

FLATHEAD COUNTY



Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Adopted December 17, 2009

Resolution #2015L

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**RESOLUTION
FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners approved the Flathead County Growth Policy on March 19, 2007 pursuant to 76-1-601, M.C.A.; and

WHEREAS the growth policy envisioned a Parks and Recreation Master Plan being an important component of the policy implementation; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Flathead County Growth Policy, the Parks Board did prepare a Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board did generally follow the procedures for creating a plan outlined in Chapter 9 of the Growth Policy; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Planning Board held a public hearing concerning the adoption of the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan on 10/21/09, and considered the public comments received at that hearing.

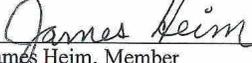
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Flathead County Planning Board hereby recommends that the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as an element of the Flathead County Growth Policy.

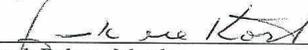
Dated this 21st day of October, 2009.

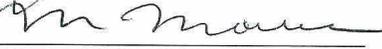
FLATHEAD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
Flathead County, Montana

By: 
Gordon Cross, Chairman

By: _____
Randy Toavs, Vice Chairman

By: 
James Heim, Member

By: 
Frank Dekort, Member

By: 
Michael Mower, Member

By: _____
Marc Pitman, Member

By: 
Marie Hickey-AuClaire, Member

By: 
Charles Lapp, Member

By: 
Jeff Larsen, Member

ATTEST:

By: 
Jeff Harris
Director, Planning and Zoning Office

RESOLUTION NO. 2015 L

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, adopted the Flathead County Growth Policy on March 19, 2007 and envisioned a Parks and Recreation Master Plan as being an important component of the implementation of that Growth Policy;

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Parks Board has prepared a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with the procedures for creating a plan outlined in Chapter 9 of the Flathead County Growth Policy;

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Planning Board held a public hearing pursuant to the provisions of Section 76-1-602, M.C.A., considered the public comment that was received and recommended that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan be adopted as an element of the Flathead County Growth Policy; and

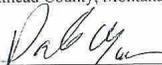
WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of Commissioners reviewed the proposal and determined that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be formally considered, passed a resolution of intent (Resolution No. 2015 K) to consider the adoption of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as an addendum to the Growth Policy on November 3, 2009, and gave notice that it would consider public comment received prior to December 11, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has received no comments since the adoption of the resolution of intent and has determined that it should be adopted as an addendum to the Growth Policy.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, pursuant to Section 76-1-604, M.C.A., by the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, that it hereby adopts the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as an addendum to the Flathead County Growth Policy, as recommended by the Flathead County Planning Board and attached hereto.

Dated this 17th day of December, 2009.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Flathead County, Montana

By 
Dale W. Layman, Chairman

By _____
Joseph D. Brenneman, Member

By 
James R. Dupont, Member



ATTEST:
Paula Robinson, Clerk

By 
Deputy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Purpose

In 2008, the Flathead County Commissioners, County Parks and Recreation Board, and the Parks and Recreation Department initiated an effort to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of this plan is to:

1. Provide a framework for decision making regarding park development, land acquisition, recreation programming and partnerships.
2. Engage the citizens of Flathead County in developing a vision for Parks and Recreation and establishing program priorities.
3. Identify and promote the benefits of a county park system.
4. Determine needs through an analysis of existing facilities, level of service benchmarks and the examination of trends.
5. Develop an Action Plan that will identify next steps, roles and responsibilities and financial strategies.

II. Relationship to Other Plans

A. Growth Policy

In 2007 the Flathead County Board of County Commissioners adopted a Growth Policy. A growth policy is an official statement of public policy to guide growth and manage change for the betterment of the community. It is a general guide that provides a framework for public officials to make budgeting, programming, and land use decisions.

The Growth Policy includes a Park and Recreation element that provides goals and policies for parks. The Growth Policy recommended that a detailed Parks and Recreation Master Plan be undertaken and adopted as an appendix to the Growth Policy. This Master Plan expands the analysis that is contained within the Growth Policy and contains more detailed recommendations for park and recreation development.

B. Trail Master Plan

In addition to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Board is undertaking a Trails Master Plan. This plan considers the recreational and transportation aspects of a comprehensive pathways system. The Trails Plan is being developed by an Advisory Committee to the Parks Board and will be adopted by reference in this document as an addendum to the plan.

C. Previous Planning Documents

In 2001 the Park Board revised the Flathead County Park Management Plan. The plan's intent was to assist policy makers with general guidelines for administration, provide policies for purchase of new land and evaluate surplus parks for potential disposal. This Master Plan is an update of the information in that document and expands its purpose to include other aspects of park planning as stated above.

III. Planning Framework

The Plan is organized into four issue areas as illustrated in the diagram below. Each issue area is described in subsequent chapters and contains specific goals and policies to provide direction for decision makers. The organizational issues address staffing, advisory committee roles, and partnerships. Benefits based management establishes policies based on the economic, environmental, social and recreational benefits of a park and recreation system. The needs assessment section inventories facilities and services and identifies gaps while the financial section examines strategies and funding resources to address those gaps.

Figure 1: Planning Framework



The Master Plan integrates these issue areas and contains the overall vision for a countywide park and recreation system. The Vision Statement reflects public input and underlies the goals and policies as well as identifies priorities and guiding principles for the Master Plan. The plan also contains an implementation section to identify action steps, partners, and resources to accomplish the goals of the plan. Primarily, the Master Plan is a strategic planning tool that provides a framework for public officials in making decisions regarding the Parks and Recreation system in Flathead County.

IV. Planning Process

The project approach was designed to develop a vision for a county wide park system to meet the current and future needs of the citizens of Flathead County. To implement this vision, the plan provides strategic direction to allocate staff and funding resources. The plan sets forth goals and policies to guide public officials in making decisions on land acquisition, budgeting, programming, partnerships, and park development. Basic components of this planning approach include:

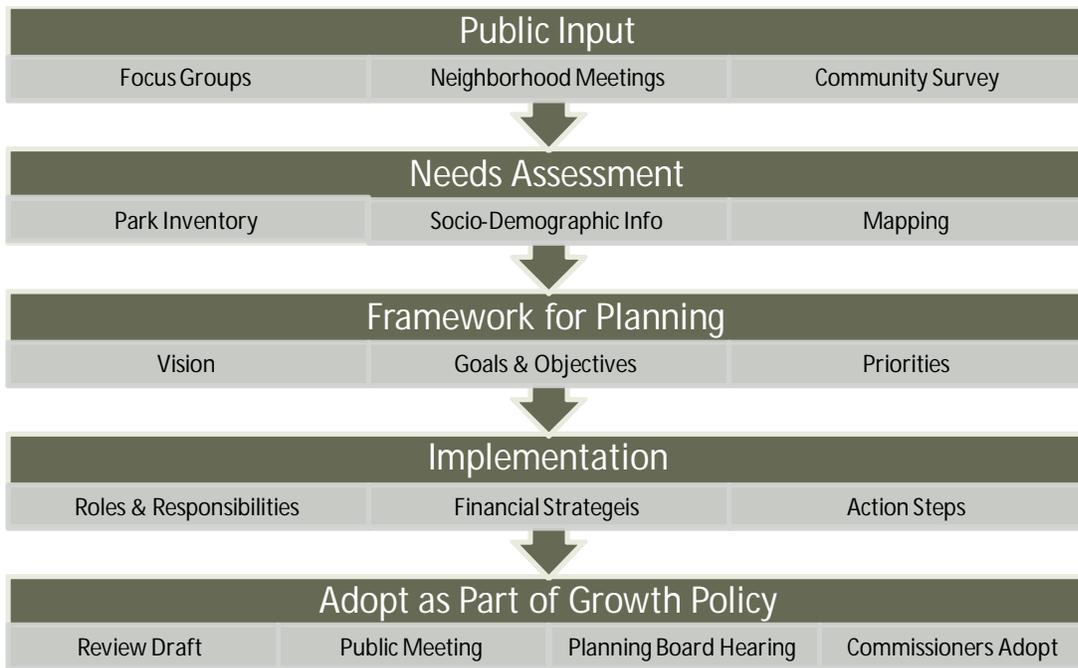
Needs Assessment: The needs assessment is based on community input, an analysis of existing facilities and operations, industry trends and a socio-economic analysis. The needs assessment identifies gaps in services and potential partnerships.

Vision, Policies, Guiding Principles: The vision, policies and guiding principles provide the framework for evaluating proposals for new facilities or programs. The Plan is a dynamic document and the vision should provide guidance to meet future challenges.

Implementation: This component outlines action items and establishes priorities for realizing the vision. It reviews funding strategies and partnerships to optimize limited resources.

Public Input: Techniques to engage citizens in the planning process included six neighborhood meetings, focus group sessions with each advisory group and recreation providers, on-line surveys, web-site updates, media coverage and e-newsletters. The Master Plan reflects the citizen input that was gathered throughout the planning process.

Figure 2: Planning Process



Vision Statement

Flathead County Parks and Recreation Department will strive to provide a high level of service to the community through well maintained parks, facilities and recreational programs. Through a system of parks and recreation facilities the county will promote a variety of economic, social, environmental and recreation benefits. To optimize resources and achieve these benefits the top priorities of the Park and Recreation Department will be to provide outdoor recreation in a natural setting with an emphasis on water access, to provide opportunities and facilities for organized team sports and to provide a non-motorized trail system that provides large scale connectivity and safe routes to schools, parks and recreation facilities.

Guiding Principles

1. Parks and recreation facilities should be developed and maintained in a manner to meet their intended function and to provide a safe and positive experience for users.
2. Plans for parks and recreation facilities should be made in accordance with sound fiscal policy to develop parks in a cost effective manner with adequate funding for long term operation and maintenance.
3. The County shall promote creative partnerships with other government agencies, citizens, schools, and non-profit groups to achieve the goals of this plan.
4. The Parks District shall be good stewards of park lands by being a good neighbor to private property near parks and recognizing the conservation value of parks.
5. County residents should have convenient access to a system of regional and local area parks and programs that are accessible to all segments of the population.

Chapter 2: Regional Context

I. Geography

A. Land Area

Flathead County is located in the northwestern corner of Montana and is the third largest county in State encompassing approximately 5,252 square miles. The County stretches almost 100 miles from the border with Canada on the north to its southernmost boundary with Missoula County. Flathead County is another 100 miles at its widest point from the Continental Divide on the east to Lincoln County on the west.

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In land area, the county is larger than the state of Connecticut.

.....

Most development is located in the valley, an area of approximately 15 miles wide and 20 miles long surrounded by mountains on the north, west and east sides and bordered by Flathead Lake to the south.

B. Natural Features

There are over 40 lakes and 3 major river systems comprising 158 square miles of water. The largest water body is Flathead Lake extending from Flathead County into Lake County and 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 and is a barometer of the ecological health for the entire Flathead watershed.

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. The Flathead River Basin's lakes range in size and character from nearly inaccessible alpine lakes of only several surface acres to such other significant large water bodies as Swan, McDonald, Whitefish, Tally, and the Little Bitterroot Lakes.

Figure 3: Flathead Lake



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

Elevations in the County range from Mount Stimson in Glacier National Park at 10,142 feet to 2,893 feet at Flathead Lake. Most steep slopes occur in the public and corporate timberlands surrounding the valley bottom, as well as in Glacier National Park.

Map 1: Flathead County- Slopes and Major Water Features



Source: State of Montana, Natural Resource Information System

C. Public Land

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). Flathead County contains portions of four National Forests and two Wilderness Areas. Flathead National Forest has approximately 1,875,545 acres within the County. Other National Forests that have lands within Flathead County are Kootenai, Lewis and Clark and Lolo (totaling approximately 115,390 acres). The National Forests and Wilderness Areas contribute approximately 59% of the total acreage of Flathead County.

Federal land also includes Glacier National Park. The Park is approximately 1,008,306 acres, is split between Flathead County and Glacier County. Approximately 635,214 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), Swan River National Wildlife Refuge (1,568 acres) and the Flathead, Batavia, McGregor Meadows, Smith Lake and Blasdel Waterfowl Production Areas (totaling 5,189 acres). Combined, Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas contribute an additional 14,642 acres of land in Flathead County.

Within Flathead County, lands managed by the State of Montana include DNRC Trust Lands Management System account for approximately 129,670 acres of Flathead County. Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) manage another approximately 3,208 acres.

D. Open Space

Other open space in the valley consists of private timber land, conservation easements, and agricultural land. 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 and approximately 52.7% of the private land in the County.

The three organizations that manage the majority of conservation easements in the County include the Montana Land Reliance, Flathead Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy. There are over 21,000 acres of conservation easements recorded with the County Clerk. Easements protect critical riparian areas, wetlands, wildlife habitat and prime farmlands. In 2007, approximately 40% of the private land (251,597 acres) in Flathead County was being farmed.

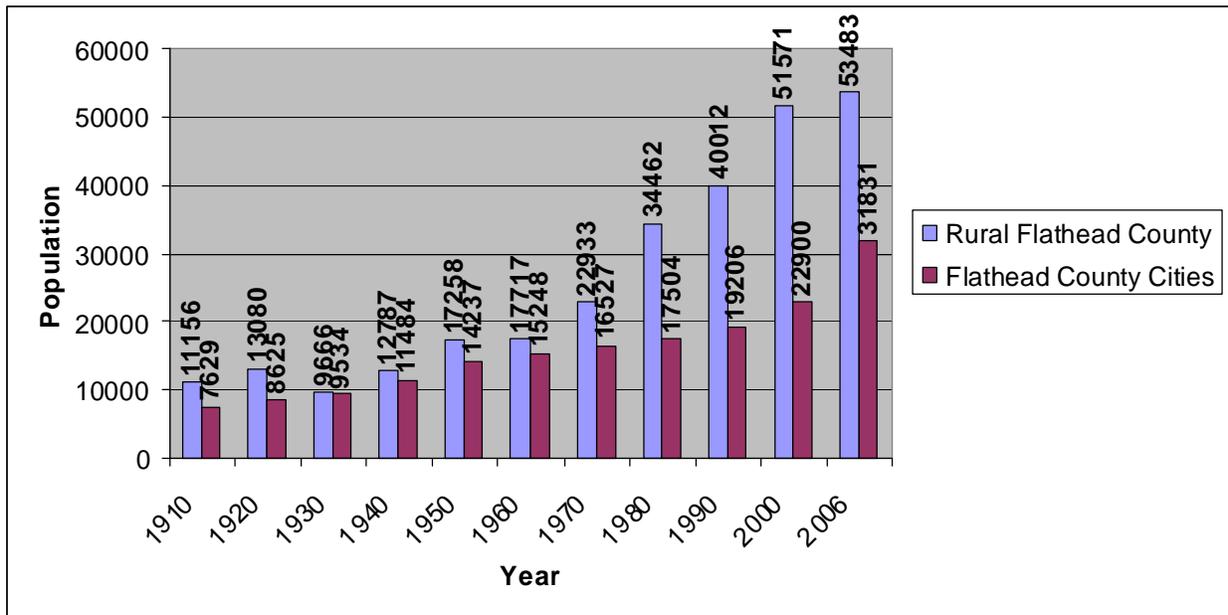
E. Transportation

There are no Interstate Highways in the County. The two major US Highways include US 93 the main north-south arterial and US 2 the main east-west arterial. The highways intersect in the City of Kalispell. Other major arterials include Montana Highway 40 and Montana Highway 206. Glacier International Airport provides commercial passenger service while private aircraft can land at Kalispell City Airport and other landing strips.

F. Settlement Patterns

There are three incorporated municipalities in Flathead County: Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish. As indicated in Figure 4, approximately 63% of the population in Flathead County, however, lived outside of the cities in 2006, the most recent year for which data is available.¹ Growth in the cities has increased notably since 2000. The cities have had far more growth than rural Flathead County, especially Kalispell and Whitefish, which have grown 36.6% and 53.5% respectively, compared to a 3.7% growth rate in rural Flathead County. Flathead County has had an overall growth rate of 14.6%.

Figure 4: Population Growth in Flathead County



Source: U.S. Census of the Population

Kalispell is the county seat and with an estimated 2006 population of 19,432 it has the largest population of the three cities. Whitefish had an estimated population of 7,723 and Columbia Falls had a population of 4,676 in 2006.

The U.S. Census recognizes eight additional communities in Flathead County as Census Designated Places (CDPs): Bigfork, Evergreen, Lakeside, Somers, Hungry Horse, Martin City, and Coram. Almost 16% of the population of rural Flathead County is located in CDPs. Table 1 shows the population increases from 1990 to 2000 in CDPs, cities, undesignated rural areas of Flathead County, and the county overall.

Table 1: Population Growth in Flathead County

	Population 2000	Population 1990	Increase 1990 - 2000	Percent Increase 1990 - 2000
<i>Bigfork CDP</i>	1,421	775	646	83.4%
<i>Coram CDP</i>	337	257	80	31.1%
<i>Evergreen CDP</i>	6,215	4,109	2,106	51.3%
<i>Hungry Horse CDP</i>	934	507	427	84.2%
<i>Lakeside CDP</i>	1,679	949	730	76.9%
<i>Martin City CDP</i>	331	305	26	8.5%
<i>Somers CDP</i>	556	317	239	75.4%
<i>Total in CDPs</i>	11,473	7,219	4,254	58.9%
<i>Total in Rural County (outside of cities and CDPs)</i>	40,048	32,793	7,255	22.1%
<i>Total in Cities</i>	22,900	19,206	3,694	19.2%
<i>Total in County (including cities and CDPs)</i>	74,471	59,218	15,253	25.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of the Population

Several other communities throughout the county that are not designated as CDPs are experiencing growth as well. 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.

G. Population Density

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 type of growth 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.

II. Socio-Demographic Information

A. Seasonal Population

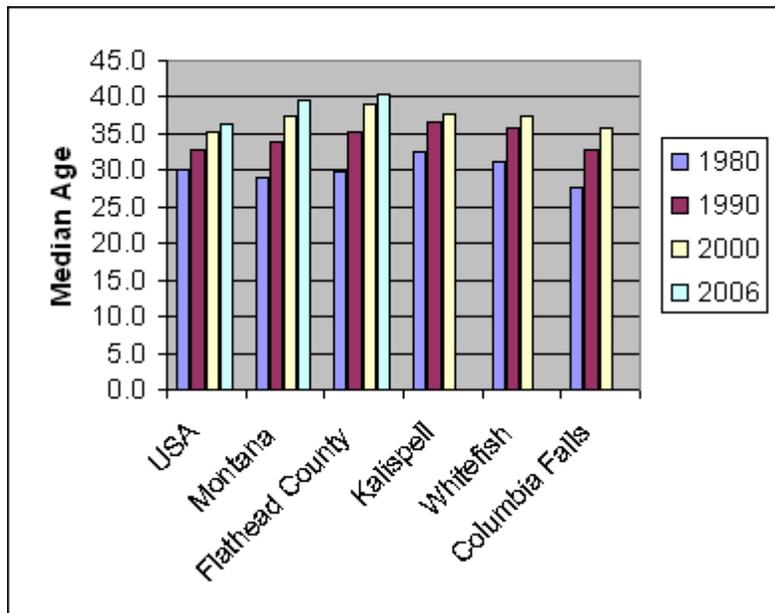
Due to its proximity to abundant natural amenities, Flathead County attracts a significant numbers of seasonal residents. The U.S. Census identifies housing units expressly dedicated for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The 1990 Census indicates that there were 2,517 housing units in Flathead 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%.

B. Demographics

The median age for the County is on the rise. In 1980, the median age for Flathead County was 29.7 years. Census 2000 data determined the median age of the population in Flathead County to be 39 years. The 2006 Community Survey determined the median age to be 40.3 years. Since 1980, the median age in Flathead County has increased by over 10 years.

Between 1990 and 2000, every age bracket except 25 to 34 experienced an increase in population. Between 2000 and 2006 however, the 25 to 34 bracket saw an increase, but a decrease occurred in the 35 to 44 bracket. The largest population gain and percent increase occurred in the 45 to 55 age bracket which has seen a 125.3% increase since 1990. The second largest increase occurred in the 55 to 64 age bracket at 110.3%, followed by the 85 and over age bracket at 84.8%.

Figure 5: Comparison of Median Age for Selected Areas

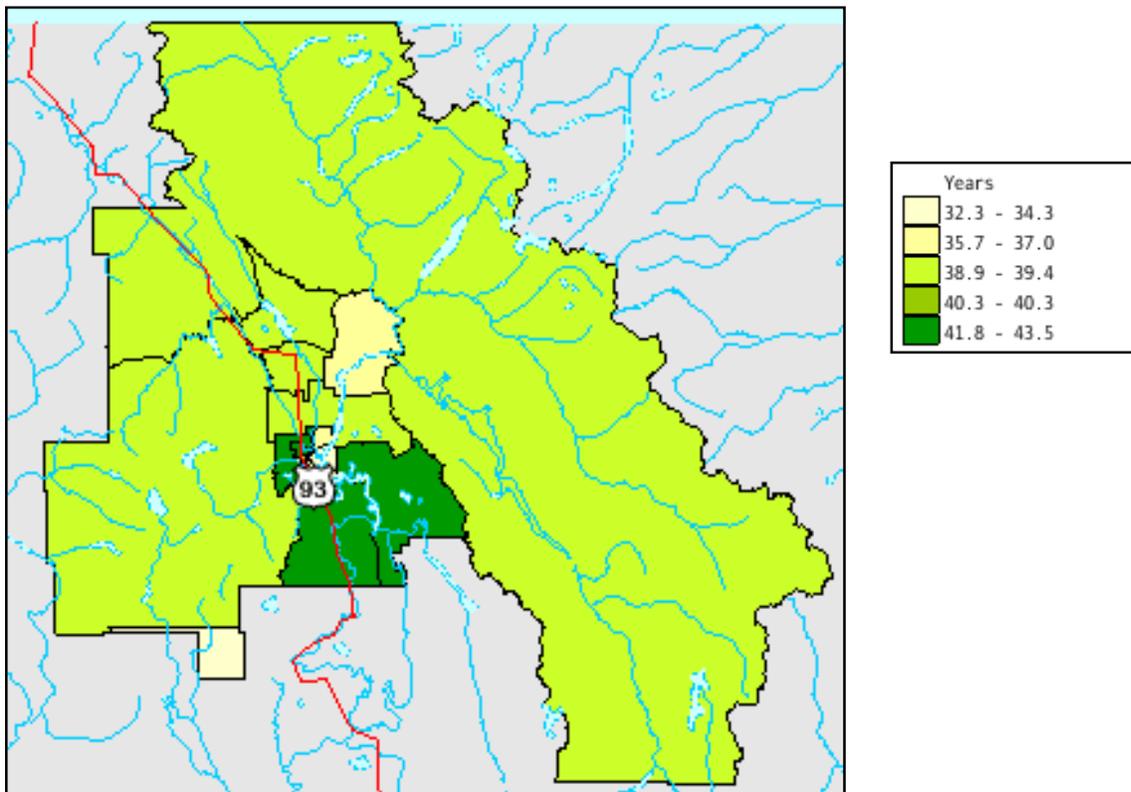


Source: U.S. Census

Map 2 shows the median age in Flathead County as designated by census tracts in Flathead County. It is notable that the median age is above the average in the southern portion of the county (Bigfork, Lakeside, and Somers), and lower than the average in the area around Columbia Falls.

Trends show that the population over 65 is generally healthier than previous generations. They are staying more active and demanding opportunities and facilities to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle. This age group typically prefers fitness activities as opposed to competitive sports.

Map 2: Median Age by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census

C. Household Characteristics

Family households comprise almost 70% of households in the County compared to 64% of households statewide. Average household size in the County was 2.69 compared to 2.49 statewide. From the year 2000 to 2006 the average household and family size increased significantly. This is a reversal of a trend over the past 25 years towards smaller household size. This may reflect the cyclical nature of population trends and the increase in a family demographic with young children that are part of the echo boom – the children and grandchildren of baby boomers.

Table 2: Household Characteristics - Flathead County

	Number: 2006	Percent of Total: 2006	Number: 2000	Percent of Total: 2000	Percent Change: 2000 - 2006
Total Households	31,409	**	29,588	**	6.2%
Family Households	21,699	69.1%	20,425	69.0%	6.2%
Family Households - Married Couple	18,287	58.2%	16,841	56.9%	8.6%
Non-Family Households	9,710	30.9%	9,163	31.0%	6.0%
Households with individuals under 18	9,709	30.9%	10,205	34.5%	-4.9%
Households with individuals 65 +	7,002	22.3%	6,577	22.2%	6.5%
Average Household Size	2.69	**	2.48	**	8.5%
Average Family Size	3.25	**	2.97	**	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census

D. Disability

The most recent information available from the U.S. Census states that 15.8% of the population five years and over is disabled. This statistic jumps to 42.4% of the population when range is reduced to those 65 and over. The U.S. Census includes the following categories for disabilities.

- Sensory Disability - blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment
- Physical Disability - A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying
- Mental Disability - learning, remembering, or concentrating
- Self-care Disability - dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home
- Mobility Disability - going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office
- Employment Disability - working at a job or business

The population over 65 is more likely to experience disabilities related to sensory, physical, self-care and mobility. Since this age group is among the fastest growing age cohort in the County, there will be a larger part of the population with these characteristics.

Disabilities, however, are not related solely to an aging population. Parks facilities should be designed and maintained to allow for the highest accessibility possible no matter the age.

III. Implications for Park Planning

1. The large geographic area of the County translates to long driving distances and spread out services. This increases the costs for maintenance and programming due to drive time for staff, fuel costs, and wear on vehicles.
2. Natural features such as lakes offer opportunities for water recreation but private development is limiting public access.
3. River systems with floodplains have ecological value that should be preserved through conservation parks to enhance water quality, wildlife habitat, and riparian systems. Such parks can provide natural recreation areas and provide connections between parks.
4. The extensive public lands offers ample opportunity for wilderness, hiking, camping, and other outdoor activities. Agencies that manage public lands are potential partners for development of county parks where agencies share common goals and provide connections or access to these public lands.
5. Open space and the rural landscape is the dominant characteristic of the County and should be enhanced with a park system.
6. The majority of the population in the county lives in the unincorporated areas. This population will demand park and recreation services from the county that would otherwise be provided for by municipalities in other counties in the State.
7. Population growth in the County has been concentrated in the valley in areas that has infrastructure to support denser populations. Remote areas such as Olney, Essex and Polebridge have not experienced the high growth and are not placing significant demands as other unincorporated areas.
8. There is a large seasonal population that increases the summer population and places demands on the park system that may not be reflected in the population numbers.
9. The population is aging and active seniors demand more fitness oriented activities.
10. As the rate of people with disabilities increase, park facilities should be designed with this population in mind. Park facilities should be designed to provide access people with various levels of ability.
11. Population trends are cyclical and long-term planning should account for this and design parks for all ages and abilities.

Chapter 3: Public Input

Citizen input supplements other analysis in the plan and should be considered in context of park standards, cost benefits and other evaluation criteria. A variety of methods were used to solicit public input. The focus of the survey was on park facilities. A feasibility study for a gymnasium/recreation center will collect public input more specific to sports programs.

I. Survey

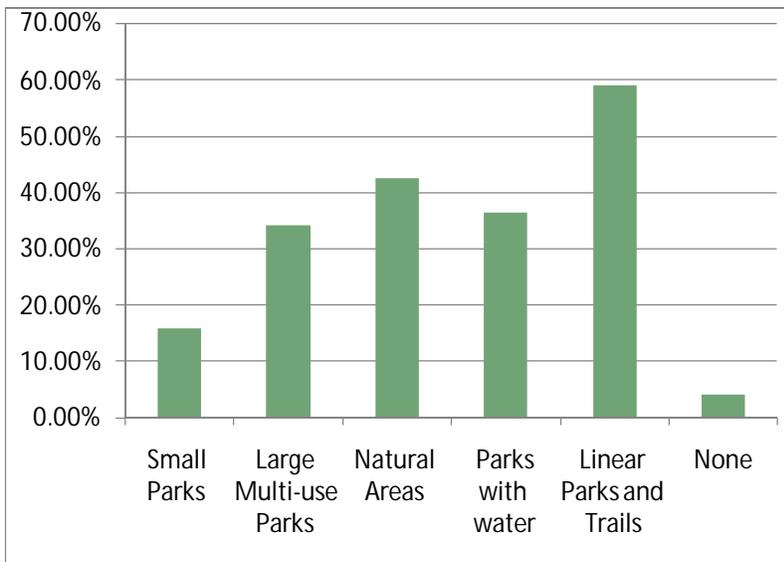
A. Methodology

From September, 2008 until January, 2009, the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Department conducted an on-line survey to provide residents an opportunity to have input in the plan. The survey was publicized through various list-serves as well as newspaper articles and radio and television coverage. Additionally, hard-copies of the surveys were available at all of the community meetings and were distributed at recreation league games. A total of 435 surveys were completed. (See Appendix E for complete survey.)

B. Survey Responses

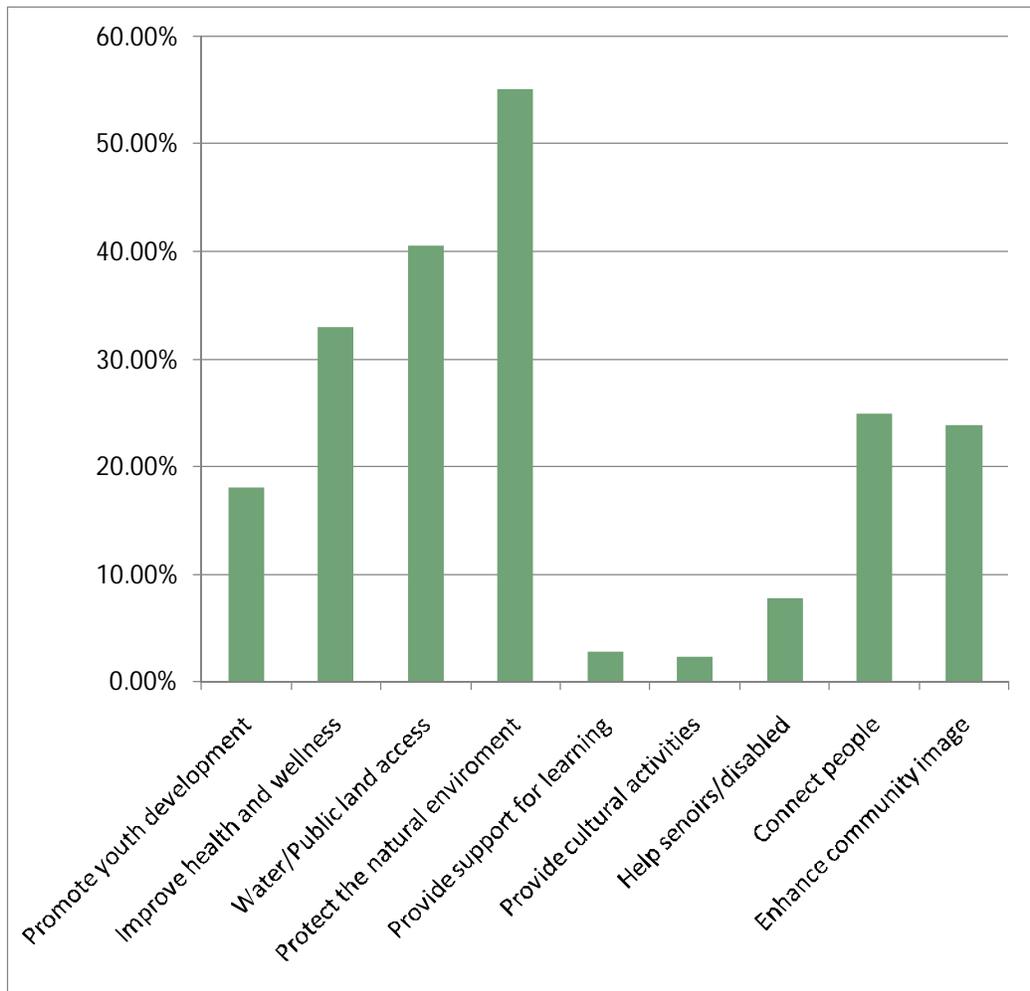
Survey respondents indicated that the types of parks most needed in the county are linear parks with trails, natural area parks and large multi-use parks. The two most common responses to the question on how people use parks were, "Enjoy outdoors/nature" (71%) and "Walk or bike for exercise" (47%).

Figure 6: Types of Parks Needed in Flathead County



The survey also asked respondents to rate the public benefits of parks. The two most important benefits were protecting the natural environment and providing access to water and public lands.

Figure 7: Benefits of Parks

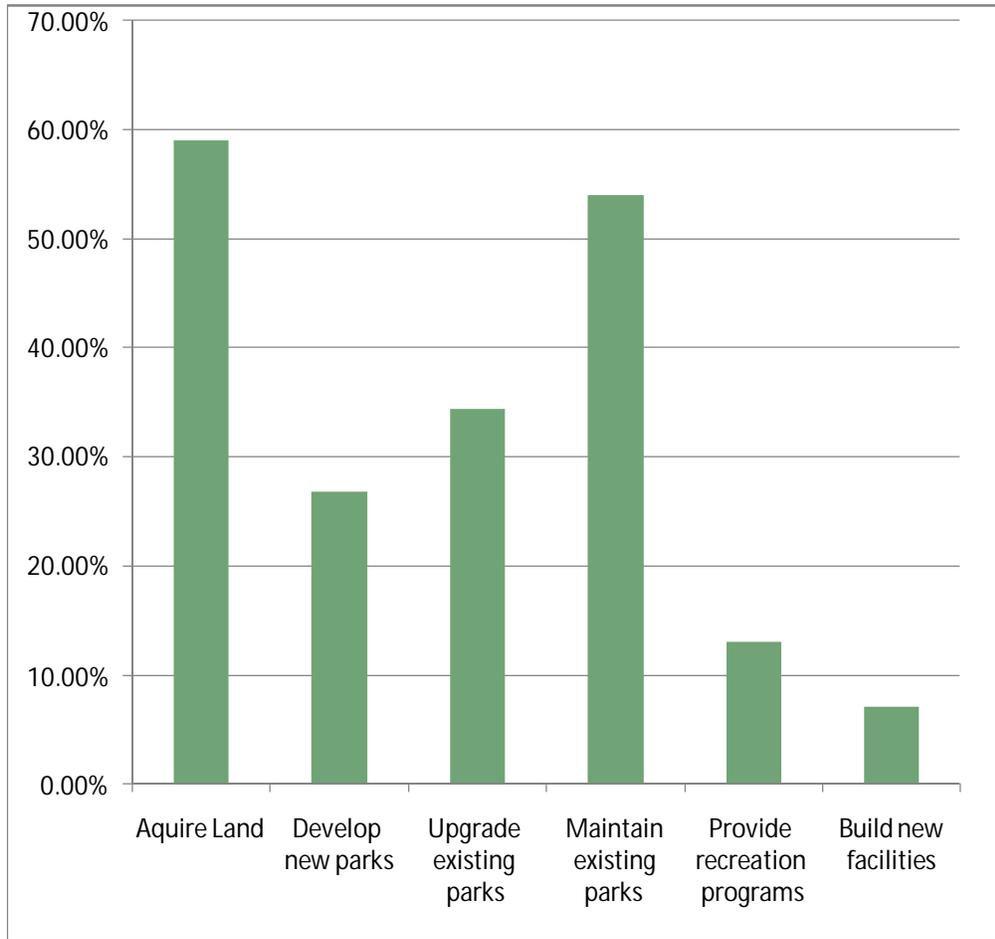


While providing access to water and public land was important for many respondents, access is most important when conveniently located to their home. The most common obstacle to use of county parks was distance from home. The top five reasons preventing park use are listed below.

1. Distance from home (40.8%)
2. Poor maintenance (31.5%)
3. Lack of restrooms (30.7%)
4. Doesn't contain desired features or facilities (29.5%)
5. Rowdy behavior of other park users (28.6%)

Several questions asked respondents about support for financial mechanisms to fund park improvements. Although more respondents (44.7%) indicated that they would support a county-wide tax than creation of a park maintenance district, (37.3%) neither option received more than the 50% approval that would be necessary to pass a ballot measure. In using the financial resources it does have, acquiring land while the opportunity exist and maintaining existing parks were the top two priorities.

Figure 8: Focus of Parks and Recreation Efforts



The five most popular policies for park planning were:

1. Parks should protect natural areas such as wetlands, floodplain and wildlife areas.
2. Connect parks with trails or pathways
3. Protecting access to public lands should be a priority
4. Develop a county-wide interconnected trail and pathway system.
5. Acquire new land for future parks

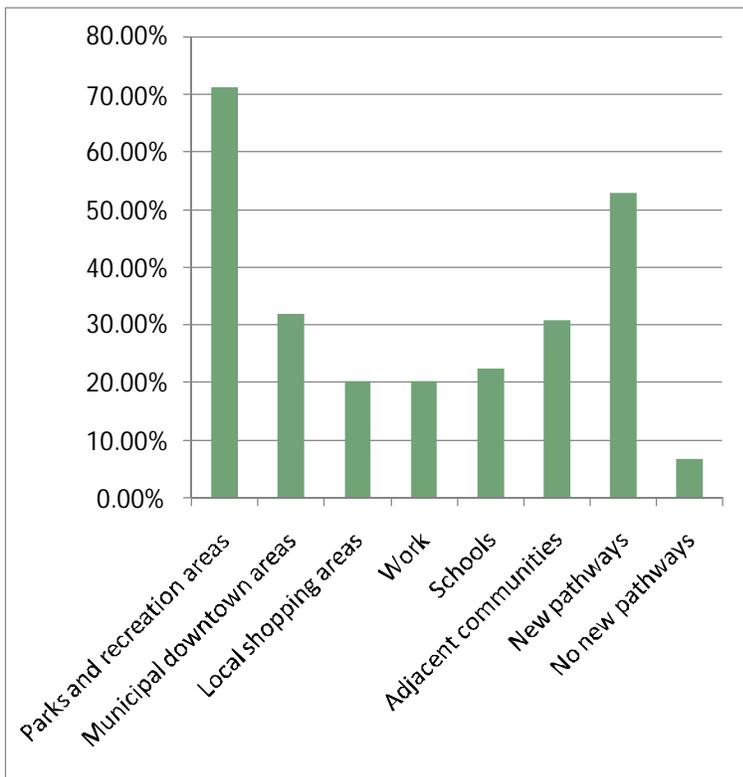
The five least popular policies for park planning were:

1. Provide alternative sports such as skateboarding, Folf, Bike jumps
2. Provide more athletic facilities such as tennis courts and basketball hoops
3. County parks should attract visitors from outside of the area
4. Provide a dog park in the county
5. Generate revenue from user fees

The survey did not ask about specific types of user fees. Public input from community meetings indicated that general entry fees for parks were undesirable while fees for specific programs, such as sports leagues, were supported to make such programs self-sustaining.

Three out of four survey respondents indicated that they currently use the trail system in Flathead County. When asked where additional trails should go, the most common response was to connect parks.

Figure 9: Preference for location of new trails



II. Public Outreach

Public outreach was an important part of the planning process. Public outreach provides an opportunity for citizens to be involved in the planning process and provides information about various planning issues, programs costs, and the difficulty or ease of program implementation. In addition to the survey, the following public outreach methods were used as part of the planning process.

Table 3: Public Outreach Summary

Technique	Description
Opinion Surveys	An on-line survey was conducted as part of the planning process. There were 435 responses to the survey. Results were consulted to develop goals and policies. .
Open House	The Parks Board conducted an open house to present the draft plan and obtain public input.
Community Meetings	In the fall of 2008, there were six community meetings conducted at various locations in the county. Big Fork Columbia Falls Kalispell Lakeside West Glacier Whitefish
Internet	Draft documents were posted on the County Web Site. Meeting dates were posted on the web site. There was a list-serve of approximately 150 people who received regular e-updates regarding the plan.
Focus Groups	Focus Groups were conducted with each of the Park Advisory Groups and the Paths Committee. Additionally, there was a focus group comprised of representatives from municipal park departments and State and Federal public land managers. .
Press Coverage	Periodic press releases sent to media outlets in the County.

III. Summary of Input

Certain topics were repeatedly mentioned in discussions at the community and focus group meetings. While many of the priorities expressed in these group discussions were similar to the responses in the survey, the group discussions provided more detail and insight into each of the topic. A summary of the most common topics are described below.

- **Partnerships** - Partnering with other agencies and civic groups will be essential to achieve the goals of the plan. Examples of successful partnerships include the Foy's to Blacktail Trail effort, Kidsport Athletic Fields, Sliter Park in Big Fork, and Columbia Falls ballfields. Potential partners include the municipal park departments, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, and United States Forest Service. Civic groups and athletic groups are also potential partners.
- **Advisory Committees** – Advisory committees have worked well to engage citizens and take the initiative on promoting projects. The roles of the advisory committees should be better defined. There is a desire to form advisory committees in other parts of the county such as Columbia Falls, Kila, West Valley and the Canyon area.
- **Funding** – The Parks and Recreation Department is underfunded. There is not enough money for maintenance. Generally, participants felt that funding parks was a low priority for County Commissioners. There were questions about the use of cash-in-lieu of land fees that are collected as part of the subdivision process. Suggestions for financing improvements to the park system include impact fees, user fees, use of volunteers, forming a non-profit foundation, investigating a park maintenance district and privatizing some functions.
- **Opportunities to Improve Existing Parks** - There were numerous suggestions for improving or expanding the existing county parks. The biggest obstacle to implementing such improvements is funding.
- **Park Use Abuse** - Abuse of the park system by users was mentioned in almost every meeting. Issues included vandalism, illegal activity, partying after hours, litter, and uncontrolled dogs. Some of the problems were attributed to the heavier use of parks due to population growth. Parking congestion was a concern at Foy's Lake and Somers Beach. There was concern about property values near parks where such problems occur. (Note: In 2009, a Park Ranger system was implemented to respond to these concerns.)
- **Water Access** – There was general consensus among all groups that parks that provide access to water and rivers should be a priority. The crowds at Foy's Lake and Somers Beach were noted as an indication of the demand for water access. Montana FWP is in the process of obtaining land for state parks on Flathead Lake. There is a proposed park on Flathead Lake in Lakeside that would result from the donation of

property. It was suggested that some County R.O.W. with lakefront access be converted to parks.

- Trails – Trails should be part of the park system. Trails should generally provide connectivity between parks and schools. There should be a trail connecting Kalispell to Lone Pine State Park and Foy's Lake Park. Trail maps should be made widely available. Partner with trail organizations to build and maintain trails. Consider a water trail for canoes/kayaks on some of the rivers.
- Surplus Parks - Park land that has been previously dedicated but is not functional as a park should be sold as surplus land. There should be a public process to evaluate the surplus parks before they are sold.
- Park Values - Natural area, riparian corridors, access to public lands are important park values that should be incorporated into the plan.
- Recreation - Participation in softball leagues is growing. There should be a long term solution to securing playing fields either through a long-term lease or owning fields. Rotary basketball competes with Park Department programs for gym space. Recreation programs provide a needed service for at-risk youths. Baby boomers will be more interested in health and wellness activities rather than competitive sports. There is a demand for tennis in Lakeside.
- Accessibility – Parks need to be easily accessible from roads. Handicap accessibility features are important.

Chapter 4: Organization

I. Governance

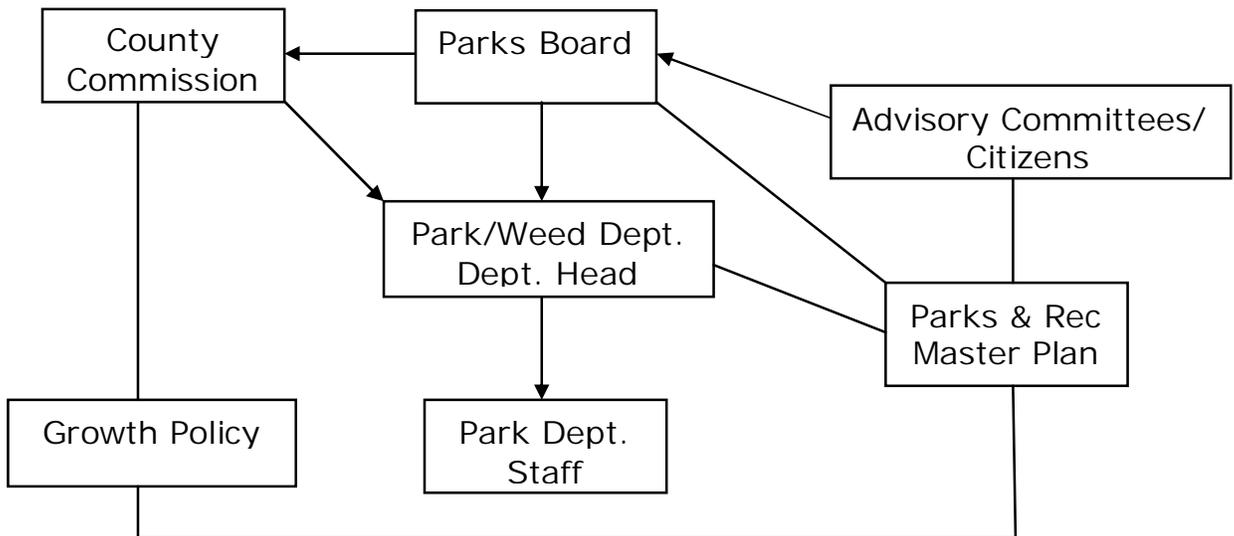
The Flathead County Parks Board oversees park and recreations services for the County. The board is comprised of five members appointed by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners to serve three year terms. The Board meets monthly and has responsibility for administration of the Parks and Recreation 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 Park Board does not have by-laws but must follow State law for open meetings, record keeping and decision making. By-laws could be adopted to establish more formal procedures for appointing committees, voting, meeting format and defining roles and responsibilities.

Figure 10: Organization Chart



II. Staffing

The Parks Department is comprised of two divisions: Parks and Facilities Maintenance Division and the Recreation Division. The Parks and Recreation Department employs nine people comprised of both full-time and seasonal employees. There are three building maintenance workers. The park maintenance staff consists of one full-time employee plus one seasonal employee. Staff is cross-trained so that personnel assigned primarily to weeds and building can also assist with park maintenance. There is also a full-time recreation supervisor. In FY 2008 and FY2009, the budget for park maintenance and recreation has been approximately \$300,000 dollars while the budget for the recreation division has been approximately \$130,000.

Compared to other Park and Recreation programs in Montana and in the intermountain west, the Flathead Parks and Recreation program has a significantly lower per capita expenditure for its parks program. Additionally, the staffing levels to maintain a comparable amount of park land ranges from one-half to one-tenth of the staffing levels of other park programs. Flathead County currently owns more than 70 parks and/or park sites. Approximately 32 parks are fully or partially developed.

Poor maintenance was cited by 31% of survey respondents as a reason for limiting their use of county parks. As the population in the County increases, there will be more use of parks resulting in more wear on facilities that will add to upkeep costs. In addition to lowering the quality of experience at county parks, deferred maintenance often requires more expensive repairs at a later date and can create liability issues.

More than half of residents said maintaining existing parks should be a top priority of the County ranking only behind acquiring land for future parks. In order to keep up with demand on existing parks and maintain new parks that are required to meet the needs of a growing population, it will be necessary to increase park maintenance staffing levels.

Table 4: Comparison of Staffing to Other Park Programs

	Flathead County	Bozeman	Missoula	Butte Silverbow County	Average (CO, ID, WA)
Acres Developed Parks Maintained	383	425	500	276	1466
Maintenance Staff (FTE)	2	6	26	3	33.3
Staff per Developed Acres	1:191	1:20	1:19	1:92	1:37
Maintenance Budget Per Capita	\$5.61	\$33.84	\$21.03	\$19.62	\$48.68

Source: Information compiled by Applied Communications from budgets and park plans

III. Advisory Committees

In 2006, the Park Board established Advisory Committees in Lakeside and Somers to provide input on park and recreation issues in their respective communities. The Advisory Committee's are comprised of five voting members with one alternate. The members are appointed by the Park Board. Since the first two committees were established, the Park Board has created three more Advisory Committees. The Committees and their primary accomplishments are listed below.

- Big Fork – The Committee has completed an inventory of the county parks in the area and has made recommendations on improvements for each park.
- Lakeside – The Committee has prepared plans to develop Ben Williams Park and has conducted fundraising for playground equipment. The Committee is working with the community on a proposed waterfront park in Lakeside that would be acquired through a donation of land.
- West Glacier – The Committee was established to assist with the planning for developing Belton-Stage Park. There have been suggestions that the committee's function be expanded to include park issues in the entire canyon area from Hungry Horse to Essex.
- Herron-Foys – The Committee focuses on operations at Herron Park and Foys Lake as well as related projects such as the Foys to Blacktail Trail. The Committee works with the equestrian groups that use Herron Park on maintaining the various facilities.
- Paths Committee – The Committee was established to develop and implement a comprehensive non-motorized trails plan. The Committee will be a permanent advisory committee to the Park Board. Upon completion, the plan will be adopted as an addendum to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It will provide direction in the allocation of Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) Funds.
- Proposed Committees - The Board has a goal to establish advisory committees throughout the county. During the public process there was support for additional committees to cover the Columbia Falls, Kila, Marion, Bitterroot Lake and West Valley areas. An Advisory Committee representing recreational programs and sports leagues is being created.

The roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committees include:

1. Meet regularly to discuss local park issues.
2. Facilitate public input
3. Assess local park needs
4. Make recommendations to Park Board on improvements and programs for parks (See budgeting procedures on following page.)
5. Help identify funding opportunities for improvements
6. Have a representative attend Park Board meetings to report on Committee activities.
7. Assist in fundraising for park improvements with Park Board approval.

Recommended Procedures for Evaluating Park Project Requests

The Park Board and staff develop an annual budget for the county park system. After the budget is adopted, it is difficult to allocate additional funding for new projects that have not been included in the budget for that fiscal year. The following administrative procedures will help accommodate requests from the Advisory Committees, non-profit groups and citizens. It is recommended that the Park Board modify and refine these procedures to reflect their experience with the budgeting process.

1. Advisory Committee conducts assessment of park system in its service area and compiles list of proposed improvements. After completing the assessment, the Advisory Committee prioritizes needs.
2. Advisory Committee works with staff to develop cost estimates for improvements that rank as top priorities.
3. At the annual budget meeting with the Park Board, the Advisory Committee submits budget request to Park Board on a form to be provided by the Park Board.
4. The Park Board ranks the budget requests according to evaluation criteria and determines which projects to include in the next fiscal year budget.

Ranking Criteria

- This is a high priority project for the Advisory Group
- This project will improve safety and reduce liability
- This project will reduce overcrowding
- This project will fulfill needs for service as identified in the Level of Service analysis
- This project has an acceptable cost to implement
- This project will leverage other funding sources such as matching funds, grants, in-kind services or donations to make the project more cost effective or it will generate a positive revenue stream
- This project can be a successful pilot or model for other park projects
- This project has an acceptable maintenance cost or will lower current maintenance cost
- There is a high degree of public support for this project
- This project provides multiple benefits regarding recreation, conservation, social and economic assets
- The area of the proposed project has been under represented in past expenditures of park funds
- The project will advance other goals and objectives of the Park Master Plan

IV. Partnerships

The Flathead County Growth Policy notes the importance of establishing partnerships with other government agencies, civic organizations, non-profit groups and private businesses to accomplish the goals of the plans. Partnerships can create cost efficiencies through pooling resources, sharing costs, and joint programming. Multiple partners can generate a broader base of community support for projects. Grant makers are more likely to fund projects that are leveraging community resources from several partners.

There are a variety of partnership models that are available to local governments. Flathead County already has several examples of successful partnerships that are providing parks and recreation services. Types of partnerships are described below.

- **Intergovernmental Agreements** – Agreements with other government agencies may range from leases, maintenance agreements, joint purchase programs and joint development of park and recreation facilities. The Park and Recreation Department has arrangements with a number of school districts in the county to use gym space. Formalizing the arrangements through a lease or intergovernmental agreement may help avoid potential use conflicts. The lease with the Conrad Cemetery Association to use land for the softball complex is another example of an intergovernmental arrangement. These leases must be renegotiated periodically and securing long-term commitments is an issue.
- **Public – Private Partnerships** – These often include partnerships with other government agencies or private organizations to develop new facilities. Financing arrangements, maintenance responsibilities, and other roles and responsibilities are set forth in a contract or memorandum of agreement. Development agreements are sometimes used to construct new facilities as part of a large subdivision. The Kidsport Complex on the north side of Kalispell is an example of a sports complex that was developed through a partnership between Kalispell, Department of Natural Resources and Conversation and non-profit sports organizations.
- **Foundations** - In some jurisdictions, citizens have formed non-profit foundations to raise fund for park projects. Foundations that are formed as a 501(c)(3) organization can accept donations, apply for certain grants, and conduct fundraising activities. The Foy's to Blacktail Trails and Rails-to-Trails groups are examples of non-profits that are raising funds for a specific project in the County.
- **Intergovernmental Coordination** – In addition to the three incorporated municipalities, recreation facilities and programs are provided by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Flathead National Forest, and Glacier National Parks. Montana Department of Transportation administers the CTEP program. Coordinating with the agencies to identify common issues and goals can suggest ways to work together to achieve these goals. As part of the planning process it was suggested that the agencies have regular joint meetings to facilitate such efforts.

Keys to a Successful Partnership

Following are recommended criteria for evaluating potential partnerships.

1. A Commitment from Executive Leadership:

A successful partnership can result only if there is commitment from leadership of both the government and private sector organization to work together. Well-informed leaders play a critical role in developing effective partnerships.

2. A Statutory Foundation for Partnering:

There should be a statutory foundation for the implementation of public and private partnerships.

3. Direct Public Sector Involvement:

Once a partnership has been established, the public-sector must remain actively involved in the project. On-going monitoring of the performance of the partnership is important in assuring its success.

4. A Well-Crafted Plan:

A carefully developed plan will substantially increase the probability of success of the partnership. This plan should clearly describe the responsibilities of both the public and private partners and have provisions for dispute resolution.

5. Effective Communication with Stakeholders:

More people will be affected by a partnership than just the public officials and the private sector partner. It is important to communicate with and involve all stakeholders. These may include affected employees, the portions of the public receiving the service, the press, and relevant interest groups. Successful implementation should positively affect the work environment and relationships with sponsoring organizations, employees and other stakeholders.

6. The Right Opportunity:

Not every situation is ripe for a true partnership. Partnerships should be carefully evaluated and both parties should set reasonable expectations.

7. The Right Partner:

The "lowest bid" is not always the best choice for selecting a partner. The partner's experience, long-term viability, and willingness to work with local governments are important factors in identifying the right partner.

8. Well-Defined Management Processes:

It is critically important that both public and private sector parties agree on key management processes early in the formation of the relationship. These include management responsibilities, quality assurance, reporting requirements, and financial arrangements.

V. Volunteers

During the community meetings and focus group sessions, citizens suggested that volunteers could assist in certain park operations and should be used as tools in maximizing limited resources. Benefits of using volunteers include contribution of in-kind services to perform tasks not within the county budget and boosting the number and types of various programs that can be offered. Additionally volunteerism engages citizens, help build supports for programs and can foster leadership skills in young adults. Adult volunteers often bring specialized skills to a project.

The recreation programs rely heavily on volunteer coaches. Montana Conservation Corp provides trail construction and maintenance services. Often service clubs, businesses, or private individuals will offer to help construct playgrounds or maintain park facilities. Various challenges, however, limit the ability of the Parks and Recreation Department to utilize volunteer resources. The following table outlines typical practices to address these challenges.

Table 5: Best Practices

Challenge	Recommended Best Practice
Staff time to manage volunteers	<p>Monitor the number of volunteers and the amount of volunteer hours as compared to staff time to manage volunteer programs as a measure of effectiveness of program.</p> <p>Identify appropriate activities for volunteers in advance so they can be used most effectively</p>
Liability and insurance issues if volunteer gets injured	<p>Civic group or workplace of volunteers provides proof of insurance for their participants</p> <p>Insurance coverage provided through non-profit park foundation</p> <p>Work with County Risk Committee to develop policies and procedures for covering volunteers through county insurance</p>
Quality control of volunteer projects	<p>Written policies and procedures</p> <p>Background checks for volunteers in youth programs</p> <p>Screening and training for volunteers</p>
Recruiting volunteers on an on-going basis	<p>Volunteer Recognition</p> <p>Assign staff person as volunteer coordinator</p>

Resources:

- National and Community Service Agency, www.nationalservice.org
- UPS Foundation, www.community.ups.com

Chapter 5: Level of Service

I. Level of Service – Methodology

Benchmarks provide a community with a quantifiable method to evaluate existing and proposed park and open space systems. National benchmarks have been the product of research, professional judgment and intuition of people having experience with the subject. National standards provide a basis for comparison but often are modified to meet local conditions.

The recommended approach to develop benchmarks for a region is to apply the 'Systems Approach to Planning' that includes a 'Level of Service Analysis' advocated by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) planning guidelines. The systems planning approach focuses on creating a comprehensive and interrelated system of parks, recreation, open spaces and pathways that:

- Respond to locally-based needs, values, and conditions;
- Provide an appealing and harmonious environment;
- Protect the integrity and quality of the surrounding natural systems;

To apply this systems approach the following methodology has been used.

1. Develop Park Classification System – The park classifications used in the master plan are based on the classification system that is commonly used in park planning. Definitions reflect some of the unique characteristics of Flathead County in regards to the large size of the county and the rural character of the service area.
2. Inventory and Mapping – A database was created to include not only county parks but municipal parks, schools, State parks and recreation sites, and Federal public lands. The complete database and maps showing these sites are compiled in a Technical Resource document.
3. Develop Level of Service (LOS) Benchmarks - The plan analyzes level of service based on the four criteria:
 - Per Capita analysis
 - Service area analysis
 - Functional analysis
 - Suitability analysis

Each of these LOS criteria is described in more detail in subsequent sections.

4. Identify Needs – Based on the level of service analysis, current and future needs are identified.

II. Park Classifications

For purposes of the Flathead County Master Plan, the LOS analysis uses the following classification system.

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

POCKET PARK: Pocket-parks, tot lots, and children's playgrounds are small, single-purpose play lots generally less than two acres in size. They are generally located to provide some passive open space in developments and to provide a small amenity where no other park sites are conveniently located. Park features usually include a small open grass area and may include a children's playground or a picnic area. In the County these are typically maintained by the homeowner's association.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK: This park is generally within ½ to one-mile of the residential area being served. It is accessible by a safe route or trail and typically contains a turf area for informal play, a playground, and picnic facilities. It ranges in size from 3-10 acres. The land is fully developable for park uses; that is, it is not in environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, a designated retention pond or containing steep terrain. Neighborhood Parks may be combined with a school. There may be both passive and active recreation opportunities. In the County these may or may not be maintained by a homeowner's association.

Figure 11: Picnic Shelter in Potoczny Park



COMMUNITY: A Community Park is a larger park that serves multiple neighborhood areas with a two-mile service area radius but will often attract residents from much larger area. The size range is 10-100 acres. At least 50% of the land is developable for park uses with the remaining area that may contain environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, a designated retention pond or steep terrain. Community Parks may be combined with a school. A Community Park will include similar type of development as a Neighborhood Park and provide additional facilities that consolidate adult and youth programmed activities. Safe, non-motorized routes often link the park to other parks and the neighborhoods that they serve. Parking for vehicles is available, either on-street or adjacent to the park, so that crossing a road is not required. Generally, community parks include both ample active recreation opportunities with areas for passive use. Facilities for group activities and events are available.

SPORT COMPLEX: Athletic facilities include parking lot, drinking water, lighting, multiple organized ball fields, courts, and bathrooms. Serves people from the city and county. For new sports parks, a minimum size of at least 20 acres is recommended for optimum use. Designed for active recreation use.

REGIONAL PARK: Regional parks supplement neighborhood and community parks, serving a broader base of recreation needs in addition to what is provided in the smaller parks. The size range is 50 or more acres, servicing the entire County and visitors. At least 50% of the land is developable for park uses and the rest may contain environmentally sensitive areas such flood plains. Regional parks offer a balance of active and passive recreation, while including sizeable undeveloped areas with natural features and/or water features.

SPECIAL USE PARK: Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose uses, such as a nature center, historic site, plaza, urban square, aquatic center, equestrian facilities, campgrounds and golf course. Often these are fee based activities and may or may not be public parks.

CULTURAL/HERITAGE PARK: Cultural and heritage facilities include interpretive signage areas along trails, specific sites that are historically significant and may or may not contain remnants of historical significance. Such parks may or may not be areas incorporated into larger park types.

WATER ACCESS PARK: Primarily designed to provide fishing, boat or swimming access or protect riparian areas.

OPEN SPACE - NATURAL AREA PARK: This type of park may include environmentally sensitive lands, steep terrain, forested areas, flood plain and other natural areas that are only minimally developed and may serve as conservation areas, educational and wildlife watching opportunities. "There are no specific standards for how much conservation land a community ought to have. Instead, it is dependent on the number and quality of natural and historical resources in the area, public desire to preserve these valuable sites, and the willingness of the elected body to provide funds for their preservation." Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, National Recreation and Park Association.

TRAIL/LINEAR PARK: Linear parks may be in a healthy, natural state or developed landscaped areas and other lands that follow corridors such as abandoned railroad right-of-ways, creeks, canals, power lines, and other linear, elongated features. This type of park usually contains trails, landscaped areas, viewpoints, and seating areas. They may compose portions of a system of green infrastructure and serve as links from one park to another.

III. Inventory

An inventory of parks is included in Appendix A. The list classifies each park according to type and includes a list of facilities and water features for each park. Map 3 in this chapter indicates the general location of parks sites. The following statistics regarding the Flathead County Park system are derived from this inventory.

Table 6: Flathead County Parks Statistics

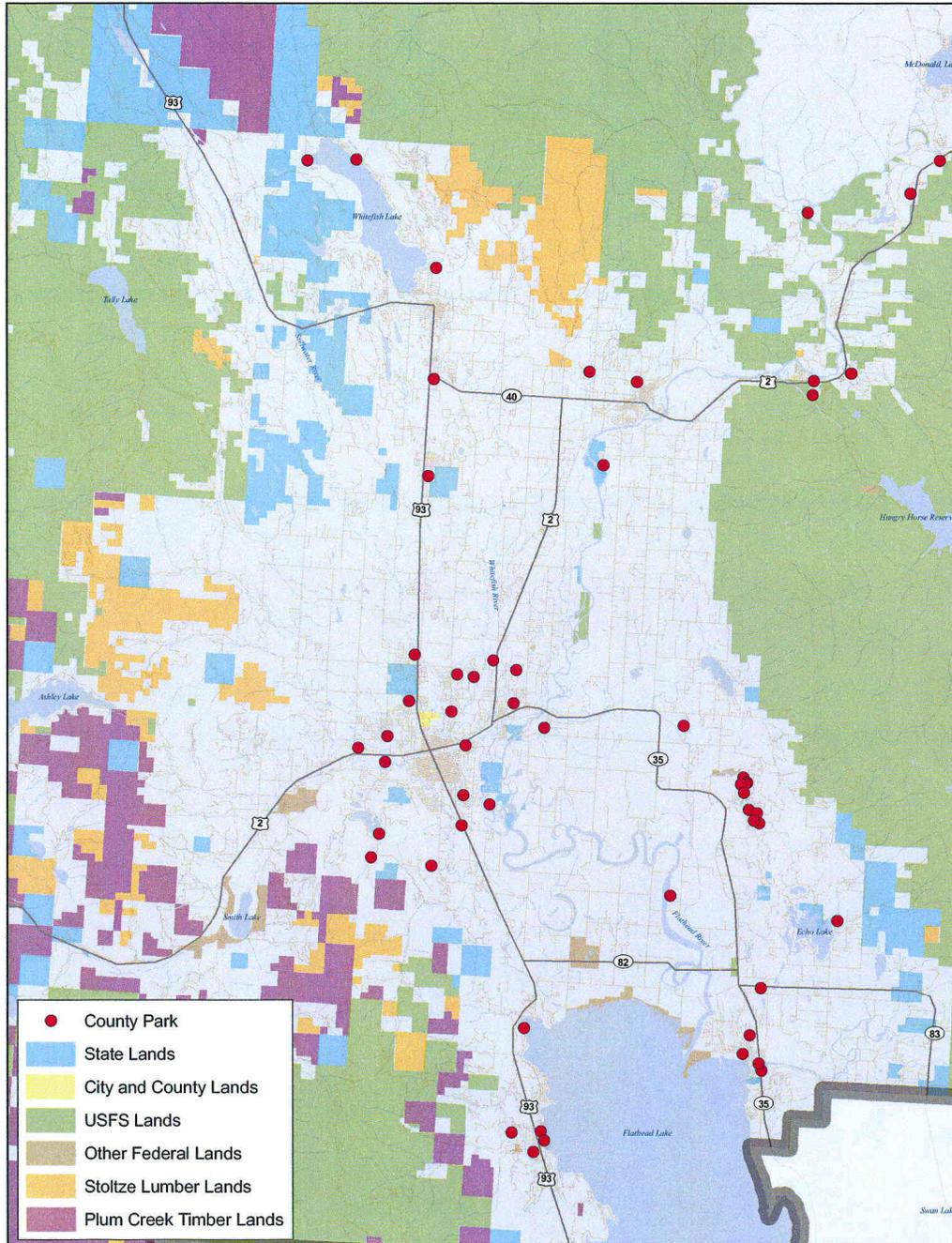
Item	Statistic
Total Number of County Park Sites	70
Total Acres of County Park Land	515
Total Number of Developed Park Sites	32
Total Acres of Developed Parks	383
Total number of Parks with Fishing, Boat or Swimming Access	14
Average Acreage of Water Access Park Sites	2
Total Number of Neighborhood Parks	14
Total Number of Community Parks	4
Total Number of Sports Park	2
Total Number of Special Use Parks	2
Total Number of Linear Parks	3

Source: Database Compiled for Master Plan (See Appendix A)

Notes:

1. The Belton-Stage Park is classified as a community park but is currently under development.
2. Conrad Complex is a sports park that is leased by the county. It is not included in the inventory of county owned parks. Although several neighborhood parks have a ball field, they function primarily as neighborhood parks and do not meet the criteria for a sports park. Carlye Johnson is undersized according to recreation standards.
3. Herron Park functions as both a community park and a special use park with equestrian facilities. It is also part of the Foys to Blacktail trail system. The Foys Community Center is a special use park adjacent to Herron Park.
4. Parks that are undeveloped are classified as "open space". Sites should be evaluated to determine if they have potential to function as a recreation site or if they have conservation values to be treated as a "natural area".

Map 3: Location of Park sites



IV. Level of Service – Per Capita Analysis

A per capita analysis measures the level of service that is being provided based on the amount of park land compared to the population base. As indicated in Table 7, in order for the county to maintain the current level of service for future populations, it must add 143 acres of park land by the year 2025.

Table 7: Current Level of Service vs. Future Growth

Park Type	Acres	Current Acreage per 1000 pop.	Acreage per 1000 Pop. w/o new facilities in 2025	Additional acres needed to maintain current acreage per 1000 population
Land-Based	97	1.9	1.3	38
Water-Based	163	3.0	2.2	57
Special Use	123	2.3	1.7	48
Overall	383	7.2	5.2	143

Note: 1) Analysis only includes developed park land sites.
 2) Population base = 2006 unincorporated population.

The national standards in the following table are compiled from a number of sources including the National Park and Recreation Association, American Planning Association and park plans in Montana. While total county park land is equivalent to national standards, many of these parks are undeveloped or primarily provide water access. If the level of service analysis is completed for just neighborhood and community parks per capita park land is significantly below national standards. Neighborhood and community parks are needed to provide basic play and fitness opportunities for residents of unincorporated towns.

Table 8: County Level of Service vs. National Standards

	Acres Per 1000 Population	National Standard
Total Parkland	10	10
Developed Parkland	7	10
Land Based Parks –Non-Special Use	2	7-10

*Note: Land Based Parks = Neighborhood & Community Parks

V. Level of Service – Spatial Analysis

The spatial analysis is primarily a mapping exercise that divides the county into sub-regions and then examines if there are any gaps in services or opportunities for expanding the parks system within each sub-area. The following factors are considered in this analysis.

- 1) Each population center should have convenient access to a neighborhood park with developed play facilities. This park could be a county park or a park in adjacent municipality. A school site with recreation facilities might double as a neighborhood park in small unincorporated areas that lack other facilities.
- 2) Are there opportunities to expand the park system and meet goals through partnerships with other agencies that have park and recreation sites or conservation land in the area?
- 3) Are there natural features such as lakes or river corridor that could provide water access or conservation opportunities?
- 4) Are there connections that can be made between county park sites and schools, other recreation sites or existing trails?
- 5) Are there opportunities to improve access to public lands?
- 6) Are there improvements that should be made to existing park sites that are underdeveloped or overcrowded?

Figure 12: Foys Lake, Herron Park and Lone Pine State Park offer opportunity for connectivity



The following tables summarize the opportunities for each sub-area. The analysis encompasses the unincorporated areas that have concentrations of population. The future level-of-service maps are included in Appendix B.

Table 9: Future Level-of-Service Analysis by Sub-Area (See Appendix B for Maps)

Area	Park and Recreation Needs
Marion (See Future LOS Map 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional park with play and sports facilities • Potential partnership with school • Little Bitterroot Lake and Ashley Lake access and open space • Potential partnership with FNF on Ashley Lake for a Regional Park
Kila (See Future LOS Map 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community park with potential partnership with school • Potential to develop parks and cultural opportunities along the Great Northern Historic trail
West Valley (See Future LOS Map 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports and open space park, potential partnership with school • Stillwater – Whitefish River water trails
Whitefish (See Future LOS Map 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitefish Lake access and open space
Happy Valley (See Future LOS Map 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential partner with state on Trust lands to meet park need • Community park with sports facilities and open space
Columbia Falls (See Future LOS Map 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Bridge Park • Flathead River access & water trail • Continue Partnerships
Hungry Horse (See Future LOS Map 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional park with river access and open space, also serving Coram & Martin City • Potential partner with the Forest Service
Martin City (See Future LOS Map 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional park in Hungry Horse
Coram (See Future LOS Map 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flathead River access and open space • Regional park in Hungry Horse
West Glacier (See Future LOS Map 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belton Stage Park Development • Potential partner with NPS • Lake Five access and open space • Middle Fork of the Flathead River access and open space
Kalispell (See Future LOS Map 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to equitably partner or cooperate with City of Kalispell for park needs • Regional park with sports facilities, water access and open space
Evergreen (See Future LOS Map 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River access and open space • Regional park with sports facilities, water access and open space
Creston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Blaine access and open space

(See Future LOS Map 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flathead River access and open space • Community park with sports facilities and open space, potential partner with school
Somers (See Future LOS Map 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flathead Lake access and open space • Potential for cultural park partnership • Flathead River access and open space
Lakeside (See Future LOS Map 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flathead Lake access and open space • Community park with sports facilities and open space, potential partnership with school
Big Fork (See Future LOS Map 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Big Fork community and County Road Department to secure water access where feasible in Big Fork Bay. • Expand Carlyle-Johnson Sports Park • Echo Lake regional park with water access and open space • Swan River Water Trail
County-wide Water Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County R.O.W. – Ownership issues – need long term policy • Foy's Lake, Whitefish Lake Park, Columbia Falls River Access • Large waterfront property/access
County-wide Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Plain/Riparian/Wetland • Open Space • River trail potential • Viewsheds • Sustainable
County-wide Special Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural/Historic – Railroad/Early Communities/Native Amer. • Gymnasium • Other – As opportunities arises

VI. Level of Service – Functional Analysis

Traditional needs assessments for parks and recreation have a facilities based focus. The per capita analysis and spatial analysis evaluate whether there are adequate park sites or facilities to meet the needs of the population. More recent park planning efforts, however, also consider the “function” of parks.

“New social mandates and needs are creating a complex environment, requiring a broader view, that takes more factors into account in the planning process and the decision equation, and that satisfies a wider range of needs and values.”

(National Park and Recreation Administration, “Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines.)

Analyzing the need for parks according to function provides a community with a way to assess if the park system contains all of the components to meet the various open space and recreation needs of the community. The following table identifies the various park functions and describes how those functions are being met in the county:

Table 10: Flathead County – Park Functional Analysis

Function	Description	Comments
Wilderness	Birding, Habitat, Hiking, Camping...	National Forest, Glacier National Park, State Forest. As private forest land is developed, access to these public lands becomes a concern. These areas are used by county residents and non-resident visitors.
Forest Park	Trails, Nature Areas, skiing, Multi-Use	Herron Park. Foys to Blacktail. State and Federal parks and public lands.
Play Park	Play Ground Equipment, Passive Recreation	Municipal and County neighborhood parks primarily meet this need. Must be conveniently located to residents. Some underserved unincorporated areas.
Sports Park	Ball fields, organized sports	Conrad Complex, Carlyle Johnson are operated by the county. Kidsport and Whitefish soccer complex are operated by a partnership between the cities and sports groups. Parks with playing fields are used by local residents but are not suitable for tournaments. There will be growing pressure on these complexes with population growth.

Garden	Passive, formal landscape – garden	Conrad Mansion in the City of Kalispell. Public input indicated that this function was more suitable for urban areas. FVCC Arboretum
Group Activities	Events, Group gatherings	Group facilities at Foy's Community Center. Some state parks and USFS sites have picnic shelters. Lone Pine State Park and Tally Lake have group facilities. Municipalities have parks that have facilities for groups. Demand for these facilities has been increasing. Would be an appropriate use for a community or regional park.
Heritage	Interpretive Center, Museum, Arts, Cultural and Historic Sites.	None of the county parks have heritage sites or interpretive plaques. Some sites with signage within municipalities. Demersville Cemetery has potential opportunities for sites regarding Native American and early settlement history could be incorporated into park designs.
Conservation	Wetland, Floodplain Preservation, Riparian, Wildlife Habitat	Leisure Island located in floodplain is primarily a natural site. State of Montana FWP has wildlife habitat preserves. Conservation easements protect some sensitive areas. Connecting scattered sites to preserve natural corridors would be most effective. Both urban and rural residents use county parks to access natural areas.
Water Access	Fishing, Boating, Swimming access	There are 14 county parks with water access. Montana FWP has additional sites. Whitefish Beach is a municipal park. County sites average 2 acres in size. There is growing pressure on these parks. There are no large community parks with water access suitable for group gatherings.
Fitness	Exercise equipment, gyms, Indoor Swimming,	This need is being met by private or quasi-public fee-based facilities. (See Chapter 6 for discussion on recreation needs)
Sports	Gym, Sports Complex	Two sports complexes for softball, soccer. No gymnasium except arrangements with schools to use gym space.
Connectors	Trails, Greenways	Rails-to-Trails. Trails Plan being developed by PATHS committee. Public input identified demand for connector trails and greenway corridors
Special Interest	Equestrian, Golf, Skiing, Folf, Dog Park	Herron Park provides equestrian facilities. Golf courses are private or quasi-public fee based facilities. Downhill skiing

	private fee based facility. FOLF, skateboarding and dog park are more urban focused.
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VII. Level of Service - Suitability Analysis

Existing undeveloped park land and future sites should be evaluated to determine the site's suitability for park and recreation use. The County Subdivision Regulations contain specific standards to address the suitability of park land that is proposed to meet the requirements for park land dedication in the subdivision regulations. The County subdivision regulations state the following:

Land dedicated for public parks or recreational purposes shall be useable land, shall be of appropriate shape and size and shall have convenient access by public roads meeting all appropriate County standards and specifications. Proposed public parkland with any of the following limitations may not be considered appropriate for park purposes

- i. Where more than five percent of the site has an average cross slope greater than 25 percent.
- ii. Where more than 50 percent of site has an average cross slope greater than two to six percent.
- iii. Where more than one percent of the park site is swampy or marshy.
- iv. Where the site is less than five acres in size, except in cases of providing public access to water based recreation.
- v. Where the site is an undeveloped open space area within a subdivision which does not have appropriate size, dimensions, or access to serve as a park.
- vi. Where proposed sites have been utilized in the past for industrial or other uses which could have hazardous waste implications.

Figure 13: Belton-Stage Park is a former landfill site



In some instances, sites with hazardous waste contamination, may be remediated and make a suitable park. The Belton-Stage park site is an example of an old landfill that has been remediated and accepted for use as a park. The county would need to work closely with property owners and regulatory agencies before accepting these parcels. Additionally, a swampy or

marshy area if part of a riparian area that has high conservation value may be acceptable.

In addition to the subdivision standards, there are additional considerations in determining whether a particular site or facility is suitable for park purposes. These include:

- Are the costs to develop or maintain the site comparable to other county parks? If costs will be excessive, is there a specified revenue source to cover the extra costs?
- Is the site open to the public? Sites that are within gated subdivisions, are landlocked, or have limited access points are not suitable park land.
- Are there traffic safety issues associated with the site? Park sites adjacent to roads with heavy traffic or high speeds require safe pedestrian crossings.
- Dense vegetation limits usability, creates areas of seclusion that may conceal illegal behavior and could create a fire hazard. Some areas of dense vegetation may require thinning.
- Older play equipment, broken sidewalks, and remote locations create liability and safety issues.
- Comply by State laws and court rulings on water access sites.

Appendix C lists park sites and contains a preliminary evaluation of the sites based on the above criteria. The table notes sites that are potential surplus sites. More detailed evaluation of these sites should be conducted prior to any action to dispose of them is taken.

The table also notes sites that are suitable for parks but require improvements or maintenance to bring them up to optimal conditions.

Chapter 6: Organized Sports

I. Background

Flathead County operates both youth and adult recreation programs. Recreation programs are currently devoted to recreational and competitive sports leagues and do not include alternative programming such as arts and crafts, fitness, or similar activities.

The County Park and Recreation staff is comprised of a Recreation Program Supervisor and a Park Concession Supervisor. The program is self-supporting with registration fees and sponsorships covering the costs of operating the program. Volunteers are used for coaching.

The County has arrangements with the school districts use school gyms to operate indoor recreation programs such as basketball and volleyball. The County must compete with the school programs, traveling clubs, Flathead Valley Community College intramurals and Rotary basketball for gym space. Currently, the County is subject to the various school districts' use policies. There are no formal agreements securing long term use of the space.

The softball leagues primarily use the Conrad Complex. The county leases the land from the Conrad Cemetery Association and has constructed the facilities at the site. The County is responsible for maintenance of the facility. Registration fees for the leagues cover the annual costs to maintain and lease the land. The current lease is a short term lease and will be due for negotiation in 2014. When the lease was renegotiated in 2008, the annual fee was set at \$15,000 annually.

Following are some key statistics regarding the Recreation Program for 2008

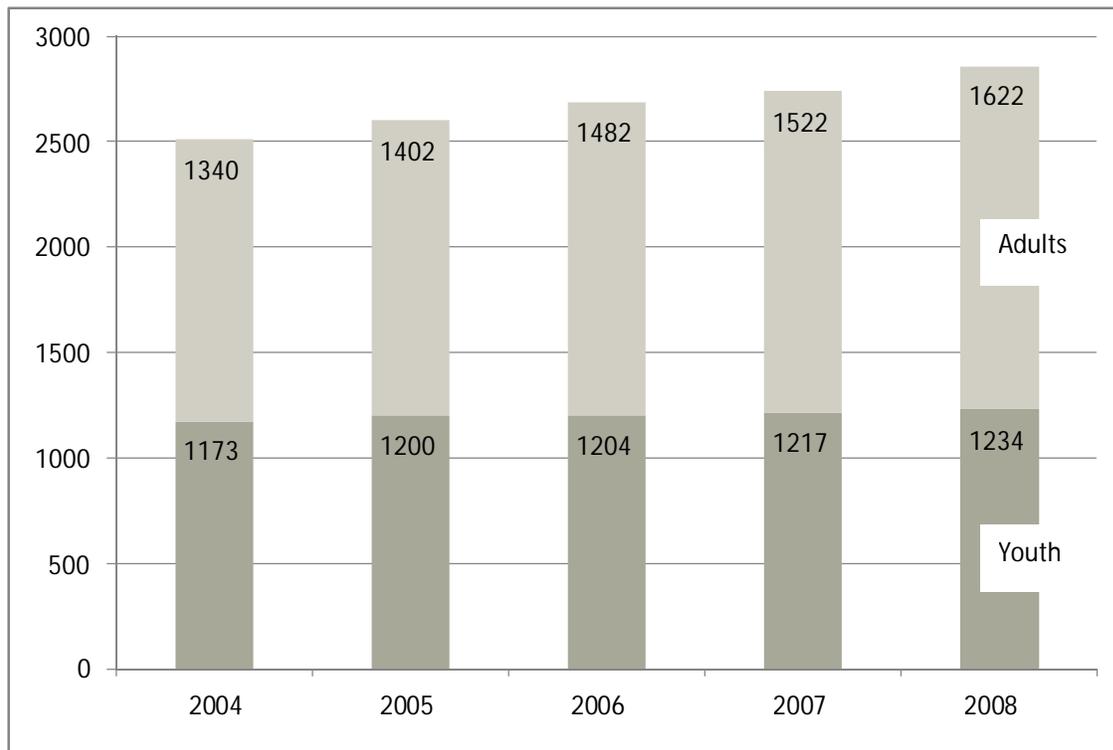
- Number of Adult leagues offered = 11
- Number of Youth leagues offered = 7
- Softball Tournaments = 8
- Number of Volunteers = 165
- Number of programmed times a gym is used = 350

II. User Trends

The County has youth programs for t-ball, basketball, volleyball, and flag football. It has adult programs for softball, basketball, and flag football. Softball had the most participants of all sports programs.

From 2004 to 2008 the number of participants in sports leagues increased every year. Participation in adult leagues (light gray) increased by 21% over this five year time period while participation in youth leagues increased by 5%.

Figure 14: County Recreation Leagues –Total Number of Participants



Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Department

In 1997, revenue from sports programs amounted to \$59,000. Participation in sports has increased every year since then. Revenue collected from all team sports has increased 44% over the five year time period from \$105,139 in 2004 to \$151,106 in 2008. Softball accounted for half of the revenues generated by the recreation fees.

III. Recreation Trends- National

The National Sporting Goods Association conducts an annual survey that provides an indication of national trends in recreation activities. Table 11 indicates if respondents have ever participated in a particular activity and their median age at the time of participation.

As indicated in the table, participation in recreation activities varies according to age groups. Younger age cohorts are more likely to participate in organized sports while older age cohorts are more likely to participate in fitness oriented activities or activities that require a significant investment in equipment.

Participation rates also varied according to gender. Males were more likely to participate in organized athletics at some point over their lifetime than females. Baseball, fishing, basketball, soccer, and boating were the most popular among males. Aerobic exercise, exercise walking, volleyball, and softball were the most popular activities among females.

Table 11: Most Selected Popular Recreation Activities by Age Group

Activity	% of Males Participated	Median Age (Male)	% of Females Participated	Median Age (Female)
Aerobic Exercise	29%	37.5	71%	38.2
Baseball	76%	22.6	23%	32.1
Basketball	69%	24.5	31%	23.1
Bicycle Riding	53%	31.0	47%	29.4
Boating/Canoeing	57%	36.2	42%	36.0
Exercise Walking	37%	37.0	62%	40.0
Fishing	68%	37.0	37%	36.0
Running	52%	31.0	47%	28.0
Soccer	62%	19.9	38%	17.1
Softball	51%	31.5	49%	21.1
Tennis	53%	30.5	47%	30.6
Volleyball	42%	30.4	58%	24.4

Source: National Sporting Goods Association, 2007

The Parks and Recreation survey that was completed as part of this Master Plan was designed to ascertain use of park facilities. The survey did not measure participation rates for various sports programs. According to national statistics, however, there is significant demand for such programs. A separate survey designed specifically to assess recreation programming needs in the county is recommended. A telephone survey of a randomly selected sample would help determine general support for a recreation center, desired services and funding options. A survey of current recreation program users might provide more in-depth information on programming needs and future demand for sports leagues.

IV. Recreation Center

A. Specifications

Due to increasing demand for gymnasium space in the schools, the Park Board is assessing the feasibility of a recreation center to provide gymnasium space for the County recreation programs. The following minimum specifications are the result of preliminary discussions on this concept. A feasibility study may suggest other alternatives.

- Primary mission is to provide gymnasium space for organized indoor sports leagues
- Provide services countywide – requires central location
- Minimum of approximately 13 to 15 acres of land
- There would be a small fitness center for use by county employees. This would not be intended to compete with private fitness centers.
- One regulation basketball court with three cross courts
- Seating capacity of 500
- Concession area
- Outdoor playground area
- Office space for Recreation staff
- Parking for 300 cars
- Room for future expansion

B. Evaluation of Alternatives

To date, three potential sites for a recreation center have been discussed. All of the sites are in the Kalispell Area. A feasibility study would include a more detailed analysis of each site and may identify additional options.

A feasibility study will estimate construction costs, projected revenue and expenses associated with a recreation center. These projections should be based on analysis that reflects local market conditions and consumer demand. Feasibility studies can provide detailed cash flow projections that will inform critical decisions regarding what to spend on the development, how much to build, where to build, what to offer, and what to expect in operating expenses, cost recovery, profits, energy consumption, and maintenance expenses. They may also address issues such as the organizational structure, competition, future trends in sports participation, and pricing, as well as a wide range of other factors.

The options outlined below include a preliminary analysis of the pros and cons of each alternative that should be considered in any feasibility analysis.

Option 1: Status Quo

In this option, the recreation program would continue to operate as it is currently run with arrangements made for use of gym space from school districts.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest costs of all alternatives • Ability to spend funds on other land acquisition/park development/ or trails • Opportunity to negotiate long-term formal agreement for use of gym space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No opportunity to expand indoor recreation programs to meet growing needs due to limited gym availability from schools • Dependent on schools for gym time. Could lose access to gyms space and have to discontinue sports programs • Rec programs are low priority for schools and cancellation of gym time for other programs is not uncommon • Displace recreation users • Staff time used to schedule programs at multiple facilities is unproductive • No concession revenue or rental fees potential

Option 2: Partnership

In this option, the Parks and Recreation Board would work with a partner to construct a recreation facility. The partner could represent another governmental unit or a private partner. The details of the partnership agreement and configuration of a future recreation facility would be dependent on the type of partner, the recreation goals of the partner, and the resources the partner would commit to the project.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New facility designed for recreation – No retrofitting • Partner could bring land and funds to project • Shared O&M expenses • Potential Revenue stream from rental of building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must identify partner with appropriate resources and compatible mission for joint venture • Share use of facility with partners – design would have to accommodate multi-purposes • Long term operating and maintenance expense • Commit substantial resources to build or purchase land (depends on partners)

Option 3: Stillwater Christian School

The County has had discussions with Stillwater Christian School located adjacent to the County Park and Recreation offices regarding purchase of the school grounds. As of the date of this report, the schools plans to relocate have been put on hold. Depending on future plans of the school, this option may or may not be viable.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuse existing building • Architecturally sound • Classroom space can be used for alternative programs • Classroom space can be converted to offices and leased for revenue • Room for expansion • Fields available for outdoor sports • Centrally located – convenient to Lakeside/Somers • Potential for partnerships • If considered with adjacent county lands this could become an important regional park containing many park and recreation uses • Adjacent to state land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remodeling & Retro-fitting costs • School property is currently off the market • Timing horizon for potential purchase is indefinite • Gym is too small to meet needs and there would be a need to construct a smaller gym • Long-Term expense for O&M • Commit all funds to purchase facility – No funds left for other land acquisition or improvement to existing parks • Requires negotiation and agreement on purchase price

Figure 15: Stillwater Christian School Site



Option 4: Hillcrest Park

The County currently owns and operates Hillcrest Park located on Whitefish-Stage Road. The park has two ballfields and parking lot but no other facilities.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New facility designed for County Parks – No retrofitting • Construction of gym is on economic stimulus wish list • No land purchase required • Centrally located – convenient to Whitefish, Columbia Falls • Trail access • Revenue stream from rental of building • Potential for partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood opposition • Increased traffic on WF Stage Road – Road is in poor condition • Lose use of ballfields (only limited use of facilities) • Long term operating and maintenance expense • Commit all funds to purchase facility – No funds left for other land acquisition and improvement to existing parks • 13 acres – Site is smaller than optimum. Limited potential for fields/Expansion

Figure 16: Hillcrest Park



Option 5: County Land on FFA Road

The county owns 129 acres on FFA Drive that is currently agricultural use for the Future Farmers of America program.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New facility designed for County Parks – No retrofitting • Construction of gym is on economic stimulus wish list • No land purchase required • Centrally located – convenient to Lakeside/Somers • Potential Trail access from CTEP • Revenue stream from rental of building • Potential for partnership • Adequate land for expansion • Convenient to Park & Rec Office • If considered with adjacent county lands this could become an important regional park containing many park and recreation uses • Adjacent to state land • Potential for water access to river 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible sewer plant to be constructed on site • Dislocate Vo-Ag programs • Increased traffic on FFA – Road is in poor condition • Proximity to proposed pre-release center • Substantial earth moving costs • Long term operating and maintenance expense • Commit all funds to purchase facility – No funds left for other land acquisition or improvements to existing parks • Redundant gym space with school across street

Figure 17: County Land on FFA Drive



FEASIBILITY STUDY – CONTENT

A feasibility study for a recreation center can have different components depending on the needs of the community. Some components that are typically part of a feasibility study include:

Needs Assessment:

- Community Surveys – Community Outreach
- Consumer Profile – Service Area
- Recreation Trends – Projected Use
- Potential Partners
- Programmatic Options
- Competitive Analysis

Site Analysis:

- Traffic Analysis
- Utilities
- Site Analysis (Topography, lot configuration, soils, site constraints)
- Environmental Impacts
- Conceptual Designs

Financial Analysis:

- Land Acquisition Costs
- Construction Costs
- Operation & Maintenance Costs
- Revenue Projections – Cost-Revenue Analysis
- Funding Options
- Phasing

Other

- Marketing Plan
- Risk Analysis
- Legal Issues

Chapter 7: Benefits Based Management

I. Benefits Based Management Approach

The “Benefits Based Management” approach recognizes the benefits that parks contribute to the overall quality of life in the community. More often, local and federal agencies are using this approach to evaluate investments for parks and recreation. Identifying benefits offers a strategic framework to make decisions based on the long-term benefits associated with a quality park and recreation system.

“Benefits-based Management (BBM) is a framework for engaging recreation service providers as partners in managing quality recreation settings to produce desired recreation experiences, and personal, social, economic, and environmental benefits”

“A Unified Strategy to Implement BLM’s Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services” Bureau of Land Management, 1/09/07

This “Benefits Based Management” approach represents a significant departure from the traditional parks planning model. The benefits based model acknowledges that there are multiple providers of parks. Planning will be most effective when public agencies work collaboratively. Rather than competing to fill market niches, agencies work together to evaluate parks and recreation facilities as part of a regional system. Decisions to acquire and improve parks are based on management objectives that reflect the benefits the community derives from parks. By identifying a wide range of benefits, park agencies can identify a broad array of partners and funding sources to help them meet their goals.

Figure 18: Benefits of Parks and Recreation



II. Economic Development

A. Increased Land Values

An increasing number of studies indicate that properties located adjacent to or near an amenity such as parks or open space have higher resale values and consequently generate more property tax revenues. This phenomenon is known as the “Proximate Principle”. Real estate developers use this principle to design subdivisions with amenities such as golf courses or common areas/green spaces.

To have a positive effect on property values, a park must be managed to be an amenity to nearby residents. Parks that are poorly maintained, poorly designed, or have problems with traffic congestion and vandalism can negate potential for increased land values. When properly managed and designed, however, the increased tax revenues that are generated by premium locations to a park can greatly offset the costs of land acquisition and development of the park.

B. Attracts Business and Employees

Quality of life factors are often cited by professionals in site selection as an important factor in attracting businesses to a community. Schools, parks, safety, and cost of living all contribute to quality of life. Companies evaluating a relocation decision routinely examine these factors. A survey of business owners and managers in Montana reported that they considered “community setting, natural environment, and recreational opportunity” to be more important in location decisions than business climate. (Journal of Travel Research, 1995)

Recreational opportunities are also an important consideration in recruiting employees. A survey of 1,200 high technology workers in 1998 by an economic consulting firm, KPMG, found that quality of life in a community increases the attractiveness of a job by 33 percent. (City Parks Forum – American Planning Association, Briefing Papers, “How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development”)

Parks and Economic Development

John L. Crompton, American Planning Association, PAS Report Number 502, 2001

Following are the conclusions from a review of studies on the impact of parks on land values:

- The effect on property values does correlate with the size and use of the park.
- Properties that are located near a large community park with significant areas of passive recreation and natural features can increase values by more than 20% for properties up to a half-mile away.
- Parks that are small and have a heavy amount of use may have less than a 10% impact on property value and the increase in value is limited to a few blocks.
- Studies generally agreed that there was no negative impact from properties located adjacent to a greenway or trail.
- The potential positive impact on property from a greenway is dependent on design of the linear park and perceived benefits from access to a trail system.

C. Tourism and Visitors Spending

Tourists or visitors may travel to Flathead County to visit a County park, engage in activities that take place in a park or participate in a sports event. Attractions in county parks may entice out-of-state visitors to extend their vacations and spend more dollars at local businesses. Visitors spend money on a variety of expenses including admission fees, eating out, food, shopping, lodging, gas, and other entertainment. The income generated from visitors generally stays in the local economy creating employment opportunities and supporting local businesses.

The economic impact of visitors to parks or sporting events can be significant. According to data from the University of Montana, the average expenditure per day for a single visitor ranges from about \$100 to \$200 depending on the nature of the trip. For example, a softball tournament that attracts 200 out-of-town visitors for a weekend tournament has the potential to generate up to \$100,000 of visitor spending. A statewide soccer tournament with up to 100 teams and 3000 to 4000 visitors has been estimated to have an economic impact of \$1.2 million dollars in one weekend. (Source: Daily InterLake, 5/28/09)

Table 12: Expenditures and Average Length of Stay by Purpose of Visit for Montana Visitors

	Avg. Length of Stay	Avg. Daily Expend.	Total Expend. (millions)	% Annual Expend.
Vacation/Recreation/Pleasure	6.02	\$195	\$1,674	52%
Visiting Friends/Relatives	5.50	\$148	\$612	20%
Passing Through	1.29	\$102	\$146	5%
Shopping	0.98	\$202	\$13	<1%
Business/Convention/Meeting	5.64	\$154	\$426	15%
Other	6.69	\$144	\$248	17%
ALL VISITORS	4.56	\$153	\$3,199	100%

Source: Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana

The County Park system has a variety of features and activities that can attract visitors. These include the following:

- Sports Tournaments
- Equestrian Events
- Hiking
- Cross-country Skiing
- Cultural Events – Festivals – Heritage Tours
- Fishing
- Boating – Canoeing
- Birding – Wildlife Watching
- Mountain Biking
- Weddings-Family Reunions

III. Environment

A. Water Quality

Floodplains and riparian areas perform valuable functions such as providing groundwater recharge areas, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, filtering pollutants from stormwater run-off and sediment control. Development in flood plains usually reduces, modifies, or eliminates their ecological functions. Protecting floodplains reduces property damage and saves taxpayers money by reducing the need for costly improvements or emergency services in areas subject to flooding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the National Flood Insurance Program, recognizes these benefits and now has a voluntary Community Rating Systems (CRS) that offers incentives in the form of discounts on flood insurance in localities that go beyond the minimum floodplain management requirements to achieve these ecological goals. Open Space preservation in floodplains is a means to attain credits in the program. Establishing parks in areas subject to flooding is an effective measure to preserving open space in accordance with the CRS program.

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“Local governments are knowledgeable, well equipped, and supported to conserve and protect wetland and riparian resources as they plan, develop, and implement programs and policies that enable them to cope effectively with rapid growth and development.”

Montana Wetland Council

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Figure 19: Wetland in Flathead County



Wetlands have similar environmental benefits as riparian areas and have also become a focus of a number of conservation grants and programs. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Technical & Financial Assistance Bureau is responsible for coordinating and providing leadership to wetland conservation activities state-wide. Wetland grant projects are solicited each fall for projects that further the goals of the State of Montana “Strategic Framework for Wetlands”.

www.deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/Wetlands/Index.asp

Case Study: Missoula, MT

“In Missoula, Montana, the Forest Service has been actively involved in a partnership of federal, State, and local land managers. The group originated in the fall of 2004 when the Lolo National Forest Supervisor and Missoula District Ranger met with county commissioners and the city of Missoula’s Park Director to discuss the benefits of coming together to discuss common land management issues. Today the partnership includes key people at the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, University of Montana, local land trusts, and county and city planners and open space staff. In 1 year, the group has produced a useful product – a map with layers depicting major land ownerships, conservations easements, elk winter range, riparian areas, and other significant features. Mapping helps meet the goal of fostering ongoing communication and coordination in this rapidly developing area of Montana. Balancing open space and wildlife needs is often the focus of these informal and constructive discussions that take place approximately every 6 weeks.”

Source: Cooperating Across Boundaries: Partnerships to Conserve Open Space in Rural America, USDA, Forest Service, FS-861, August 2006

B. Open Space

Open space includes natural areas such as forests and grasslands, as well as working farms, ranches and timberlands. Open space also includes parks, stream and river corridors. Protecting open space improves quality of life by providing amenities such as scenic beauty, preserving rural character and recreation opportunities. Environmental benefits from open space preservation accrue from habitat protection to improved water quality. Open space also creates economic benefits when land-based livelihoods like farming, ranching and forestry can continue to operate cost effectively in areas with rising land prices. Due to the multi-jurisdictional aspect of preserving open space, working collaboratively with other agencies is essential.

C. Reduce Pollutions

Studies have demonstrated that within one year an acre of trees can absorb enough carbon dioxide to equal the amount produced by driving a car 11,000 miles (Virginia Cooperative Extension, www.ext.vt.edu). The U.S. Forest Service calculates that over a 50-year lifetime one tree generates \$31,250 worth of oxygen and provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control by absorbing pollutants from the air. (www.coloradotrees.org/). In addition to air quality, parks and green space are also common solutions to help remediate sites that are contaminated with hazardous wastes.

D. Wildlife

Many of the principles for wildlife habitat protection are basic conservation practices that also have other environmental benefits. Major principles for designing parks with wildlife benefits in mind include:

- Maintain natural habitat patterns
- Allow natural processes to continue
- Enable wildlife movement between natural areas
- Plan development according to the land’s capacity
- Maintain key plants and animals
- Minimize the extent of disturbance

Source: Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, “Building with Wildlife”

IV. Social

A. Health

Organizations and agencies that promote fitness and health are increasingly raising awareness about the way the built environment can promote healthy communities. Convenient and safe places to exercise, such as parks and trails, are key determinants in how often people will incorporate fitness activities into their daily routines.

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“The diseases of the 21st century will be “chronic” diseases, those that steal vitality and productivity, and consume time and money. These diseases - heart disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and depression - are diseases that can be moderated by how we design and build our human environment.” (Source: “Creating A Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health”, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control)

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Additionally, trends also show that the aging population is actually healthier than previous generations. The baby-boom generation is staying more active and is demanding opportunities and facilities to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle.

Programs and facilities in parks will need to adjust to meet the needs of an active, yet less mobile and athletic clientele. Being physically active is key in maintaining independence and a high quality of life. Besides reducing the risk of many diseases associated with aging, regular exercise increases the ability for basic living, making it easier to carry grocery bags, get up from a chair and take care of household chores. In general, people become less physically active as they get older; nearly 40% of people over age 55 report no leisure-time physical activity. Challenging exercises and physical activities, done regularly can help many older adults improve health, even when done at a moderate level. According to the National Institute on Aging, four types of exercises are important.

1. Endurance activities
2. Strength exercises
3. Balance exercises
4. Stretching

B. Community

The City Parks Forum notes that parks help build communities in the following ways:

- Parks provide places for people to connect and interact in a shared environment.
- Parks channel positive community participation by getting diverse people to work together toward a shared vision.
- Park improvements are often quick and tangible actions for local officials and citizens to work together on issues such as reducing crime, eliminating graffiti, or traffic management.
- Parks are important in providing cultural activities and promoting local history through interpretive signs, exhibits and preserving historic structures.

Figure 20: Farmers Markets and Craft Fairs are popular community activities in parks



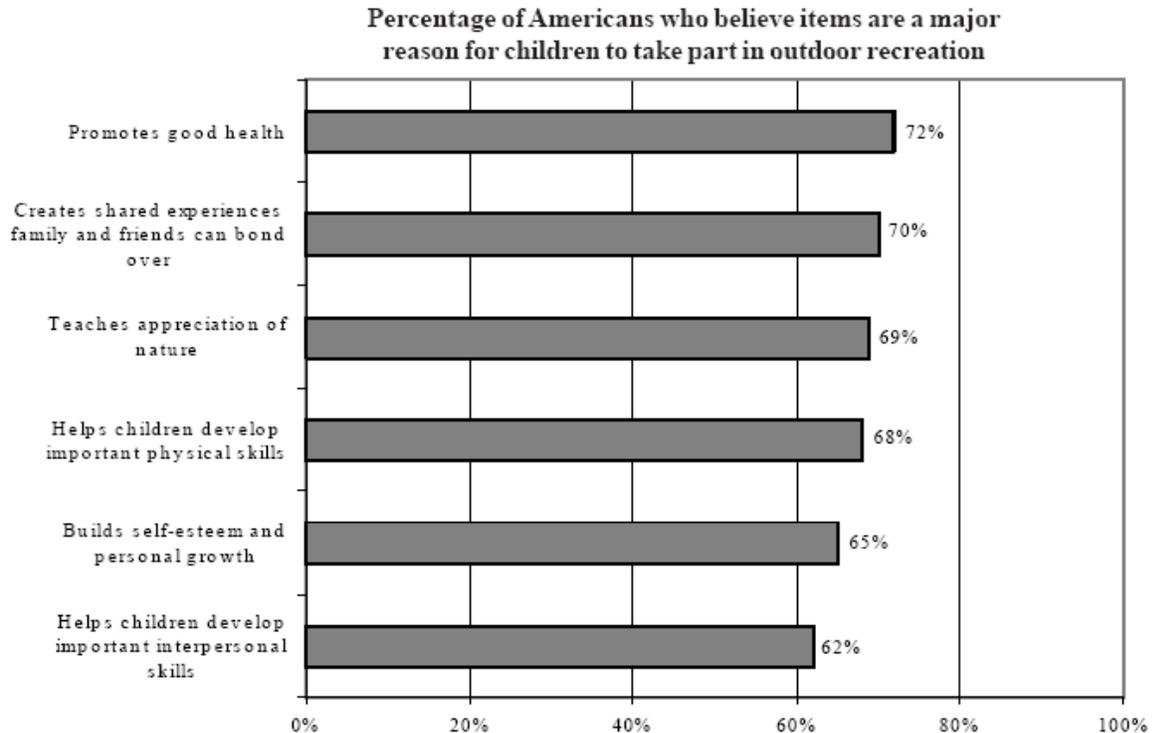
C. Less Crime

The National Association of Counties and the U.S. Conference of Mayors jointly sponsored a telephone survey of average citizens to determine their opinion of the parks in their communities. This survey consisted of random telephone calls of 1,200 people in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Seventy-four percent of the responding citizens agreed that parks and recreational opportunities would help prevent juvenile crime and delinquency.

V. Recreation

In a survey by the American Recreation Coalition respondents indicated numerous benefits to participation in outdoor recreation. Among one of the top benefits is promoting good health. Additionally, organized sports provide a healthy alternative for young adults to socialize and engage in physical activity. The county sports program is an affordable alternative for families to provide a competitive sports experience for their children.

Figure 21: American Recreation Coalition Survey Results



Source: ARC, 1999

The book, Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv notes that, “From 1997 to 2003, there was a decline of 50% in the proportion of children nine to twelve who spent time in such outside activities as hiking, walking, fishing, beach play and gardening ...” County parks are an opportunity for children to get direct experience with the natural environment. There’s been recognition on a federal level of the importance of children having access to natural environments and developing ecological literacy.

Chapter 8: Goals & Policies

I. Organization

Goal 1: Provide resources to the Park and Recreation staff and Park Board and consider innovative approaches to help them fulfill the responsibilities delegated to them by the County Commissioners.

- A. Adequately fund existing parks to maintain a safe system and avoid liability.
- B. Support funding for additional park staff positions as the parks, recreation, and trails system grows.
- C. Explore the feasibility of contracting for services where it may result in cost-savings or shared revenue.
- D. Use technology to create more efficient operations or revenue streams from applications such as on-line registration, web-cams, or leasing to wireless companies.
- E. Monitor annual progress towards achieving goals of the plan and establish priorities for the next year.
- F. Review and update the plan every five years to reflect changing needs and opportunities and to coordinate with the updates in the Growth Policy, state statutes, and transportation plans.
- G. Use public outreach to communicate the Parks and Recreation vision and goals and to build support for parks and recreation development.
- H. Provide for professional development for staff and board members through memberships in associations and training.

Goal 2: Develop a system of Advisory Committees to advise the Park Board on concerns, priorities and values of county resident.

- A. Develop an Advisory Committee system to geographically cover all areas in the County by establishing new committees in areas where there are interested citizens.
- B. Create a Recreation Advisory Committee to provide input on recreation programs and issues.
- C. Make the PATHS Committee a permanent advisory committee to assist with implementation of the Trails Master Plan.
- D. Develop and keep up-to-date by-laws for the Board and Advisory Committees to clarify expectations, responsibilities, and roles.

- E. Conduct an annual meeting with the Park Board, County Commissioners and Advisory Committees to set goals and priorities, allow various committees to share ideas and identify areas of joint concern and cooperation.
- F. Create an orientation packet and conduct an annual meeting to train Park Board and Advisory Committee members.
- G. Create policies and procedures for evaluating budget requests from Advisory Committees.

Goal 3: Engage citizen volunteers in helping to implement the goals of the plan and to build support for a vital park and recreation system.

- A. Work with the county risk management staff to establish policies and practices that will allow volunteers to perform various services to improve and maintain parks and trails while addressing potential liability issues.
- B. Identify specific tasks that would be appropriate for volunteers to perform and establish written policies for what type of training is necessary to use certain equipment and materials.
- C. Encourage and accept volunteerism as needed through an outreach program to civic organizations and schools.
- D. Develop a volunteer recognition program.
- E. Continue to use a process of background checks for volunteers that are working with recreational programs that involve youth.
- F. Coordinate with other recreation agencies and non-profit groups to share resources on volunteer development.
- G. Explore the development of a memorandum of understanding for programs such as adopt-a-park/trail for community groups that want to undertake such efforts.
- H. Explore the establishment of a non-profit organization to support parks, recreation and trails through fundraising, grant writing, volunteer development, and community outreach.

Goal 4: Create partnerships with common interest groups and people within the county to achieve the goals of this plan.

- A. Meet regularly with other park and recreation providers in the County to coordinate activities, identify areas of joint concerns, and potential for partnering.
- B. Expand joint-use agreements with school districts on gym space and the Conrad Complex to formalize arrangements for costs and responsibilities and to secure the future use of gym space and ball-fields for recreational programs.
- C. Develop an agreement with schools on trail maintenance for those paths and trails that are providing access to schools.
- D. Whenever possible, County parks should be developed in conjunction with public or private schools.
- E. Work with non-profit groups to establish public-private contracts to develop parks, secure funding, and build recreation facilities to meet the goals of this plan.
- F. Develop partnerships with community civic groups and organizations, private sector building and development industry and others interested in parks and recreation activities.
- G. Encourage parks, planning, maintenance and development coordination with other local jurisdictions, state and federal agencies.
- H. Where mutually beneficial and appropriate pursue intergovernmental agreements with municipalities and state agencies on common issues such as joint purchasing, shared maintenance of trails and parks, development of recreation facilities, land leases, and other similar issues.
- I. Encourage pocket-parks that are maintained and owned by homeowner groups and Associations.
- J. Engage in management practices to provide proper oversight, public input, and accountability to partnership arrangements.

II. Level of Service

Goal 1: Maintain and/or increase the current level of service for existing park and recreation facilities in Flathead County.

- A. Existing parks and recreational facilities must be operated and maintained in quality conditions for a safe and enjoyable use as identified elsewhere in this document.
- B. Evaluate undeveloped parks to determine if they meet the development guidelines in this plan and if not declare them as surplus property that can generate revenue for acquisition of parks that will better serve the needs of the population.
- C. Conduct safety checks on all playground structures and park equipment and review and eliminate (where possible) areas of liability in parks.
- D. Work with Advisory Committees to identify upgrades to current parkland facilities to meet the park development criteria in this plan and have them help identify funding sources to complete upgrades.
- E. Work with transportation planners to ensure safe pedestrian and vehicle access to parks.
- F. When opportunities to purchase adjoining land arise, the County should explore expanding existing parks to alleviate overcrowding or address parking issues.

Goal 2: Acquire, develop and maintain new parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of a growing population.

- A. Ensure that future demands are met through the development of new facilities/services either by the County or through development or partnership agreements.
- B. Pursue funding sources to expand the park system on parks that serve priority needs such as access to water, preserving natural areas, relieving overcrowding, providing rural community focus or trail/park connectivity.
- C. Use the park development guidelines contained within this plan to determine whether to accept land through subdivision dedication or cash-in-lieu of fees.
- D. New facilities should be built only after they are evaluated and determined to be financially feasible regarding costs to develop and long-term operation and maintenance costs.
- E. Special use parks should be developed and maintained in partnership with interest groups who can demonstrate significant demand and contribute financially to the facility.
- F. Secure long-term recreation facilities for sports programming to serve the population in the County that is in the unincorporated areas.
- H. County may develop new sport fields but private groups should be primarily responsible for managing and maintaining the facilities.
- I. Denser areas of settlement should have convenient access for families to Play Parks either through a homeowner park, school, or county park.

Goal 3: Develop parks that provide access to water features and natural areas.

- A. Providing public access to lakes and rivers in the County should be a top priority of the County.
- B. Accept donations of land that provide public access to water.
- C. Support the development of water access parks by other public agencies and identify potential partnerships for development of these parks.
- D. Identify county owned road right-of-ways that are undeveloped and are potential access sites to lakes or river and where feasible transfer ownership to County Parks and Recreation Department.
- E. There should be a large scale community or regional park on one or more of the major lakes in the county to accommodate larger crowds, events and gatherings.
- F. Natural areas to be integrated in the park system should have high conservation values and provide connectivity to other public lands, greenways, conservation lands, riparian corridors or wildlife corridors.
- G. Promote connectivity of natural areas through trails, public lands, conservation easements, protection of riparian areas and other means.
- H. Creating isolated islands of natural areas is discouraged, unless it is an opportunity to acquire critical land that would be the first piece of a larger system or vision.

Goal 4: Partner with other agencies to develop a system of trails.

- A. Coordinate with the goals and policies of the Trails Master Plan.
- B. Generally attempt to connect parks and schools with trails and interconnect various trail systems.
- C. Identify river access sites along the Whitefish River, Flathead River and Stillwater River to create a water trail.
- D. Acquire trail easements in new subdivisions in accordance with the trails master plan.
- E. Develop design guidelines for trails based on the projected use for recreation or commuting and user groups.
- F. Develop a strategy with the County Road Department, Planning Department, Montana Department of Transportation, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, recreation agencies, community groups and schools to determine responsibilities to construct and maintain trails.
- G. Partner with other agencies and landowners to provide recreation trails that connect lakes, public lands and other natural features.

Goal 5: Accelerate the development process for park, trail, and open space infrastructure to meet the challenges of community growth and development.

- A. Acquisition of park and leisure facility sites should occur now to serve the future needs of the county, particularly water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers and streams.
- B. Develop strategies to fund, operate, and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.
- C. Flathead County should preserve and increase recreational access to public lands and waterways by procuring or partnering to acquire necessary land, easements, or rights-of-way.
- D. Coordinate park and trail planning and development efforts with initiatives to preserve open space such as conservation easements to achieve common goals.
- E. If a county park site becomes surrounded by a municipality, evaluate on a case-by-case basis proposals from the municipality to transfer jurisdiction of the park based on whether there is a feasible plan for operating, maintaining, and funding the park.

III. Benefits Based Management

Goal 1: Manage parks to promote a positive economic benefit to the county.

- A. Maintain parks so they are an amenity to the neighborhood.
- B. Work with economic development agencies and professionals to promote parks and the quality of life benefits to potential new businesses.
- C. Work with the tourism industry to identify ways to promote and develop parks and trails to attract visitors to Flathead County particularly in the shoulder seasons.
- D. Promote sports tournaments and events in special use and sports parks to generate park revenue and visitor spending.
- E. Document economic impact of park usage and sports facilities to leverage other funding sources

Goal 2: Recognize the importance of the park system in achieving other environmental goals of the county.

- A. Riparian areas should be recognized for their recreational value and their ability to protect the natural aesthetics of waterways.
- B. Riparian buffers should be recognized for their ability to protect the quality of water along major streams and rivers in the County, by reducing erosion, limiting surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers and minimizing stream bank depredation/defoliation.
- C. Use best management practices to establish maintenance standards, vegetation standards and management plans for the various types of parks and their properties the County maintains.
- D. When feasible, select durable materials that are sustainable, resource efficient and non-toxic for construction of new facilities.
- E. Identify key areas on existing and future parklands with high quality native vegetation, wetlands or wildlife habitats, and manage to reduce existing invasive, non-native species and potentially detrimental effects associated with overuse.
- F. Within parks preserve wildlife corridors, environmentally sensitive areas and areas of high quality, natural vegetation.

Goal 3: Develop parks to provide a positive social experience for users and neighbors.

- A. Include interpretive signs and exhibits to promote the rich cultural heritage of the County.
- B. Promote the development of cultural or heritage parks through partnerships with non-profit agencies or community groups.
- C. Include picnic shelters and other facilities for group gatherings in larger community parks.
- D. Support programs to connect children and families with nature through both educational efforts and unstructured play to promote health and stewardship values.
- E. Provide recreational opportunities and facilities for people of all ages and abilities.
- F. Be good neighbors to private property near parks by enforcing rules to ensure the safe and quiet enjoyment of parks by everyone without negatively impacting neighbors.
- G. Work with the Sheriff Department, neighborhood watch groups and advisory committees to monitor illegal or nuisance activity and respond to complaints in a timely manner.
- H. Investigate the feasibility of caretaker arrangements for larger parks that receive heavy use.
- I. Work with the Sheriff Department to establish rules, regulations and enforcement procedures for park users.

Goal 4: Promote the positive benefits of recreation and sports programs.

- A. Have the Recreation Committee coordinate with schools, youth sports organizations and municipalities to identify areas of need for recreation programming and develop a plan to meet those needs.
- B. Identify partners for promoting recreation programming for benefits such as physical fitness, public health benefits, sportsmanship and crime prevention.
- C. Monitor participant trends and survey adult sports leagues to identify needs and demands for sports programming.
- D. Involve the community in recreation programming by seeking sponsors for events and leagues and recruiting community volunteers.
- E. The recreation program should be self-supporting through user fees, registration fees and sponsorships.
- F. Develop a scheduling system for sports fields to avoid conflicts and allow for maintenance.

Chapter 9: Finance & Implementation

I. Overview

The current budget is not sufficient to meet the growing demands on the park system. It is likely that a combination of various types of funding resources will be necessary to achieve the goals of the plan. The County must investigate new and innovative funding mechanisms to support the parks and recreation program.

Table 13 indicates the type of funding mechanisms that are available and how various types of funding can be allocated to different park and recreation functions. As noted in the table, there are a variety of funds that can be used for land acquisition and park development. It is becoming more common for local governments to use a combination of these funding sources to meet their goals for developing a park system. Once the land has been acquired and parks have been developed, there are fewer funding options to cover the operation and maintenance costs of these facilities. Although the primary source for operation and maintenance costs is the tax levy, revenues generated by the tax levy have flattened. In order to cover the operation and maintenance costs for an expanded park system, these revenues will need to increase accordingly. As noted in Chapter 4, funding for operation and maintenance already lags behind recommended spending levels.

Table 13: Park and Recreation Funding Mechanisms

	Operating & Maintenance	Land Acquisition	Park & Trail Development	Recreation Programming
General Fund	x	X	X	X
Park Mill Levy	x	X	X	
General Obligation Bond		X	X	
Land Dedication		X	X	
Cash-In-Lieu		X	X	
Impact Fee		X	X	
User Fees	X	X	X	X
Grants		X	X	X
Donations - Sponsorships	X	X	X	X
Partnerships	X	X	x	X
SID		X	X	
Park Main. District	X	X	X	
Concessions				X

I. Revenue Sources – Statutory Based

The Montana Code Annotated authorizes certain funding mechanisms specific to parks. These include:

A. Authorization to levy tax for various cultural, social, and recreational facilities.

Section 7-16-2102 of the MCA authorizes the board of county commissioners to annually levy on a tax for the purpose, "... of maintaining, operating, and equipping parks, cultural facilities, and any county-owned civic center, youth center, recreation center, recreational complex, or any combination of purposes, parks, and facilities."

Flathead County does have such a levy. The amount of the levy has decreased from \$1.39 2006 to \$1.10 in 2008. Property valuations, however, have increased so the revenue generated from the levy has remained steady. Population, however, has increased as well and park revenues are generally not keeping pace with population growth. Increasing the park levy would be one way to generate additional revenues for park operations.

B. Park dedication requirement or Cash-in-Lieu of Dedication.

The Flathead County Subdivision Regulations (Section 4.7.25 Parkland Dedication) require the subdivider to either dedicate a cash donation or land for parkland. Requirement for dedication of cash or parkland must be made accordance with Section MCA 76-3-621. Lots over 5 acres are exempt. The County recently amended its subdivision regulations to require land dedication for minor subdivisions. The amount of land or cash is determined by the following formula.

Parkland cash or land donation dedication requirements shall be based on the following formula:

- i. 11% of the combined gross area of the land proposed to be subdivided into parcels of 1/2 acre and smaller;
- ii 7.5% of the combined gross area of the land proposed to be subdivided into parcels larger than 1/2 acre and not larger than one acre;
- iii. 5% of the combined gross area of the land proposed to be subdivided into parcels larger than one acre and not larger than three acres; and
- iv. 2.5% of the combined gross area of the land proposed to be subdivided into parcels larger than three acres and not larger than five acres.

More recently the County has been accepting cash-in-lieu of land. As of 2008, the county had approximately \$400,000 of funds accumulated from subdivision dedications.

C. Impact Fees

Impact fees are one-time payments that are used to fund capital improvements necessitated by new growth. The Montana Impact Fee Act (MCA 7-7-1601) specifies the process for enacting impact fees and how such fees may be used. Flathead County completed an "Impact Fee Feasibility Study" in October, 2007 conducted by the consulting firm of TishelerBise. The study concluded the following:

"As development pressures continue in the County, new growth will place increasing demands on the County's park system, including demand for facilities the County does not currently provide, such as indoor recreation centers, including gymnasiums. TishelerBise feels that parks and recreation is a strong candidate for impact fees. The impact fee would contain several components assess only against residential development. The appropriate methodology would be determined during the fee study. It should be noted that the State of Montana Impact Fee Act requires a unanimous vote of the Board of County Commissioners in order to implement this impact fee."

In 2007, Per the State Act, the County had appointed an Impact Fee Advisory Committee to recommend an impact fee system. The Committee recommended that the county initially proceed with establishing fees for roads and a county justice center and consider fees for other facilities at a later date. In 2008, the County put all work on impact fees on hold and disbanded the Committee.

D. Park Maintenance Districts

The MCA - 7-16-2411 allows the creation of county park districts. A park district may be initiated by a petition signed by 10% of the voters within the proposed boundary of the district. The County Commissioners then conduct a public hearing and after the hearing if the county governing body determines that the proposed park district should be created, it shall by resolution:

- (a) set the boundaries of the proposed park district;
- (b) set the mill levy or maximum fee on each household for the proposed park district;
- (c) set the number of members to be on the district commission; and
- (d) call for an election on the question of whether to create the county park district.

Once a Park District is created, a Park Commission is established and Commissioners are elected from the district. The Park District Commission sets an annual budget for approval by the County Commission. There are currently no Park Districts within the County.

E. Special Improvement Districts

Under 7-12-4101, MCA, cities and towns can create special improvement districts for a number of activities including:

- “5. The acquisition and improvement of land to be designated as public park or open-space land”

Special Improvement Districts require approval by 50% of property owners within the district. There are no special improvement districts for parks and recreation purposes in the County.

F. General Obligation Bond

General obligation bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the county and must be approved by the voters in an election. General obligation bonds are generally payable from ad valorem taxes (based on the value of property) and expressed in mills. General obligation bonds are attractive to bond buyers because they have voter approval and are not as vulnerable to fluctuations in revenue. Cities and counties are assigned a bond debt limit based on a percentage of taxable valuation.

G. Revenue Bonds

Revenue Bonds—Under 7-7-4401, MCA, a city or town may issue revenue bonds to finance any project or activity authorized. Revenue Bonds are paid back with revenue sources such as TIF funds, fees, rentals or other sources of revenue. Some localities have used revenue bonds as part of the financial package for recreation centers when membership fees or facility rentals will generate enough revenue to pay off the bond. Revenue bonds do not require voter approval.

III. User Fees

User Fees are commonly mentioned as a method of supplementing park operating funds. The attraction of user fees is that at least part of the costs of operation and maintenance is funded by those who are receiving direct benefits from using the facility. The downside to user fees is that it requires additional administration to collect funds and develop an accounting system to ensure proper tracking and spending of funds. Sometimes these administrative costs exceed the amount of funds collected. Often County residents receive discounts from fees. Following is a review of the various types of user fees.

A. Facility Rentals

Currently the County averages about \$5000 per year in facility rentals. Rental rates are comparable with other park facilities in the area. The focus groups indicated an increasing demand for these types of facilities so there may be opportunities to develop and market facilities for group rentals.

Table 14: Rental Fees

Meeting Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foy's Community Center - \$135 per day • Lone Pine State Park - \$125 per day • Saddle Club (Whitefish) - \$72 per day
Park/Picnic Shelter	<p>Flathead County - \$50 to \$200 per day depending on group size</p> <p>Woodland Park - \$72 to \$360 per day depending on group size. City residents get a 20% discount.</p> <p>Lone Pine Shelters - \$75 per day</p>

B. Park Entry Fees

National and State Parks often have park entry fees. To institute such fees requires an attendant at the park to collect fees. To ease administration, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks collects fees along with vehicle registrations. Vehicles with Montana plates do not pay an entry fee. County parks generally do not generate the visitor traffic to justify park entry fees. There was very little support for this funding option in the community survey.

An alternative to entry fees is to install a collection box to allow visitors to voluntarily contribute donations towards the maintenance of county parks. There is currently a donation box at Herron Park. Vandalism sometimes occurs with this system and it would need to be monitored.

C. Special Events

Events such as tournaments, festivals, fishing derbies, and farmers markets can generate revenues. The cost of hosting the event, however, must be considered to make sure there would be a positive revenue stream from the event.

D. Stable Fees

Herron Park has equestrian facilities including stables that can accommodate 60 horses during special events. During events at the park, the horse club collects fees for stabling horses and turns these over to the Park and Recreation Department. The average amount collected is \$1500 per year. The fees do not cover maintenance costs of the stables. There is no long-term stabling at the facility. Overnight campers that use the facilities for special events pay \$10 per night for camping. State Parks camping fees are \$15 per night

A telephone survey of private boarding facilities indicated that an average overnight boarding fee in western Montana ranges from \$20 to \$35 dollars. A mandatory fee for boarding at the stables at a competitive rate would generate additional revenue that could off-set the operating costs for the stables. According to the Flathead Combined Training Association calendar of events, the stables are used approximately 10 to 15 nights over the summer. Minimal stabling rates of \$10 to \$20 could easily generate \$500 to \$1000 per night and contribute significantly more income for operation and maintenance.

The Flathead Combined Training Association is conducting a fundraising campaign for Herron Park. This includes selling sponsorships and naming rights for the barn. (http://www.flatheadeventing.org/herron_park.html)

E. Recreation Licenses

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation have a recreation license that is to be purchased for anyone who recreates on School Trusts Lands. The license requirement is difficult to enforce and often residents are even unaware of the requirement. Consequently, participation rates of those purchasing licenses are low. This system worked best when fees are collected as part of another program.

F. Parking – Boat Launch Tags

Fees to use parking facilities or boat launch facilities are a revenue option at some parks but generally require an attendant to collect the fees. These could be instituted on peak weekends. Montana FWP charges \$5 a day for use of a boat slip.

G. Commercial Outfitters

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has a commercial outfitters fees for guided trips that are using state park facilities. With the development of a trail system such as the Foy's to Blacktail Trail or a canoe/kayak trail it is possible that these will be attractive to commercial outfitters. The FWP "Commercial Use Fee" is 3% of a commercial user's yearly, unadjusted

gross revenue for that portion of their commercial business.

H. Sports Fees

The county collects registration fees for sports leagues. These fees cover the cost of operating the program.

IV. Grants

In addition to taxing and bonding authority, government agencies can fund some improvements through grants and donations. Grants are available from Federal and State agencies as well as non-profit foundations. Grants can be linked to economic development benefits, wellness benefits, environmental benefits and other strategic planning goals. There are also numerous sports organizations that will fund recreational programs and local foundations that often contribute to civic improvement projects in parks.

Researching grants, grant writing and grant administration can be a time consuming endeavor and it will be necessary to determine what resources are available to pursue these specific grant programs. Many grants will require a match. Cash, in-kind labor and land are possible ways to provide a match.

V. Other

Sponsorships for the organized recreation leagues are an important source of revenue to off-set costs of the recreation program. Local businesses sponsor teams, newspaper ads, and tournaments.

Although there is no formal program to solicit donations, the County does receive between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per year in donations for county parks. Some park programs around the State offer opportunities for memorials or adopt-a-park programs to generate revenue from donations. Establishing a parks foundation is a common way to accept these types of donations.

Concessions at sporting events are a significant source of revenue for the recreation program. In 2008, concessions generated \$38,000 in revenue.

Adopt-a-Park has been instituted in other jurisdictions and allow local civic organizations and businesses to donate time and money to maintaining area parks. In-kind donations of time by volunteers for a variety of activities can significantly increase the level-of-service that a parks department can offer.

VI. Funding Strategies

The following administrative strategies are recommended for funding the recommendations of this plan. The Park Board may review and refine these strategies to improve their effectiveness.

Operation and Maintenance

1. At a minimum, maintain existing funding using a benchmark of expenditures per acre of developed parkland service for operation and maintenance for existing developed parks.
2. Increase revenues to reduce the funding gap between the county and peer communities.
3. Staffing, operating and maintenance should be funded from the existing park mill levy.
4. Revenues generated from the mill levy should increase in relation to inflation, the development of existing parks and the expansion of the park system due to population growth.
5. Promote an adopt-a-park/trail program and use of volunteers to assist with maintenance of parks.

Park Land Acquisition

6. Establish a park land acquisition fund with revenues from through cash-in-lieu fees, impact fees (if implemented), grants, fundraising, and donations.
7. Establish procedures to accept donation of land for parks that meet the goals and priorities of this plan.
8. Proceeds from the sale of surplus park land should be dedicated to the acquisition of park land in more appropriate locations.
9. The funds in the park land acquisition fund should be used to purchase large tracts of land or water access to meet the goals and objectives of this plan.
10. Unless the land provides water access or helps meet other priorities of this plan, the preference for new subdivisions is to accept cash-in-lieu fees of land so funds can be compiled for larger land acquisitions to meet the needs for community parks.

Park Improvements

11. Establish a Park Improvement fund with revenues from grants, fundraising, special improvement districts, park maintenance districts, and annual surplus from revenue generated by the park levy.
12. A portion of revenues from the mill levy should be set aside as a park improvement fund. The fund would be supplemented through donations, fundraising, rentals, and

revenues generated from special events. The park improvement fund would be a discretionary fund to consider request for parks improvements per the procedures established in the organizational chapter.

13. Advisory Committees and community groups may initiate fundraising activities for the purpose of financing specific improvements in parks in their areas.
14. Establish an adopt-a-park/trail program to allow civic organizations and local business to conduct fundraising or provide volunteer labor for maintenance of a specific park.

Recreation – Organized Sports

15. A portion of the cash-in-lieu fund may be used to leverage funds for the construction of a recreation center – gymnasium.
16. Upon completion of a feasibility study, a recreation center-gymnasium capital costs should be funded through a financial package that represents a combination of funding sources. (Down payment, debt financing, grants, partner contributions, fundraising,)
17. If county land is used for a recreation center-gymnasium, the value of the land should be used as a matching contribution for grants.
18. Recreation programming should be self-supporting through registration fees, concessions, and sponsorships

Trails

19. Existing trail should be maintained per the policy adopted by County Commissioners, Park Board and Road Department.
20. New trails should be maintained through a combination of resources such as volunteers, homeowners associations, MOUs and other mechanisms identified in the Trails Master Plan.
21. Trail construction costs should be funded through grants such as CTEP, partnerships, or fundraising and other sources identified by the Trails Master Plan.
22. Trail easements and right-of-way should be obtained through exactions during the subdivision process, grants, transportation improvement projects, donations or fundraising.
23. Establish an adopt-a-trail program to allow civic organizations and local businesses to conduct fundraising or provide volunteer labor for maintenance of a specific park.

Special Use & Natural Spaces

24. On-going maintenance for special use facilities should be funded through user fees, partnership, endowment or other long-term maintenance plan.
25. Park land acquisition should be coordinated with open space preservation programs.
26. Expansion of natural areas and environmentally sensitive lands should be coordinated with conservation partners.
27. Special use functions should have a partner to share in costs.

VII. ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is a matrix that lists the task and identifies staffing, costs considerations, and timeframe for each task.

Table 15: Action Plan

Action	Staffing	Cost	Timeframe
1. Create Sports Advisory Committee	Park Staff	N/A	Immediate
2. Create Advisory Committees for Columbia Falls and Kila	Park Staff	N/A	Work with Community
3. Conduct Recreation Feasibility Study and develop action plan for securing gymnasium space per results of the study	Consultant	Study Costs \$25,000 to \$50,000. Grant to fund.	After Rec. Committee Forms
4. Complete and adopt Trails Master Plan	PATHS Committee	NPS Technical Assist Grant	Fall 09
5. Evaluate existing parks in accordance with Master Plan guidelines and policies and prioritize recommendations for improvements	Advisory Committees	N/A	Per process in Chapt. 4
6. Evaluate undeveloped park land in accordance with Master Plan guidelines and policies. Commence process to sell surplus parks.	Staff Contract work as needed	Administrative costs. Fees for professional services (Appraisals...)	Before 5-year master plan update
7. Create development plans for lands to remain in park system	Contract work	Fees for professional services. Look for grants to fund.	Before 5-year master plan update
8. Park Board conduct annual meeting with Advisory Committees	Park Board and Park Staff	N/A	Fall
9. Develop by-laws and rules for Park Board and Advisory Committee	County Staff	N/A	On-going
10. Establish volunteer program and an adopt-a-park/trail program.	Park Staff	Administrative Costs	Following resolution of insurance issues

11. Conduct annual inter-agency meeting	Park Staff	N/A	Fall/Winter
12. Negotiate Memorandum-of-understanding (MOU) or joint agreements with schools regarding use of gyms and trail maintenance	Park Staff	N/A	As needed
13. Work with community groups to establish Park Foundation or Park Fund for charitable donations	TBD	Grants – Donations	TBD
14. Evaluate county properties with water frontage to determine viability as water access sites	Staff	Administrative Costs	Before 5-year update
15. Map existing river access sites as part of effort to establish water trail	County GIS	Administrative Printing	First year action
16. Develop on-line scheduling/reservation system for use of park facilities and sports fields	County Staff	Administrative	As time permits
17. Acquire new park sites in accordance with policies and LOS analysis in Master Plan	Park Board	See financial strategies	On-going
18. Evaluate user fees and revise according to policies in the plan.	Park Board	N/A	First year action

Chapter 10: Park Development Guidelines

I. General Guidelines

The following park classifications and their associated development guidelines and design standards are intended to be used to inform decision-making pertaining to park development, land acquisition, and recreation opportunities within the county-wide park system. These parks can be developed as stand-alone types or as hybrids (example: a Neighborhood Park could be developed adjacent to a School Park for a larger park fabric; or a Cultural/Heritage Park could be developed within a Community, Regional or Linear Park). Flathead County park and open space classifications are:

- A. Pocket Park
- B. Neighborhood Park
- C. Community Park
- D. School Park
- E. Regional Park
- F. Sports Complex
- G. Special Recreation Park
- H. Cultural/Heritage Park
- I. Water Access Park
- J. Open Space/Natural Area Park
- K. Trail/Linear Park

The County's park classification system is similar to that identified by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Other information is referenced from several parks and recreation documents developed by various counties in the State of Montana.

The Flathead County classification system corresponds with the inventory and level of services maps in Appendix B. A trail system providing park connectivity is recommended. Trails, other than water trails, are not indicated on the level of service maps. The Trails Master Plan, when completed, will contain detail regarding trail design and proposed locations.

Several factors that influence the type of park system that should be developed in Flathead County are 1) the majority of the population is living in the unincorporated areas of the county; 2) currently limited funding and staff dedicated to the maintenance of existing parks, and limited funding available for land acquisition and the development and maintenance of new parks; 3) the opportunities to develop equitable partnerships with other agencies and organizations; 4) the large amount of public lands within the County that provide recreational opportunities and amenities; 5) the opportunities to engage citizen volunteers.

Based on these factors, the following general guidelines should apply:

1. All parks should be developed in accordance with other goals, guidelines, and policies within this plan.
2. Parks should be developed and upgraded in a manner that minimizes maintenance efforts over time. These efforts include preserving, to the greatest extent possible, areas of naturalized and/or native landscape, an emphasis on hardy, drought-tolerant plantings and low-grow grass mix, and minimizing lawn planting to areas that are appropriate.
3. Parks that have significant infrastructure components should receive careful consideration regarding long-term operations and maintenance commitments.
4. The Park Board and the Advisory Committees can use this information in evaluating the maintenance of existing parks, development of new parks, land acquisition and the acceptance of park land dedication by developers.

II. Specific Guidelines

A. Pocket Park

Description: Pocket Parks, mini-parks, tot lots, and children's playgrounds are small, single-purpose play lots generally less than two acres in size. They are generally located within ¼ mile of a residential area, provide some passive open space for local residents and provide a small amenity where no other park sites are conveniently located. Park features usually include a small open grass area and may include a children's playground or a picnic area. In the County these are typically maintained by the homeowner's association.

Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. No pocket parks should be acquired or developed in the unincorporated areas of Flathead County, unless it is owned and maintained by a private homeowners association.
2. These sites should have good access and visibility from a public street.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. Appropriate facilities include:
 - Children's playground area
 - Open grass area
 - Picnic areas
5. Off-street parking is not required.

B. Neighborhood Park

Description: Neighborhood parks are generally within ½ to one-miles of the residential area being served. This park is accessible by a safe route or trail and typically contains a turf area for informal play, a playground, and picnic facilities. The parkland, ranging from 3-10 acres, is fully developable for park uses and is not in environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, a designated retention pond or containing steep terrain. Neighborhood parks may be combined with a school. There may be both passive and active recreation opportunities. In the County these are typically maintained by the homeowner's association.

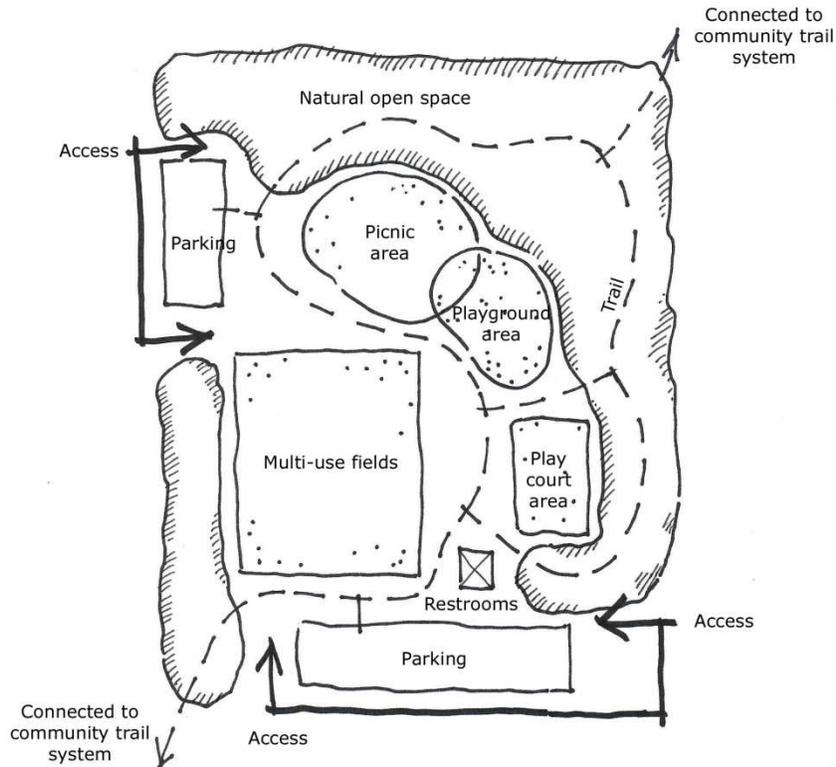
Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. This park type should have a balance of active and passive park uses. Active recreation facilities are intended to be used in an informal and unstructured manner.
2. Neighborhood parks should have at least 100 continuous feet of street frontage for access and good visibility.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. At least 50% of the site should be flat and usable for both active and passive recreation.
5. Parcels of land that have aesthetic value are desirable for neighborhood parkland.
6. These parks should contain areas landscaped with trees and grass where appropriate. Areas of natural vegetation should be preserved to increase aesthetics and habitat value.
7. A site should accommodate 7-10 parking spaces. On-street or off-street parking, or a combination thereof, is acceptable. On-street parking is acceptable only if the street is adjacent to the park.
8. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - Multi-use field(s) for informal active recreation
 - Children's playground area
 - Paved courts or multi-use area
 - Picnic area with shelter building
 - Natural open space
9. Restroom facilities are discouraged.
10. To minimize noise and lighting impact on adjoining homes, active and noisy facilities, and those that may require lighting, should be located a minimum of 75 feet from the property line.

C. Community Park

Description: A Community Park is a larger park that serves multiple neighborhood areas with a two miles service area radius but will often attract residents from a much larger area. The size range is 10-100 acres. At least 50% of the land is developable for park uses and may contain environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, a designated retention pond and/or steep terrain. Community Parks may be combined with schools. A Community Park will include similar type of development as a Neighborhood Park and provide additional facilities that consolidate adult and youth programmed activities. Safe, non-motorized routes often link the park to other parks and the neighborhoods that they serve. Parking for vehicles is available, either on-street or adjacent to the park, so that crossing a road is not required. Generally, Community Parks include ample active recreation opportunities with areas for passive use. Facilities for group activities and events are available.

Figure 22: Concept Plan – Community Park



Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. This park type should have a balance of active and passive park uses. Active recreation facilities are intended to be used in an informal and unstructured manner.
2. Maintaining a large portion of natural open space should be a priority. Trails and other appropriate amenities can connect the open space with other developed portions of the park, and also provide buffering between the park and adjacent residential areas.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. The site should be accessible from an arterial or major road.
5. Off-street parking should be provided. On-street parking can supplement off-street parking and is acceptable only if the street is adjacent to the park.
6. These parks should be located on the edges of residential areas rather than in the interior of developments because of the traffic and noise they generate.
7. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - Multi-use field(s) for informal active recreation
 - Children's playground area
 - Paved courts or multi-use area
 - One or more picnic areas, with one or more picnic pavilions of varying size
 - Restroom facilities
 - Internal trails or pathways, connecting to a community trail system
 - Facilities for cultural activities, such as plays and concerts
 - Natural open space and natural features

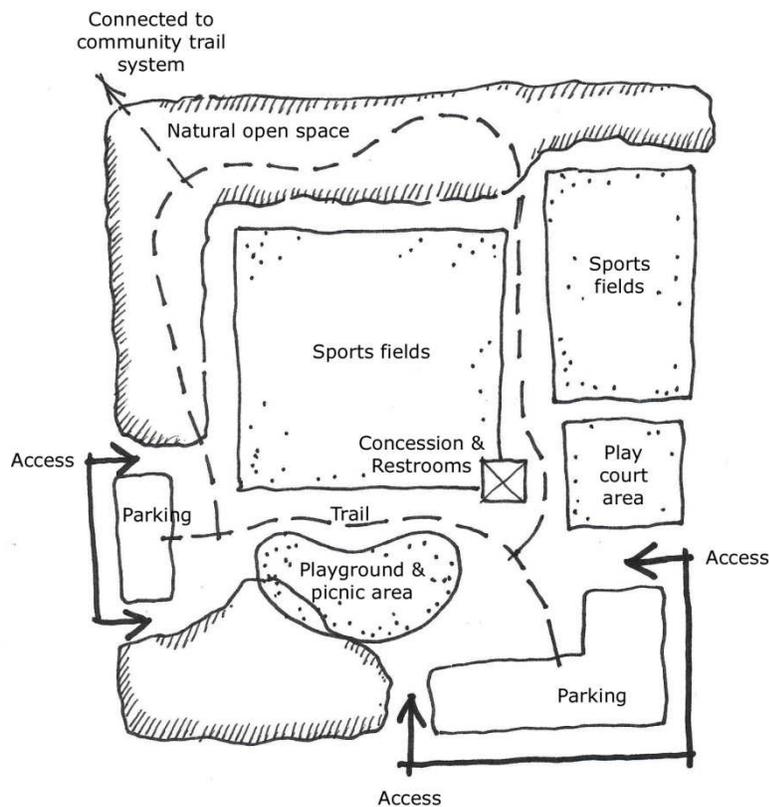
D. School Parks

School Parks are not included in the County park classification system but can be used in combination with other park types

E. Sports Complex

Description: A Sports Complex consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities into larger sites that are located strategically throughout the County. Sports Complexes should be a minimum size of at least 20 acres and serve people from both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County. Designed solely for active recreation use, these parks should accommodate the specific needs of the County athletic programs, athletic associations and other user groups. Athletic fields and facilities can be used for a variety of sports so as to be inclusive of more participants.

Figure 23: Concept Plan – Sports Complex



Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. This park type is strategically located and solely for active and programmed recreation.
2. Sports Complexes should be located adjacent to non-residential land uses. Where these parks are adjacent to residential areas, buffering (topography, vegetation, etc.) shall be used.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. Sites should be easily accessible from major thoroughfares. Park access through residential areas should be avoided.
5. Topography and soils should be appropriate for developing sports facilities.
6. Natural vegetation along the perimeter of the park or in non-field areas may be preserved to increase aesthetics and habitat value.
7. Parking areas should be off-street and be large enough to accommodate an identified number of participants and spectators.
8. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - Multiple ball fields and courts
 - Parking lot
 - Play structures
 - Restroom facilities
 - Multi-use buildings/shelters
 - Concession stand
 - Internal trails or pathways, connecting to a community trail system
 - Lighting
 - Drinking water

F. Regional Park

Description: Regional Parks supplement neighborhood and community parks, serving a broader base of recreation needs in addition to what is provided in the smaller parks. The size range is 50 or more acres, servicing the entire County and visitors. At least 50% of the land is developable for park uses and may contain environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, a designated retention pond and/or steep terrain. Regional Parks offer a balance of active and passive recreation, while including sizeable undeveloped areas with natural vegetation, features and/or water features. Safe, non-motorized routes often link these parks to other parks and the neighborhoods that they serve. Facilities for group activities and events are available.

Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. This park type should have a balance of active and passive park uses. Active recreation may be a combination of structured and informal fields.
2. Maintaining a large portion of natural open space should be a priority. Trails and other appropriate amenities can connect the open space with other developed portions of the park, and also provide buffering between the park and adjacent residential areas.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. The site should be accessible from an arterial or major road.
5. Minimum street frontage of 1,500 feet
6. One or more parking lots (i.e. 100-300 cars each) possibly serviced by an internal road.
7. These parks should be located on the edges of residential areas rather than in the interior of developments because of the traffic and noise they generate.
8. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - a. Multi-use field(s) for informal active recreation
 - b. Sports complex (lighted) with 3 or more fields per
 - c. Children's playground area
 - d. Paved courts or multi-use area
 - e. Multiple picnic areas, with one or more picnic pavilions of varying size
 - f. Restroom facilities
 - g. Swimming pool with bathhouse or natatorium (indoor pool)
 - h. Internal trails or pathways, connecting to a community trail system
 - i. Facilities for cultural activities, such as plays and concerts
 - j. Natural open space and natural features
 - k. Multiple access points to water, if applicable

G. Special Recreation Park

Description: This park classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose uses, such as a nature center, aquatic center, equestrian facility, arboretum, campground and golf course. These parks should serve a broad cross section of the community. Often these parks offer fee-based activities and may or may not be public parks. The size of these parks is dependent on facility requirement and specific uses.

Figure 24: Equestrian Facility at Herron Park



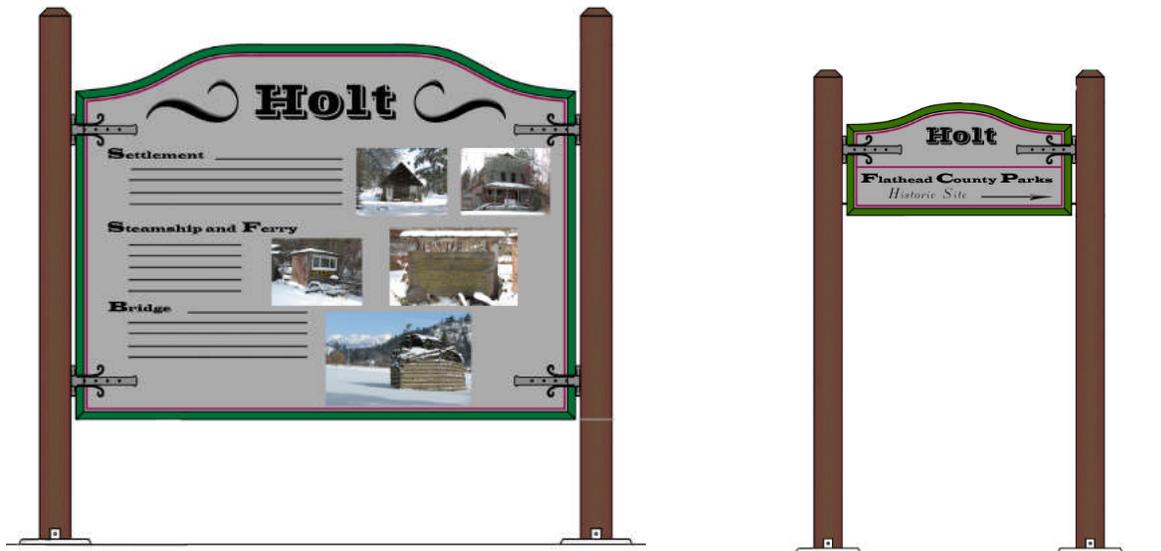
Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. Special Recreation Parks are often developed with partnerships.
2. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.

H. Cultural/Heritage Park

Description: The Cultural/Heritage park classification recognizes that Flathead County has a rich history which could be incorporated into the county park system. Cultural and heritage facilities include interpretive signage areas along trails, specific sites that are historically significant and may or may not contain remnants of historical significance, and areas incorporated into larger park types where appropriate.

Figure 25: Example of Interpretive Signs



Cultural/Heritage Signage Concepts

Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. The primary function of park type is to preserve, enhance and educate park users about the cultural and historical foundation of Flathead County.
2. Parking is dependent on facilities provided.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - a. Interpretive signage
 - b. Seating and/or picnic areas

I. Water Access Park

Description: Water Access Parks range in size from small to large sites. These parks can include road rights-of way, riparian areas, or be a component of other park types, like a regional park and others described in this chapter. This type of park is primarily designed to provide fishing, boat or swimming access. Often these parks inhabit environmentally sensitive areas. Planning, design and development should be conducted carefully to ensure the protection of natural systems, water quality and habitat.

Figure 26: Foys Lake



Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. The primary function of this park type is to provide public water access on a variety of water bodies around Flathead County.
2. In the public input process, water access parks were identified as highly desirable components to the county park system.
3. Safe walking and biking routes should provide access.
4. Parking is dependent on use and facilities provided.
5. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - a. Trails/trailheads
 - b. Docks
 - c. Boat ramps
 - d. Designated swimming areas
 - e. Picnic areas
 - f. Natural open space

J. Open Space/Natural Area Park

Description: This type of park that may include environmentally sensitive lands, steep terrain, forested areas, water bodies, flood plain and other natural areas that are only minimally developed and may serve as conservation areas, educational and wildlife watching opportunities. The size range of this park type varies but should be linked to other open spaces and parkland to maintain park system connectivity. Trails, wildlife viewing areas and other amenities can be integrated to provide passive recreation opportunities.

“There are no specific standards for how much conservation land a community ought to have. Instead, it is dependent on the number and quality of natural and historical resources in the area, public desire to preserve these valuable sites, and the willingness of the elected body to provide funds for their preservation.” Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. National Recreation and Park Association.

Figure 27: Leisure Island Park



Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. The primary function of park type is to conserve open, natural space (including sensitive ecosystems and species, natural resources, wildlife habitat, and viewsheds).
2. The secondary function is to provide passive recreation opportunities with trails and other amenities.
3. Parking areas – Dependent on use of park
4. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - a. Trails
 - b. Interpretive signage
 - c. Scenic/wildlife viewing areas

K. Trail/Linear Park

Description: Linear parks and trails provide non-motorized transportation and recreation opportunities and connect parks, open spaces and other areas with greenways to form a cohesive park system. Linear Parks may be in a healthy, natural state or developed landscape areas and other lands that follow corridors such as active or abandoned rights-of-way, creeks, canals, power lines and other linear, elongated features. These parks may compose portions of a system of green infrastructure and serve as links from one park to another.

Figure 28: Great Northern Trail



Planning Guidelines and Design Standards:

1. In the public input process, trails were identified as a highly desirable component to the county park system.
2. Trailhead parking areas should be strategically located and sized appropriately.
3. Appropriate facilities may include:
 - a. Trails
 - b. Interpretive signage
 - c. Scenic/wildlife viewing areas
 - d. Seating areas
 - e. Restroom facilities may be desired at trailhead areas

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

PARK	Location	Acres	Developed Acres	Type	Facilities	Water Access Description
AERO LANE PARK	OFF AERO LN	2.00	.864	Neighborhood	2 bleacher sets, 2 dugouts, 1 backstop, 1 fenced ballfield, 4 picnic tables	
ASHLEY CREEK GREENBELT RAILS TO TRAILS	NEAR KALISPPELL, HWY 2 W	9.00	9	Linear Park	Trail	
BASS LAKE PARK	Creston West Glacier - Belton- Stage Rd.	1.00		Open Space		Bass Lake: Two parks; steep hillside with dense timber and brush growth
BELTON-STAGE		9.97		Community		
BEN WILLIAMS PARK	One mile southwest of Lakeside OFF BLACKTAIL RD	5.00	5	Neighborhood	4 picnic tables; 1 park shelter; 1 outhouse; 1 well and water system; playground equipment, 1 volleyball court, horseshoe pits	
BIG SKY PARK	OFF BIG SKY BOULEVARD	1.00		Open Space		Spring Creek; marshy access
BLUE GROUSE PARK	BITTERROOT LAKE OFF LODGEPOLE DR	4.00	4	Boat Access	Concrete boat ramp, restrooms,	Bitterroot Lake; Excellent recreation potential
CAMELOT ESTATE PARK	EVERGREEN	4.00	4	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables, fishing, and benches	Spring Creek runs thru on west edge of property
CARLYLE JOHNSON PARK	OFF SHAWNEE DR	14.00	14	Sports	4 baseball and 3 soccer fields, 2 restrooms, playground equipment.	
CAROLINE POINT	DOCK BOAT RAMP			Boat Access		Access too small to be useful for recreation

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

CHURCH-SLOUGH	Lower Valley Rd Carver Subdivision			Boat Launch		Access to Church Slough & Flathead River
COUNTRY ESTATES PARK	ENDS OF GARDEN DRIVE AND DAIRY DRIVE	4.00		Open Space		
CREE LAKE SOUTH PARK	MANY LAKES			Open Space		Cree Lake: Swampy low area on east side of Cree Lake
DAN LAKE PARK	CRESTON	1.00		Open Space		Gully at the north end of Dan Lake, open area
DEMERSVILLE CEMETARY PARK	KAUSPELL-SOUTH	24.70		Open Space	Cemetery	
DOUBLE LAKE PARK	CRESTON	1.00		Open Space		Dan Lake; small open gully
EAGLE POINT PARK	WHITEFISH	2.00	2	Boat Access, Fishing Access	Floating dock	Whitefish Lake; Cliff prevents easy access; accessible by boat or foot
EAST BASS LAKE PARK	CRESTON	3.00		Open Space		Many Lakes; Poor shoreline
EAST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS	Blankenship Rd. & West Glacier	1.00	1	Boat Access, Fishing Access	Restrooms, picnic tables.	
EVERGREEN LIONS PARK	Bernard Road and East Evergreen Drive	3.00	3	Neighborhood		
FLATHEAD RIVER RANCHETTE PARK	CRESTON	1.00	1	Boat Access	Floating Dock, Boat launch, benches, picnic table.	Flathead River; beach area poor; good recreational potential
FOYS LAKE PARK	OFF MT HWY 404			Boat Access, Community	Swim area and dock, boat dock and ramp, benches, restrooms, swim dock, swim area + beach, boat dock, 2 bathrooms	Foys Lake: 700 feet of lake shore, excellent recreational potential, beach area is excellent

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

FOYS SCHOOL-FOYS LAKE COMMUNITY CENTER		2.00	2	Special Use	Large public meeting room, 2 restrooms, kitchen, basement, large deck and picnic tables outside, Horsshoes pits, Volleyball net	Gilbert Lake: small steep hillside on the southern end of the lake;
GILBERT LAKE NORTH PARK	Creston	1.00		Open Space		
GREEN ACRES PARK	W END OF HAVEN CT VALLEY MEADOW/ AIR STRIP BTWN BEAR TR AND COUGAR TR	2.00		Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables, grill.	
HAPPY VALLEY PARK		24.00		Community	Playground equipment, picnic tables,	
HERRON PARK	Four miles southwest of Kalispell on Foy's Lake Road	120.00	120	Community Special Use	Restrooms, equestrian jumps, horse stalls, dressage arenas, hiking trails, cross country ski trails, sledding, 2 shelters, Pavillion	Birch Creek: small water body that wanders through the meadow, then goes underground. Possible development
HEWITT PARK	West Glacier	1.00		Open Space		
HILLCREST PARK	WHITEFISH STAGE RD	7.00	7	Sports Park	2 softball fields, bleachers, dugouts restrooms, playground equipment, 2 soccer fields.	
HILLTOP TERRACE PARK	Columbia Falls, west	2.00	2	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, basketball court.	
HUNGRY HORSE "H" PARK	REACHABLE AT END OF MOUNTAIN DR OR CANYON ROAD OR SOUTHFORK DR	7.40		Open Space		
HUNGRY HORSE HIGHWAY	Hungry Horse	1.50	1.5	Open Space	Picnic tables & Runing Water	

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

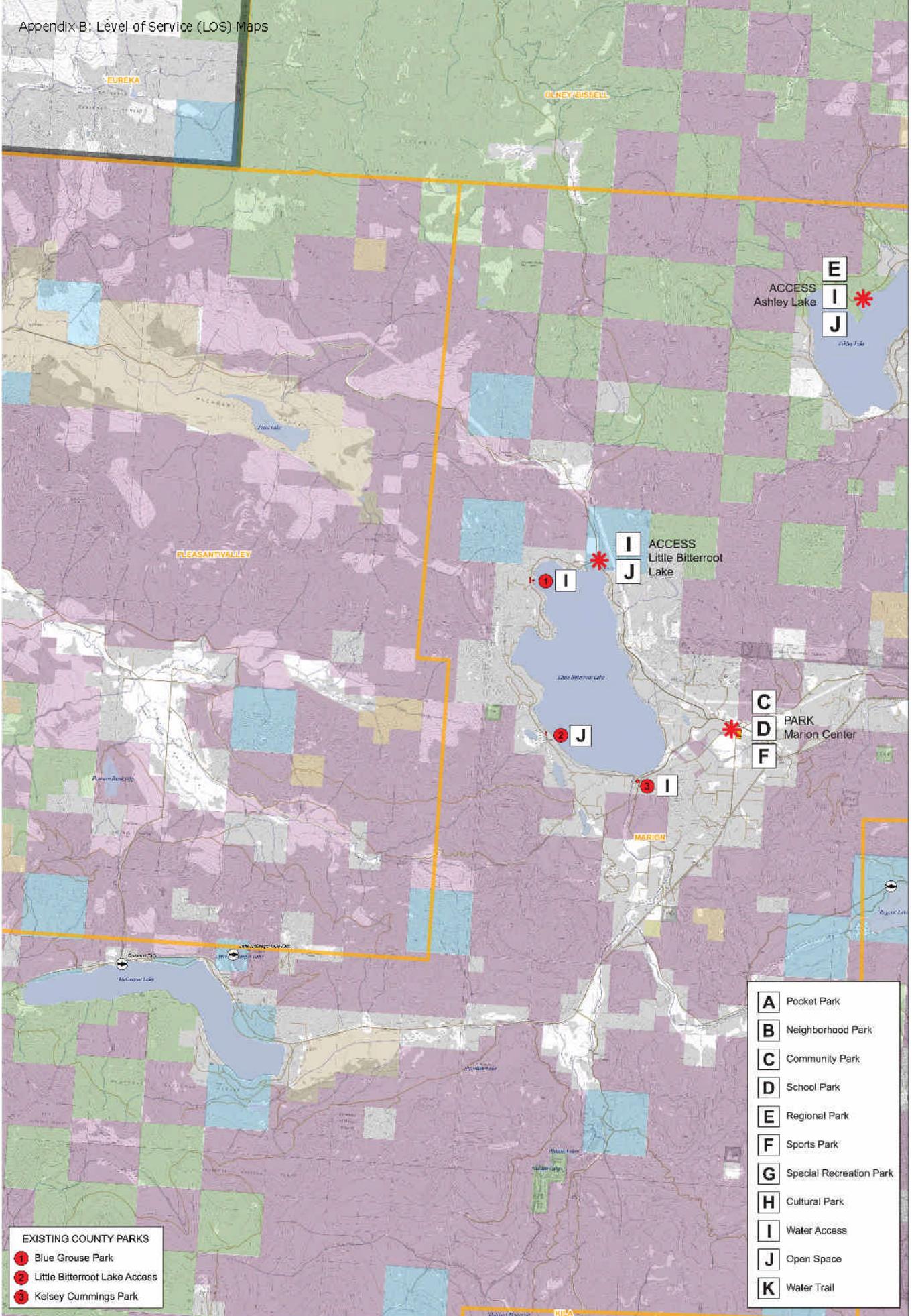
JOHN LAKE	Creston	4.00		Open Space		John Lake: Large area with potential
KATHY LAKE PARK	Creston	3.00		Open Space		Kathy Lake: steep timbered bowl at east end of lake
KELSEY CUMMINGS PARK	Marion, Bitterroot Lake	3.00	3	Boat Access	Picnic tables	Little Bitterroot Lake; excellent recreation, one of two public owned launches on the Lake
KINGS LOOP PARK FISHING ACCESS	Evergreen	5.00	5	Neighborhood	Fishing, picnicking.	Whitfish River: river bottom area that is reasonably open
KOKANEE BEND PARK	END OF KOKANEE DRIVE	4.00	4	Neighborhood	Baseball field, playground equipment.	Flathead River: site is near the Flathead River and Kokanee Bend Fishing Access owned by the FWP
LAKE HILLS PARK	Bigfork	4.00		Neighborhood		
LAKESIDE - ADAMS PARK (BOAT RAMP)	BOAT RAMP			Boat Access		
LAKESIDE BOAT RAMP	END OF BIERNEY CR RD			Boat Access	Boat ramp, Large Dock	Flathead Lake: 50 feet of lake frontage
LAZY BAY PARK	DELRAY RD/WHITEFISH LAKE	3.00		Boat Access		Whitfish Lake; Lazy Creek: swamp area on north Whitfish Lake
LEISURE ISLAND PARK	Kalispell, east side	137.00	3	Boat Access, Open Space	Boat ramp, picnicking	Flathead and Stillwater Rivers: wooded island between rivers
LEISURE LANE	Kalispell			Open Space		Flathead and Stillwater Rivers: island between rivers

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ACCESS	Marion	1.00		Open Space		Bitterroot Lake: lake access, south side of lake; cut from forest; quite steep; limited parking
MANY LAKES VACATION VILLAGE	Creston					
MARTIN CITY PARK	Martin City	2.00	2	Neighborhood	Ball fields, playground equipment.	
MEADOW HILLS PARK	BETWEEN MEADOW HILLS RD AND YODELIN RIDGE	3.00	3	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables.	
MEREDITH LAKE PARK	Creston	10.00		Open Space		Meredith Lake: large woody gully surrounding lake
MISSION VILLAGE OVERLOOK PARK	Kalispell, Whitefish Stage Road	4.20	4.2	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables, benches.	
NORTH HAVEN PARK	Kalispell, north on Four Mile Drive	1.00	1	Pocket	Playground equipment.	
PAOLA PARK	Essex, west (north of Hwy 2)	4.00		Neighborhood		
PARMA PARK	PARK DR - ESSEX	3.00		Open Space		
PLEASANT VIEW HOMESITES PARK	Creston, Lake Blaine	7.00		Open Space		
PLUMMERS LAKE PARK	Creston	1.00		Open Space		Plummers Lake: long, narrow stretch of shoreline and hillside
POTOCZNY PARK	OFF HOLT DRIVE - BIGFORK	3.00	3	Neighborhood	Baseball field, restrooms, play equipment, picnic tables.	
RAILS TO TRAILS	Meridian to Appleway	22.00		Linear Park	2.5 miles of trail starting at Meridian and Appleway Dr and running West to Spring Creek Road and Hwy 2.	

Appendix A: Flathead County Park Inventory

SCENIC VIEW PARK	OFF HIGHLINE BLVD IN BELTON	8.00		Open Space	Playground equipment, picnic tables, small ballfield with backstop.	
SILVER SHADOW PARK	Evergreen, north	1.00	1	Pocket		
SKYLINE PARK (ROY COOPER PARK)	Polebridge	3.00	3	Neighborhood	Ballfield, toilet	Two small streams and a shallow pond
SOMERS 5N & SJ PARK	Somers	0.00				Swim Acces on Flathead Lake
SUNRISE TERRACE PARK	OFF HARBIN HILL ROAD	2.00	2	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, benches.	
SWAN MEADOWS	MEADOWS OFF SWAN RETREAT RD+A24	0.69		Open Space		Swan River: an open meadow on the Swan River
SWIMMING LAKE COURT	Creston	2.00		Open Space		Swimming Lake: timbered south facing slope to lake
TAMARACK	Creston			Fishing Access		Tamarack Lake: sizeable bass population; one of the best sites in Many Lakes, gentle grassy slope to a beautiful lake (4 individual parks)
TROUTBECK RISE PARK	Lakeside	5.00		Open Space		
VETVILLE PARK	Columbia Falls	10.80		Open Space		
WAPITI PARK	CORNER OF JUANITA WAY/DALE DR	3		Open Space		
WEST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS	Blankenship Rd. & Flathead River	3.7	3.7	Boat Access, Fishing Access	2 Restrooms, picnic tables.	
WHITEFISH BOAT ACCESS PARK	OFF WEST LAKESHORE DR Edgerton School to City limits	0		Boat Access	Dock, restrooms, benches.	
WHITEFISH STAGE				Linear Park		



- EXISTING COUNTY PARKS**
- ① Blue Grouse Park
 - ② Little Bitterroot Lake Access
 - ③ Kelsey Cummings Park

- A** Pocket Park
- B** Neighborhood Park
- C** Community Park
- D** School Park
- E** Regional Park
- F** Sports Park
- G** Special Recreation Park
- H** Cultural Park
- I** Water Access
- J** Open Space
- K** Water Trail

FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS
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 JOB #: 08-03
 SCALE: 1:89,000

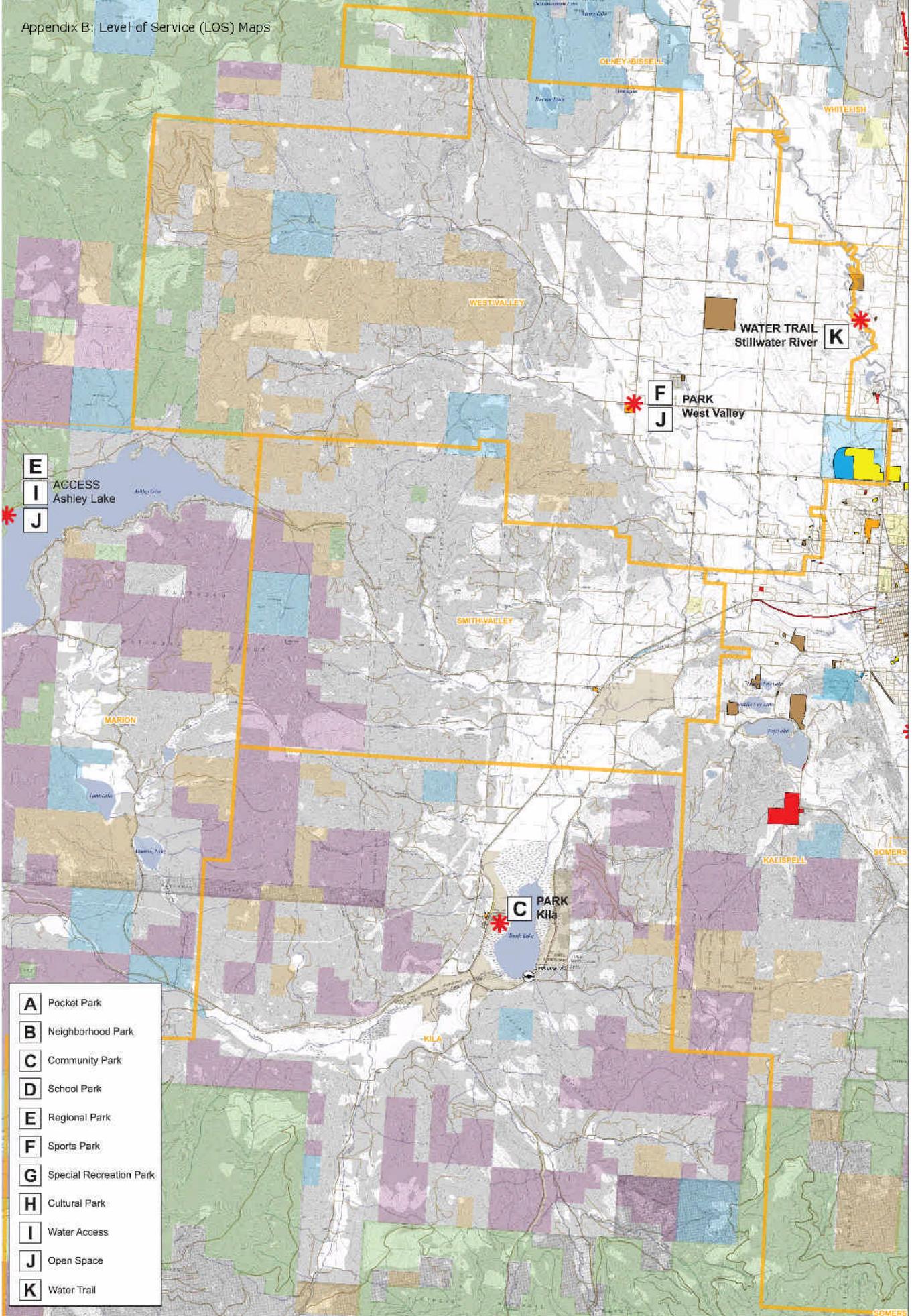
FUTURE PLEASANT VALLEY & MARION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
1
 LOS

Parks
 County Future LOS
 County
 City
 School
 State
 Other

Lands
 City, County, Local Lands
 US Forest Service
 Montana State Lands (Various)
 Flam Creek Timber Company
 Fd State Lands & Lumber Co
 Other

Map Data:
 Flathead County
 Park Data (08/07/09)
 were provided by the Flathead County GIS department,
 600 N. Main St., Kalispell, MT
 Ownership layer provided by
 NRS, Montana State Library,
 Helena, MT.

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E
I
J
ACCESS
Ashley Lake

F
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PARK
West Valley

K
WATER TRAIL
Stillwater River

C
PARK
Kila

KALISPELL

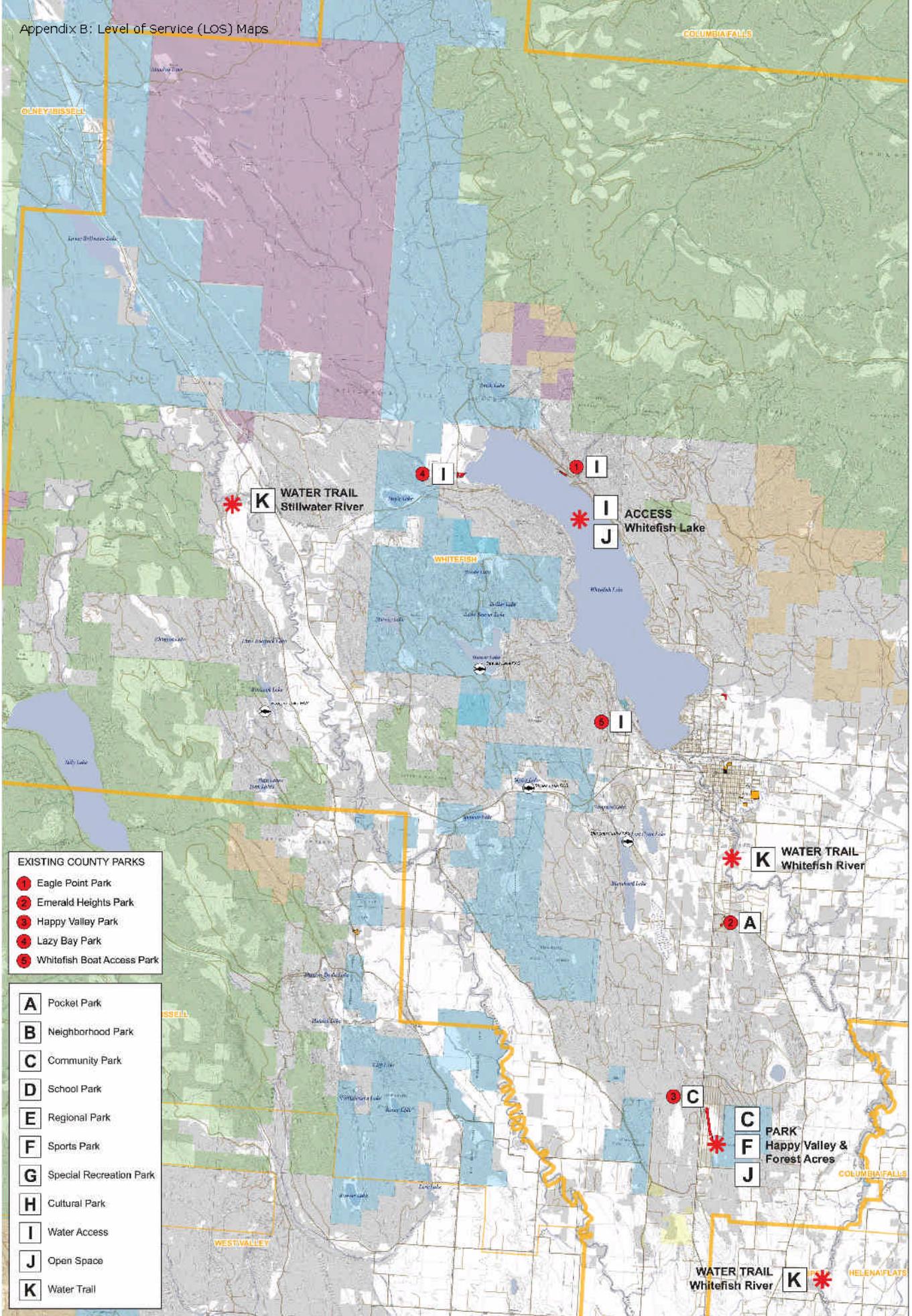
SOMERS

- A** Pocket Park
- B** Neighborhood Park
- C** Community Park
- D** School Park
- E** Regional Park
- F** Sports Park
- G** Special Recreation Park
- H** Cultural Park
- I** Water Access
- J** Open Space
- K** Water Trail

Parks	Lands
County Parks, LOS	City, County, Local Lands
County	US Forest Service
City	Montana State Land (Various)
School	Flam Creek Timber Company
State	Ft. Shoshone Land & Lumber Co
Other	Other

Map Data:
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EXISTING COUNTY PARKS

- 1 Eagle Point Park
- 2 Emerald Heights Park
- 3 Happy Valley Park
- 4 Lazy Bay Park
- 5 Whitefish Boat Access Park

- A Pocket Park
- B Neighborhood Park
- C Community Park
- D School Park
- E Regional Park
- F Sports Park
- G Special Recreation Park
- H Cultural Park
- I Water Access
- J Open Space
- K Water Trail

SHEET 4 OF 9

FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS

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 SCALE: 1/8"=100'
 JOB #: 08-03

FUTURE
3
LOS

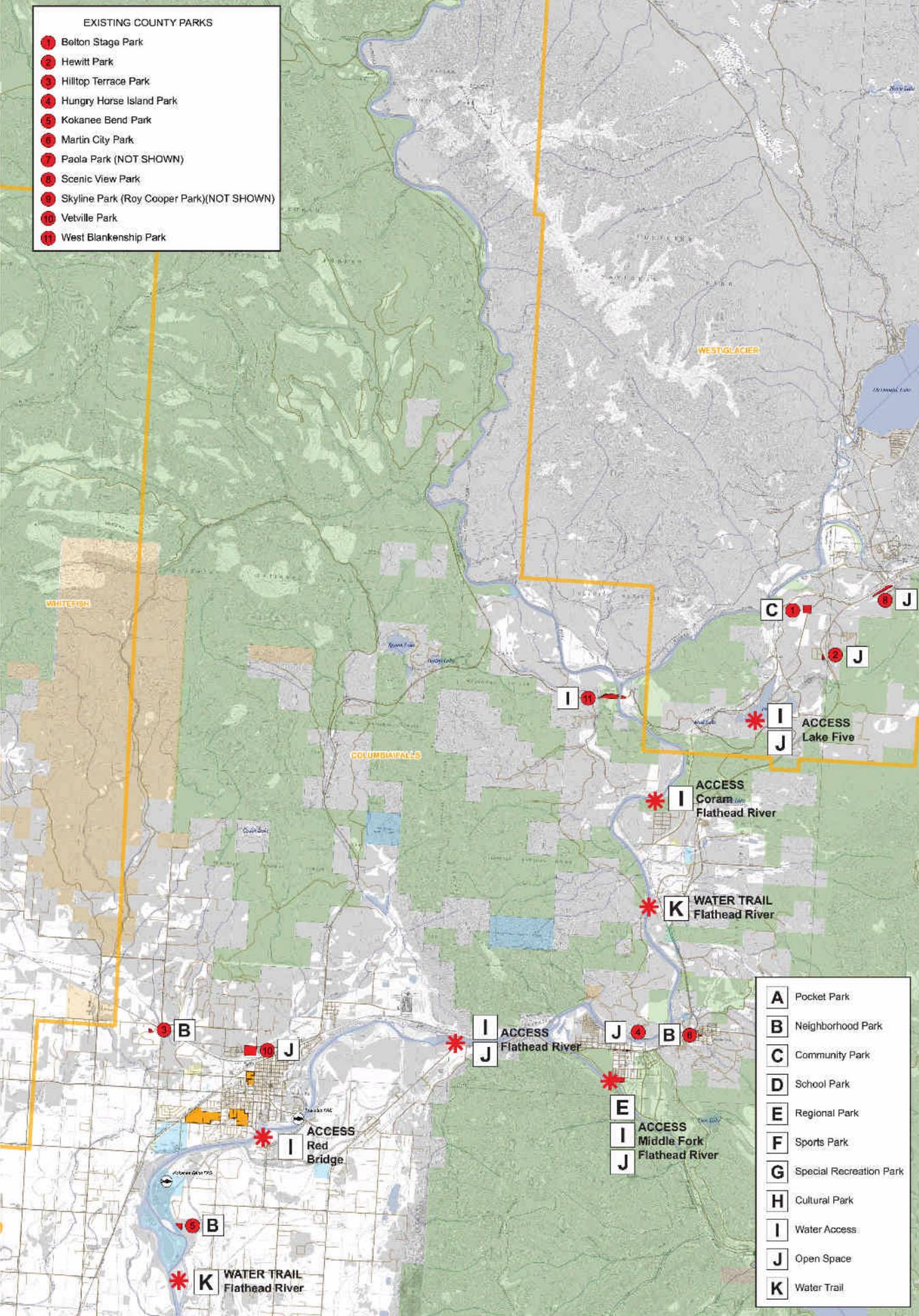
WHITEFISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Parks	Lands
* County Future LOS	City, County, Leas Lands
County	US Forest Service
City	Mantle State Lands (Various)
School	Flam Creek Timber Company
State	F4 State Land & Lumber Co
Other	Other

Map Data:
 Flathead County
 Plan Date: 05/27/09
 Work provided by the Flathead County GIS Department
 300 N. Main St., Glacier, MT
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- EXISTING COUNTY PARKS**
- 1 Belton Stage Park
 - 2 Hewitt Park
 - 3 Hilltop Terrace Park
 - 4 Hungry Horse Island Park
 - 5 Kokanee Bend Park
 - 6 Marlin City Park
 - 7 Paola Park (NOT SHOWN)
 - 8 Scenic View Park
 - 9 Skyline Park (Roy Cooper Park)(NOT SHOWN)
 - 10 Vetville Park
 - 11 West Blankenship Park



- A Pocket Park
- B Neighborhood Park
- C Community Park
- D School Park
- E Regional Park
- F Sports Park
- G Special Recreation Park
- H Cultural Park
- I Water Access
- J Open Space
- K Water Trail

FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS

SHEET 6 OF 9

DATE: 06/12/09
Job #: 08-03

SCALE: 1:81,000

FUTURE COLUMBIA FALLS & WEST GLACIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

4
LOS

Parks

- * County Future LOS
- County
- City
- School
- State
- Other

Lands

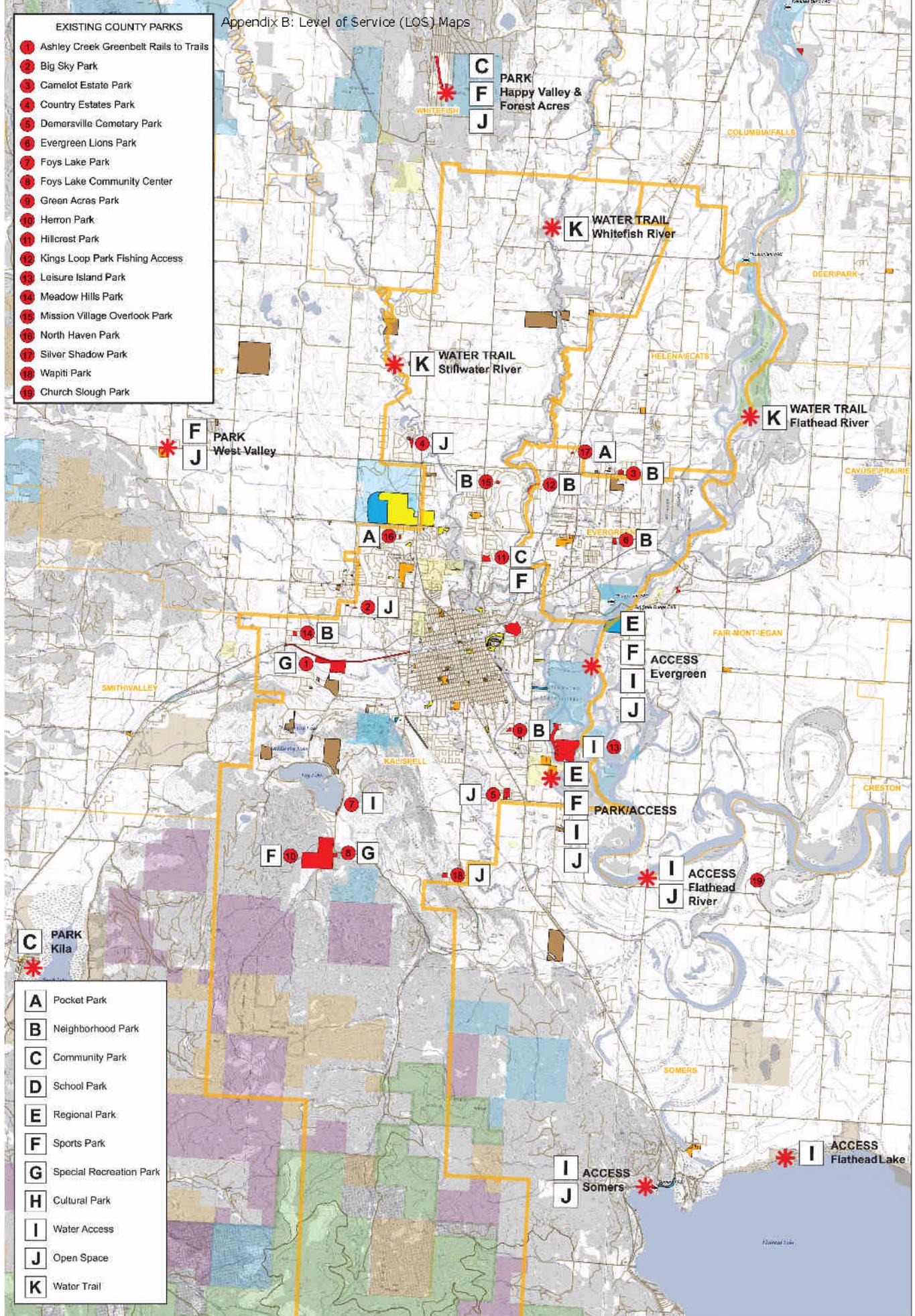
- City, County, Leed Lands
- US Forest Service
- Montana State Land (Various)
- Flam Creek Timber Company
- Fd State Land & Lumber Co
- Other

Map Data:
Flathead County
Park Data (03/07/09)
were provided by the Flathead County GIS department,
600 N. Main St. Kalispell, MT
Ownership layer provided by
NRCS, Montana State Library,
Helena, MT.

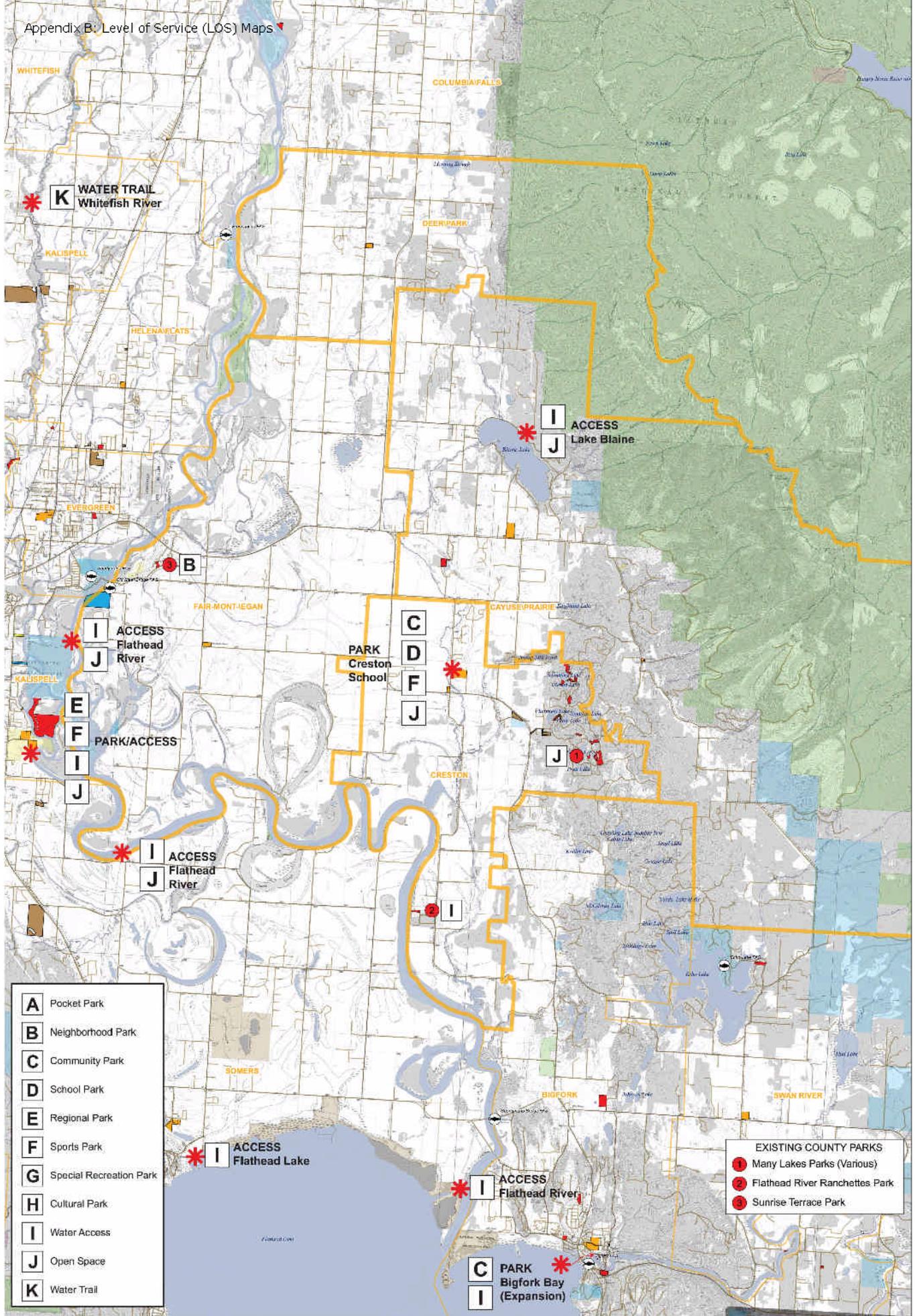
Bruce Boody,
Landscape Architects Inc.
301 E 2nd Street, Suite 1B
Whitefish, Montana 59937
Phone: (406) 862-4755
Fax: (406) 862-9755

EXISTING COUNTY PARKS

- 1 Ashley Creek Greenbelt Rails to Trails
- 2 Big Sky Park
- 3 Camelot Estate Park
- 4 Country Estates Park
- 5 Demersville Cemetary Park
- 6 Evergreen Lions Park
- 7 Foys Lake Park
- 8 Foys Lake Community Center
- 9 Green Acres Park
- 10 Herron Park
- 11 Hillcrest Park
- 12 Kings Loop Park Fishing Access
- 13 Leisure Island Park
- 14 Meadow Hills Park
- 15 Mission Village Overlook Park
- 16 North Haven Park
- 17 Silver Shadow Park
- 18 Wapiti Park
- 19 Church Slough Park



- C PARK Kila
- A Pocket Park
- B Neighborhood Park
- C Community Park
- D School Park
- E Regional Park
- F Sports Park
- G Special Recreation Park
- H Cultural Park
- I Water Access
- J Open Space
- K Water Trail



- A** Pocket Park
- B** Neighborhood Park
- C** Community Park
- D** School Park
- E** Regional Park
- F** Sports Park
- G** Special Recreation Park
- H** Cultural Park
- I** Water Access
- J** Open Space
- K** Water Trail

- EXISTING COUNTY PARKS**
- 1** Many Lakes Parks (Various)
 - 2** Flathead River Ranchettes Park
 - 3** Sunrise Terrace Park

Parks	Lands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * County Future LOS ■ County ■ City ■ School ■ State ■ Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ City, County, Leod Lands ■ US Forest Service ■ Montana State Land (Various) ■ Flam Creek Timber Company ■ Flathead Land & Lumber Co ■ Other

Map Data:
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FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS

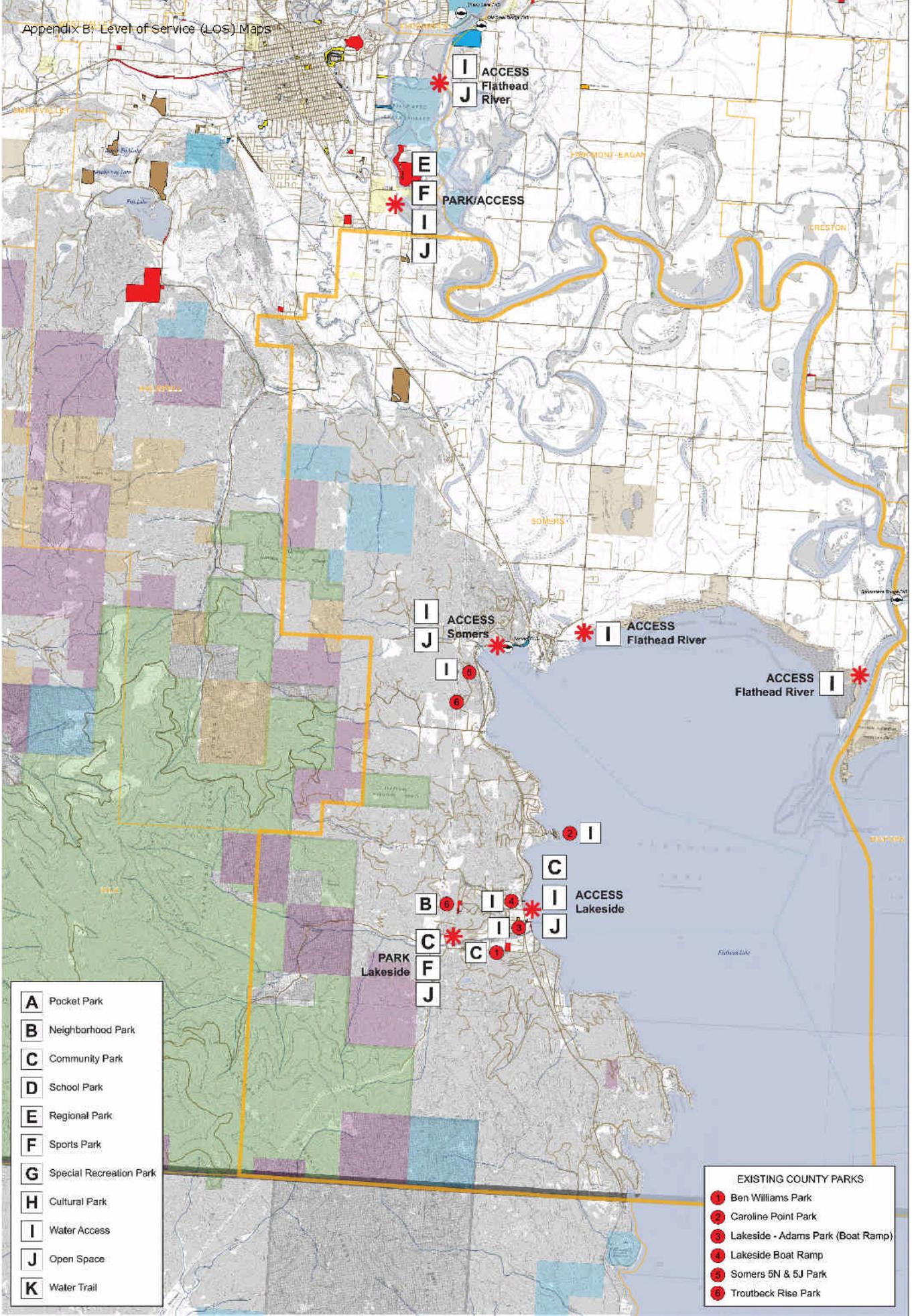
SHEET 7 OF 9

DATE: 06/16/19
 JOB #: 08_03

SCALE: 1:80,000

6
LOS

FUTURE CAYUSE PRAIRIE, CRESTON, DEER PARK & FAIR-MONT EAGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

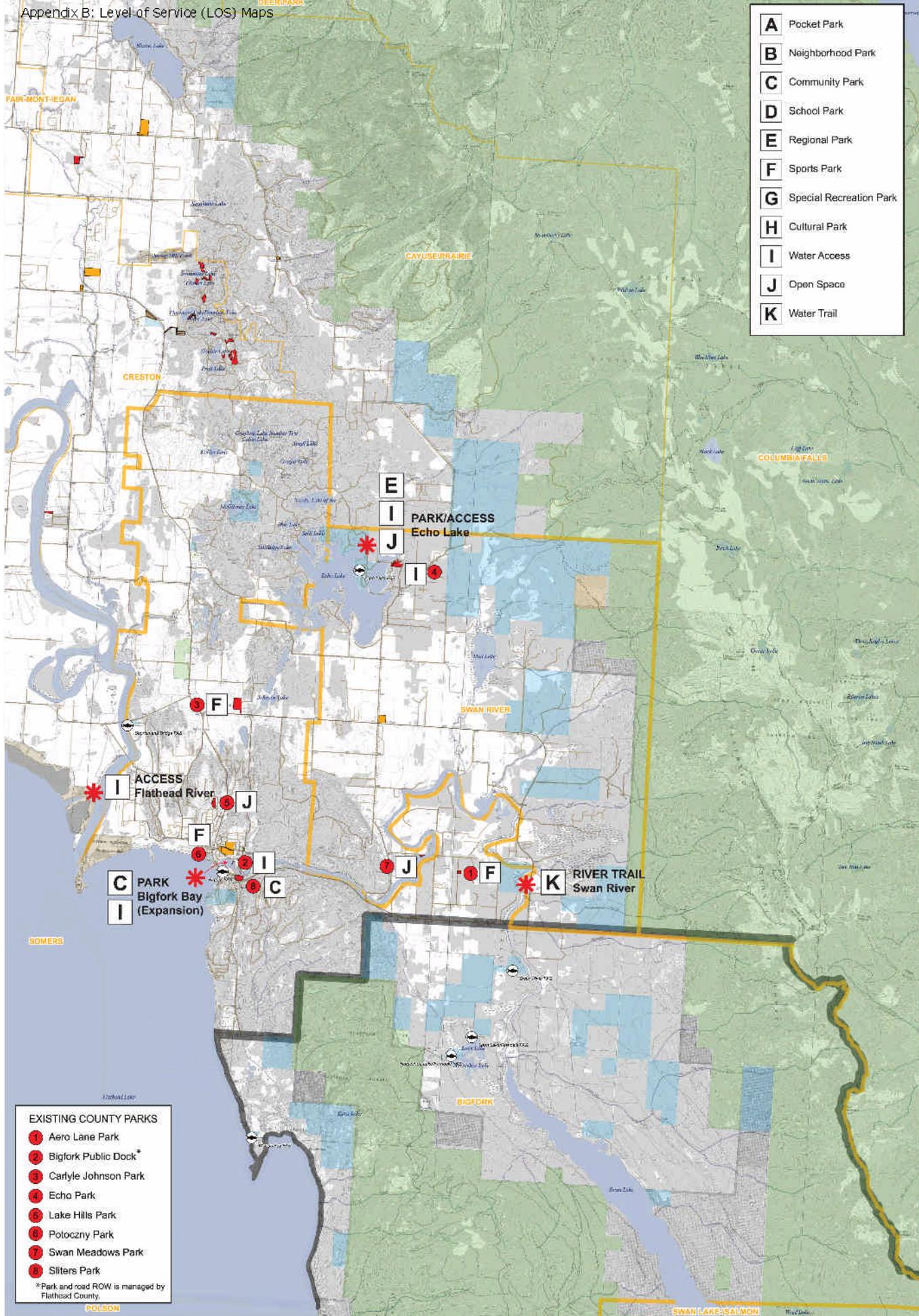


A	Pocket Park
B	Neighborhood Park
C	Community Park
D	School Park
E	Regional Park
F	Sports Park
G	Special Recreation Park
H	Cultural Park
I	Water Access
J	Open Space
K	Water Trail

EXISTING COUNTY PARKS	
1	Ben Williams Park
2	Caroline Point Park
3	Lakeside - Adams Park (Boat Ramp)
4	Lakeside Boat Ramp
5	Somers 5N & 6J Park
6	Troutbeck Rise Park

<p>SHEET 8 OF 9</p> <p>FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS</p>	<p>DATE: 06/16/09</p> <p>Job #: 08-03</p>	<p>SCALE: 1:80,000</p>	<p>FUTURE</p> <p>7</p> <p>LOS</p>	<p>SOMERS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT</p>	<p>Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * County Future LOS ■ County ■ City ■ School ■ State ■ Other <p>Lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ City, County, Leased Lands ■ US Forest Service ■ Montana State Land (Various) ■ Flam Creek Timber Company ■ Flathead Land & Lumber Co ■ Other 	<p>Map Data:</p> <p>Flathead County Park Data (02/07/09) were provided by the Flathead County GIS department, 600 N Main St, Kalispell, MT Ownership layer provided by NRCS, Montana State Library, Helena, MT.</p>	<p>Bruce Boody, Landscape Architects Inc. 301 E 2nd Street, Suite 1B Whitefish, Montana 59937 Phone: (406) 867-4750 Fax: (406) 862-9755</p>
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- A** Pocket Park
- B** Neighborhood Park
- C** Community Park
- D** School Park
- E** Regional Park
- F** Sports Park
- G** Special Recreation Park
- H** Cultural Park
- I** Water Access
- J** Open Space
- K** Water Trail



- EXISTING COUNTY PARKS**
- 1 Aero Lane Park
 - 2 Bigfork Public Dock*
 - 3 Carlyle Johnson Park
 - 4 Echo Park
 - 5 Lake Hills Park
 - 6 Potoczny Park
 - 7 Swan Meadows Park
 - 8 Siliters Park
- *Park and road ROW is managed by Flathead County.

FUTURE

8

LOS

BIGFORK & SWAN RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Parks

- * County Future LOS
- County
- City
- School
- State
- Other

Lands

- City, County, Leas Lands
- US Forest Service
- Montana State Lands (Various)
- Flam Creek Timber Company
- Fd State Land & Lumber Co
- Other

Map Data:
 Flathead County
 Park Data (01/07/09)
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 600 N. Main St. Kalispell, MT
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 NRCS, Montana State Library,
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FLATHEAD COUNTY AND OTHER PARKS

SHEET 9 OF 9

DATE: 06/01/09
 Job #: 08-03

SCALE: 1:87,000

PARK	Management Partners	Future Development Plans	Site Factors	Topography	Vegetation
AERO LANE PARK			Being developed	Level	Mostly timber, has been cut
ASHLEY CREEK GREENBELT RAILS TO TRAILS				Low grade	Mostly overgrown with weeds and grass with very few trees
BASS LAKE PARK		Sell or trade for a more suitable site	Undesirable due to slope, southern exposure	Steep hillside, poor lake access	Dense forest growth, fir, larch, pine
BELTON-STAGE	Landfill Owns; County Parks maintains	Advisory Group creating development plan	Remediated dump site	Slopes on south end - possible sled hill	Meadows & Wooded area on eastern portion.
BEN WILLIAMS PARK	Lakeside Lions Club and Lakeside Park Advisory Group	Advisory Board is developing plans for park that may include tennis courts and improved play area and better signage.	Located near YACC Camp and Lakeside	Rolling slope west, fairly level in the east	fir stand, brush, grass
BIG SKY PARK			A poor site due to the marshy ground	Creek bottom, low area, quite marshy	brush, grass and some small trees
BLUE GROUSE PARK		Develop as the county park in this area	The site is partially developed in a subdivision	Mostly level	Pine, larch, woods in park, grassy and open in access
CAMELOT ESTATE PARK				Level	Irrigated Field
CARLYLE JOHNSON PARK		Expansion of parking lot		Mostly level	Irrigated Field
CAROLINE POINT		Sell or trade this area for additional land	Located between two houses	Gentle slope to Flathead Lake	Grass, two large pines
CHURCH-SLOUGH	MFWP/Jr. Bass Masters	Installation of Boat Ramp being developed		Mostly level	Alfalfa and Grass
COUNTRYESTATES PARK					
CREE LAKE SOUTH PARK		Possible Surplus	Poor site due to low area	Low gully	Brush and trees
DAN LAKE PARK		Possible Surplus	Gully at the north end of Dan Lake, open area, surrounded by access road	Gully	Fir and pine trees, grassy bottom

DEMERSVILLE CEMETARY PARK	Records preseucation				
DOUBLE LAKE PARK		Possible Surplus	Small open gully on Dan Lake	Hillside that slopes to the lake	Fir forest, grassy open area
EAGLE POINT PARK		Maintain existing docks or sell	Only accessible by foot or boat	Cliff, too steep for development	Fir, larch forest
EAST BASS LAKE PARK		Possible surplus	Undesirable; steep hillside with dense forest growth	Steep hillside, poor shoreline	Dense forest, fir, larch, pine
EAST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS					
EVERGREEN LIONS PARK		Contin ue to assist in development	A beautiful park has been built on the site by the Evergreen Lions Club and County Park Board; a developed tennis, basketball, picnic, softball park, community in nature	Level	Trees and grass
FLATHEAD RIVER RANCHETTES PARK	Big Fork Advisory	Develop only if needed	A level area in a subdivision on the east bank of Flathead River	Level	Grass, brush, cottonwood and evergreen trees
FOYS LAKE PARK		Continue development as an aquatics park. Steps from the parking area to the beach would improve accessibility. Increase waterfront access. Need trail from Kalispell to Foy's Lake. Need to assess potential fees.	Area is developed. Highest use area of all county parks. Along with Somers beach and complex	Moderate slope to lake	Grass, some pine trees

FOYS SCHOOL_FOYS LAKE COMMUNITY CENTER		Scheduled to be supplied with water from nearby private well. Playground equipment will be added. Basement walls and kitchen must be improved before the building can be fully utilized.		Gradually sloping	Grass
GILBERT LAKE NORTH PARK		Do not develop	Small, steep brushy area	Steep hillside	Brushy, fir trees
GREEN ACRES PARK	Subdivision homeowners	Continue to maintain	Area includes play equipment, and picnic facilities	Level	Grass has been planted with some introduced trees
HAPPY VALLEY PARK	Subdivision homeowners	Excellent site for a large scale development (sports arena, etc.)	An excellent site for future large scale development	Rolling meadow	Grassy meadow. Meadow is boggy.
HERRON PARK	Local Horse Clubs: Flathead Combined Training Association (FCTA); Hoofs & Company; Pony Club	Currently being developed as a regional park for Kalispell area. Continued development with another possible LWCF grant. Need to complete trail system. Equestrian facilities need on-going upkeep. Need to address potential user fees.	Access via a paved county road, four miles from Kalispell	A large rolling meadow and east facing hillside	Fir, larch, pine timbered hillside, grass covered meadow.
HEWITT PARK		Use lodgepole stand for park construction, hwy rest stop potential	Adjacent to Hwy 2	Rolling knolls	Lodgepole pine stand
HILLCREST PARK		Hillcrest is currently being developed as an athletic and community park; Possible gym location	Good access	Level	Grass

HILLTOP TERRACE PARK		The residents of the area have shown an interest in a small park development	The area is in need of a subdivision park	Level	Meadow grass
HUNGRY HORSE "H" PARK			User created trails. Wooded.	Slopes from road to river	
HUNGRY HORSE HIGHWAY	Local Business			Level- some trees, lawn	
JOHN LAKE		Could make a good park site; develop as need dictates	Excellent road access; rather poor lake access	Hilltop	Thick forest, fir, larch, pine
KATHY LAKE PARK				Steep bowl from road to lake	Thick and brushy forest
KELSEY CUMMINGS PARK		Under development	Both sites have improved / may upgrade	Most level top	Pine, fir forest, grassy floor, light brush
KINGS LOOP PARK FISHING ACCESS	Subdivision homeowners	Under development as a subdivision park	Area is a good spot for a subdivision park. Near Mission View	Gradual slope to the river	Grass, brush, birch, cottonwood, pine
KOKANEE BEND PARK		Since the State of Montana has a developed fishing access adjacent to the site, our development should be done in conjunction	The site is in need of a major clean up	Fairly level area	River bottom with cottonwood, fir, and pine, some brush
LAKE HILLS PARK		Possible athletic area or neighborhood park		Long draw	Meadow grass
LAKESIDE - ADAMS PARK (BOAT RAMP)					
LAKESIDE BOAT RAMP		Trail needs to be paved and retaining wall requires repair. Other issues include parking and recreation access. Seek parking area.	Both sites are small, but have a lot of use during the summer months. Limited space for parking	Flat beach	Sparce

LAZY BAY PARK		A bird study, fishing access point could be developed	There is an unimproved boat ramp on Lazy Creek	Low, swampy area	Marsh, grass, cattails, brush
LEISURE ISLAND PARK		This area has excellent development possibilities; no plans have been compiled at this time	Site is located between the Owen Souwvine and Leisure Lane County recreational areas	Level	Typical river bottom area with cottonwood trees and brush
LEISURE LANE		Development in conjunction with Leisure Island if accepted by HCRS. If not, continue to develop this as a community park.	On an island near the Owen Souwvine natural area	Level	Cottonwood, pine, grass, and brush. A meadow area of high quality grass
LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ACCESS		retain and name	Hard to get to	Gentle slope to lake	Area is an old log landing which has grown over
MANY LAKES VACATION VILLAGE		surplus			
MARTIN CITY PARK		Maintain, possible ice rink	Only county site in the area; small; restrooms; equipment; developed parcel	Park, ballfield, level	Park has a lot of fir and larch trees, ballfield is void of trees
MEADOW HILLS PARK	Subdivision homeowners	Subdivision park, power lines do not enhance the area	High tension power lines that distract from the site	Long rolling hill; good area to develop except for power lines	Grass
MEREDITH LAKE PARK		Possible surplus; Has potential due to its size	Park is all around lake	A steep depression	Thick fir, larch, and pine forest
MISSION VILLAGE OVERLOOK PARK		Excellent area for an athletic site	Near Kalispell; King's Loop area is located just across the river		
NORTH HAVEN PARK		This area is now under development as a subdivision park	In a subdivision	Depression near subdivision access road	Meadow grass, very few trees

PAOLA PARK		Possible camping and picnic site	A level area with an excellent forest	Level	A stand of large lodgepole pines
PARMA PARK		Check on short term logging to cruise excess timber	Dense forest, surrounded by subdivision road. Flathead County declared the road abandoned	Fairly level	Fir, larch, birch, pine forest, lots of undergrowth
PLEASANT VIEW HOMESITES PARK			Poor access, steep bank	Steep area and marsh	Pine woods, brush
PLUMMERS LAKE PARK		Possible aquatics park	Near access road	Hillside and shore	Fir forest
POTOCZNY PARK	Big Fork Advisory Committee		The area is close to Bigfork	Gentle slope to Holt Drive	Meadow grasses and pine trees
RAILS TO TRAILS					
SCENIC VIEW PARK			Very close to West Glacier and Glacier Park (1-2 miles)	Fairly steep hillside which would make development difficult	Fir, pine (lodgepole), some larch, very brushy, some white birch
SILVER SHADOW PARK	Subdivision homeowners	We should continue to assist in the development of this area	This site has been developed as a subdivision park, including play equipment and a small baseball diamond	Gently rolling meadows	Meadow grasses
SKYLINE PARK (ROY COOPER PARK)		Under development	Being developed as a softball park	Level	Meadow grass, cottonwood, pine
SOMERS 5N & SJ PARK	Possible FWP & MDT	Along Hwy 93	Developed swim access. Needs bathrooms.	Level then drop off to Lake	Cottonwood & Brush
SUNRISE TERRACE PARK		Subdivision park	A great view is afforded from the hill top	Bluff top and steep gully	Native grass, pine trees, and brush
SWAN MEADOWS	Road ROW	May be a good boat access site	Part of the park is a low marshy area	Level	Grass and a small stand of birch trees
SWMIMMING LAKE COLLRT		Current		Staan hill to lake	Fir larch forest

TAMARACK		An ideal park to develop for a swimming, fishing, picnic site in Many Lakes; possible surplus	Excellent access, adjacent to Douglas Lake Park	Usable slope down to Tamarack Lake	Pine trees, grass
TROUTBECK RISE PARK	Homeowners	This area should be developed only if needed as a park	Located in a subdivision, a hillside that is timbered and brushy	Hillside	Thick, overgrown fir stand
VETVILLE PARK		good trails area to develop	can be boggy	depression area	cottonwood/fir
WAPITI PARK		Area could be used as a subdivision park	Excellent view site	Sloping hillside facing easterly direction	Fir, pine forest on upper portion, meadow on lower portion
WEST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS	Possible Flathead National Forest				
WHITEFISH BOAT ACCESS PARK					
WHITEFISH STAGE					

APPENDIX D: Potential Grant Resources

1. State & Federal Grants

- **Community Transportation Enhancement Funds**

The long term goals of the Flathead County CTEP is to have a connected system of trails for transportation enhancement opportunities. The CTEP administered by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), is a reimbursement program that funds transportation related projects designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of Montana's intermodal transportation system. Flathead County receives an allocation of approximately \$200,000 per year. Projects are submitted and administered by the Flathead County Planning and Zoning office. Local projects must commit 13.42% match money and/or in-kind services to 86.58% of reimbursed funds. Groups and organizations may submit an application to the Flathead County Planning and Zoning office any anytime. However, processing may not begin until Flathead County has received its allocation amount from the State of Montana. Typically funds are for paved trails along roadways.

- **Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks**

The federal program titled, "Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (SAFETEA-LU) is currently funding the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) administers the RTP funds at the state level, while the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides program oversight at the federal level. The State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) is a council that advises FWP on such things as RTP Program expenditures and a variety of recreational trails issues. An advisory committee such as the STAC is a federal requirement in order for Montana to be eligible for RTP funds.

RTP grant applicants (sponsors) can include federal, state, county or municipal agencies, private associations and clubs. RTP grants may not exceed 80% of the total of an individual project. This is a reimbursement program. After approval of all required documentation, FWP will reimburse the sponsor for 80% of the actual documented costs incurred. Reimbursement of RTP funds will only be approved for project expenditures incurred after the date of the signed project agreement between the project sponsor and FWP.

The goal of Montana's RTP is to distribute money to the best trail projects based upon applications that are complete and of high quality. However, the RTP Program may not be the right grants program in every case. That is why we have listed some of the more important technical and regulatory aspects of the program for your review and consideration. Please be sure you understand RTP rules and regulations BEFORE you begin the application process; it could save you considerable time and money.

<http://fwp.mt.gov/parks/grants/rtp/default.html>

- **Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)**

Low cost loans and grants to projects that will help protect water resources.
<http://www.epa.gov/recovery/>

- **Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP)**

TIIP funds are to be used for "brick and mortar" projects. They cannot be used for marketing or ongoing operating expenses. Types of usage that would be allowed include, but are not limited to, project construction costs associated with building new and/or remodeling or preserving existing tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites and artifacts; costs associated with purchasing new and/or existing tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites and artifacts; and equipment purchased for specific tourism project operation.

The grants can range from the minimum of \$20,000 to the maximum amount available for the TIIP grants in any given year. The required match is 2:1. For every two dollars of grant money being requested, the sponsor must provide one dollar. The match must be in "hard" dollars. In-kind services will not be considered as part of the required match amount. Contact Travel Montana's Tourism Development & Education Program, 406-841-2795, FAX 406-841-2871, vbjornberg@mt.gov. Current, updated applications are available by March of each year. TIIP applications, guidelines, funding history and other program information is available electronically at <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/forms/>

- **Community Development Block Grant**

In Public Facilities projects, CDBG funds are most often used in combination with other federal, state, or local funds to make basic community infrastructure improvements, such as water and sewer facilities, affordable to low and moderate income families. Public facility projects can also include facilities designed for use predominantly by persons of low and moderate income such as nursing homes, senior centers, Head Start centers, or mental health centers. In the past the State has funded a Boys and Girls Club and Community Recreation Center in other parts of the State. Maximum grants are \$450,000. Grant applications are due in the spring. A 100% match is required. The match can be a combination of cash and land.

Planning Grants are available to local governments up to a maximum of \$20,000.

- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality**

Wetland conservation priorities are funded by an Environmental Protection Agency grant program administered by the DEQ Wetland Coordinator. Currently, there are 20 active grant projects involving state and local governments.
www.deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/Wetlands/Index.asp

- **Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund**

Category II - Planning Grants: 25% of BSTF earnings are awarded to Certified Regional Development Corporations and other qualified economic development organizations in Counties not covered by a CRDC in the form of grants for planning activities. Eligible planning activities include feasibility studies, business plans, workforce surveys, target industry analyses, preliminary architectural reports and preliminary engineering reports. Applications will be accepted throughout the year on a calendar quarter basis with application deadlines of March 31st, June 30th, September 30th and December 31st.
http://www.businessresources.mt.gov/BRD_Trustfund.asp

- **MT Dept. of Natural Resource and Conservation**

Tribes, cities, counties, CDs and other local government entities may apply. Planning grants must address at least **one** of the following: (1) reclamation of land, water, or other resources adversely affected by mineral development (mining and oil and gas development); (2) mitigation of damage to natural resources caused by mineral development; (3) investigation and remediation of sites where hazardous wastes or regulated substances threaten public health or the environment; or (4) crucial state need. Projects addressing a crucial state need must prevent or eliminate severe and unacceptable damage to natural resources or capture extraordinary public benefit that would otherwise be lost.

Project planning activities may include problem analysis, feasibility or design studies, environmental monitoring, remedial action plans or implementation, technology demonstration, research, construction or acquisition of capital facilities, or other related actions that lead to development of a full-scale project. Up to \$50,000 is available per

www.dnrc.mt.gov/cardd

- **US Fish and Wildlife Service – Grant Programs for Local Governments**

North American Wetlands Conservation Act - To provide funding assistance to promote conservation of wetlands and associated habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife Preference given to projects that have grantee or partners that have never participated in a NAWCA supported program. Small Grants Program- grants may not exceed \$50,000; 50% Match.

Cooperative Conservation Initiative - To restore natural resources and establish or expand wildlife habitat. 50% Match.

<http://www.fws.gov/grants/local.html>

- **USFS Forest Legacy Program**

The Cooperative Forestry Staff, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, works with States, private landowners, and other partners to promote healthy forests and livable communities throughout the United States. Our programs and partnerships help private landowners and rural communities care for their forests, strengthen local economies, and maintain a high quality of life.

We are a partnership-driven organization. Federal funding is provided to States, local governments, and non-profit organizations to leverage additional resources and fuel innovative ideas. We work closely with the Forest Service's [Urban & Community Forestry staff](#), [other units within the Forest Service](#), and other federal agencies to enhance and maintain forests across watersheds and ecosystems, both on private and public land.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/aboutus/>

2. Foundation Grants

- **General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids**

The General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids initiative is a partnership of the General Mills Foundation, the American Dietetic Association Foundation, and the President's Council on Physical Fitness. The goal of the initiative is to encourage U.S. communities to improve the eating and physical activity patterns of young people, ages 2-18. In 2009, the initiative will award 50 grants of \$10,000 each to nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies throughout the country that offer innovative programs to help youth develop both good nutrition and fitness habits. Local organizations that work with children, including park districts, health departments, government agencies, Native American tribes, municipal organizations, schools, YMCAs, Boys & Girls clubs, etc., are encouraged to apply. Online applications must be submitted by January 15, 2009. Visit the website listed above for program details and application information.

<http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx>

- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program**

The Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program, an initiative of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by supporting wetland, riparian, and coastal habitat restoration projects. Grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000 are provided to projects that build diverse partnerships and foster natural resource stewardship through education, outreach, and training activities. Partnerships should include at least five organizations that contribute to project success through funding, land, workforce support, technical support, and/or other in-kind services. Projects that can leverage the amount of funds requested with significant cash or in-kind contributions from project partners are given priority. The application deadline is February 16, 2009; an online webinar for potential applicants will be offered on December 5, 2008. Visit the website listed above for detailed program information.

<http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Grants>

- **National Forest Foundation**

The National Forest Foundation, a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, chartered by Congress, engages America in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 192 million acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests. The NFF believes that communities should play a significant role in determining the future of National Forests and Grasslands. By matching federal funds (provided under a cooperative agreement with the Forest Service) to non-federal dollars, the NFF's Matching Awards Program (MAP) is able to effectively double the resources available to nonprofit partners to implement projects that directly benefit our National Forests and Grasslands.

- **American Hiking Society**

This web site has an overview of various funds for trails, including federal appropriations, state funds, grants, and private donations. Regardless of administration or funding source, most trails are founded on public-private partnerships and include some form of cost-sharing or leveraging.

http://www.americanhiking.org/news/trail_fund.html

- **International Mountain Bicycling Association**

The web site has an overview of funds for trails
<http://www.imba.com/resources/grants/index.html>

- **The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation**

The mission of the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation is to transform lives and strengthen communities by fostering innovation, creating knowledge and promoting social progress. The Foundation supports nonprofit organizations located in, or serving populations of, the Pacific Northwest, which includes Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The Foundation's program areas that are open for application include: arts and culture, youth engagement, and community development and social change. Letters of inquiry are accepted throughout the year. Visit the website listed above for more in depth information about each of the Foundation's program areas.

<http://www.pgafamilyfoundation.org/>

- **United States Tennis Association**

Public Facility Assistance
The USTA Public Facility Assistance Program is extremely competitive. The need for new tennis facilities or improvements at existing facilities is not, in and of itself, sufficient justification for a grant. The Public Facility Assistance Program is intended to have a major impact on the growth of tennis in a community and the clients served by that organization. Our review includes a thorough evaluation of the programmatic, administrative, financial and organizational accomplishments of the applicant.

<http://www.usta.com/AboutUs/AwardsandGrants.aspx>

- **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

The Foundation's major research efforts in this area—Active Living Research, Healthy Eating Research and Bridging the Gap—are contributing to the nation's collective knowledge about the changes to policies and to community and school environments that are most effective in increasing physical activity and improving nutrition for kids.

<http://www.rwjf.org/grants/>

- **Home Depot Foundation**

The Home Depot Foundation makes cash grants to non-profit organizations focused on affordable housing, at-risk youth, the environment, and disaster preparedness and response. The Home Depot Foundation makes grants to 501(c)(3) tax exempt public charities in the United States and to charitable organizations in Canada. To maximize the impact of Foundation resources, The Home Depot Foundation only funds programs that meet its eligibility test. Grants typically range from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

- **Wal-Mart**

Our founder, Sam Walton, believed in servant-leadership, which makes our mission to serve our Associates and customers with compassion and integrity. Our emphasis is on our Associates, children, families, the local community and other local programs that improve the quality of life in our communities.

Specifically, we focus our giving on:

- Community education and scholarships
- Family health and welfare needs - particularly our youth
- Economic and workforce development programs that benefit our communities
- Environmental issues
- Community-based 501(c)3 organizations

The cornerstone of Wal-Mart Good. Works. community involvement effort is our Community Grant programs. All requests for funding must be directed to the Good. Works. Coordinator at your local Wal-Mart store, SAM'S CLUB, Neighborhood Market or Distribution Center. Proposals mailed directly to the Wal-Mart Foundation will not be considered. For more information about the Wal-Mart Foundation.

<http://www.walmartfoundation.org/wmstore/goodworks/scripts/index.jsp>

- **Albertsons**

Albertson's Corporate Contributions Program

Albertson's supports nonprofit organizations in communities across the nation where employees and customers live and work. Giving is focused on hunger relief, education and youth development, and health and nutrition programs. Applications are accepted throughout the year.

www.albertsons.com/corporate/pr/brochure.asp?cat=3&subcat=2

- **Wells Fargo**

Nonprofit programs or projects that impact a specific community or neighborhood should contact their local Wells Fargo manager.

- **BCBS Foundation for Healthy Montanans**

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation for Healthy Montanans supports community and state-based initiatives that principally address our priority areas of funding:

1. Encourage healthy lifestyles for adults and children, especially programs that reduce childhood obesity and/or measurably increase the adoption of a healthy, active lifestyle by children and youth.

<https://www.bcbsmt.com/Pages/aboutusbcbfoundation.aspx>

Flathead County Parks and Rec

What type of parks are most needed in Flathead County? (Check top 2 choices)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Small parks in my neighborhood		15.8%	
More multi-use parks that serve the whole community		34.2%	
Natural Areas		42.5%	
Park consisting primarily of sports fields		2.8%	
Parks with river or creek frontage		36.6%	
Linear parks- trail corridors - pathways		59.2%	
Additional parks or natural areas needed		4.0%	
		<i>answered question</i>	
		<i>skipped question</i>	

Which area should the county focus its parks and recreation efforts? (Check top 2 choices)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Acquire land for future parks		58.9%	
Develop new parks		26.7%	
Upgrade existing parks		34.3%	
Maintain existing parks and facilities		53.9%	
Provide recreation programs and activities		13.2%	
Build new major facilities (e.g. Community center, gymnasium)		7.3%	
		<i>answered question</i>	
		<i>skipped question</i>	

Which of the following benefits of parks recreation services and open space are most important to you? (Check top 2 responses)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Promote youth development		18.3%	
Improve health and wellness		33.1%	
Water or public land access		40.4%	
Enjoy/protect the natural environment		54.9%	
Provide support for lifelong learning		2.8%	
Provide cultural activities		2.3%	
Enable seniors/disabled remain active		7.7%	
Connect people, build strong families and neighborhoods		24.9%	
Enhance community image/sense of place		23.7%	
	<i>answered question</i>		
	<i>skipped question</i>		

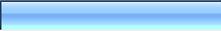
What are the two primary reasons you use the parks in the county?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Enjoy the outdoors/nature		70.6%	
Use specific facility at a park		9.3%	
Play sports		9.1%	
Picnic and general leisure		15.0%	
Walk or bike for exercise		48.1%	
Meet friends		3.7%	
Participate in family activities		12.1%	
Attend special events or concerts		5.8%	
Fishing and hunting access		11.4%	
Water access		22.2%	
Do not use parks		2.1%	
	<i>answered question</i>		
	<i>skipped question</i>		

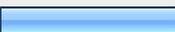
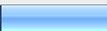
any of the following reasons prevent you from using or using more often the area's parks and recreation facilities?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	Respo Cou
Physical disability	3.0% (12)	93.2% (371)	3.8% (15)	
Distance from home	40.8% (164)	57.0% (229)	2.2% (9)	
Safety concerns	13.1% (52)	83.6% (332)	3.3% (13)	
rdy behavior of other park users	25.8% (101)	68.3% (269)	6.1% (24)	
User fees for programs	15.8% (62)	75.8% (298)	8.4% (33)	
Difficult access, such as busy streets	16.4% (65)	76.6% (304)	7.1% (28)	
Overcrowding in parks	25.2% (100)	68.5% (272)	6.3% (25)	
Not enough parking at parks	23.5% (88)	69.3% (260)	7.2% (27)	
Poor maintenance	31.5% (126)	59.8% (239)	8.8% (35)	
Dogs on a leash	21.2% (84)	71.5% (284)	7.3% (29)	
Poorly designed facility	18.5% (73)	70.3% (277)	11.2% (44)	
Lack of restrooms	30.7% (121)	64.0% (252)	5.3% (21)	
sn't contain desired features, or facilities	29.5% (115)	57.2% (223)	13.3% (52)	
	<i>answered question</i>			
	<i>skipped question</i>			

general would you support a county wide tax measure to maintain and improve existing parks, acquire land for new parks, natural areas, or develop more recreational trails, pathways, parks and recreation facilities? (Check all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I would support it.		44.8%	
would support it depending on the amount of the tax.		30.3%	
would support it depending upon the projects proposed.		40.3%	
would support it depending upon amount of the projects.		9.0%	
would support it depending upon the cost of future maintenance projects.		13.7%	
No, I would not support it.		10.4%	
	<i>answered question</i>		
	<i>skipped question</i>		

general would you support the creation of a park maintenance district to improve the facilities in the school district where you live?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I would support it.		38.4%	
would support it depending on the amount of the tax.		20.3%	
would support it depending upon the projects proposed.		23.8%	
would support it depending upon amount of the projects.		3.1%	
No, I would not support it.		14.4%	
	<i>answered question</i>		
	<i>skipped question</i>		

How would you rank the importance of parks and recreation among the county's other programs and expenses?

		Response Percent	Response Count
High		39.5%	
Medium		48.5%	
Low		10.8%	
No opinion		1.2%	
		<i>answered question</i>	
		<i>skipped question</i>	

How would you rank the importance for new pathways among the county's other programs and expenses?

		Response Percent	Response Count
High		52.4%	
Medium		32.0%	
Low		13.0%	
No opinion		2.6%	
		<i>answered question</i>	
		<i>skipped question</i>	

Please indicate how important you feel about the following policies are for park planning.

	Very Important	Important	Not Important	No Opinion	Rating Average	Response Count	
More recreational programs for youth.	17.5% (73)	15.9% (66)	35.6% (148)	19.0% (79)	7.2% (30)	4.8% (20)	2.82
More recreational programs for adults.	7.9% (33)	12.9% (54)	30.5% (127)	25.2% (105)	17.5% (73)	6.0% (25)	3.33
More recreational programs for seniors.	8.7% (36)	16.7% (69)	34.7% (143)	23.8% (98)	11.2% (46)	4.9% (20)	3.13
Parks should protect natural areas such as wetlands, floodplain and wildlife areas	59.9% (252)	16.2% (68)	12.4% (52)	6.7% (28)	4.0% (17)	1.0% (4)	1.78
Construct handicap facilities in parks	15.6% (65)	19.9% (83)	38.5% (161)	16.7% (70)	6.9% (29)	2.4% (10)	2.79
Provide more areas for group activities such as pavilions, picnic areas . . .	6.0% (25)	15.3% (64)	32.5% (136)	30.5% (128)	13.8% (58)	1.9% (8)	3.32
Provide more athletic facilities such as tennis courts, basketball hoops, . . .	5.3% (22)	8.2% (34)	28.6% (119)	30.5% (127)	23.6% (98)	3.8% (16)	3.61
Provide alternative sports such as skateboarding, Golf, bike jumps	3.6% (15)	9.7% (40)	24.9% (103)	28.1% (116)	29.5% (122)	4.1% (17)	3.73
Provide a dog park in the county	15.7% (65)	12.6% (52)	16.5% (68)	18.2% (75)	32.4% (134)	4.6% (19)	3.41
Develop new parks to serve new subdivisions that are open to the public	10.8% (45)	14.4% (60)	28.6% (119)	24.5% (102)	17.8% (74)	3.8% (16)	3.25
Partner with other public agencies and non-profit groups on park improvements	30.8% (128)	27.6% (115)	30.5% (127)	6.0% (25)	3.8% (16)	1.2% (5)	2.24
Connect parks with trails or pathways	53.2% (224)	19.7% (83)	16.9% (71)	5.0% (21)	4.0% (17)	1.2% (5)	1.86
Develop a county-wide interconnected trail and pathway system.	55.3% (233)	16.2% (68)	12.1% (51)	9.0% (38)	6.4% (27)	1.0% (4)	1.94
Provide parks for visual buffers.	20.5% (85)	22.9% (95)	24.6% (102)	18.1% (75)	10.8% (45)	3.1% (13)	2.75
Include historic and cultural resources in park system.	14.9% (61)	19.8% (81)	31.1% (127)	18.1% (74)	12.0% (49)	4.2% (17)	2.92

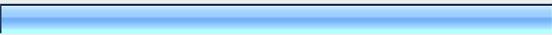
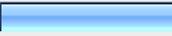
ease volunteer base to develop and maintain parks.	23.1% (97)	27.6% (116)	36.2% (152)	10.0% (42)	1.4% (6)	1.7% (7)	2.38
er and lake access should be a priority	40.1% (169)	19.2% (81)	21.4% (90)	11.9% (50)	5.2% (22)	2.1% (9)	2.21
Protect access to public lands should be a priority	49.4% (205)	21.2% (88)	18.1% (75)	7.0% (29)	3.1% (13)	1.2% (5)	1.92
enerate revenue from user fees	7.2% (30)	13.9% (58)	31.4% (131)	22.5% (94)	21.1% (88)	3.8% (16)	3.38
Sports organizations should maintain facilities	14.1% (58)	22.0% (90)	32.7% (134)	17.1% (70)	7.3% (30)	6.8% (28)	2.80
nty parks should serve primarily local residents	14.1% (58)	19.2% (79)	27.2% (112)	17.0% (70)	16.5% (68)	6.1% (25)	3.03
nty parks should attract visitors from outside of the area	6.3% (26)	14.9% (62)	22.2% (92)	25.3% (105)	26.0% (108)	5.3% (22)	3.53
quire new land for future parks	41.9% (174)	20.5% (85)	19.5% (81)	7.7% (32)	7.7% (32)	2.7% (11)	2.17
	answered question						
	skipped question						

Does any member of your household engage in the following activities?

	Yes	No	Response Count
Equestrian	25.3% (94)	74.7% (277)	
Walking for Pleasure	97.6% (407)	2.4% (10)	
Exercising/Fitness Workout	85.7% (354)	14.3% (59)	
Gardening	79.6% (320)	20.4% (82)	
Bicycling (pleasure)	83.6% (346)	16.4% (68)	
Dog Walking/Dog Parks	57.3% (232)	42.7% (173)	
Bird Watching/Feeding	53.4% (210)	46.6% (183)	
Nature Walks	87.4% (361)	12.6% (52)	
Wildlife Watching	80.5% (323)	19.5% (78)	
Swimming	68.2% (274)	31.8% (128)	
Jogging/Running	48.5% (195)	51.5% (207)	
Skiing (x-country)	70.4% (285)	29.6% (120)	
Rafting/Tubing	57.1% (225)	42.9% (169)	
Baseball	9.8% (38)	90.2% (351)	
Softball	14.7% (57)	85.3% (330)	
Soccer	22.9% (89)	77.1% (299)	
Volleyball	13.7% (53)	86.3% (333)	
Ice Skating	45.3% (177)	54.7% (214)	
Outdoor concerts & festivals	81.0% (329)	19.0% (77)	
Playground (visit/play)	52.1% (207)	47.9% (190)	
Picnicking	74.2% (299)	25.8% (104)	
Basketball	20.6% (81)	79.4% (312)	
Tennis	25.3% (99)	74.7% (292)	
Skateboarding	11.6% (45)	88.4% (343)	
Horseshoes	23.3% (91)	76.7% (299)	

In-Line Skating	13.8% (53)	86.2% (332)	
Disc Golf	22.3% (87)	77.7% (303)	
Ice Hockey	12.8% (49)	87.2% (335)	
Golf	37.2% (146)	62.8% (247)	
Fishing	68.7% (277)	31.3% (126)	
Climbing Wall	27.1% (106)	72.9% (285)	
Football	11.1% (43)	88.9% (344)	
Boating	67.4% (271)	32.6% (131)	
Off-Road Vehicle Riding	21.1% (82)	78.9% (306)	
			<i>answered question</i>
			<i>skipped question</i>

Do you currently use Flathead County's pathways, including on street bicycle routes (bike lanes, road shoulders) and off street pathways?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		76.4%	
No		23.6%	
			<i>answered question</i>
			<i>skipped question</i>

If you could improve one thing about Flathead County's pathway system, what would it be?

		Response Count
		<i>answered question</i>
		<i>skipped question</i>

Where would members of your household most like to go using additional Bicycle/pedestrian pathways developed in the county? (please choose no more than three (3))

		Response Percent	Response Count
Parks and recreation areas		71.4%	
Municipal downtown areas		31.7%	
Local shopping areas		20.2%	
Work		20.2%	
Schools		22.6%	
Adjacent Communities		31.0%	
We would like new pathways as recreations destinations		52.6%	
We would not use pathways		6.7%	
Other (please specify)			
		<i>answered question</i>	
		<i>skipped question</i>	

Are you aware of any timely areas to make new off-street pathways in the county, if so where?

	Response Count
<i>answered question</i>	
<i>skipped question</i>	

Are there any other comments you would like to share with us regarding specific parks or recreation programs in Flathead County?

	Response Count
<i>answered question</i>	
<i>skipped question</i>	