neighborhood Plans. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee

P.5.4	Identify "objectionable impacts" of industrial uses and determine desirable distance thresholds and buffers from other land uses.	Growth Policy Amendment- Identify requested thresholds and modify P.5.4 into a policy. Implement with Industrial Zoning. Neighborhood Plans.
P.6.3	Provide ample commercial land designation to promote affordability.	Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Commercial Zoning Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.7.1	Determine commercial development features that support the seven elements of the Flathead County vision detailed in Chapter 1: The Character of Flathead County.	Growth Policy Amendment Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans
P.7.2	Develop regulations that promote P.7.1 and mitigate the negative impacts of commercial development.	Growth Policy Amendment and implement with Commercial Zoning
P.7.4	Identify existing areas that are suitable for impact-mitigated commercial uses.	Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Zoning Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.7.5	Encourage commercial development that is visually and functionally desirable.	Growth Policy Amendment to define "visually and functionally desirable" then Commercial Zoning combined with Design Standards.

		Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.8.2	Identify required criteria for various densities that support the seven elements of the public's vision outlined in Chapter 1.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Zoning Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.8.3	Create maps that spatially represent the criteria identified in P.8.2.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.8.4	Set clear standards for amending development guidelines.	Ensure that each regulatory implementation has amendment criteria.
P.9.1	Identify open spaces that serve a critical role in public and environmental health, safety and general welfare.	Growth Policy Amendment to include requested info, instead of creating a new plan. Neighborhood Plans. Overall Development Plans Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee

P.9.2	Create regulatory incentives for the preservation and protection of open spaces during the development process.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Zoning Regulations Subdivision Regulations
P.9.3	Consider and develop specifications for various buffers to protect open spaces.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee Subdivision Regulations Zoning Regulations Floodplain Regulations Lakeshore Regulations.
P.10.3	Encourage impact-mitigated development in areas of shallow groundwater. Use test holes or bore holes and best available data to determine areas of shallow groundwater.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Growth Policy Amendment to define "impact-mitigated development" and "areas of shallow groundwater." Implement with subdivision regulations.
P.10.6	Develop reasonable and fair criteria for identifying and preserving structures, artifacts and areas with cultural and historical significance to the residents of Flathead County. Such criteria shall not be used to prohibit development, but rather to encourage development that incorporates and protects these areas for future generations.	Subdivision Regulations Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans
P.11.1	Identify critical gateway areas that provide lasting impressions of Flathead County to both residents and visitors.	Growth Policy Amendment to ID requested areas. Neighborhood Plans

P.11.2	Identify impacts of development that threatens gateway areas and develop land use guidelines that mitigate these impacts without prohibiting development.	Growth Policy Amendment to ID requested impacts and implement with zoning in areas ID'd in P.11.1.
P.11.3	Determine road and recreational waterway corridors with scenic resources that are valued by both residents and visitors.	Growth Policy Amendment to ID requested areas. Neighborhood Plans
P.11.4	Create incentives for developments that consider the scenic settings, incorporate design and construction standards that harmonize and complement the local views, and where possible, provide incentives for excellent architectural design.	Zoning combined with PUD incentives. Overall Development Plans
P.11.5	Develop guidelines to ensure that lighting should not destroy the reasonable enjoyment by all residents of the night skies.	Add lighting performance standards to existing zoning regs, and zone unzoned areas.
P.12.2	Identify areas of significant mineral resource deposits and develop accurate maps reflecting these areas.	Mineral Resource Extraction Plan Neighborhood Plans Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.12.3	Create land use policies that segregate existing and future gravel extraction operations from incompatible land uses.	Mineral Resource Extraction Plan or Neighborhood Plan, then implement with zoning. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.12.4	Develop policies to mitigate the impacts of mineral resource extraction. These may include road maintenance, dust abatement or vegetative buffers.	Mineral Resource Extraction Plan or Neighborhood Plan, then implement with zoning.

P.13.1	Utilize future expansion plans of Glacier International Airport to create a land use designation that protects both the economic significance of the airport and the safety of neighbors and passengers.	Create the land use designation (zone) and implement it around the airport.
P.13.2	Provide predictability to landowners neighboring the airport by designating growth areas.	Use zone developed for P.13.1 to designate growth areas.
P.13.5	Coordinate and cooperate with GPI on the Glacier Park International Airport Master Plan.	Communicate with GPI on land use designation development (see P.13.1).
P.14.2	Identify all suitable solid waste disposal options available to the County and implement a strategy to assure capacity is secured to meet future demands.	Solid Waste District Strategic Plan
P.14.3	Aesthetically screen satellite refus collection sites (green boxes) and licensed junk vehicle collection sites to reduce the spread of litter and mitigate objectionable views.	Solid Waste District Strategic Plan Compliance with state law-junk vehicle program.
P.16.2	Create an affordable housing plan for the county which includes evaluating the need for a county housing committee and establishing coordination between the county and the cities of Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish.	Affordable Housing Plan
P.16.6	Consider the advisability of adopting a building inspection procedure for new residential construction.	Building Department Feasibility Analysis
P.16.7	Identify areas suitable for quality mobile home park development.	Growth Policy text amendment to determine desirable locations for mobile homes (access, proximity to employment, commercial services, etc.) then zoning to promote mobile home park development in appropriate areas.

P.17.4	Develop zoning and design standards for Class A manufactured housing.	Update existing zoning.
P.17.5	Encourage the establishment of public/private partnerships as a method to offer financing to first time homebuyers.	Affordable Housing Plan
P.17.6	Establish affordable housing standards for developing infrastructure that would reduce the cost of affordable lots while maintaining the character of the projects.	Affordable Housing Plan
P.17.7	Develop criteria for developers to meet to qualify for affordable housing incentives.	Affordable Housing Plan
P.18.1	Acquire park and leisure facilities now to serve the future needs of the county, particularly water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers and streams.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.18.3	Ensure existing parks and recreational facilities are operated and maintained in quality condition for use by the general public.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan to increase maintenance and acquisition efficiency.
P.18.4	Develop strategies to fund, operate, and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.18.5	Utilize the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the expansion of the park system to meet the needs and expectations of the growing public. Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan at a minimum of every five years from the date of adoption, to ensure the plan is current.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.18.6	Preserve and increase recreational access to public lands and waterways by procuring necessary land, easements, or rights of way.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans

		Official Mapping Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.18.7	Create a committee to determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.	In general, bicycles are used in Flathead County for two purposes; recreation and transportation. Transportation Plan Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.19.1	Encourage parks, planning, maintenance and development coordination with other local jurisdictions, state, and federal agencies.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan. (communication during development) Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Official Mapping
P.19.2	Participate with developing partnerships, community civic groups and organizations, private sector building and development industry, and others interested in parks and recreation activities.	Broad community participation in Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
P.19.4	Recognize riparian buffers for their recreational value and their ability to protect the quality of water along major streams and rivers in the County in order to enhance recreational opportunities, protect the quality of water (reduce erosion; surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, etc.; stream bank depredation/defoliation; etc.) and their ability to protect the natural aesthetics of waterways.	Growth Policy amendment to identify riparian corridors critical to water quality, wildlife habitat and migration, and recreation access. Subdivision Regulations
P.19.5	Develop County Parks in conjunction with	Parks and Recreation Master

	public or private schools whenever possible.	Plan.
P.19.6	Develop standards, procedures, and requirements for the preparation, review, and adoption of neighborhood and subdivision park plans.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Once developed, include in Subdivision Regulations.
P.20.1	Provide for and acquire new lands and indoor/outdoor recreation and park facilities as outlined in the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to keep pace with expanding population and demand.	Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Implement with mechanisms for purchase of park lands and construction of facilities, once priorities are established in plan.
P.21.2	Develop methods to enhance a sustainable agricultural and timber industry through community-based incentives.	Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.21.3	Foster business development as a method to provide employment and locally produced goods and services to meet the needs and demands of local communities and to provide region specific export goods.	Economic Development Authority
P.21.4	Promote education and work force development programs to better prepare current and future generations for high quality job opportunities and to provide employers with quality and dependable workers.	Economic Development Authority
P.21.5	Utilize economic development authorities to attract relocation or startup of businesses that offer competitive wages and job opportunities for those with a range of educational backgrounds.	Flathead County Economic Development Authority
P.22.1	Identify infrastructure needs of the various business types and identify areas of the County which can best suit those needs.	Growth Policy amendment to ID needs and areas, then zoning to put those uses where the infrastructure

		exists to accommodate them.
P.22.4	Consider the infrastructure needs of local businesses when prioritizing development of new county facilities.	Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)
P.23.7	Develop a transportation grid system that minimizes environmental impacts to developed and natural areas.	Transportation Plan Official Map
P.23.8	Promote coordinated and cooperative transportation planning with Kalispell, Columbia Falls, Whitefish and Montana Departments of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.	Transportation Plan
P.23.10	Restrict direct access from private properties onto the Montana State highways and require frontage roads where needed and internal vehicle circulation roads for all development outside of urban areas.	Transportation Plan Official Map Neighborhood Plans Subdivision Regulations
P.23.11	Plan for and pursue opportunities for the development of additional east-west transportation corridors, especially between U.S. Highways 2, 93 and MT Highway 206.	Similar to P.24.4 Transportation Plan Official Map
P.24.1	Ensure that identified functional class, road easement width, and condition of existing transportation facilities are adequate	Transportation Plan Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans
P.24.6	Attempt to develop cooperative agreements with the Montana Department of Transportation and the United States Federal Highway Administration to promote coordination of land use and transportation planning and the efficient use of transportation facilities.	Transportation Plan followed by zoning reviewed by MDOT to direct various land uses to areas most suited to accommodate traffic and safety concerns.

P.24.7	Develop a comprehensive countywide transportation plan to categorize current needs and to identify future needs.	Transportation Plan
P.24.8	Develop uniform system of prioritization for road improvements and maintenance.	Transportation Plan
P.24.9	Develop a Dust Abatement Program to mitigate dust impact from traffic on county roads as funding and resources allow.	Transportation Plan Impact Fees for road facilities Subdivision Regulations
P.25.2	Identify and prioritize areas for a predictable regional and interconnected bicycle path network and require pedestrian/bicycle easements on both sides of identified county roads. Encourage developments that aid and/or connect to this network.	Parks and Recreation Plan, then implement with Official Map. Tied to Subdivision Regulations
P.25.5	Determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.	Same as P.25.2 Parks and Recreation Plan, then implement with Official Map. Tied to Subdivision Regulations
P.26.4	Recommend solid waste containers in rural areas to utilize measures such as animal-proofing, and encourage public education on disposal methods to discourage the attraction of wildlife.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.
P.26.5	Promote and encourage increased opportunities for community recycling through recycling pilot programs and the initiation of public-private partnerships.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan. Same as P.27.3
P.26.6	Encourage safe disposal of household hazardous wastes through education and collection programs.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.

P.26.8	Recommend impacts to the local community be mitigated at the time of construction, improvement, or consolidation of a green box collection facility by encouraging visual screening, safety improvements and dust mitigation measures.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.
P.27.2	Perform a needs analysis to assess current and future levels of service to provide cost effective and efficient solid waste collection services within the County.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.
P.27.3	Encourage county-wide recycling program(s) to reduce the rate at which landfill approaches maximum capacity.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan. Same as P.26.5
P.27.4	Explore new funding mechanisms for continued solid waste disposal activities as well as future expansion.	Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.
P.28.3	Prepare a comprehensive water quality management plan for the county.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan
P.28.4	Initiate the development of a regional wastewater treatment plan.	Wastewater Management Plan
P.28.5	Work to engage water and sewer districts in the county development processes.	Wastewater Management Plan Also continue agency referrals.
P.28.7	Encourage wastewater treatment facilities and technologies adequate to meet or exceed water quality standards.	Wastewater Management Plan- But possibly "Neither" due to water quality standards being set by other agencies independent of the land use planning process.
P.29.3	Identify wellhead protection areas for public wells and land uses in those areas should be limited as to limit the risk of	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan

	drinking water contamination.	Zoning
P.29.4	Support land uses and subdivision activities that do not threaten drinking water sources.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Zoning
P.30.1	Identify areas of higher susceptibility to impacts from septic systems due to soils, depth to groundwater, proximity to sensitive surface waters, topography, and/or density of development.	Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Water Quality Management Plan and zoning to implement.
P.30.2	Determine the feasibility of a countywide wastewater management plan for the maintenance and management of septic systems.	Wastewater Management Plan
P.30.3	Develop an educational brochure that explains the appropriate management of septic systems and the impacts associated with inadequate management. Promote the document by distributing it to home owners and home buyers in Flathead County.	Distribute pamphlet in FCPZ office available from MT DEQ.
P.31.3	Determine common characteristics of developments most likely to add school children to the local schools and identify incentives for projects to mitigate impacts.	Subdivision Regulations-bonus densities for subdivisions with identified characteristics that donate land to schools. Doesn't seem to violate 76-3-608 M.C.A. Possibly impact fees for school facilities, although it could be argued that impact fees are not "incentives" per se.
P.32.7	Identify target level of service (LOS) for emergency 911 call processing and work to achieve and maintain that target as growth occurs. This should include security, survivability and redundancy of facilities	Emergency Service Plan(s) created in conjunction with service providers.

	and services.	
P.33.1	Create a seamless emergency response system through a regional 911 emergency response provider network.	Emergency Service Plan(s) created in conjunction with service providers.
P.33.2	Attempt to increase the current ratio of patrol officers per 1,000 residents to meet the growing number of calls for assistance.	Emergency Service Plan(s) created in conjunction with service providers.
P.33.4	Develop a comprehensive public response plan for sheriffs and fire districts to support growth and development in the county.	Emergency Service Plan(s) created in conjunction with service providers.
P.34.1	Add appropriate agencies to the referrals during the subdivision review process.	Subdivision Regulations.
P.34.4	Establish standardized regulations for wireless and fiber optics communications infrastructure that ensure the following are maintained: public health, safety, general welfare, convenience, natural resources, and the visual environment/appearances.	Cell tower zoning and transportation planning for expansion of rights of way to accommodate fiber optic cables.
P.35.1	Establish public/private partnerships to develop a Flathead basin watershed management plan using scientific data to determine critical areas and evaluate the impacts of future development on water quantity and quality.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.35.2	Provide improved educational information to landowners on the importance of buffers and restoration techniques to reduce nutrient loading to water resources.	Distribution of brochures available from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.
P.36.2	Review and revise the Lakeshore Protection regulations to include consideration of potential harm caused by fertilizers and pesticides entering lakes, streams and rivers.	75-7-202 M.C.A. might preclude extension of Lakeshore Protection Zone-implementation might require legislative work.
P.36.3	Investigate the feasibility of a regional	Wastewater Management

	wastewater treatment system. Ensure that the regional wastewater treatment plan protects the Flathead Watershed.	Plan
P.36.7	Identify critical aquifer recharge areas in Flathead County and land uses in these areas that protect water quantity and quality.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Possible Growth Policy Amendment to include a map of these areas. Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.37.2	Develop and provide educational information to individuals, organizations, and neighborhood associations regarding storm water management and the importance of proper storm water management practices.	These pamphlets are already available from the MDEQ.
P.37.3	Develop best management practices (BMPs) and setback requirements for development projects that impact water bodies. This may include vegetative buffer strips along stream sides and riverbanks, and the use of sedimentation barriers.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Subdivision Regulations
P.38.1	Adopt FEMA maps and existing floodplain studies as they become available.	Flathead County Floodplain Regulations.
P.38.2	Review and revise floodplain regulations as necessary. Consider appropriate setback requirements from floodplain.	Flathead County Floodplain Regulations. Subdivision Regulations
P.38.4	Consider density guidelines in the floodplain regulations.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Subdivision Regulations

P.39.1	Use scientific studies to identify locations of riparian areas and delineated wetlands.	Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan
P.39.3	Develop regulations that restrict development in jurisdictional wetlands and riparian areas.	When combined with 39.1, could be implemented (once identified) with overlay zones, zoning, or subdivision regulations.
P.39.4	Develop best management practices (BMP's) and setback requirements for development to mitigate adverse impacts to sensitive wetland and riparian areas.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Subdivision Regulations Similar 37.3 Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.40.1	Use scientific studies to identify locations over shallow aquifers.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Development Predictability Map Neighborhood Plans Overall Development Plans Possible Growth Policy Amendment to include map of these areas.
P.41.1	Develop an educational brochure that explains "Living with Wildlife" concepts and the impacts landowners can expect when living in rural areas of the County. Promote the document by distributing it to	Distribute brochures in the FCPZ office available from Montana FWP.

	home buyers and home owners in Flathead County.	
P.41.3	Maintain a greenbelt along streams and rivers to protect the quality of water, protect critical wildlife corridors, and maintain the natural aesthetics of waterways.	Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan Subdivision regulations Possibly Growth Policy Amendment to identify green belt and create a zoning overlay.
P.43.1	Implement the existing Flathead County Air Pollution Plan, adopted December 16, 1996 and revised January 17, 2008, into development standards. Any new plans should be considered for inclusion through a public process.	Subdivision Regulations Zoning performance standards.
P.43.2	Prioritize and perform road-surfacing and dust abatement projects to reduce airborne dust generated from gravel-surfaced roads.	Transportation Plan Capital Improvements Plan Impact Fees
P.45.1	Develop expedited and simplified subdivision and development review processes for lands within the jurisdiction of an approved neighborhood plan that has been reviewed for consistency with the growth policy.	Neighborhood Plans AND Zoning, subject to 76-3-608(6) M.C.A. Tied to Subdivision Regulations Overall Development Plans
P.45.2	Develop a guide to assist landowners and residents who desire a neighborhood plan to develop a plan that implements the character of the neighborhood and fulfills the needs of identified by the community.	Planning Office develops guide for distribution.
P.45.3	Ensure a clear majority of both landowners and acreage represented within the established boundary of a neighborhood plan [described in Step 1 of the neighborhood planning process] are in	Neighborhood Plans

	support of a proposed neighborhood plan by following the process outlined in this chapter. Steps 1 through 6 of the neighborhood planning process provide a mechanism by which the Planning Board can recommend denial of a plan to the commissioners due to lack of support if a clear majority of landowners within the planning area boundary do not support the plan.	
P.45.4	Ensure checks and balances throughout the neighborhood planning process by establishing an option whereby a plan adopted by the County Commissioners may be repealed should written protest be submitted within 90 days following the adoption date by 40% of landowners within the neighborhood plan area whose names appear on the last completed assessment role, or by landowners representing 50% of the acreage included within the neighborhood plan boundary.	Neighborhood Plans
P.45.5	Establish a Commission-approved advisory committee for each approved neighborhood plan, comprised of landowners and residents representing diverse elements of the plan area.	Neighborhood Plans
P.46.1	Ensure previously existing neighborhood plans remain in effect until revised by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners by incorporating those existing plans into the Growth Policy as addenda deemed consistent with the existing Growth Policy.	Neighborhood Plans
P.46.2	Enable the Flathead County Planning Board and the Planning and Zoning Office to periodically review existing neighborhood plans to determine whether the County and the landowners in the neighborhood plan area should update the neighborhood plan.	Neighborhood Plans
P.46.3	Initiate a neighborhood plan amendment	Neighborhood Plans

	and/or update when the County Commissioners approve a recommendation by the Flathead County Planning Board that a neighborhood plan should be updated.	
P.46.4	Apply expedited subdivision and development review processes to existing neighborhood plan areas.	Neighborhood Plans AND Zoning, subject to 76-3-608(6) M.C.A. Subdivision Regulations Same as P.44.1 Overall Development Plans
P.47.1	Uphold the provisions of the existing interlocal agreement between Flathead County and the City of Columbia Falls.	Regular updates of interlocal agreement.
P.47.2	Maintain communication on planning issues adjacent to the interlocal agreement boundary.	Agency referral process
P.47.3	Review the provisions of the interlocal agreement for adequacy, accuracy and relevancy annually and revise as necessary.	Regular updates of interlocal agreement. Same as P.46.1
P.47.4	Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Columbia Falls	Prepare a statement. Similar to P.46.1 and P.46.3- an interlocal agreement is very similar to a statement of coordination.
P.48.1	Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell appropriate for high density, urban development.	Interlocal Agreement or Zoning amendments developed with Kalispell. Development Predictability Map
P.48.2	Share plans for guiding growth away from hazardous and/or unhealthy lands.	Zoning amendments developed with Kalispell.

P.48.3	Identify areas most appropriate to be served by Kalispell or county sewer and water services. Share plans for extension of sewer and water facilities to increase the predictability of the community development process.	Kalispell/County Neighborhood Plan.
P.48.4	Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell appropriate to preserve through open-space development design incentives or acquisition of land for natural and/or recreation areas.	Kalispell/County Neighborhood Plan.
P.48.5	Work with the City to identify areas around Kalispell likely to be annexed and appropriate for development to urban density, service and facility standards.	Kalispell/County Neighborhood Plan.
P.48.7	Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Kalispell.	Prepare a statement.
P.49.1	Promote County representation of those residents outside the City of Whitefish, while giving consideration to both the interests of those residents as well as the growth needs of the City during county planning processes.	Flathead County shall administer all planning and zoning, subdivision review, lakeshore protection regulations, and floodplain regulations outside Whitefish city limits. Standard adjacent property notification as well as legal notices.
P.49.2	Request comments from the City of Whitefish agencies on subdivision, zoning and other land use issues within 2 miles of city limits and give consideration to those comments during the county review process.	Agency referral process
P.49.4	Encourage a statement of coordination on planning issues between the County and Whitefish.	Prepare a statement. Similar to P.48.1 and P.48.3- an interlocal

		agreement is very similar to a statement of coordination.
P.50.1	Develop an intergovernmental agreement clarifying and codifying all jurisdiction, communication and coordination issues on lands within both the Flathead Indian Reservation and Flathead County as well as tribally-owned lands outside the Flathead Indian Reservation.	Intergovernmental Agreement
P.50.2	Communicate on development occurring near and/or on lands designated as culturally significant to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.	Subdivision Regulations- require "cultural clearance" from the tribe.
P.50.3	Provide for cultural clearance of development sites in Flathead County where defined Indian artifacts are uncovered during development, as part of the intergovernmental agreement.	Subdivision Regulations- require "cultural clearance" from the tribe. Similar to P.49.2
P.51.1	Actively participate in the process of planning for federal and state lands, communicating regularly on issues of importance to Flathead County residents and providing input to state and federal agencies on the effectiveness of existing plans.	All plans once adopted by Flathead County could be considered "active participation" that communicate to the federal and state land managers the issues of importance to residents of Flathead County.
P.51.2	Regularly review and update the accuracy and relevance of the "Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy, Custom and Culture Document."	"Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy, Custom and Culture Document." Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee
P.51.3	Pursue a "statement of coordination" with state and federal land management agencies, clarifying and codifying relevant jurisdictional issues including, but not limited to, fire response, fuel reduction,	Statement of Coordination

	emergency services, road usage and access, water resources, timber, agriculture, noxious weeds and recreation access.	

NEITHER

Neither		Reason
P.2.1	Create land use regulations that are directly linked to the vision outlined in the Growth Policy.	Land use regulations are required under MT law to be linked to the growth policy. Implementation method would be "compliance with state law."
P.2.2	Regulatory and fiscal implementation of the Growth Policy should protect the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or general welfare in the process of community development (76-1-106, M.C.A.).	The Planning Board implements the Growth Policy and functions according to law cited. Implementation method would be "compliance with state law."
P.8.1	Create reasonable, flexible and predictable development guidelines based on accurate, fair and reasonable criteria.	This is a general statement, more of a goal than a policy.
P.12.1	Identify areas of known sand and gravel resources.	Same as P.12.2., but less specific.
P.12.8	Require compliance with existing local, state and federal laws regarding oil, gas, and mineral exploration or production.	Flathead County can only administer those laws that are within our statutory jurisdiction.
P.14.5	Consider existing adjacent or nearby private or public solid waste collection facilities during the development process.	There is only one solid waste collection facility in Flathead, and all areas of the county are served by private contract hauling per PSC requirements. Also, the policy does not give indication of what to consider, such as distance, capacity, cost, etc. of these facilities. No guidance is given by this policy.
P.15.1	Encourage housing, employment, education and recreation to attract, support and maintain young families.	This policy is too broad to be effectively implemented. Affordable housing, entry

		level professional jobs, higher education opportunities and youth-oriented recreation programs are all addressed in other more specific policies in the document.
P.15.3	Promote and respect the culture, heritage and history of Flathead County residents.	Similar to P.8.1, this is a general goal statement and does not provide specific guidance for growth issues in Flathead County. The policy is certainly an important statement, but is not implementable with specific actions.
P.16.4	Consider the locational needs of various types of housing with regard to proximity of employment, access to transportation and availability of public services.	This policy does not offer guidance. Its intent would be better understood if combined with P.16.3 to offer guidance for locating prime sites to encourage affordable housing.
P.16.5	Promote the rehabilitation of historic and/or architecturally significant structures for the purpose of conversion to housing.	Implementing this policy is not feasible in Flathead County within the foreseeable future. A fine statement and worthy policy, but actually implementing it would require oversight and "incentivizing" of the building process.
P.20.2	Maintain the current level of recreation services by providing innovative programs geared towards a diverse demographic of county residents (children, adults, seniors, etc.).	This is more accurately a goal statement, to be included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, followed by policies detailing how it would be accomplished.
P.21.6	Preserve the natural amenities that	This is more of a goal

	characterize the county in order to attract industries and businesses that maintain the high quality of life that attracts visitors and new residents, and sustains the tourism sector of the economy.	statement. This is a very important goal, but is too broad to be implementable.
P.23.1	Manage land use and the transportation system as a unified and coordinated system to ensure that one does not outpace the other.	This is more of a goal. The policies would be how this is to be accomplished.
P.23.9	Adopt urban road standards and designs consistent with city road standards in county areas adjacent to cities.	Not realistic to implement. If a property is adjacent to a city and the density is such that ag is appropriate, then they will likely annex to get sewer and water. Historically, there has been no county support for requiring curb, gutter, sidewalks and streetlights in projects near cities due to cost to developer.
P.25.3	Support the partnership between Eagle Transit, the State of Montana and the National Park Service to develop a joint transit system that services both Glacier National Park and the residents of Flathead County.	Not implementable in a Land Use plan.
P.31.1	Consider a school district's ability to accommodate new students as part of the proposed subdivision review process.	Possibly illegal- see 76-3-608 M.C.A. Consider removing.
P.31.2	Consider the needs for future school building sites as development occurs.	Future sites for schools should be considered WELL in advance of development, so as to fairly and predictably secure locations during the development process. Considering ANY future needs can't be done "as development occurs."
P.32.2	Support mutual aid agreements between	A land use plan cannot

	rural and municipal fire districts.	implement mutual aid agreements, nor is there a mechanism to "support mutual aid agreements."
P.39.2	Encourage educational programs on voluntary conservation strategies for private property owners.	Difficult to implement through a regulatory land use process- more of a private task for non-profits. Possibly implemented by distributing brochures in the Planning Office.
P.40.5	Develop incentives to encourage failing and polluting septic systems to be upgraded.	Failing and polluting systems are the jurisdiction of MDEQ and there is very little land use regulations or plans can do to "incentivize" replacement of these systems.
P.40.6	Encourage educational programs on septic system impacts to groundwater and surface water quality for neighborhood associations and other organizations to utilize.	FCPZ is unlikely to provide resources to encourage programs that are the primary jurisdiction of another county office/state agency. Possible partial implementation by distributing brochures in the Planning Office. Similar to P.30.3
P.49.3	Protect and preserve the many unique opportunities present in the natural and human environment surrounding the City of Whitefish.	Too vague to be implemented effectively.

PART 2: Implementation Methods

In Part 1 of this document, numerous methods for implementing policies and action items are listed. Chapter 10 of the Flathead County Growth Policy entitled "Implementation Strategy" lists many of these methods. Others are specifically authorized under Montana law and need not be specifically mentioned in the Growth Policy. Still others are proposed in Part 1 for the first time and will be appended to the Growth Policy with the adoption of this document.

For clarity and better understanding of the implementation scope of work, all implementation methods are listed below. Methods are divided into Non-Regulatory and Regulatory lists and further identified as either "Existing in Growth Policy" or "Proposed as New Implementation Method."

Non-Regulatory Implementation Method	**Authorization Status**
Neighborhood Plans[†]	Existing In Growth Policy
Overall Development Plans*	Proposed as New Implementation Method (See Part 3)
Mineral Resource Extraction Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Growth Policy Text Amendments	Existing In Growth Policy
Parks and Recreation Master Plan.	Existing In Growth Policy
Transportation Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy	Existing In Growth Policy
Distribution of educational materials	Existing In Growth Policy
Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee	Proposed as New Implementation Method (See Part 3)
Affordable Housing Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Building Department Feasibility Analysis	Proposed as New

[†] Although Neighborhood Plans and Overall Development Plans can be used to implement much of the Growth Policy, it is important to note that these plans individually cover limited areas of Flathead County. Some implementation requires county-wide planning, such as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan or the Wastewater Management Plan.

	Implementation Method (See Part 3)
Economic Development Authority	Existing In Growth Policy
Capital Improvements Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.	Proposed as New Implementation Method (See Part 3)
Wastewater Management Plan	Existing In Growth Policy
Emergency Service Plan(s)	Existing In Growth Policy

Regulatory Implementation Method	**Existing or Proposed Authorization**
Official Map	Existing In Growth Policy
Lakeshore Regulations.	Existing in M.C.A.
Statements of Coordination/Interlocal Agreements	Existing In Growth Policy
Road Design Manual	Proposed as New Implementation Method (See Part 3)
Impact Fees	Existing In Growth Policy
Floodplain Regulations	Existing in M.C.A.
Development Predictability Map	Existing In Growth Policy
Zoning[‡]	Existing In Growth Policy
Subdivision Regulations	Existing In Growth Policy

[‡] Zoning can be used as a tool to implement land use policies. Some actual "policies" (see definition in Part 1 of this document) already in the Growth Policy can be directly implemented with zoning. Some "action items" (see definition in Part 1 of this document) are implemented with additional plans that may contain new detailed policies. Those new policies can then be implemented with zoning.

PART 3: New Implementation Methods Described

Part 2 of this document introduced 5 implementation methods not currently listed in Chapter 10 of the Flathead County Growth Policy. The new implementation methods are described below and hereby appended to the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Road Design Manual

On July 2, 2007 the Flathead County Commissioners passed Resolution #2074 adopting minimum standards for design and construction of public and private roads in Flathead County. Regulatory standards were adopted to provide clear, predictable road design and construction guidance to both county agencies and private sector interests and to improve county-wide quality, consistency and safety of roads. The standards shall be revised and updated as needed.

Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee

The purpose of this committee is to provide landowner's perspective and technical support to the county relative to any proposal(s) that would create or amend land use policies and regulations affecting the rural landscape The role of this Committee is primarily intended to address proposed or amended county policies or regulations that would have broad application to the forest or agricultural landscape and not to individual landowner applications that do not change established county policy, rules, or regulations. The Committee should, at a minimum, consist of the Flathead County Fire Warden and one representative from each of the following groups appointed by the Commissioners: (1) Large agricultural land owner, (2) Federal or State land management agency, (3) rural residential landowner - agriculture, (4) rural residential landowner – forest land, (5) industrial forest landowner and (6) the Flathead County Planning Board. Any County agency or board considering a policy or regulation that would affect any of the landowner types listed above must consult this committee early in the process for input and review of any such proposed policy or regulation.

Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.

The Flathead County Solid Waste District is responsible for solid waste facilities and services in Flathead County. The Flathead County Solid Waste District should create a strategic plan to guide the management of future services and facilities. The Flathead County Growth Policy outlines many objectives to be accomplished in a Solid Waste Strategic Plan and could be used as a guide during the creation of that document.

Building Department Feasibility Analysis

Rapid growth and construction in Flathead County has created challenges for ensuring the safety of residential structures in rural areas. Although many builders voluntarily meet building codes established by national organizations, residential structures in Flathead County are not inspected beyond plumbing and electrical systems for

compliance with other minimum health and safety standards. A feasibility analysis could be completed to compare and contrast the overall cost of requiring compliance with some minimum building standards and the associated benefits to public health, safety and general welfare.

Overall Development Plans

Montana law differentiates between public health, safety and general welfare impacts of minor subdivisions (5 lots or less) and major subdivisions (6 lots or more). However, no additional distinction is made for the regional impacts of large development projects with multiple phases extending over long periods of time. Flathead County is increasingly accepting applications for development projects that involve hundreds of lots/units or more, with multiple phases and proposed uses in unzoned areas. The impacts of these large developments are minimally reviewed for their regional planning significance, only for their compliance with the subdivision regulations.

Overall Development Plans (ODP) provide a mutually beneficial way for both the community and the developer to address the impacts of large developments in areas with no regulatory land use designations or accompanying performance standards. ODPs combine the regional planning elements of a neighborhood plan with the predictability and flexibility of a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Developers and property owners seeking a predictable entitlement process begin by first addressing large-scale planning issues such as arterial and collector roads, emergency service facilities, future land use designations, environmental constraints and compliance with the Neighborhood Plan (if applicable) and Growth Policy. Developers and landowners also have the option of securing additional marketability of a product by including details not normally found in subdivision regulations such as overall character of the development, building design elements, unique lighting standards, etc. The ODP also includes a proposal for detailed land use zoning throughout the project to secure a regulatory entitlement of future land uses, development standards and build-out densities. Once a plan is developed, future subdivision applications within the plan provide technical details such as lot layouts, local road layout and building sites.

ODPs are landowner initiated voluntary tools to "master plan" property for development. ODPs cannot be required as a condition to any preliminary plat application or be mandatory to any proposed application. ODP's may identify an entire tract, a portion of a tract or multiple tracts for planning; however not all contiguous ownership is required to be planned at one time if development plans are not immediately anticipated or desired for the remaining contiguous properties. Incentives must be part of any ODP process to encourage the use of this tool by a landowner. In particular, the environmental analysis included in the ODP, together with the adopted zoning, should be sufficient to waive the redundant environmental review requirements with each subdivision application. Failure by the governing body to approve an ODP application does not preclude future development options for the property. An ODP is not a Neighborhood Plan in that it is not a plan created by a community but shall, at a minimum, contain the elements required under 76-1-601 M.C.A. in order to utilize incentives enabled in state law. Detailed

guidelines for preparing Overall Development Plan applications should be appended to the Flathead County Growth Policy.

ODPs are appropriate to the following situations:

- To help implement a neighborhood plan
- To achieve long-term entitlements and future predictability of long term development objectives
- To amend any existing entitlements including zoning, land use maps, density maps or Development Predictability Maps

The ODP shall include the following basic elements:

- A conceptual lot layout at full build-out with detailed information for Phase 1
- Land use plan (uses, density, location)
- Transportation plan (road circulation, trip generation, trip destination)
- General design standards and covenants
- Open space plan
- Phasing plan
- Assessment of the natural environment (soils, topography, vegetation, habitat)
- Water availability report
- General sanitation assessment
- Wildland fire mitigation plan (if applicable)
- Infrastructure plan (utility extensions, drainage)
- Emergency services and schools impact assessment
- Wildlife impact assessment
- Proposed zoning
- 76-1-601 M.C.A. criteria for a growth policy. The extent to which the ODP addresses the criteria is at the discretion of the governing body.

PART 4: Implementation Schedule

The Flathead County Growth Policy calls for a number of specific master or management plans to be written. It is not possible to assess the importance of these plans by simple numerical prioritization alone. They involve issues that are of vital importance to the future of Flathead County. The Flathead County Commissioners and the Planning Board held a joint workshop on October 3, 2007 to discuss the relative importance of these plans. It was determined that they all will provide needed guidance in areas of critical importance. The Commissioners fully understand that importance and are committed to assuring their creation in the shortest timeframe possible, assuming adequate funding is available. The prospect of assigning responsibility for drafting the plans to existing or newly created county boards and committees will be given strong consideration.

All plans created will follow the public process outlined in Section 2 of Chapter 10 of the Flathead County Growth Policy. Planning staff would be assigned to the various bodies for the purpose of aiding and monitoring progress. All the plans will eventually be brought to the Planning Board for public hearings and possible revisions before being forwarded on to the Commissioners with a recommendation for amending to the Growth Policy. The goal is to have all plans completed within 24 months. The plans are listed below, in order of priority to implement as set by the Commissioners and Planning Board at the October 03, 2007 workshop.

Non-Regulatory Implementation Method	**Completion Goal**
Overall Development Plans	24 months
Transportation Plan	24 months
Water Quality/Flathead Basin Management Plan	24 months
Mineral Resource Extraction Plan	24 months
Affordable Housing Plan	24 months
Rural Lands Policy and Regulation Advisory Committee	24 months
Wastewater Management Plan	24 months
Parks and Recreation Master Plan.	Completed, update as needed.
Neighborhood Plans	As needed.
Growth Policy Text Amendments	As needed.
Flathead County Solid Waste District Strategic Plan.	Completed, update as needed

Distribution of educational materials	As needed.
Flathead County Natural Resource Use Policy	Completed, update as needed.
Emergency Service Plan(s)	As needed.
Economic Development Authority	As needed.
Capital Improvements Plan	Completed, update as needed.
Building Department Feasibility Analysis	As needed.

Regulatory Implementation Method	**Completion Goal**
Official Map.	24 months
Development Predictability Map.	24 months
Land Use Zoning (where health, safety, efficiency and general welfare impacts of increased development make it appropriate).	24 months
Impact Fees	24 months
Statements of Coordination/Interlocal Agreements	24 months
Subdivision Regulations	Completed, update as needed.
Floodplain Regulations	Completed, update as needed.
Road Design Manual	Completed, update as needed.