APPENDIX B: GROWTH POLICY PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARIES

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

REPORT #1 OF 3: Listening Sessions

Prepared by Cossitt Consulting, Inc. for the Missoula County Community and Planning Services Department

The Missoula County Growth Policy, the county's comprehensive long-range plan, is being updated. The current growth policy was adopted in 2005, and since that time there have been a number of changes in the county, including closure of Smurfit-Stone industry, restoration of the Milltown Dam area, and effects of the national 2007-2009 economic recession. In addition, the county planning jurisdiction and that of the City of Missoula were separated. The 2005 growth policy addresses both the city and the county. The county's 2015 update will address only the area of the county outside the Missoula city limits.

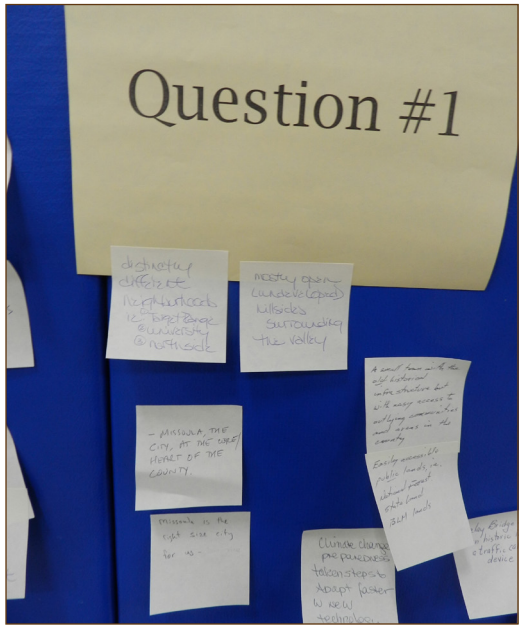
In order to hear what was on the minds of community members, in October 2014 Missoula County held eight "listening sessions" throughout the county. The listening sessions provided an opportunity for residents to learn more about the growth policy update project and to express their views on the county's assets, features or positive attributes, and also issues or concerns. The listening sessions were held in Evaro, Bonner, Target Range, Condon, Lubrecht, Seeley Lake, Lolo, and Frenchtown. A total of 79 people attended the sessions.

The same meeting format was used for each listening session. The evening began with a short slide show overview of the growth policy project, explaining why an update is needed, and describing the overall process and schedule. Participants were asked to identify important or special places on maps and to respond to the following questions:

QUESTION #1:What are the special features or attributes of Missoula County that you value most and make it where you choose to live?

QUESTION #2: What are the issues or concerns that should be addressed in the Missoula County growth policy?

Example of How Listening Session Participants Grouped Comments



Participants placed their responses, written on "post-it" notes, next to what they considered to be similar concepts or ideas posted by other participants. Then they discussed as a group the ideas and issues and how they were organized. In the last part of the meeting, participants identified how they believed the growth policy should address the issues identified by the post-it notes and discussion.

Detailed notes from the listening sessions are included in two separate documents – one for the two exercises on assets and issues (Report #1a) and the other a record of flip-chart notes from group discussion at the sessions (Report #1b). Results of the mapping exercise are included in the "Final Map" document.

1. General Summary

Across the county people said they value their unique local areas, the county's natural resources, outdoor recreation, scenic views and open spaces. They value the resource-based economy and the trend to diversify the economy. People very much value the rural lifestyle as well as services provided in the county.

County residents want the growth policy to address agriculture, open space, transportation, the economy, and other issues, but often the discussions revealed differences of opinion on what people want to see happen on these topics in 20 years. In some cases, there was agreement among those present at a particular meeting, and when that was the case it was noted and can be found in the last section (#4) of this summary.

2. Key Assets by Categories of "Landscapes, Livelihoods, and Communities"

This section summarizes comments made in response to Question #1: "What are the special features or attributes of Missoula County that you value most and make it where you choose to live?" The responses are organized by the three categories "Landscapes, Livelihoods, and Communities" which is the planned structure for much of the growth policy update. The number of comments after each topic is the number of written comments received at the listening sessions. This section also includes notes on discussion that took place during the listening session.

Landscapes (105 comments)

- ***Natural Landscapes*** The majority of comments in the "Landscapes" category addressed natural landscapes (mountains, rivers, etc.), scenic beauty, open space, outdoor recreation and public access.
- ***Clean Water and Air*** Comments on clean water addressed the purity of water from wells and other references to being on a well instead of a community system. Air quality was also identified, but with very few specifics.

- ***Agriculture*** The topic of agriculture was included in the "Landscapes" category because of the tie many people made to the rural nature of the county.

Note on Tie to Economy There is cross-over between the "landscapes" category and economics ("livelihoods" category). Agriculture, timber, and recreation also form a part of the county's economy. These topics are, however, included under the landscapes category because the comments did not typically address related economic considerations.

Livelihoods (8 comments)

- ***Natural-Resource Based Economy*** People commented on the importance of timber and agriculture to the economy. Some comments indicated that these are less a part of the overall economy than previously. Some would like to see more timber-based jobs.
- ***Diversified Economy*** Some comments identified a diversified economy and existing technology as assets.

Communities (147 comments)

- ***Community/People*** Comments about people -- their friendliness, neighborliness, diversity, rural individualism, etc.—were the most frequently cited asset in the "Communities" category.
- ***Services and Rural Lifestyle*** Services were the next most frequently cited, such as health care, library, airport, shopping, and so was rural lifestyle – many people like the rural environment and may not want all these services in their locale but appreciate that they are available in the county.
- ***Other Assets*** Other assets cited were safety, no zoning, no box stores in the rural areas, Missoula as a "small" big city, local school systems, and the University of Montana.

3. Key Issues and Concerns by Categories of "Landscapes, Livelihoods, and Communities"

This section summarizes comments made in response to Question #2: "What are the issues, or concerns that should be addressed in the Missoula County growth policy?" It is organized by the three categories "Landscapes, Livelihoods, and Communities" which is the planned structure for much of the growth policy update. The number of comments after each topic is the number of written comments received at the listening sessions. This section also includes notes on discussion that took place during the listening session, including discussion of what people want to see in the county in 20 years.

Landscapes (57 comments)

- ***Natural Resources*** Comments addressed wildlife, wildlife habitat protection, wildfire, weeds, air quality and renewable energy. In discussion, clean water was often tied to groundwater pollution from septic tanks and drainfields. People generally want to keep existing public access or create more access to lands and waters. The need to remediate the Smurfitt Stone site was also mentioned. Open space was also frequently cited, sometimes in connection with agricultural lands, but open space is a broad term and could apply to many purposes, including wildlife habitat.
- ***Agriculture*** The importance of agriculture and need to preserve agricultural land was the most frequently cited concern. Discussion of the topic also made it clear that farmers and ranchers want flexibility to sell their land for other purposes.
- ***Climate Change*** The need to make provisions to adapt to climate change was discussed at length at the Target Range listening session.

Livelihoods (27 comments)

- ***Strong Economy*** Everyone wants a strong economy, but there were differences in opinion as to what constitutes a strong economy. Some would like to see resource extraction (timber harvest or a mine near Potomac) with few limits. Others emphasized a balance of economic growth, wages that support families, sustainability of long-term employment, compatibility with rural environment and balance with a healthy natural environment.
- ***Better Internet and Technology*** Discussion indicated that better internet and access to technology are important to support business growth.

Communities (166 comments)

- ***County Government*** This topic had the highest number of comments, including the following -- elected officials who do not listen, lack of respect for rural citizens, county commissioners who do not come to the rural areas, there should be less government, need input from the agricultural community, stop letting realtors and developers drive policy, and county policy not coordinated with the city.
- ***Regulations and Land Use Controls*** Generally, comments addressed a desire for no zoning and less government regulation, but in some locations there was specific discussion about need to identify where industrial activities should take place (Bonner), need for setbacks for construction near property lines (Evaro). Building permit requirements were identified as excessive for rural areas. Several comments indicated more needed to be done to reduce sprawl and increase open space. In discussion, some clearly voiced their opposition to “set-asides” for agricultural land.
- ***Taxes*** Several comments indicated that residents feel they pay too much in taxes and get too little in return. Some believe a disproportionate amount of county taxes goes to things within city limits.
- ***Anticipating and Managing Growth*** Some want to see more growth and development; others would like to keep their community the same as it is now (or perhaps even like it was 30 or 40 years ago.). Some identified the need to anticipate change and prepare for it – including climate change, increased potential for wildfire, etc. Some discussed changing demographics – moving to a larger proportion of older residents and how that affects services, economy, local schools, etc.

- ***Unique Local Characteristics*** Comments and discussion indicated the growth policy should take into account the unique nature of various areas of the county.
- ***Housing*** There were comments and discussion about issues of availability and cost of housing.
- ***Built Environment*** Some want to see concentrated development; others want to be able to do what they choose on their property. There were a few references to the cultural and historic aspects of the built environment.
- ***Transportation and Infrastructure*** Comments related to transportation and infrastructure included the following -- safety and maintenance of county roads is an issue as is pedestrian safety, need to focus on basic services first (especially roads), bus service (some want it and some don't), trails and pathways (many want more, but some want no more until there is a clear mechanism to make sure pathways are separated from the road, and are maintained year-round, including snow removal). Exception to this comment was from participants in Seeley, who said they don't want snow removal on pathways– they want groomed snowmobile trails along highway and roads.
- Quality of Life Comments reflected a recognition of the importance of quality of life -- healthy lifestyles, good living conditions, etc.

4. Local Area Emphases and Concerns

The following summarizes topics on which participants generally agreed on a particular point. In some cases the topic is noted as one for which there were sharp differences of opinion.

Evaro

- Consensus -- interested in some sort of zoning, particularly regarding boundary setbacks.
- Proximity to Flathead Indian Reservation – makes this part of the county very different from other areas and there was a question regarding issues with delineation of county/tribal lands.
- Divided as to need for increased telecommunication.

Bonner

- Area of major commercial development at site of former mill and industrial area.
- Interest in more say in how industries are sited, some interested in zoning, but others indicated there are too many regulations now and it makes operating a business very difficult.

Target Range

- Very concerned about annexation; want to retain low density and stay off city sewer and water.
- Upset over Maclay Bridge – decision to remove and replace with bridge on South Street - others present indicated that the bridge is not safe and needs to be replaced.
- Very proud of their local plan and upset that the county commissioners are not following the local plan.
- Discussed climate change in depth.
- Want streets safer, more sidewalks, Reserve Street is a major problem.

Condon

- Stretched out along highway for miles; have to get in the car to go places, no paths along road (or not enough); speeds on highway are not safe for this type of highway residential development pattern.
- Condon as a thriving community – some want to see it grow, others say it is fine as-is. Increased older population and reduced numbers of families threaten viability of historic community character and also schools.

Lubrecht

- Very strong local ties to the land, some go back generations.
- People like the individualism, like the natural environment and rural area, but want to be able to do what they like on their property.
- Doesn't want to be like Ravalli County, but most do not want any regulations or zoning.
- Differing views on benefit of the mine – some vocal supporters who want to see the proposed mine developed near Potomac.
- Some roads have serious maintenance issues.
- Fire Department has funding issues.

Seeley Lake

- Want clean water, but want to implement a sewer system incrementally, or deal with it on a case-by-case basis; others say sewer system is needed.
- Do not want zoning.
- Want to stay about the same size.

Lolo

Note: Only two persons attended; one arrived about halfway through. There was no discussion; only the presentation and review of maps.

Frenchtown

- Proximity to city of Missoula – more development on the way.
- Want agricultural land preserved and a strong real estate market.
- Smurfit-Stone Industries buildings – need for restoration and clean-up.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

REPORT #2 OF 3: Personal Interviews

Prepared by Cossitt Consulting, Inc. for the Missoula County Community and Planning Services Department

This is the second report prepared in the fall of 2014, summarizing comments received during initial outreach efforts conducted by Missoula County as part of updating the 2005 growth policy. The first report summarized results of eight listening sessions held throughout the county. This second report summarizes individual interviews conducted with each of the three county commissioners, individual interviews with 10 different county departments, and interviews with Missoula Economic Partnership, and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Missoula Organization of Realtors. This report also includes notes from listening session exercises held with the City-County Planning Board and the Open Lands Committee that were conducted similarly to the eight listening sessions held across the county.

1. Summary Overview of Key Comments

Many comments made during the interviews and listening sessions with the City-County Planning Board and Open Lands Committee were similar to those received at the eight listening sessions.

There were, however, some significant, previously unmentioned concepts that came out of these discussions. These include the following, all of which fall under the growth policy category of "Communities."

Communities

- ***County Government*** Some comments indicated the need to consider the public good, not just special interests or most vocal groups or individuals. County governments are perceived to have more power than they actually do.

- ***Regulations and Land Use Controls*** Some people indicated they'd like to see specific geographic areas designated for development and other areas designated for resource protection. Others indicated a preference for distinct communities instead of sprawl. A few suggested county-wide zoning. Others wanted to see some mechanisms to manage development in areas subject to hazards such as high groundwater or flooding.

- ***Built Environment*** One person commented that we should put people where we've planned and invested for them and don't be swayed by special interests who block logical expansion

- ***Transportation*** One person raised the question of impacts of the megaloads headed to tar sands in Canada on smaller highways in the county.

2. Public Health and Safety Comments included need for a county-wide master plan for fire protection services, need for more deputies as there are too few deputies to cover such a large county, and need to address numerous health-safety issues such as drunk driving, domestic violence, etc. Detailed Comments

The following includes other points raised in the interviews and Missoula City-County Planning Board and Open Lands Committee "listening sessions" that expounded on or were different from those raised in the eight community listening sessions.

Landscapes

Natural Resources

- Protect important viewsheds – need for cell tower regulations.
- Water quality – concerns over degradation of water quality, particularly from septic systems.
- Need to develop a master plan for acquisition of open space that includes a map of key areas – the current process is too ad hoc and doesn't set priorities.
- Trails are very important, enabling people to walk and exercise.
- Environmental health of the county is important.
- Need more open space close to city.
- Address Smurfit-Stone site.

Climate Change

- Need a climate change action plan.

Livelihoods

Economic Development

- Economic development is a top priority among residents.
- Perception that county is not doing enough, but county is a strong supporter of Missoula Economic Partnership, and has created three economic districts in the past few years.
- County should be more pro-active in economic development.
- There is a new economy that has emerged – it is not the same as the manufacturing-timber base of the 1960s and 70s and has three main components – new manufacturing, UM affiliated businesses, and foreign business --investment from and products being shipped to other countries.
- Need workforce development.
- One of few counties with net in migration of 20-somethings, a key point--they are coming here for lifestyle.
- The county faces issues of economic inequality – some people are quite wealthy and many quite poor.
- Issues of poverty also involve economic justice issues – such as distances that lower income persons have to travel to work, housing, etc.

Internet and Technology

- Need more broadband and internet, especially in rural areas.

- County has sufficient broadband in I-90 corridor, great access in industrial parks, but in other areas people are not willing to pay cost of extension.

Communities

County Government

- Working to get budget more "user-friendly" and understandable to public.
- Live within your means, fiscal responsibility in the long run (20-75 years).
- Difficult to balance the wide divides between conservative and liberal elements of the county.
- County has to serve the public interest, not just the most vocal or special interests.
- County needs to improve communication with the public.
- Citizens do not know where tax dollars go.
- Need better coordination among CAPS, Public Works, and Public Health departments.
- County Fire Chief role should be moved to DES and should be directly under Board of County Commissioners.

Services

- Medical transportation/transit from outlying areas to services needs to be improved
- Need a master plan for fire services in the county.

Public Health and Safety

- Provide opportunities for people to get moving for their health.
- Public buildings should be retrofitted for seismic events.
- Relationship violence.
- Rural urban interface and fire.
- Shuttle for medical care (e.g., Seeley to city of Missoula).
- Human trafficking along I-90, Msla a stop along route to Bakken oil fields.
- Persons with Disabilities -- "get by" without accessing services --people unaware of services.
- DUI - substance abuse.
- Homelessness and veterans issues.
- Law enforcement -- not enough sheriff deputies -- cannot cover entire county.

Regulations and Land Use Controls

- Need an ombudsman to guide people through regulatory processes and requirements.
- Need a simplified overview-guide to regulations.
- Issues with different development standards in city and county.
- Need context sensitive road building requirements for ingress-egress – the requirements for many lots on a steep hillside should be different from a few lots on flat landscape.
- Need ingress/egress standards for buildings for lease or rent regulations.
- Need building requirements for areas with high groundwater (e.g., no basements, etc.).
- Requirements for subdivision parks should be appropriate for different scales of development.

- Addressing should be required for all units – residential, rental, lodging, business, etc. to make sure emergency services can respond quickly.
- Bring about more zoning - pursue countywide zoning - zoning/standards for small community density.
- Annexation - Target Range thinks the county can prevent annexation, but that is not the case.
- Checkerboard annexations (where city leap-frogs over county parcels) creates issues for delivering services--city services may be farther away than county services (e.g., fire department), but limited in inter-locals because the city fire department is unionized and cannot enter into inter-local agreements with departments that are not unionized.

Anticipating and Managing Growth

- Need to plan for the special needs of the aging – the number of seniors will continue to grow – and needs include specialized housing, age-in-place, transit, medical, etc.

Housing

- Need affordable and workforce housing; land is expensive; no incentives now to build lower priced housing units.

Built Environment

- Bonner is a potential growth area for the county.
- More land available for industrial development than could be absorbed in two lifetimes.
- Build near existing services.
- There are serious issues with building in hazard areas – such as flood areas, high groundwater areas, wildland urban interface areas.
- Issues with fire suppression water supplies – volume and rates – in some new developments.
- Put people where we've planned and invested for them and don't be swayed by special interests who block logical expansion.
- Incorporation of Msla Co. communities - Lolo, Seeley.
- Downtown beautification.

Transportation/Infrastructure

- People appreciate recreation and trails.
- Infrastructure is the number one priority.
- Improve/extend public transit.
- If water quality issues arise outside of the sewer district, the sewer district boundary may be extended.
- Recognize the connections between increased transportation and poor air quality – work to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Connect city parks and open space with non-motorized trails/paths and public transit.
- Road "diets" (where number or width of lanes is reduced) can be an issue for emergency service and evacuation routes.
- How to make sure that subdivision and private development water supplies for fire suppression are maintained and available over time?
- Need a way for private companies to submit info on location, etc. of critical infrastructure (such as cell towers) whereby the sensitive information is protected rather than released to public domain.
- Prevent a high/wide transport corridor from using our scenic byways (Rt 12, Hwy 200, etc.); "Keep 'em on the interstate."

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

REPORT #3 OF 3: Written Comments

Prepared by Cossitt Consulting, Inc. for the Missoula County Community and Planning Services Department

This is the third report prepared in the fall of 2014 summarizing initial outreach efforts conducted by Missoula County as part of updating the 2005 Growth Policy. The first report summarizes results of eight listening sessions held throughout the county. The second report summarizes individual interviews conducted with each of the county commissioners, 10 different county departments, Missoula Economic Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and Missoula Organization of Realtors, and Missoula City-County Planning Board and Open Lands Committee.

This third report summarizes written comments received by November 6, 2014. A total of 10 individuals submitted comments.

Summary of Comments Received from 10 Individuals (as of November 6, 2014)

The following provides a listing of comments from the 10 individuals who submitted comments in response to standardized questions on the county growth policy website, or who submitted other written comments. The comments are organized by the three main growth policy categories of "Landscapes," "Livelihoods," and "Communities."

Landscapes

Natural Resources

- Issues with land set asides for open space or agriculture in subdivisions -- people should do what they want – there are enough regulations.
- Designated floodplains should all be "Open and Resource."
- Restore our forests.
- Many people choose to live in Missoula County because of our beautiful open spaces, clean water, recreational trails and our proximity to diverse wildlife habitat
- Maintain access to public lands.
- Voluntary private land conservation will remain our best tool for protecting agricultural land.
- Protect natural assets, wildlife habitat, scenic and recreational corridors.
- Protect natural land and develop new public trails.
- Public trail system in Missoula, which includes Mt. Jumbo, Mt. Sentinel, and the Kim Williams Trail, the Potomac Valley, and the Seeley Lake area.

Livelihoods

Economic Development

- Sustainable economic growth -- e.g. priorities for industries producing renewable energy products vs. those that relate to extracting fossil fuels.
- Identify tools to promote sustainable development -- e.g., zoning and tax incentives.
- County should identify means to actively pursue more sustainable development.

Communities

County Government

- Perceived as impeding economic development by making it impossible for small businesses to thrive and function.
- County gov't needs to facilitate citizen initiatives, not block them.
- Missoula isn't what it used to be -- no longer safe -- assaults, rapes, drug offenses.

Regulations and Land Use Controls

- Do not allow sprawl - subdividing goes against more rural character.
- Create incentives for land to remain agricultural, but do not limit people's ability to sell their land if they need the money.
- Regulations should be tied to reason -- regulations that don't make sense should be eliminated.
- Issue with regulations from county and Target Range Homeowners Association.
- Cannot issue a floodplain permit that doesn't comply with the growth policy - or with zoning - and sometimes those two conflict. Applicants then have to seek changes to those documents or obtain a variance from the floodplain regulations which requires compliance with either zoning and/or comp plan (growth policy).
- Over-regulated.
- Get a definition/designation regarding density in Open and Resource in the GP i.e., does "Open and Resource" really mean one single family dwelling per 40 acres.

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Maclay bridge needs to be replaced -- details and facts provided in the email.
- Increase bus service instead of widening roads and increasing speeds.
- County can't force a sewer system on Seeley -- that has to go to a vote.
- Keep existing Maclay bridge.
- The Seeley sewer system wouldn't serve the properties owned by the state of Montana on the lakefront so there would still be pollution effects.
- Missoula city should have its own water system.

OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS ON DRAFT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES

From Comments Received During Round 2 Listening Sessions For the Missoula County Growth Policy Update

Prepared by Cossitt Consulting, Inc. and Land Solutions, LLC
For the Missoula County Community and Planning Services Department

1. BACKGROUND

The Missoula County Growth Policy, the county's comprehensive long-range land use plan, is being updated. The current growth policy was adopted in 2005 and since that time there have been a number of changes in the county, including closure of Smurfit-Stone, restoration of the Milltown Dam area, the 2007-2009 national recession and the current period of economic growth. In addition, the county planning jurisdiction and that of the City of Missoula were separated. The 2005 growth policy addresses both the city and county. The county's 2015 update will address only those areas of the county outside of the Missoula city limits.

During the fall of 2014 a consultant team and Missoula County Community and Planning Services (CAPS) staff began a process of collecting information on the priority issues and topics to be included in the growth policy update. The planners held eight public listening sessions at different locations around the county and also conducted individual interviews with county commissioners, county department heads and stakeholder organizations. The county also developed a website devoted to the growth policy project which includes opportunities for the public to submit comments. The first round of outreach efforts generated information on key issues with which the consulting and CAPS planners used to draft preliminary goals and objectives.

During two weeks in late February and early March of 2015, the planners held eight more listening sessions at locations throughout the county designed to vet the goals and objectives and provide for public guidance on how key issues might be addressed in the growth policy update. At total of 123 persons attended the eight sessions held in Condon (16), East Missoula (13), Evaro (6), Frenchtown (10), Lolo (4 local residents and 8 University students), Potomac (31), Seeley (14), and Target Range (21). At each location there was a short presentation on results of the first round of listening sessions and process for developing the draft goals and objectives. Participants were then asked to identify their most preferred objectives with green dots and their least preferred objectives with red dots. After a short break, facilitators led discussions on specific actions that the county could take for each of the three main topics – "Communities, Livelihoods, and Landscapes." For each topic, the facilitator asked one or more specific questions, and participants responded with their ideas. Action items were captured on flip-charts. The "dot exercise" on objectives and flip chart notes are included in attached documents for all eight locations.

Also attached are separately submitted public comments received through March 25, 2015 in the second round of listening sessions.

2. COMMON THEMES

Below is a brief summary of the common themes that emerged in the second round of listening sessions and from submitted public comments.

Missoula County is diverse and each community has unique needs. We heard many times that a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing community development challenges will not work well. Meeting attendees were generally supportive of local/regional planning efforts that include significant landowner and public participation with assistance from Missoula County. Where local plans are in effect, participants asked that they be observed in decision making and also implemented.

Work with the City of Missoula on annexation planning, but make sure Missoula County's distinct communities remain. In areas surrounding the city, meeting participants expressed a desire to retain the unique identities of their communities while acknowledging the city is growing and will probably continue to grow.

There is a need for concise, understandable goals and objectives. Some of the draft goals and objectives proved to be confusing. Meeting attendees voiced a desire for more direct, concise language as well as the need for a clear, logical flow from goals to objectives to actions. More than one citizen asked that a goal or statement addressing the importance of private property rights be included.

Locally driven zoning can be an acceptable tool to conserve resources and directing growth. Participants at every location, with the exception of Potomac, appeared to have interest in zoning as a means to conserve natural resources for the future and as a method for directing growth to acceptable locations. Participants' level of knowledge of different types of zoning (for example, issue-specific zoning to protect water quality vs. comprehensive small town zoning) seemed relatively high. The willingness to accept zoning seemed greater when it was discussed as a local cooperative effort, rather than a county-wide approach. Several locations have already developed regional plans that could form the basis of local zoning. Participants from East Missoula seemed interested in possible zoning, and some places, like Target Range, already have it, but want it updated to reflect their plan.

Planning for community development should include incentives. Participants stated it is important to identify areas for growth to occur and to invest in and facilitate development of those areas in order to provide incentive for targeted development. Investment might mean roads, trails, water and sewer, community centers, preserving historical sites, grant writing resources or other community endeavors. Simply having rules 'against' development in areas of important natural resources is not enough. In community growth areas, all types of housing, including affordable and workforce housing, should be encouraged.

The use of public funds to purchase conservation easements is generally supported. However, many participants stated the easements should include requirements for public access. Meeting attendees indicated the easements do not necessarily have to be perpetual –they could be for a defined time period and renewable. Provisions must be made to ensure the purpose of the easement is carried out over time.

The county should provide equitable distribution of tax revenue. This was an issue that seemed to rise in importance in direct proportion to the community's distance from the county seat. The perspective is that the rural areas pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. The recent bond for the sports fields in Missoula was identified by many as a particularly fresh example of this issue.

Conserving agricultural lands is complicated. Several participants stated that owners of agricultural land should not be 'punished' when they seek to subdivide or develop property by the county requiring land set-asides. They felt the producers should be encouraged or compensated in some way (possibly through purchase of conservation easements) by providing the 'public good' of open space, scenic views and rural character that others enjoy. Some suggested the county work with local agricultural preservation groups to develop a clearinghouse list of potential buyers of agricultural land.

Economic development efforts are valued, but resources should be spread around the county. Using county resources to help redevelop existing, underutilized industrial sites (Smurfit, Bonner Mill) was widely supported. So was using tax dollars to help support additional broadband and cellular communication in rural communities. The general use of tax incentives for business development received mixed reviews, and some meeting attendees felt the county should not be in the business of job creation at all; simply get out of the way of private enterprise. Others felt the county should help small business owners who create jobs and add value to local agricultural and forestry products. An often-voiced comment was economic development efforts and even basic service improvements (e.g., better road maintenance) should be focused on rural communities in addition to urban projects and services. Other areas of potential economic development include attracting retirees and tourism. Supporting job training and education was also mentioned frequently.

More and better community outreach is desired, and so is more rural representation on county boards. Several meeting participants stated the County Commissioners should visit communities more often, not only when problems arise. The county should also do whatever it can to notify people of meetings and events including postcards, newspaper, internet, radio, emails and sending announcements to senior centers. Several people indicated community councils are valuable. Some suggested there be more rural representation on the planning board and other boards in order to better represent the views of rural areas.

Regulations should be limited and customer service should be improved. Many comments focused on land development regulations being overly complex, requiring more than necessary to meet county goals and that more information is often requested on application forms than the laws require. Some people indicated permitting processes should be streamlined and county departments should do a better job of internal communication. Others suggested that providing a higher level of customer service is necessary, that staff seem to get in the way of development instead of facilitating it. A comment brought up more than once was a 'citizen advocate' or ombudsman would be useful to help citizens navigate county approval processes.

Access to public lands and natural resources is a high priority. Meeting attendees asked that Missoula County continue coordinating with federal and state land management agencies to ensure access to public lands. Specific projects include planning for recreational access points along the Clark Fork River and acquiring an access area in Bonner. Some meeting attendees stated Missoula County should not try to duplicate the roles of the state and federal governments.

OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS ON GROWTH POLICY ACTION PLAN

Received During Round Three Public Outreach For the Missoula County Growth Policy Update

Prepared by Missoula County Community and Planning Services Staff

Background

The Missoula County Growth Policy, the county's comprehensive land use plan, is being updated. During the fall of 2014 a consultant team and Missoula County Community and Planning Services staff began the first round of public process by collecting information on priority issues and topics to be addressed in the growth policy. This process included eight listening sessions, as well as interviews with county departments and stakeholder organizations. The public identified key values including economic development, open spaces, agricultural lands, natural resources, recreational opportunities, and rural character. The results were used to draft preliminary goals and objectives.

A second round of public outreach was held in late February and early March 2015. Eight listening sessions were held across the county. The public reviewed draft goals and objectives to address impacts of future growth on Communities, Landscapes, and Livelihoods. The results were used to revise goals and objectives and to draft action strategies.

Missoula County Community and Planning Services (CAPS) hosted a third and final round of public events in October 2015 to invite public comment on the draft Missoula County Growth Policy Action Plan. Outreach efforts included four open houses, presentations at four Community Council meetings, and an online questionnaire. One key purpose was to gather feedback on a set of draft action strategies, grouped in the general themes of Landscapes, Livelihoods, and Communities. Participants were invited to indicate for each action strategy whether to Go Ahead/Proceed with Caution/Stop. There was opportunity to provide this feedback via dot exercises at open houses, through hard copy questionnaires, or through an online questionnaire. Each of these tools followed the same basic format.

Overall Summary

Response from the open houses, Community Council presentations, and online questionnaires showed that residents supported the majority of the strategies in the action plan. They also commented that a few types of actions should be implemented cautiously. None of the actions had an overwhelming negative response.

Overall, participants expressed caution about actions related to development of regulations, bond funding, some economic development activities, and climate change. They were quite supportive of measures to improve relations and communications between the County and communities.

Open House Summary

Residents attended open houses in Orchard Homes, Frenchtown, East Missoula, and at the Lubrecht Forest conference center. Stations at each open house provided an introduction, described the Guiding Principles, and asked for feedback on action strategies. Residents were able to review the Communities, Landscapes, and Livelihood action strategies and indicate whether these strategies can achieve County development and conservation goals and objectives. County residents could indicate if the county should go ahead, proceed with caution, or stop for each action strategy. Lastly, residents were asked if there was interest in a review and update of future land use mapping and it how that might help the community.

- The open house participants were particularly favorable to the following strategies in the Action Plan:
- Regulatory and non-regulatory strategies to protect natural resources.
- Subdivision development with the least impact.
- Restore and use historic resources and sites.
- Re-use of former industrial sites.
- Expand digital communications.
- Support local agriculture.
- Contact and communication between Missoula County and residents.
- Public engagement.
- Better service delivery.

Some participants recommended the County proceed with caution when revising zoning and subdivision regulations to address a variety of issues.

The participants' oral and written comments focused upon agriculture, communication, and transportation. Several participants recommended the County stop revision of subdivision regulations to address agricultural impacts, which were likely a result of a simultaneous project to amend the agriculture provisions in the County subdivision regulations.

Some participants expressed a desire to have more County participation and attendance, particularly from the County Commissioners, at Community Council meetings and other local planning events. A few participants said County departments should continue and/or expand its efforts on weed management, transportation, and the collection of junk vehicles on private property.

Community Council Meeting Summary

After the open houses, county planning staff and consultants gave presentations at the Seeley Lake, Lolo, Swan Valley, and Evaro/Finley/O'Keefe Community Councils so County residents could learn about the draft Action Plan and provide comment directly or through an online survey. Council members and the public took copies of the questionnaire and online survey information to share with area residents and groups. The presentations and local distribution efforts may have helped generate responses to the questionnaire.

Some comment suggested how the County could do more to generate participation and input from residents outside of

the City of Missoula, particularly with this Growth Policy project. Some residents would like the County to investigate how subdivision and zoning regulations and planning efforts impact local residential and commercial development.

Online Questionnaire Summary

Residents favorably responded to the Landscape, Livelihoods, and Communities strategies in the Action Plan. The online questionnaire results showed that the residents indicated a clear "go ahead" for the majority of the strategies in the Action Plan. The participants indicated in the online questionnaire that a few actions should be implemented with caution when warranted. Overall, none of the actions had an overwhelming negative response.

The following strategy areas showed strong implementation interest.

1. Develop Natural Resource and Environmental Protection and Conservation Strategies.
2. Support Subdivision Development With The Least Impact.
3. Maximum Access Opportunities to Publicly Owned Lands.
4. Protect and Restore Historic Resources and Sites.
5. Support and Expand Local Businesses and Workforce Training.
6. Develop Recreation and Tourist Economies.
7. Protect and Enhance Rural Character.
8. Provide Varied Development Types and Densities In and Around Communities.
9. Support Increased Infrastructure In and Around Communities.
10. Discourage Development in Areas That Reduces Public and Responder Safety.
11. Expand and Enhance Parks, Trails, and Recreation To Promote Health and Wellness.
12. Increase Contact and Communication Between County and Residents.
13. Enhance Public Engagement Opportunities.
14. Provide Simple, Clear, and Flexible Land Use Regulations, Procedures, and Forms.
15. Maintain Coordination and Communication with the Tribes, City of Missoula, and Land Management Agencies

Landscapes, 136 responses (but not everyone answered every question): The lowest outright support was for actions related to climate change. Parks and trails projects and bond funding of projects received lukewarm responses, possibly due to recent bond for Fort Missoula Regional Park and (then) upcoming vote for school bonds. Several written comments expressed a lack of support for use of public bonds. The use of private funding for conservation efforts was better received.

Livelihoods, 77 responses (but not everyone answered every question): Less than one-half respondents selected 'go ahead' with "Work with economic development agencies to create a targeted economic development plan." Over a third selected 'proceed with caution'. Some comments indicated the need to carefully consider which economic development projects to support.

Several comments and the survey figures expressed caution with the county supporting economic development efforts. Support for broadband availability; brownfields, Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDD) and tax increment financing

(TIF) districts for redevelopment; internship program; and assisting with efforts to create and expand markets for locally grown and made products was high.

Communities, 84 responses (but not everyone answered every question): "Develop Fort Missoula Regional Park" received less than one-third responses to 'go ahead' and over 40% selected 'proceed with caution.'

Affordable housing actions were not strongly supported, with less than one-half selecting 'go ahead' to "Incorporate affordable housing goals and provisions in plans, policies and regulations" and almost one-third selected 'proceed with caution.' There were similar responses to "Explore incentives for development of affordable housing in regulations."

More outreach from the county was strongly favored:

- Almost 90% selected 'go ahead' to "Prepare and disseminate information on revenues and expenditures in the County."
- Almost 90% selected 'go ahead' to "Support and encourage opportunities for rural representation on County boards."

General comments: 'Proceed with caution' figures were somewhat high (20-33% range) on actions that include zoning and subdivision regulations. 'Stop' figures were also higher for these actions where the wording seemed to support regulatory measures. The subdivision regulations agricultural standards, which were under review at the time of the survey, may account for this to some degree.

Written comments covered a very wide spectrum, ranging from unequivocal support for individual property rights to 'zone us now.' However, several comments opposed the proposed climate change actions and many also asked for the county to limit regulations. Limiting regulations was probably the most common written comment.

Missoula County
Growth Policy
Shaping Our Place,
Charting Our Future