



EST
ALLEY

Adopted by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners April 9, 1997
Resolution No. 955AA

and

Adopted by the Kalispell City Council April 7, 1997
Resolution No. 4323

Revised January 23, 2024
Resolution No. 2015AC

WEST VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Adopted by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners
April 9, 1997
Resolution No. 955AA

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Adopted by the Kalispell City Council
April 7, 1997
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Revised January 23, 2024
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RESOLUTION NO. 955 AA

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, held a public hearing on the 4th day of February 1997, to consider an amendment to the Flathead County Zoning Regulations as proposed by the Flathead County Planning Board;

WHEREAS, notice of that hearing was published pursuant to section 76-2-205, **M.C.A.**, on January 24 and January 31, 1997;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners did hear public comment on the proposed amendment to those Regulations at that hearing and reviewed the recommendation of the Flathead County Planning Board regarding the proposed amendment to those Regulations.

WHEREAS, based upon that recommendation and the public testimony, the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, in accordance with Section 76-2 - 205, **M.C.A.**, adopted a resolution of intention (Resolution No. 955 Z) on February 19, 1997, to adopt the proposed amendment to those Regulations.

WHEREAS, notice of passage of that Resolution was published once a week for two weeks, on Feb 23 and March 2 1997, and the Board of Commissioners did not receive written protests from forty percent (40%) of the freeholders within the zoning districts heretofore created by Flathead County.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, in accordance with Section 76-2- 205(6), **M.C.A.**, hereby amends the Flathead County Zoning Regulations to add a West Valley (WV) zoning classification to the Flathead County Zoning Regulations, as set forth on Exhibit A hereto.

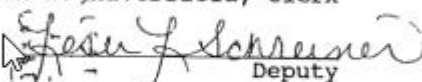
DATED this 7th day of April, 1997.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Flathead County, Montana

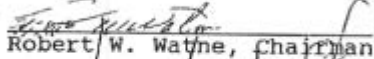
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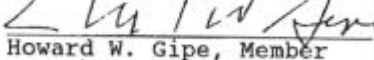
Susan W. Haverfield, Clerk

BY


Deputy

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Flathead County, Montana

By 
Robert W. Wayne, Chairman

By 
Howard W. Gipe, Member

By 
Dale W. Williams, Member



RESOLUTION NO. 2015AC

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of Commissioners adopted the West Valley Neighborhood Plan on April 9, 1997 as an addendum to the Flathead County Master Plan of 1987, which was superseded by the Flathead County Growth Policy, originally adopted on March 19, 2007, and most recently updated on August 31, 2023 pursuant to 76-1-604, M.C.A.; and,

WHEREAS, the West Valley Neighborhood Land Use Advisory Committee has initiated a revision to the Flathead County Growth Policy to amend the West Valley Neighborhood Plan; and,

WHEREAS, on October 11, 2023, the Flathead County Planning Board adopted a resolution, recommending the Board of Commissioners to amend the West Valley Neighborhood Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Board of Commissioners has reviewed the proposal and determined that the proposed amendment to the West Valley Neighborhood Plan should be formally considered; and,

WHEREAS, notice of passage of Resolution 2015AB was published once a week for two weeks on December 4 and 11, 2023; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners received no written comments regarding the proposed amendment; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has considered all written comments received since the adoption of the resolution of intent; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, pursuant to Section 76-1-604, M.C.A., that it hereby adopts the amendment to the West Valley Neighborhood Plan of the Flathead County Growth Policy.

Dated this 23rd day of January, 2024.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Flathead County, Montana

By


Randy L. Brodehl, Chairman

By

Not Available for Signature

Pamela J. Holmquist, Member

By


Brad W. Abell, Member

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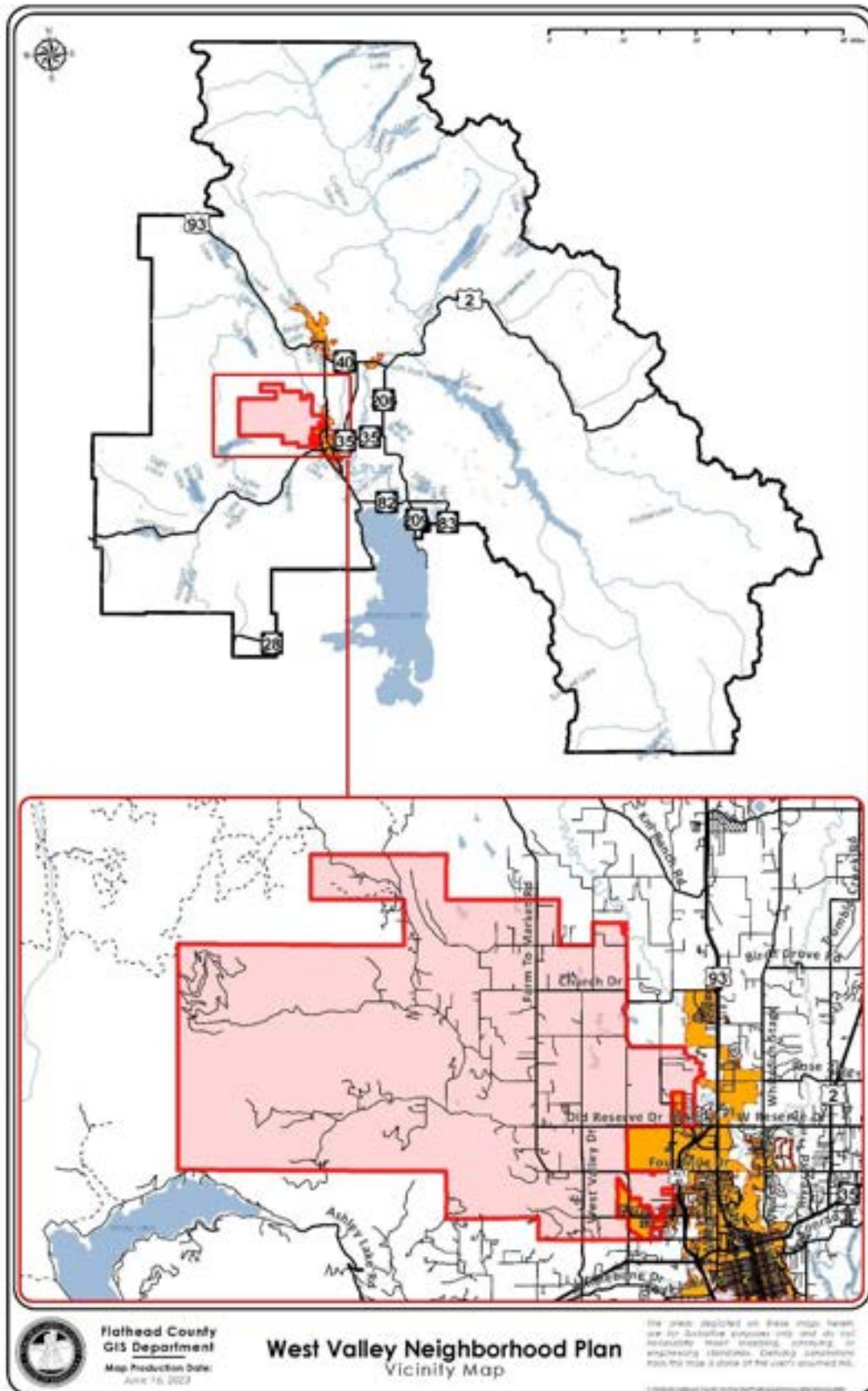
CHAPTER 1 - OVERVIEW

Section 1.01

BACKGROUND

- 1.01.010 The West Valley Neighborhood Planning process really began during the mid-1970s when the community adopted zoning regulations and established a West Valley Land Owners Association. However, over the years the role and identity of the "Owners Association" has become less defined and the legal stability of the zoning district has increasingly been in question. The need to update the West Valley Planning and Zoning Regulations to reflect the more traditional zoning statutes of 76-2-201 et seq., MCA, has been a long standing objective of the County Commissioners.
- 1.01.020 The original intent of the West Valley Planning and Zoning District was to minimize conflict with agricultural and timber practices in the area. With this as an objective, minimum lot sizes were set at 40 acres. But over the past 20 years, the liberal use of "occasional sale" and "family transfer" exemptions and the granting of variances has transformed many areas of West Valley into rural residential neighborhoods.
- 1.01.030 The preparation of Neighborhood Plans gained increased interest amongst local communities in the 80's and 90's. Example plans included those prepared for Bigfork, Lakeside, Little Bitterroot Lake, and the Canyon. The Flathead Regional Development Office (FRDO) offered to assist any "neighborhoods" wishing to pursue a planning process and the County Commissioners reserved funding to hire a planning consultant to help facilitate the neighborhood planning process.
- 1.01.040 The original impetus in 1995 to pursue a formal review of the West Valley Planning and Zoning District evolved from a proposal to establish a neighborhood convenience store in the area of the West Valley School. Reaction to this proposal lead to a series of citizen-initiated meetings during the fall of 1995 to discuss this and other issues pertaining to the West Valley Planning and Zoning District. A citizen steering committee formally requested assistance from the County Commissioners to help prepare a neighborhood plan for West Valley.
- 1.01.041 In 2021, a renewed initiative explored the relevancy of the aging West Valley Neighborhood Plan and the resolve, if any, of the West Valley population to endorse and evolve the plan (under the WV Neighborhood Plan). To investigate further, the WVLUAC sent out a survey (see attached) in 2021 to all of the landowners and residents of the West Valley (under the WV Neighborhood Plan). The tabulated results indicate 2021 viewpoints of the WV community which are very similar concerns regarding growth in the area as those in 1997.
- 1.01.042 Overarching themes within the survey results included preservation of rural, agricultural, and silvicultural land uses. Frustrations expressed in the survey included rural infrastructure becoming over-burdened, especially in the areas of traffic, education, emergency services, water quality, open space, and safety. Dense residential build-outs and encroaching industrial and chemically intrusive industries are of grave concern and inspire a collective call to action.
- 1.01.050 A vicinity map of the West Valley area is included on the following page as Figure 1.01.01.

Fig 1.01.01



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Section 1.02

PROCESS

- 1.02.010 Process 1997 - The planning process was designed to be flexible and to pace the interests of the community. Every effort was made to invite all landowners to participate in the process. Mailings of a survey and newsletter to all landowners in the planning area were utilized to enhance public awareness and to give everyone an opportunity to express ideas and concerns. Monthly meetings were held to solicit input from community members and to provide routine updates on progress. A steering committee of local land owners offered overall guidance to the process.
- 1.02.020 Process 2022 – It was decided by the West Valley Land Use Advisory Committee (WV LUAC) in 2021 to basically follow the process used to create the original Neighborhood Plan. Once again, a survey was mailed to landowners and residents in order to gauge how attitudes regarding the key elements of the Neighborhood Plan, lifestyle, and the future has changed. The regular monthly WV LUAC meetings were used to socialize the results of the survey with residents and allow further public input. In addition to the monthly WV LUAC meetings, there were additional monthly workshops held for public participation in formulating the updates to be incorporated into the final Neighborhood Plan update.

Section 1.03

WEST VALLEY STEERING COMMITTEE

- 1.03.010 The decision to develop a neighborhood plan for West Valley emerged over a period of several months following discussions at the neighborhood level with technical advice from the Flathead Regional Development Office. Following the initial meeting of "interested" citizens on August 14, 1995, Bonny Ogle commented in a follow-up letter to all attendees that it might be time to update the existing plan.

"After you are brought into the world, there is a need/or at least an occasional check-up even if you feel just fine. Otherwise, you may end up going to a doctor when you don't feel well only to find out you have an incurable disease which could have been dealt with at an early stage. Our land and community are facing these same problems now."
Bonny Ogle (9/1/95)

- 1.03.020 It was agreed by those attending the meeting in September 1995 to formally organize as a "Steering Committee" to help define and guide a planning process for West Valley. Judy Hepper was approved as "Chairperson" of the Steering Committee. A monthly meeting schedule was approved and membership and/or participation on the Committee was determined to be open to anyone owning land or living in the community.
- 1.03.030 The initial meetings held by the Steering Committee between September 1995 and January 1996 largely focused on efforts of "education" and community awareness. Various speakers were invited to address such topics as "schools," "police protection", "roads", and "taxes". An important product of those early meetings included a preliminary listing of those aspects of the community that are "positive" and "negative" and a listing of "concerns" relative to regulations. The school district boundary was selected as the planning boundary. 1.03.030 The role of the 1997 Steering Committee that developed the original Neighborhood Plan was replaced in 2022 by the

WV LUAC. The WV LUAC had an already existing county approved document that had successfully preserved the nature of the West Valley Neighborhood. The way forward was much easier since the framework of the Neighborhood Plan had already been established. One key change between the original Neighborhood Plan and updated Neighborhood Plan was the original Neighborhood Plan used the West Valley School district boundary as its Neighborhood Planning boundary. The 2022 Neighborhood Plan uses the West Valley Zoning District boundary for this purpose. The reason for this change was simple and straightforward and reflects the changes since 1995. The city of Kalispell has grown significantly and has been annexing land in the West Valley neighborhood. These annexations have removed property from the West Valley Neighborhood Plan and West Valley Zoning District while still preserving the original school district boundaries.

Section 1.04 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- 1.04.010 The FRDO advised the Committee in October 1995 that the County may hire a planning consultant to assist the planning efforts of two neighborhoods in the coming year and that it might be appropriate to request this type of assistance. The Steering Committee determined that some technical advice and/or facilitation may be appropriate to the process and made the request to the County Commissioners. The request was granted and Montana Planning Consultants of Kalispell was assigned by the County Commissioners to assist with the preparation of a West Valley Neighborhood Plan.
- 1.04.020 The primary role of the Planner was that of a facilitator and information gatherer. The collected information was presented in mapped and written formats for consideration by the Steering Committee, who had the ultimate responsibility for approving the final language of the Plan.
- 1.04.030 Since the county no longer hires consultants to help support neighborhoods in their Neighborhood Planning activities, no technical assistance was received for the 2022 Neighborhood Plan activities. However, WV LUAC member Erica Wirtala was able to secure a \$5,000 grant that provided the funding for the printing and postage for both the survey and subsequent public notice mailings.

Section 1.05 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 1.05.010 Public participation and involvement was encouraged throughout the process. The Steering Committee evolved out of a small group of interested citizens and expanded to anyone interested in the process. Meeting sign-up sheets were used to establish a meeting notification list.
- 1.05.020 Other efforts to involve citizen involvement in 1995 included the mailing of a newsletter and land use surveys to all landowners in the planning area. The newsletter helped to explain the intentions of the planning process and invited public participation. The survey offered every landowner an opportunity to express personal viewpoints and to "vote" on various issues. Both of these documents and the survey results are included in the Appendix.
- 1.05.030 Monthly meetings were held at the West Valley School in an effort to actively encourage citizen participation. Hands-on exercises were conducted to identify and rank community issues. Major agenda topics for each public meeting are listed below:

Original WVLUAC Planning Meetings - Starting September 1995

September 14 1995

- Formalize a Steering Committee
- Agree on study area
- Planning process and ID community concerns
- Establish meeting dates
- Public notification

October 18, 1995

- Presentation by school district
- Presentation by sheriff's office

November 15, 1995

- Strengths and weaknesses of present West Valley plan and regulations

December 6, 1995

- Discuss/review of issues identified in November
- Community outreach ideas
- Representation/membership of steering committee
- Designation of county neighborhood plan area

January 24, 1997

- Presentation by Flathead County Road Superintendent
- Presentation by FRDO staff on consolidated mill levy
- Introduction of planning consultant

February 7, 1996

- Presentation of draft maps
- Meeting schedule
- Draft survey
- Draft newsletter

March 20, 1996

- Recap of past meetings and general overview of planning process
- Progress report on mapping efforts and technical reports
- Survey results
- Sub-neighborhood identification exercise

April 17. 1996

- Recap of last meeting
- Break-out groups to list community issues

May 15, 1996

- Recap of last meeting
- Ranking of community goals and objectives

June 19, 1996

- Review of draft goals and policies plan

July 17, 1996

- Final Plan - approval and amendments
- Regulatory Concepts - clustering, convenience store

July 31, 1996

- Committee discussions On clustering and home occupations

August 21, 1996

- Discussions on home occupations and clustering performance standards
- Discussion of performance standards for convenience store

August 29, 1996

- Release and mailing of draft regulations together with survey

September 18, 1996

- Overview of draft zoning regulations
- Results from zoning survey

September 25, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on citizens advisory group provisions and home occupations

October 2, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on density provisions (Part 1)

October 14, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on density provisions, (Part 2)

October 21, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on convenience store criteria

October 23, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on permitted uses

October 30, 1996

- Zoning subcommittee meeting on recommended changes to proposed zoning regulations
- Presentation by the zoning committee on recommended changes to proposed zoning regulations
- Recommendation by community to forward regulations to planning board

West Valley Land Use Advisory Committee & Workshop Meetings to Update the Neighborhood Plan Starting February 2020

February 25, 2020

- Discussions with M. Mussman, Flathead County Planning Director, regarding updating WV Neighborhood Plan (NP)
- M. Mussman provided advice on how to proceed and suggest reviewing other recently updated plans

June 23, 2020

- LUAC members were asked to review the current NP and note where they thought updates were needed
- Big Fork and Ashley Lake NP would also be reviewed

September 29, 2020

- Discussions regarding the reviewed NPs and preparing to start the updates to WV NP

February 23, 2021

- Decided to use the original process to develop the NP for the update along with suggestions by M. Mussman
- Study possibilities of financial and professional help as was provided by the county when NP was developed
- Study how to pay for survey of WV landowners and residents
- Study how to get survey out into the community; Mail, Email, or Online

March 20, 2021

- Annexations by Kalispell in SD1 boundary will force NP update to use WV Zoning District boundary
- Decision was made to mail out the survey
- Determined that no financial or professional help from the State or County was possible
- Survey topical areas were defined
- Initial proposed update changes were to be sent to LUAC Chairman for consolidation and future discussions
- Grant request for \$5,000 submitted to National Assoc. of Realtors under the Rural Outreach Grant Program

April 28, 2021

- Extensive discussions and review of proposed survey questions and survey format
- Established survey target mailing date, response due date, and presentation of results to the community

May 26, 2021

- Survey was at the printers and would be mailed the following week
- Mailing list of residents and landowners was obtained from USPS as the county is prohibited from doing so
- Discussions regarding venue for public presentation of the survey results

June 28, 2021

- Document version control was discussed to ensure access to the latest version of proposed updates to sections
- Discussions on formatting of updated Plan to make it consistent with current county

- document formats
- Meetings with WV Volunteer Fire Dept Chief and county Sheriff scheduled to obtain updated data
- Transportation, Utilities, and Schools sections were still being worked

July 28, 2021

- Survey results are being tabulated
- Clear trend seen, so far, that the current Plan is not out of alignment with public opinion
- Lots of discussion on how to best present the survey results to the public (raw numbers, percentages, ...)
- Public presentation of survey results meeting agenda was discussed

August 25, 2021

- Raw survey result numbers were presented
- Noted that not all responders answered all questions.
- It was decided to present the results as percentages of all responses to each question
- Selected key public comments from the survey would also be presented for further public discussions

November 30, 2021

- Public presentation of the WV Survey is scheduled for 9 December at the WV School Commons area
- Post card notices were sent to all WV landowners and residents
- Final agenda for the public meeting was approved
- Survey results and presentations would be sent to FCPZ so people not able to attend can access the material

December 9, 2021

- Public meeting where WV Survey results were presented
- WV Commons was filled with many people standing in the back
- 103 people signed in, but all 129 chairs were filled and another 30 people or so were standing along walls
- Survey results were well received with no disagreements with results being evoked from the audience
- Lots of concern expressed by attendees about the recent rapid growth in West Valley
- Lots of frustration expressed regarding traffic, especially trucks speeding on Church and Farm to Market
- Lack of zoning, septic, and other county regulations enforcement was another big topic of frustration
- Frustrations expressed over some home business excesses leading to traffic and other neighborhood issues
- Questions were answered regarding specific survey questions and comments received
- Questions asked and answered regarding the Plan update process and timeline
- Many volunteers signed up to work on Plan update subcommittees

December 29, 2021

- Lots of discussion regarding the way forward with creating the updated Plan
- Agreement that Plan update workshops would be held every month in addition to the regular LUAC meetings
- The public, and those who volunteered, would be contacted for the 18 Jan meeting for

the Plan update kickoff

January 18, 2022

- 30 people attended the first workshop
- It was decided there would be two subcommittees: Public Services and Land Use
- Subcommittees will meet and work at Workshops held at WV School
- Each subcommittee will report progress to the LUAC at the regular monthly meetings
- The subcommittee members were advised regarding compliance with the open meeting rules
- Arrangements have been made to work with the county GIS office to update Plan data and graphics

February 11, 2022

- Initial subcommittee meetings

February 22, 2022

- Subcommittees are organizing
- Data update requests submitted to GIS office

March 30, 2022

- Questions raised about scope of changes to the Plan were raised and focus of changes
- Updated maps from GIS were presented to replace 25 year old maps in original Plan

April 1, 2022

- Meeting with FCPZ Director and subcommittee Chairs and two LUAC members
- Discussed compliance with open meeting laws, Updated Plan approval process, and other guidance

April 12, 2022

- Discussions regarding known changes in the WV area since the original Plan was drafted
- Utilities, except for FEC, have changed and Broadband internet & cell towers did not exist 25 years ago
- Compiled list of new service providers and other organizations that need to be contacted for info
- Discussions on bitcoin mining and whether cannabis production agricultural or commercial
- What things are no longer appropriate or relevant in the old Plan?

April 19, 2022

- Discussed making updates and wording consistent with existing County Growth Plan
- Began update process of agricultural section

April 26, 2022

- Land Use Subcommittee present early draft changes to LUAC to make sure they are on the right track
- Emphasis of material presented was on updating 25-year-old data
- Updated maps for the Land Use section were provided to the subcommittee

May 3, 2022

- Proposed changes to Agricultural section reviewed and modified
- Review of proposed new text for Forest section
- Approvals for Residential/Commercial/Industrial text changes
- Proposed Open Spaces changes reviewed and modified

May 10, 2022

- Continued revisions to Land Use and Open Space sections
- Review of new maps to replace old ones
- Discussion of new charts to show growth trends

May 17, 2022

- Continued work by subcommittees on update revisions to Land Use and Public services

May 24, 2022

- Land Use subcommittee presented more proposed updates to the plan
- Public Services sub-committee is compiling new inputs from Fire and Sheriff's offices
- Discussions regarding the relationship between the Plan and Zoning
- Agreed that focus will remain on only the Plan updating

June 7, 2022

- Numerical formatting reviewed
- Continued update reviews of Land Use and Public Services section

June 14, 2022

- Public Services work reviewed and discussed
- Discussed itemizing land use types such as refuges, trusts, conservation easements, etc.

June 28, 2022

- Updated plan numbering format that is consistent with other county documents was presented and accepted
- Land Use subcommittee said they are still working on the last of the proposed updates
- Public Services subcommittee presented draft updates
- Discussions regarding new charts that could better illustrate the growth trends WV has seen in last 25 years

July, 12, 2022

- Discussion on how to present growth data of WV since current Plan was created continued
- Current Plan only exists as a scanned xerox copy. A digitized version of this document will be created with no changes
- A new version of the current Plan will be created with the new numerical section format
- A numerical format version of the current updated Plan draft will be created

July 26, 2022

- LUAC presented with 3 documents:
 1. Current original WV Plan in digital format
 2. Current original WV Plan in new numerical format
 3. Preliminary updated WV Plan with updated Chapter 1 & 2

- Land Use subcommittee members began walking the LUAC through the proposed changes to Chapter 1 & 2
- LUAC voted to approve both the Original Digital and the New Original reformatted version of the Plan
- Both will be submitted to FCPZ for review and comment
- It is hoped FCPZ will adopt the original digitized version to replace their poor scanned xerox copy version
- Original reformatted version was created so it will be easy to track changes made in the new updated Plan

August 16, 2022

- Minutes of all LUAC meetings and Workshops will be used to continue the updated Plan development chronology
- Reviewed Public Services progress

August 23, 2022

- Plan updating process chronology, like the one in the original Plan, is underway
- Meeting with FCPZ on new digital and reformatted versions of current Plan went well
- FCPZ will consider adopting the new digital version to replace the old xerox copy in their files
- Final review and approval process of the updated plan was reviewed with FCPZ, no surprises
- Land Use is in final draft form with the exception of the maps and figures
- Public Utilities is finishing their final draft as well
- Anticipate final touches to the draft updated Plan will be accomplished at the next workshop
- Final draft of Updated Plan will be presented at September LUAC meeting for Acceptance

September 13, 2022

- Review of completed Plan update activities chronology format

September 27, 2022

- LUAC committee reviewed proposed changes to the Public Utilities section
- Maps and figures will be added to draft Plan once all sections of text have been reviewed and approved
- An updated Plan workshop with the Planning Board was suggested to obtain feedback prior to submission to FCPZ

October 18, 2022

- Still waiting on data from WV Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Transportation, Schools, and Implementation sections changes were reviewed
- A fully formatted version of the updated Plan without figures would be presented at the next LUAC meeting

October 25, 2022

- Fully formatted updated Plan draft was reviewed by the LUAC members
- A number of proposed sections were removed as they were deemed extraneous information

- Various bits of wordsmithing of sections of the document were done by the committee to improve focus

November 15, 2022

- Final drafts of WV Fire Dept. data figure and Plan update Chronology of activities was accepted by LUAC
- Additional minor text modifications and typo corrections were made
- Discussion ensued on how to compile the final draft as approved by the WVLUAC
- LUAC members agreed that the updated Plan Draft was basically complete
- FCPZ will be contacted for guidance on the process for final review and approval by the County

Section 1.07**PLANNING AREA**

- 1.07.010 As mentioned previously, the original West Valley Neighborhood Planning Area coincided with the boundary of the West Valley School District (District 1). The 2022 updated Neighborhood Plan uses the West Valley Zoning District boundaries as this boundary accurately reflects the area in which the Neighborhood Plan applies. See Figure 1.07.010.

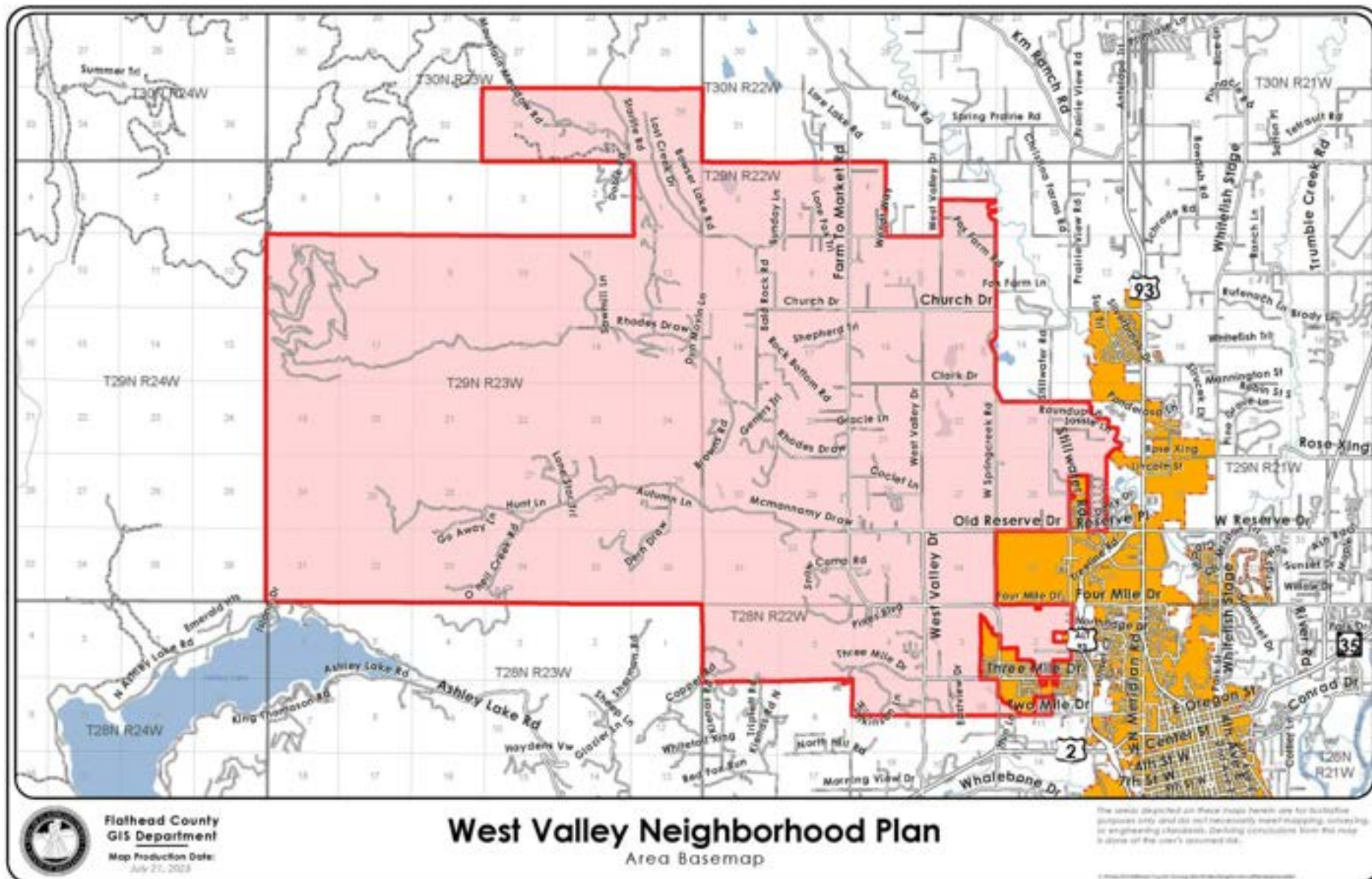


Fig 1.07.01

Section 1.08

EXISTING REGULATIONS

- 1.08.010 State law requires zoning to be in conformance with an adopted Master Plan or "Development Plan." In 1997, the West Valley Zoning District was considered to be an "Agricultural and Timber" district that required large minimum lot sizes. At that time, an amendment to the 1978 West Valley Planning & Zoning District would be necessary to recognize "other" land use opportunities in the area. The purpose of the West Valley Neighborhood Plan was to identify land use options based on the various physical, biological, social, and public services features of the area. The findings of the Plan establish the framework and justification for updating the regulations.
- 1.08.020 The purpose statement of the West Valley Planning & Zoning District is: "all lands both timber & farm land to be classified and maintained as food and fiber agriculture." The overall goal remains the same (in 2022), due to the most current 2021-2022 survey responses from the residents of the West Valley neighborhood area. The accompanying regulations generally apply to all lands in the area of School District 1, with a few exceptions. Portions of the original district have been abandoned and replaced with more traditional zoning classifications, including all that area lying within the planning jurisdiction of the Kalispell City-County Master Plan. A change of zoning to Suburban Agriculture SAG-10 has also been approved in the area of Saddlewood Subdivision. Refer to Figure 1.08.01.
- 1.08.030 The uniform application of a single zoning district to such a large area fails to recognize the variability of land features throughout the district. Not all the land can easily be classified as either "timber" or "agriculture", especially when considering how the land use character of the area has changed dramatically, even with zoning in place. The liberal use of subdivision exemptions (family transfers, occasional sales) over the years from 1997 to 2022 has created a suburban development pattern in many locations. Other changes occurring in the area and vicinity, including changing public attitudes, combine to create the rationale for amending the West Valley Planning & Zoning District.
- 1.08.040 Continued growth and change in the West Valley area in the twenty-five years since the current plan went into effect in 1997 has led the community to the current process of updating the West Valley Neighborhood Plan.

Section 1.09 **PLAN ELEMENTS**

1.09.010 Information was collected on a variety of topics and presented to the steering committee and general public as part of the planning process. The mapped and written information helped to present a factual framework when discussing topics of land use and public services.

Elements of the plan are organized as follows:

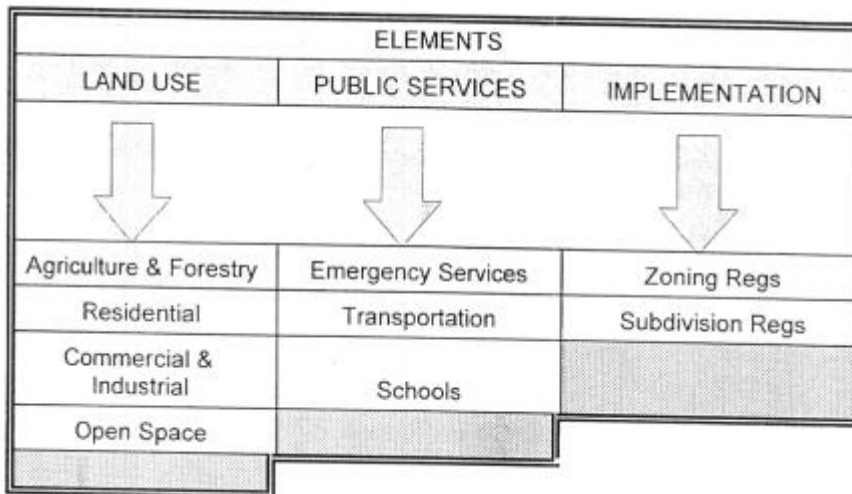


Fig 1.09.01

Each of the Plan Elements is introduced by lead-in discussions on related topics followed by a listing of community Goals & Policies.

Chapter II - LAND USE

Section 2.01 OVERVIEW

- 2.01.010 The land use character of West Valley is primarily a mixture of "Residential," "Agriculture," and "Forest." Agricultural lands are generally located to the east, forest to the west, and residential in between.

Section 2.02 AGRICULTURE

- 2.02.010 Agricultural lands in the West Valley have been and are being used in diverse ways. There are elk farms, bison farms, and dairy farms, along with gravel extraction. Crops that have been grown are the cereal grains of wheat and barley along with hay and potatoes, and recently, the bright yellow fields of canola add vibrant color to our views. Peppermint stills are seen scattered in the area as a reminder of the peppermint that was prevalent for years. Figure 2.02.01 shows the soil types in the West Valley region.
- 2.02.020 Agricultural lands in the West Valley are a big reason why people find it an inviting place to live. These lands provide the open space and vistas that residents of the area value. A piece of the West Valley agricultural land was placed in a conservation project that contains the West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing area. It is a prime waterfowl migration viewing location.
- 2.02.030 The agricultural lands in the eastern part of West Valley have been converted to residential areas over the past years. Considerable growth due to Kalispell's annexations has brought on this conversion. The growth continues to be a force that is pushing this change in the agricultural lands.
- 2.02.040 ISSUES: The agricultural community has seen many challenges over the years. The need for more residential areas along with the large increases in real estate value is a big part of the push to convert more agricultural land to residential areas. Some possible solutions to preserving agricultural land may include the following options:
1. Rural cluster incentive.
 2. Transfer development rights (TDR);
 3. Encouraging conservation easements with limited development.
 4. Purchasing of development rights program (PDR)
 5. Maintaining incentives for agricultural sustainability, promoting tolerance for agricultural use and activities whenever possible.

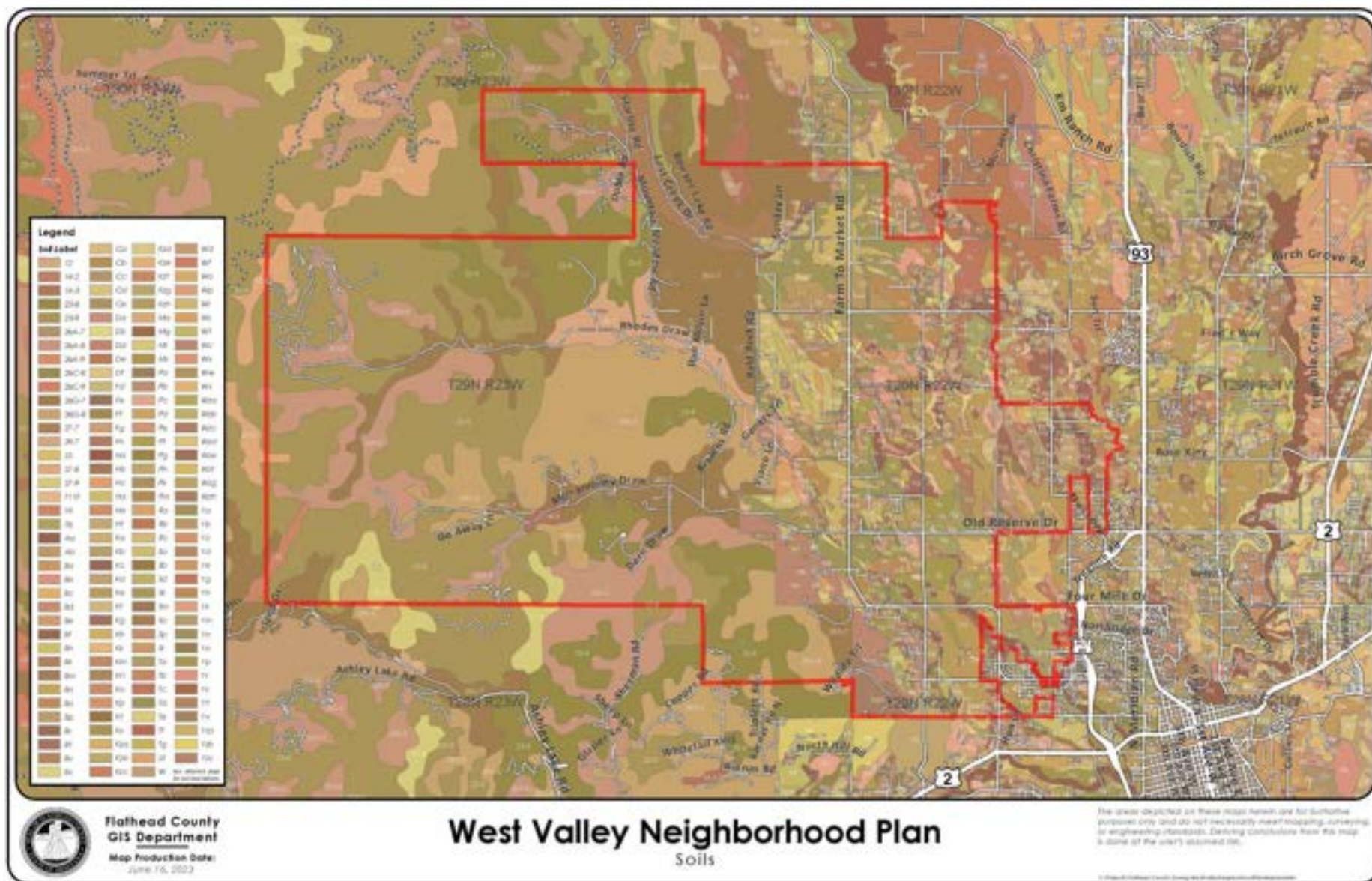


Fig 2.02.01

Section 2.03

FOREST

2.03.010 BACKGROUND: A substantial portion of the West Valley planning area is forested and on variable mountainous terrain. These lands contribute to the aesthetic, recreational, and natural setting of the community. These lands have wonderful wildlife habitat for birds, mammals, and fish. At the higher elevations they can have great vistas of the Flathead Valley and mountains to the east. These are a few of the reasons that residential growth in the forested areas of West Valley has been considerable. The forested areas located in remote, steep slope topography with dense forest vegetation can create high fire hazard situations. (Refer to Figure 2.03.01 for Topography.)

As residential use moves into traditional timber management areas, sound forest management practices remain the desirable land use in the planning area.

OWNERSHIP	TOTAL ACRES
Private Timber Companies.	9,620 acres
USDA Forest Service	3,705 acres
State	1,887 acres

Figure 2.03.02 shows current land ownership regions cited above

2.03.020 ISSUES: With the encroachment of residential uses into forested settings, land uses and associated issues can be grouped into two main land use categories:

1. Timberland
2. Forested Residential/Recreational.

The goals and concerns for each are often different, but the solutions can be somewhat similar.

2.03.030 TIMBERLAND: The primary concern for the timberland land use is the ability to continue historical land uses while retaining the ability to realize future potential land uses and values. Complaints concerning dust, noise, smoke and logging traffic increase as more people move closer to timberlands. There is concern that higher taxes may result from the creation of Rural Special Improvements Districts (to pay for rural road improvements). Some timberland owners allow public access for recreation. As this use increases, negative impacts such as trespassing, garbage dumping, resource damage and illegal fires also increase.

2.03.040 FORESTED RESIDENTIAL/RECREATIONAL: For forested residential tracts, the primary concerns are wildfire risk management, aesthetics, wildlife habitat, forest health, and maintaining privacy. Many residential forested tracts are not being managed for forest health and are becoming dangerously overstocked with trees and vegetation. This situation creates high fire danger and forests that are susceptible to insect and disease outbreaks. Drought exacerbates these dangers. Threat of wildfire, both within individual lots and in a larger landscape perspective, is a major concern. Heavy fuel loading coupled with limited emergency access and escape routes creates significant public safety concerns. Public safety with respect to wildfire considerations must be considered when new residential growth is permitted. The potential for conflict with wildlife must be considered as well.

2.03.050 RECOMMENDATIONS: Forest-related issues were identified during the process and the recommendations include the following:

1. Forest management, including commercial logging, is essential to keeping the Timberland and Residential/Recreational Forest land uses intact. This forest management requires the acceptance and acknowledgement of impacts such as truck traffic, dust, noise, and smoke. These are part of the influencing factors which maintain the rural character of the planning area.
2. Market-based conservation strategies, such as tax incentives, land exchanges, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, and the like, are preferable to regulatory strategies in retaining the forested landscape of West Valley.
3. Flathead County should work with cities, other public agencies, and private landowners to encourage continued forest vegetation management. "Firewise" principles should be adopted for structures and surrounding property in forested areas.
4. Sustainable forest management practices that meet state law and support the continued multiple use opportunities of private and public forests, should be promoted.
5. Land use planning regulations and restrictions should not prevent forest landowners from realizing land values that could be achieved through well planned development consistent with community values.
6. Wildfire planning on a landscape scale must be considered in any new development proposal. Adequate emergency ingress and escape routes must be provided for each time. Development standards should adopt "Firewise" principles.
7. Wildlife conflict is an issue with residential/recreational development in forested areas of West Valley. Planning should consider wildlife conflict and encourage education and information sharing on the subject. This could accomplish a great deal in preventing unnecessary, costly, and possibly harmful conflict between people and wildlife.

Figure 2.03.01

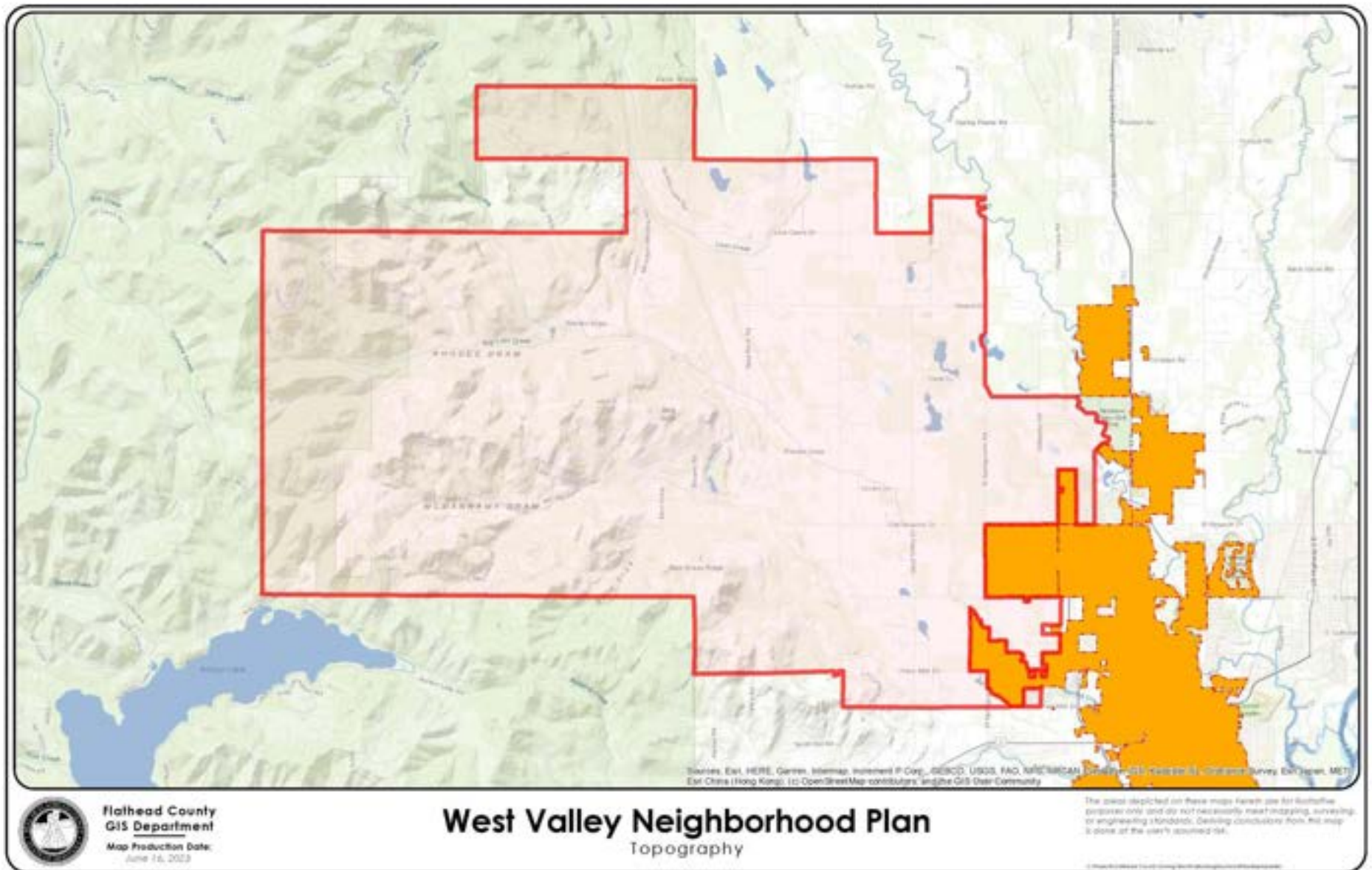
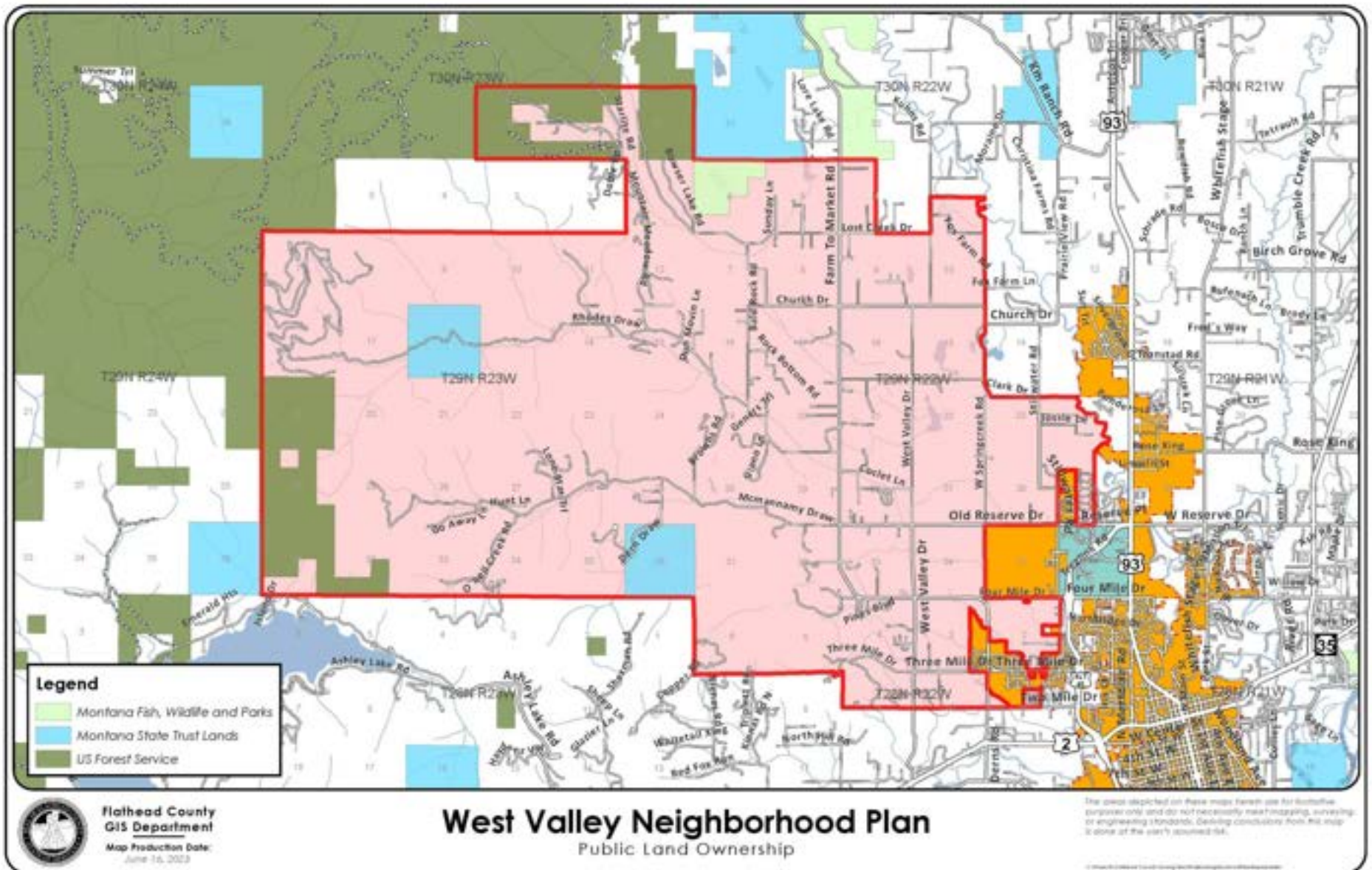


Figure 2.03.02



Section 2.04

RESIDENTIAL

2.04.010

Residential dwellings and small lots comprise the third major land use component of the West Valley area. The number of dwellings and residential lots has increased significantly since the West Valley Neighborhood Plan was originally drafted. Lot numbers have increased via the liberal use of subdivision exemptions, such as the occasional sale and family transfer exemptions. In 1997, there were approximately 1,420 separate tracts of land in the West Valley planning area. Based upon Flathead County GIS, Montana Dept. of Revenue, and 2020 US Census data, there are now 3,384 separate tracts of land. In 1997, a windshield survey indicated up to 700 dwelling units, but in 2020, the number is up to 3092 dwelling units. The 1990 Census for the area of School District 1 estimated 828 dwelling units and a total population of 2,135 persons, but at the time of this revised document, the total population is at 5370. Fig 2.04.01 shows current land use in the West Valley region. Major population clusters in the planning area include:

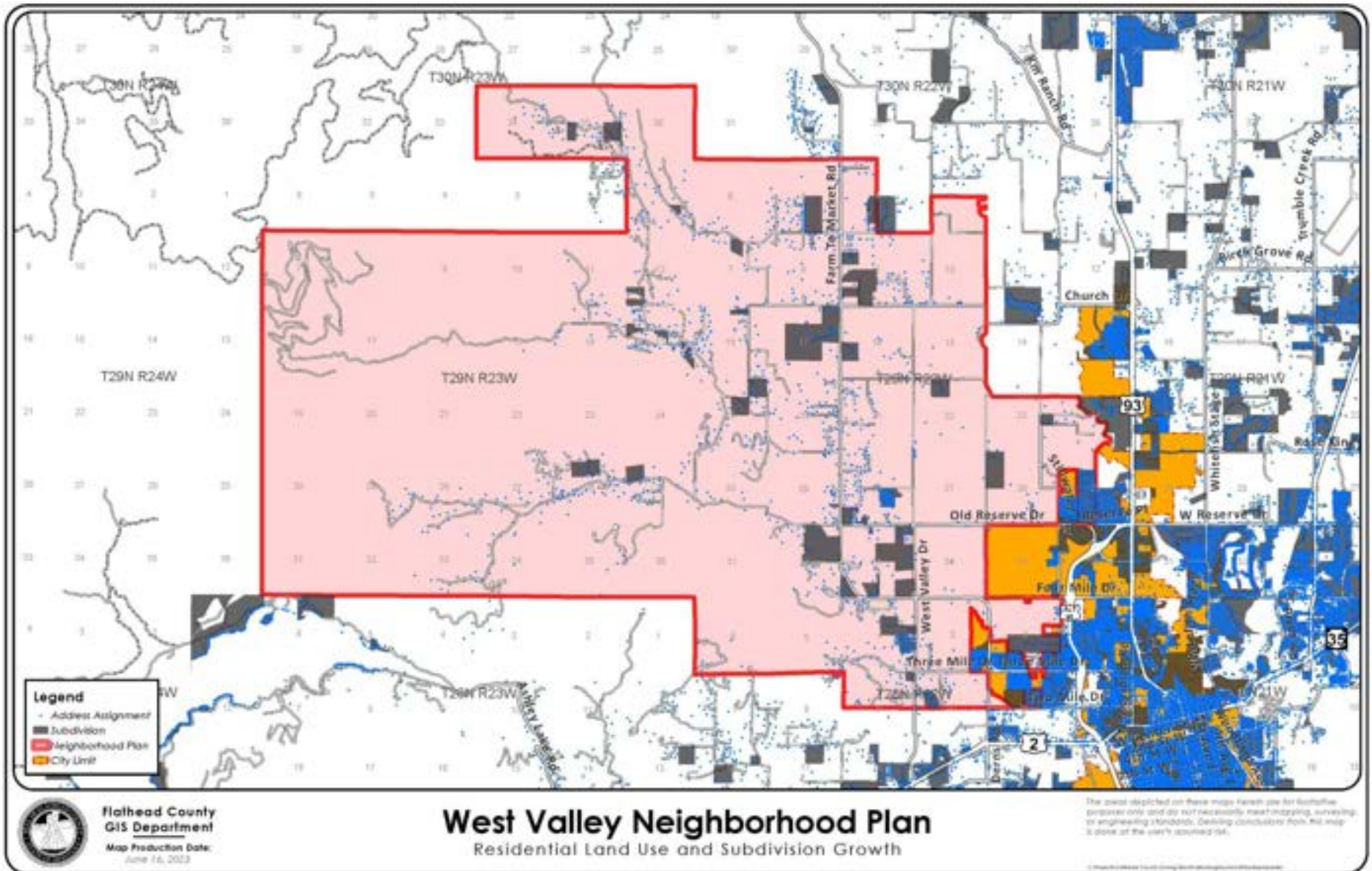
- McMannamy Draw
- Rhodes Draw
- West Valley Pines
- Pleasant Hills
- Coclet Lane
- Grand Vista Drive
- Sunday Lane
- Church Drive
- Mountain Meadow Rd.
- Bald Rock Rd.

2.04.0202

ISSUES: Residential land use issues were determined from survey results and group work sessions. Residential densities are expected to remain sparse while recognizing opportunities to divide lands where justified based on criteria related to the availability of services, topography, soil type, etc. Generalized conclusions are listed below.

1. Residential areas located within forested lands need to address wildfire issues. "Firewise" principles should be followed for construction and surrounding property.
2. "Sub-neighborhoods" exist within the larger West Valley area.
3. Land use densities in the 5–20-acre range are appropriate in some areas.
4. Clustering is an important tool to minimize sprawl and the loss of farmland.
5. Opportunities probably exist for expansion of existing subdivisions.
6. Control the spread of noxious weeds.
7. The residential character should be single family.
8. Target new residential subdivisions away from prime agricultural soils, forest lands, and aquifers.
9. Short term rental properties should follow County Growth Policy guidelines.

Figure 2.04.01



Section 2.05

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

2.05.010

Few freestanding commercial or industrial uses are located within the planning area. Although the existing regulations for West Valley have considerable flexibility for the creation of residential lots, few allowances are permitted for commercial or industrial uses. "Cottage Industries" are permitted by the existing regulations and many of these home-based businesses do exist in the planning area. Existing Industrial uses include a sawmill, gravel operations, and various agricultural-dependent uses, such as mint stills.

2.05.020

ISSUES:

Public opinion, as per the 2021 survey on this subject, appears to oppose any change from the philosophy of the existing regulations pertaining to these uses. In general, industrial, and commercial uses are discouraged. Some allowance for limited retail commercial use may be OK, with restrictions. Issue statements concerning industrial uses and commercial uses are listed below:

1. Prevent strip commercial development.
2. Prevent commercial development, especially anything of a manufacturing or mass production nature.
3. Continue to permit home occupations that comply with existing Flathead County zoning regulations.
4. Continue to prohibit commercial uses, but allow consideration of a neighborhood convenience store (mini mart);
5. Allow opportunities for gravel extraction; and
6. Industrial uses should not be permitted except those associated with normal farm operations.

Section 2.06

OPEN SPACE

2.06.010

Open space is a description of land that is either natural or "open" in the sense that it is undeveloped. General perceptions of open space include forest land and farmland. The traditional use of the phrase, "open space" is normally associated with public lands, maintained parks, or protected natural resources. In the West Valley, the ratio of public lands to private lands is (1:8). The general landscape of West Valley appears to be very open due to the abundance of farm and forest land. However, the owners of the farmland and private forest lands are quick to point out the distinctions between public versus private lands. Permanent open space on private lands, while difficult to achieve, may be accomplished through purchase or easement agreements. Large minimum lot size requirements are not the long term or best solution to the preservation of large contiguous areas of open space.

- 2.06.020 Significant natural features should be identified for special consideration when development is proposed. Important local natural features include the Stillwater River corridor, small lakes & streams, and wetlands. The West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area is a good example of preserving an important habitat via public-private partnerships. Slopes in excess of 25% often pose limitations to development and should be protected to the greatest extent possible.
- 2.06.030 Open space requires management to be an asset to the community. Forested lands should be managed through sound silvicultural practices that promote forest health, wildlife habitat, and protection of riparian areas. "Firewise" principles should be followed for structures and surrounding property. Grassland should be maintained with practices that control noxious weeds, as per county regulations. Riparian areas should be protected and the growth of local, or native vegetation, grasses, and shrubs should be encouraged. Federal, state, and county regulations shall be followed for maintaining open space areas.
- 2.06.040 Prime agricultural soils are also considered to be a significant local resource.
- 2.06.050 West Valley also provides suitable habitat for elk and deer (refer to the **Elk & White-tailed Deer Distribution Maps**). Some of the more significant habitat features, such as riparian habitat, should also be protected to the extent possible (refer to the **Water Features & Floodplain Map**). **The policy suggestion "Incentives"** (under Residential Policies and/or Goals) was cited as an important philosophy to help maintain open space in the West Valley. Other stated issues are as follows.
1. Protect water quality.
 2. Protect air quality.
 3. Sustainable use of forests.
 4. Preserve agricultural areas.
 5. Discourage clear cuts except in extraordinary circumstances deemed appropriate and necessary by accepted silvicultural practices.
 6. Maintain recreation access to public forest lands and seek to maintain an open lands policy on private forest lands in cooperation with the affected landowners; and
 7. Better enforcement of game laws.

Fig 2.06.01

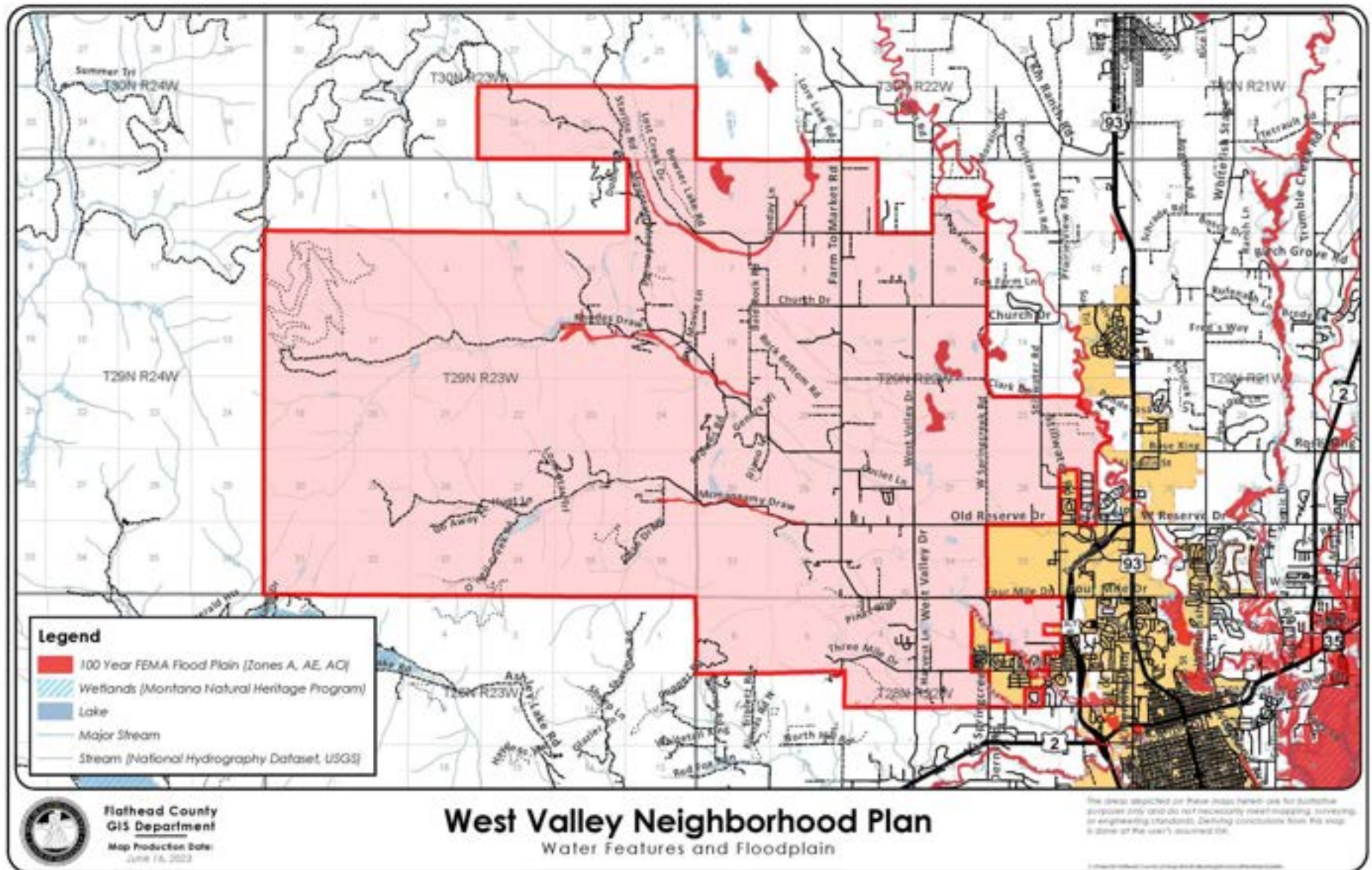
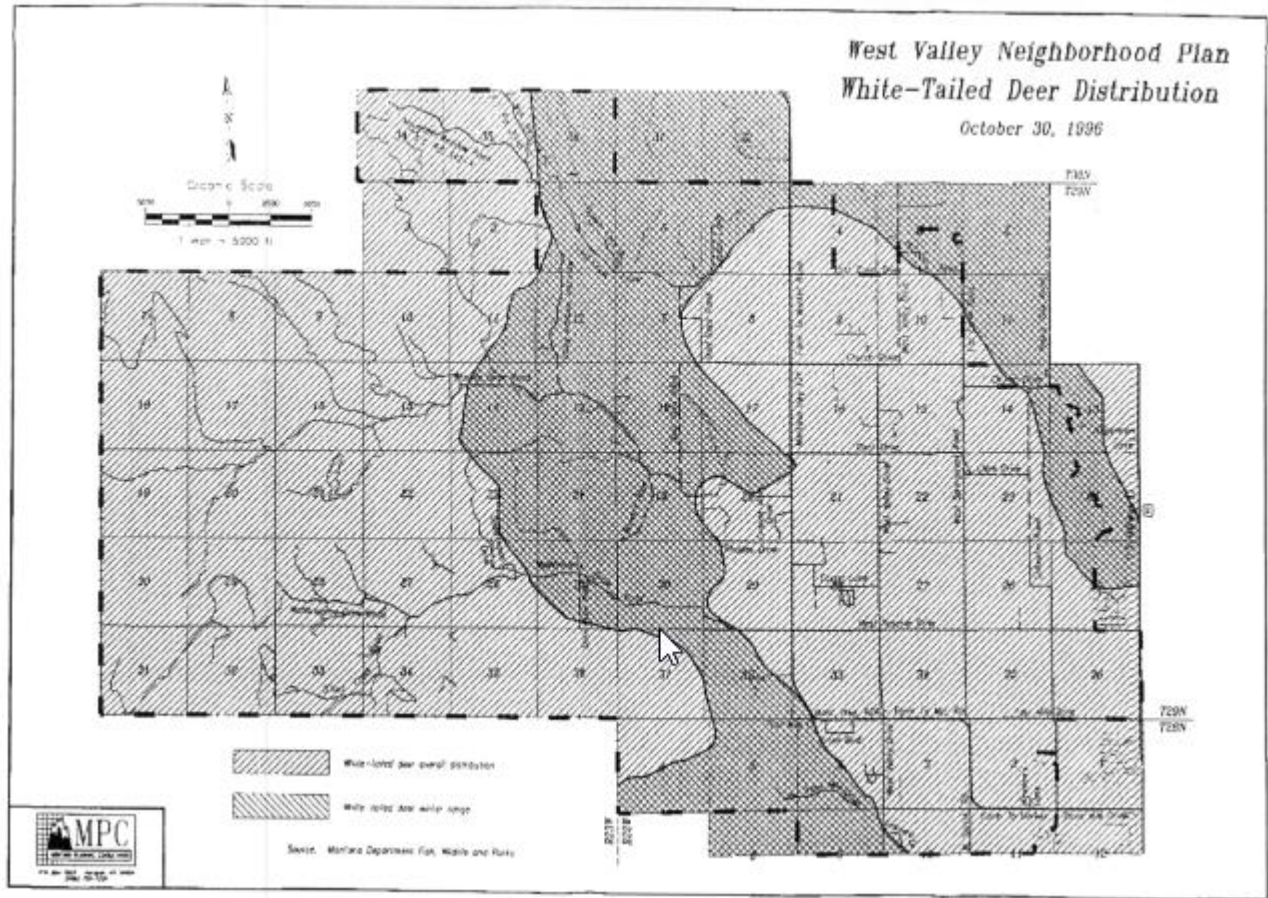


Fig 2.06.02



Section 2.07

2.07.010

WEST VALLEY LAND USE GOALS
TO PLAN FOR THE WISE USE OF LAND IN WEST VALLEY
TO MAINTAIN THE RURAL AND SCENIC QUALITY OF WEST
VALLEY
TO PROTECT AIR AND WATER QUALITY
TO PROTECT PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

2.07.020

AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY POLICIES

1. Encourage the use of conservation easements, transfer of development rights, and other such tools to help maintain farm and forest land.
2. Support right to farm and timber legislation.
3. Discourage conversion of prime agricultural soils to non-ag uses.
4. Recognize opportunity to develop residential uses on inclusions of "poor soils" within a larger agricultural district, farm, or forestland or when public pressures no longer make farming or forestry feasible.

2.07.030

RESIDENTIAL POLICIES

1. Promote the use of clustering to offer flexible lot sizes and to maintain open space.
2. Establish residential land use densities based on such considerations as soil type, existing development patterns, fire hazards, distance to services, and topography.
3. Consider fiscal and service impacts of new development
4. Development of new uses and subdivision of land should not conflict with normal and customary forest or agricultural practices occurring in the vicinity and covenants of new subdivisions should reference that such activities may be occurring in the vicinity.
5. Encourage control of noxious weeds.
6. Maintain an overall low density of development.
7. Provide incentives, such as density bonuses, in exchange for permanent open space and other suggested areas, such as community gardens, maintained parks, playgrounds, and bike trails.

2.07.040

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL POLICIES

1. A neighborhood convenience store may be an acceptable use in West Valley.
2. Provide opportunities for home-based businesses in West Valley (in accordance with the Flathead Valley zoning performance standards).
3. Legally existing commercial or industrial uses shall be "grandfathered."

OPEN SPACE

1. Maintain/enhance opportunities to access State and Forest Service lands within the planning jurisdiction in cooperation with other intervening landowners, as appropriate.
2. Discourage alteration of riverbanks and wetlands.
3. Provide incentives, such as density bonuses, to establish large contiguous areas of permanent open space.
4. Steep slopes, wildlife habitat, water features, and other such criteria should be used to help identify and prioritize lands for long-term protection, such as the West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area on West Valley Drive.
5. Encourage stewardship of open space areas such as control of noxious weeds, protection of riparian areas and use of "Firewise" practices in the Wildland/Residential interface.

CHAPTER 3 PUBLIC SERVICES

Section 3.01

Overview

3.01.010

Opportunities and/or constraints to development are often affected by the adequacy and type of available services. Public sewer and water systems are absent from West Valley. Treatment of sewage is generally provided by individual septic systems. Most residential dwellings are served by individual wells except for several subdivisions that have community water systems. Other public services available to the West Valley area are described below.

Section 3.02

UTILITIES

3.02.010

There are four major utility services in the West Valley area. CenturyLink supplies telephone and Flathead Electric Cooperative provides electrical service. CenturyLink, Montana Sky, Mountain Max, and Bullitt Communications provide internet services in various forms depending on the provider. In addition, Interbell has a fiber optic line which runs along West Reserve and Farm-to-Market north to Eureka. These are the utility providers as of June 2022. If utilities merge or are acquired by another company, please refer to public record for the company's new name. Natural gas is not included in the utilities because the service lies outside of the boundaries of the June 2022 West Valley Neighborhood Plan.

3.02.020

Telephone

Telephone service is provided throughout the West Valley District by CenturyLink. CenturyLink does not report any service problem areas in the district, nor do they anticipate problems with servicing additional developments or homes.

3.02.030

CenturyLink has six wire centers located throughout West Valley at the following intersections: West Springcreek Road and Three Mile Drive, Coclet Lane and Farm-to-Market Road, Lost Creek Drive and Farm-to-Market Road, McMannamy Draw Road and Saddlewood Drive, Rhodes Draw Road and Mountain Meadow Road, and up Mountain Meadow Road. Transmission lines are located both underground and overhead, although over 90% of the new or replacement lines now going in are underground.

3.02.040

Electricity

Flathead Electric Cooperative, Inc. (FEC) provides electrical service to the West Valley District.

3.02.050

Electricity is provided to the West Valley District through a network of single, double and three phased lines. Three phase lines run primarily along well-traveled and populated routes, such as Farm-to-Market Road and Church Drive. These lines split into double- and single-phase lines as they moved into less populated areas, such as up McMannamy Draw or Rhodes Draw. FEC does not report any problems in the West Valley District, nor do they anticipate any problems servicing additional developments. At most, a new development might require increasing the phasing of adjacent lines.

3.02.060

Internet

CenturyLink, Montana Sky Network, Bullitt Communications and Mountain Max are current providers of internet within the West Valley District. CenturyLink provides internet by DSL over phone lines. Montana Sky Network provides internet through SkyConnect Wireless. Bullitt Communications provides internet by over air wireless connection. Mountain Max provides internet through air wireless connection. InterBell has a fiber optic backbone running along West Reserve and Farm-to-Market and service will be available in the future. All these providers do not report any service problems in the West Valley District to the District

3.02.070

ISSUES: Current internet services provided by CenturyLink is at or near capacity for infrastructure and does not meet the FCC standard of 25Mbps down and 3Mbps up for high-speed internet (2015 standards).

Section 3.03

EMERGENCY SERVICES

3.03.010 Emergency services in the West Valley School District are provided by numerous organizations and are dispatched through the Flathead County Sheriff's Department (9-1-1). In most instances, the West Valley Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department is automatically dispatched in any emergency situation. Other organizations are dispatched as needed depending on the nature of the emergency.

3.03.020 **Law Enforcement**

Law Enforcement for the West Valley Community is provided by the Flathead County Sheriff's Office. The main office is located in downtown Kalispell. Flathead County Sheriff's Office provides 24/7 coverage of Flathead County with Deputies working day shift, swing shift and night shift. Deputies are assigned to zoned areas in which they conduct proactive patrols, respond to radio calls for service and respond to emergency radio calls for service. Request for service responses depend heavily on the risk to the public and the priority level of the call type. West Valley is located within the Local Patrol zone for the Flathead County Sheriff's Office.

3.03.030 The Flathead County Sheriff's Office has seen crime trending upward throughout the Flathead Valley over the past four years (2018-2022). The Flathead County Sheriff's Office has seen a large increase in call volume in addition to a large increase in population. Data from the years 2018-2021 show call volume has increased at an approximated rate of two thousand calls per year during 2018, 2019, and 2020. During 2020 and 2021 the Flathead County Sheriff's Office call volume increased by over 4,000 calls. Lack of staffing increases the challenges for responding Officers to lower priority calls.

3.03.040 Between 2018 and 2021, West Valley accounted for the following percentages of crime per type. 8% of all total calls for service were within the West Valley area. 9% of all total aggravated assaults calls took place in West Valley, 8% of all total burglary calls took place in West Valley, 12% of all total theft calls took place in West Valley, and 9% of all total criminal mischief calls took place in West Valley.

3.03.050 The crime data for the West Valley area in 2020-2021 shows that Burglaries decreased by 12%, Physical Disturbances decreased 43%, Suspicious persons responses have decreased by 6%, trespass to property has decreased 39% and disturbances with a weapon response decreased 17%.

3.03.060 While crime data for the West Valley may have decreased in the above areas, there were increases in the following categories: Child abuse responses increased by 25%, Criminal mischief increased 27%, disorderly conduct calls are up 91%, verbal disturbances increased 50%, Drug related crimes increased 67%, DUI's increased 35% and Thefts increased by 36%.

3.03.070 The Flathead County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to the protection and service of all its citizens. West Valley is one of the lower crime areas in the county, and as such is patrolled as often as Deputies are available. West Valley does not see an overall high presence of Officers due to the relatively low crime rate. The average response time for Sheriff Deputies to the West Valley area in 2020-2021 was 8 minutes and 7 seconds.

3.03.080 Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) is the highway patrol agency for the State of Montana. Their mission is to safeguard the lives and property of the people of Montana using the highway traffic system of Montana through education, service, enforcement and interagency cooperation.

3.03.090 MHP has jurisdiction anywhere in the state over Montana Traffic Law. There are currently four specialty units that Troopers can be assigned to (Executive Protection, Special Response Team, Criminal Interdiction Team and Safety Enforcement Traffic Team). MHP also operates an aviation division which includes helicopter pilots and drone pilots.

3.03.100 Montana Highway Patrol operates out of eight districts throughout the State. District VI located in Kalispell provides coverage to Flathead, Lincoln and Lake Counties.

3.03.110 **FIRE PROTECTION**

The West Valley Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department has served the West Valley community since 1968. Their number one priority is to provide fire and life safety to the community.

3.03.120 The West Valley Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department (WVFRD), the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and the United States Forest Service (USFS) are all involved with fire suppression efforts throughout the West Valley. The majority of fire calls received are brush or grass fires. WVFRD and the DNRC have overlapping jurisdictional areas within the West Valley School District (Refer to Figure 3.03.110 at the end of this Section).

3.03.130 The WVFRD responds to all fire and emergency incidents within the West Valley School District, while the DNRC and the USFS only respond when there are wildland fires. DNRC crews are automatically dispatched to wildland fires located within their Fire Protection Zone (Fire map). DNRC and USFS crews assist WVFRD anytime their assistance is requested. In the event of large structural fires, Fire Departments from throughout the Flathead Valley would cooperate in the fire suppression efforts.

3.03.140 Listed below are two charts indicating the types and numbers of incidents that WVFRD has responded to from 2019, 2020 and 2021, compared to the original West Valley neighborhood plan (1997), which included statistics from 1993, 1994, and 1995. Since 1997, WVFRD has expanded services to include....

<u>Year</u>	<u>Fire</u>	<u>EMS</u>
2019	135	261
2020	224	194
2021	262	198

Fig 3.03.01

<u>Year</u>	<u>Fire</u>
1993	25
1994	65
1995	40

Fig 3.03.02

- 3.03.150 The WVVFRD encompasses the majority of the West Valley School District. It extends east and north roughly bounded by Whitefish Stage Road and Hodgson Road. The most western sections of the School District are not included in the Fire District (Map 1). The lands in these areas are mostly owned by the State of Montana, the United States Forest Service, or the Stoltze Land and Lumber Company.
- 3.03.160 WVVFRD operates out of three fire stations. Fire Station #1 is located at 2412 Farm to Market Road, Fire Station #2 is located at 2395 Whitefish Stage Road and Fire Station #3 is located at 4195 Farm to Market Road. Fire Station #1 and Fire Station #3 each house a brush/rescue truck, a type one structure engine, a water tender, and an ambulance. Fire Station #2 houses a brush/rescue truck, an ambulance, a 68' ladder truck and a water tender.
- 3.03.170 The average response time to an emergency incident is approximately 10 minutes. Response times vary depending on the type of emergency, the location, the time of day, and the weather. Response times have the potential of being longer during the workday since many of the volunteers work in Kalispell or other areas away from West Valley. If they don't need to report directly to the fire station, many of the firefighters carry personal protective firefighting equipment with them in their personal vehicles.
- 3.03.180 For the 2020/2021 budget year, WVVFRD tax revenues from Flathead County totaled \$200,197 (compared to 1995/1996 budget year, revenues were \$67,000). The total projected budget is \$325,000 (compare to 1995/1996 projected budget was \$188,000). Other ways that WVVFRD Department receives funding to purchase equipment includes private fund-raising efforts which include biannual pancake breakfasts, annual cherry sales and biannual rummage sales in addition to private donations.
- 3.03.190 WVVFRD is governed by a 5-member Board of Trustees. There are a total of 40 volunteer members (compared to 28 in 1997). The WVFRD leadership team includes one Fire Chief, one Assistant Fire Chief, one Fire Marshal, six Fire Captains and six Lieutenants. The majority of firefighters have in excess of 100 hours of training per year in addition to the 30 hours required by the State of Montana. Training includes firefighting, wildland fire suppression, the handling of hazardous material incidents, vehicle extrication, helicopter safety, low level rope rescues, and emergency medical.

3.03.200

DNRC and USFS

These agencies are dispatched out of the Flathead Interagency Dispatch Center in Kalispell for wildland fire control. This Dispatch Center is primarily operational during the fire season, which runs from April to September. In the West Valley area, response would either be out of the DNRC's Kalispell Fire Unit based on Route 93 in Kalispell or out of the USFS Tally Lake Ranger District. The two agencies operate under a "Closest Forces Concept", where the closest or most accessible units of either agency are dispatched to an emergency situation. These government agencies can provide fire suppression equipment above that provided by the West Valley Department, including two airplanes, two helicopters, two trucks from the Tally Lake District, eight trucks from the Kalispell Fire Unit, and access to a 20-person hotshot crew.

3.03.210

EMERGENCY MEDICAL

West Valley Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department (WVFRD) provides Emergency Medical Services (EMS) within West Valley and is automatically dispatched on all emergency incidents. All WVFRD fire apparatus are equipped to provide Basic Life Support (BLS). Many of the firefighters are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), while the remainder are trained First Responders.

3.03.220

Many of the firefighters carry personal medical emergency gear in their personal vehicles so they can respond more quickly to an emergency incident. The volunteers work in conjunction with medical personnel on the Kalispell Ambulance and the ALERT Air Ambulance if patient transport is required.

3.03.230

Ground transport of medical emergency victims is provided by WVFRD. Depending on the severity of the injury to the patient and the accessibility, ALERT Air Ambulance may also be dispatched. ALERT can be in the air generally within seven minutes of a call and can provide Advanced Life Support (ALS).

3.03.240

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

Flathead County Search and Rescue (FCSAR) is the primary response search and rescue agency for the southwestern half of Flathead County and is one of the oldest SAR agencies in the United States having been founded in 1950. There are approximately 60 volunteer team members.

3.03.250

FCSAR is based out of Kalispell and dispatched by the Flathead County Sheriff's Office. Search and rescue responders are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provide assistance to missing or injured persons within Flathead County and the surrounding region.

3.03.260

All team members of FCSAR are CPR/First Aid certified with most having higher levels of training including Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Paramedic (PM).

3.03.270

Whether the search area is the wilderness, rural countryside, or a residential neighborhood, search & rescue personnel are prepared to respond with specialized

training and equipment in such areas as canine handling, technical rescue, water rescue, mountain rescue, ice rescue, man tracking, County disaster emergencies, evacuation assistance and emergency medical assistance for various community functions.

3.03.280 FCSAR's coverage area includes the southwest side of Flathead County and is comprised of 1,728 square miles, 225 miles of creeks and rivers in addition to 70 lakes.

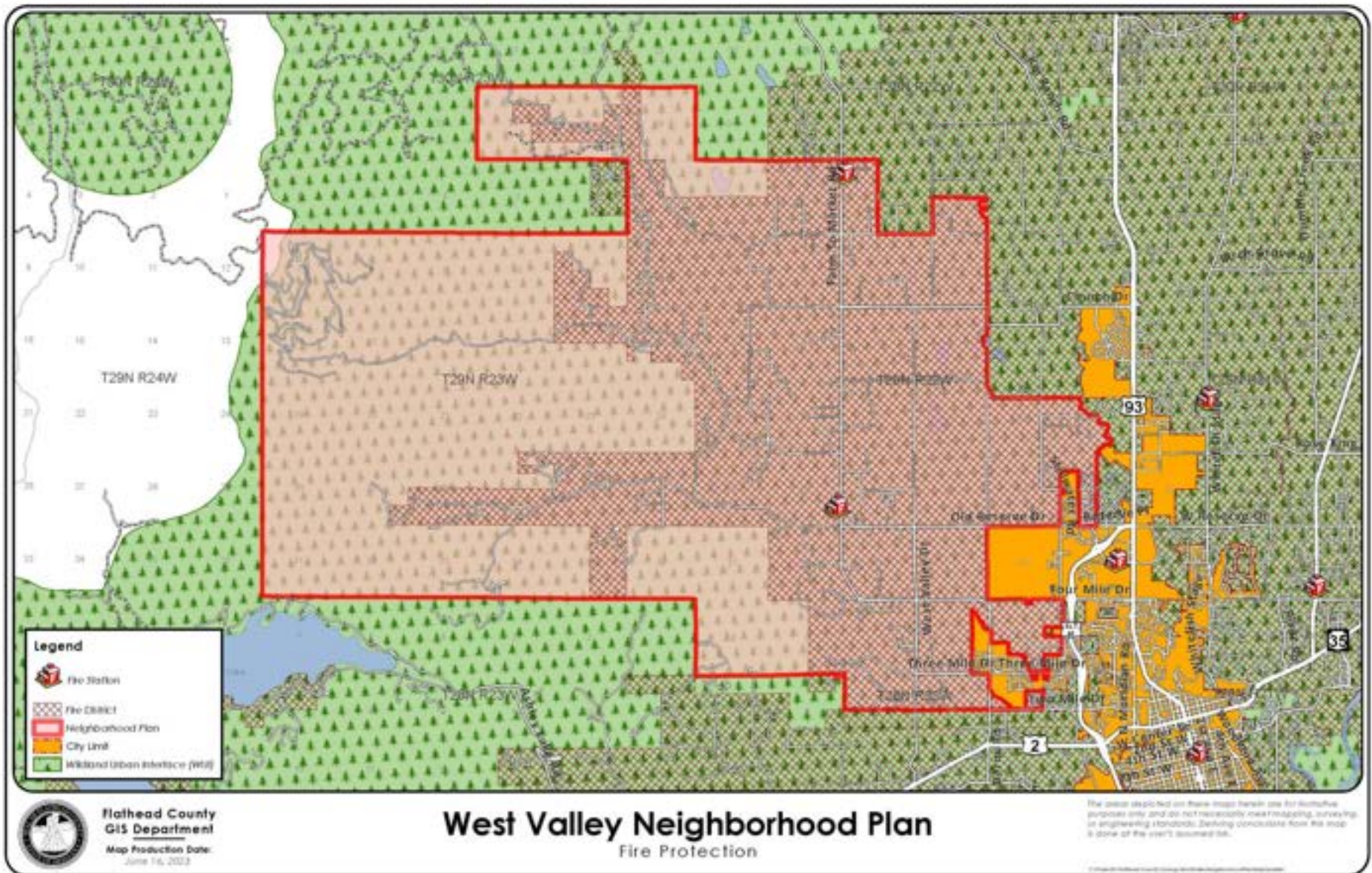
3.03.290 **HAZARDOUS MATERIAL RESPONSE**

Response to the hazardous materials incidents is coordinated through the County Disaster and Emergency Services Office, working closely with the County Environmental Health Department. The majority of incidents requiring a response either involve spillage of fuels from cars and trucks or spillage from farming chemicals. These are usually small spills and can be cleaned up by the Disaster and Emergency Services Office and WVVFRD.

3.03.300 If a situation should occur where the severity of the spill makes cleanup beyond the capability of the local response team, the Disaster and Emergency Services Office contracts with the Olympus Environmental Company out of Helena, Billings and Boise Idaho.

3.03.310 **ISSUES:** Presently there are not any up-to-date issues that are presented to the subcommittee.

Fig 3.03.01



Section 3.04 TRANSPORTATION

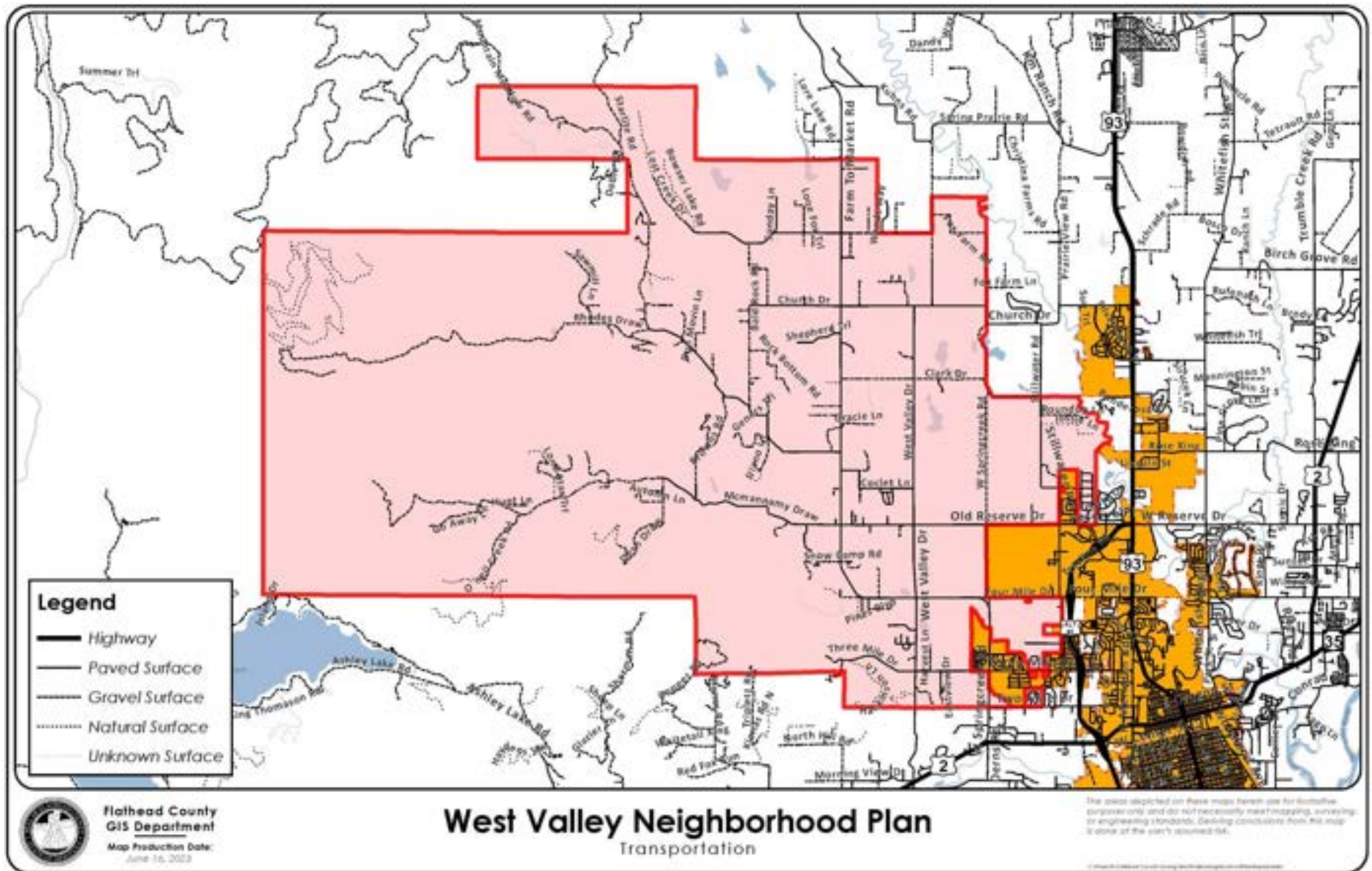
- 3.04.010 West Valley has an abundance of roads -- both private and public. There are no rail facilities or airfields. Designated public bike paths are encouraged in the area.
- 3.04.020 General access to West Valley is conveniently provided by major road systems.
- 3.04.030 U.S. Highway 93 is located adjacent to West Valley on the east. Primary east/west routes include Three Mile Drive, West Reserve Drive, and Church Drive. Major north/south roads include Stillwater Road, West Springcreek Road, West Valley Drive, and Farm-to-Market Road. Alternative 93 Bi-Pass around Kalispell was completed Fall of 2021, which has had a significant effect on local and regional traffic circulation patterns and land use in general. Other major road systems include Lost Creek Drive, Mountain Meadow Road, Bald Rock Road, Clark Drive, Coclet Lane, Brown's Road, Rhodes Draw Road, and McMannamy Draw Road. Those roads classified as Minor Arterials or Collectors are listed below. All other roads are considered to be "local" roads. Please refer to Figure 3.04.01.

MINOR ARTERIAL	COLLECTOR
West Reserve Drive	McMannamy below Brown's Road
Three Mile Drive	Rhodes below Bald Rock Road
Farm-to-Market Road	
Church Drive	

Fig 3.04.01

- 3.04.040 The classification of roads is mostly determined by traffic volume. In most cases, traffic counts are not routinely monitored in the area so these listings may not be current.
- 3.04.050 Current 2022 seasonal load limits are the following (per county regulation): Load limit single axle 7 ton, tandem axle 14 tons, 350 lbs. per inch width of tire; however, at no time will the weight exceed 14,000 lbs. per single axle and 28,000 lbs. per tandem axle. Speed Limit as posted. (This pertains to most of the roads listed above.)
- 3.04.060 Load limit single axle 8 tons, tandem axle 16 tons, 400 lbs. per inch wide of tire, however, at no time will the weight exceed 16,000 lbs. per single axle and 32,000 lbs. per tandem axle. Speed limit as posted. (This pertains to Church Dr. only at this time, 2022.)
- 3.04.070 Traffic on all the major roads has increased in the last few years. Commercial traffic has also increased due to gravel pits within the district. Dust on the gravel roads has increased as the number of residents in those areas. On the minor arterials the grass maintenance has been lacking in the roadside ditches.

Fig 3.04.02



Section 3.05

SCHOOLS

3.05.010

The area to the west of Kalispell is one of the most rapidly growing parts of Flathead County. School enrollment in the West Valley area has increased steadily since the creation of West Valley Elementary School District #1 in 1962 (See Figure). This School District was created from five pre-existing School Districts and serves grades K-8. The District is surrounded by the following other School Districts: Olney-Bissell District #58 to the west and north, Marion District #54 and Smith Valley District #89 to the south, Kalispell District #5 to the east, and Whitefish District #44 to the northeast. After completing elementary school, West Valley students attend High School in Kalispell district #5. Growth rates over the last decades have averaged about 20% every five years which means enrollment doubles roughly every 18 years. As of 2022, plat approvals within SD #1 includes 600 plus units, some of which are under construction. This will add significant pressure on the school system as these units are built out.

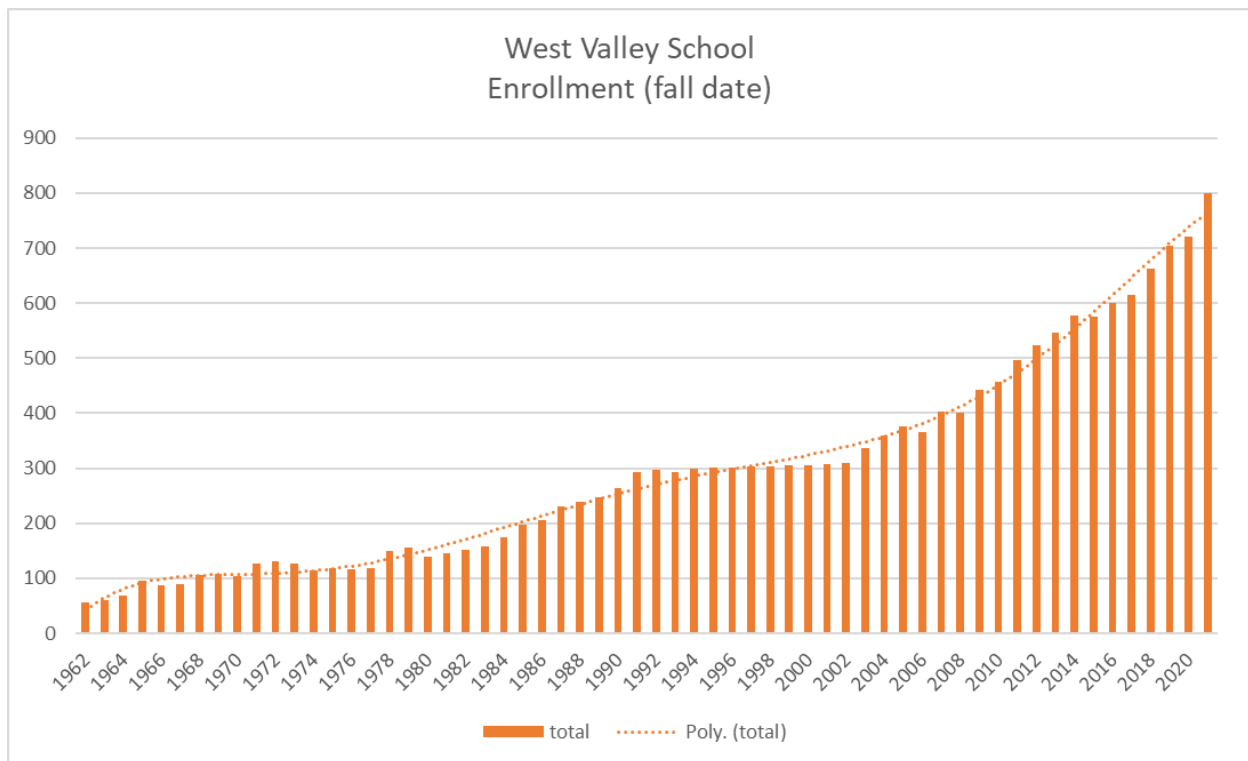


Fig 3.05.01

3.05.020

Between 2010 and 2021, enrollment in the West Valley School District increased 66%, as compared to 12% for the rest of the County K-8 School Districts combined. Data was obtained from the county superintendent's office. During this same time, the enrollment at Kalispell Regional High School only increased 12%. Additionally, Whitefish High School grew 17%, Bigfork grew 33%, but Columbia Falls declined by 8%. The tremendous increase in the number of students in West Valley has put serious pressures on the School District. It has struggled, and continues to struggle, with ways to come up with the resources necessary to support the growing number of

students. Enrollment has continued to rise beyond linear growth, to exponential growth as seen in the above figure. Enrollment nearly tripled from 2001 to 2021 with 167% growth in the last twenty years. In another twenty years if this current trend continues, over 2100 students will be enrolled in K-8 in the West Valley School District.

3.05.030 Since 1962, the voters have approved multiple levies and bonds for improvements to the school building (see below). Funds for smaller projects have come from the General Fund Budget.

Year	Retired	Amount	Purpose
1962	Yes	\$42,000	North 1
1966	Yes	\$20,000	North 2
1966	Yes	\$10,000	Gymnasium
1973	Yes	\$90,000	South
1980	Yes	\$304,000	Connects
1990	Yes	\$480,000	West
1993		\$63,629	PE Program
1998		\$54,017	Levy
1999		\$57,847	Levy
2000	Yes	\$1,925,000	Bond
2003		\$132,247	Levy
2004		\$115,500	Levy
2007		\$98,000	Levy
2013		\$6,800,000	Bond
2021	Failed	\$27,000,000	Bond

Fig 3.05.03

3.05.040 The design capacity of the existing 30,000 sq. ft. school is 275 students. As of February 1, 1996, there were 308 students enrolled in the school, with 23 members of the teaching staff. To accommodate these additional students, two rooms in the basement have been converted to temporary classrooms, but these rooms are not adequate. Including these basement rooms, the present building has: 18 classrooms, a library, a fine arts room, a gymnasium which also serves as the lunchroom, boys and girls locker rooms, a counseling room, several offices, four sets of bathrooms, two support rooms, a work room, and a janitor's room. The school does not have a separate lunchroom or kitchen for preparing hot lunches.

3.05.050 **ISSUES:** As mentioned above, the population growth in West Valley and increased student enrollment is currently a major issue for the School District. The present

school is already exceeding its design capacity and two make-shift classrooms have been set up in the basement to accommodate the increased number of students. Relaxed zoning regulations that permit higher densities of development could again accelerate school enrollment in the district.

Section 3.06

PUBLIC SERVICES GOALS

3.06.010

GENERAL

1. CONSIDER THE PUBLIC IMPACT OF NEW DEVELOPMENT
2. MAINTAIN THE CURRENT LEVEL OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE WEST VALLEY AREA
3. BALANCE GROWTH WITH THE PROVISION AND AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

3.06.020

EMERGENCY SERVICES

1. Wildland urban interface guidelines should be implemented for all new dwellings located within wooded areas.
2. Support law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services to provide reasonable response times, equipment, training and mission effectiveness.

3.06.030

TRANSPORTATION

1. Consider opportunities for bike paths along Farm-to-Market Road and West Reserve Drive to separate vehicles and bikes
2. Consider the adequacy of existing roads when reviewing new development proposals

3.06.040

SCHOOLS

1. Seek solutions to the existing building and classroom crowding at the school.
2. Secure additional land area for expansion of the existing school

CHAPTER 4 IMPLEMENTATION

Section 4.01

Summary

- 4.01.010 The Neighborhood Plan is a compilation of useful information concerning all aspects of the West Valley Neighborhood. The Plan examines the various physical, biological, and social elements of the area to establish a benchmark from which all future land use proposals can be measured. More importantly, the Plan presents a future vision for the West Valley.
- 4.01.020 The identified goal and policy statements compliment the findings of the land use survey. Based on the survey results, the top 4 reasons for choosing to live or own property in West Valley are:
1. Rural setting
 2. Lots of open space
 3. Low crime rate
 4. Easy commute
- 4.01.030 The most frequently listed problems with living in West Valley were:
1. High property taxes
 2. Uncontrolled development
 3. Poor quality of roads
- 4.01.040 Implementation of the Plan is necessary to address the identified local issues and to achieve community goals. Subdivision and zoning regulations are the primary tools of plan implementation. Subdivision regulations can assess compliance of proposed land divisions with the Neighborhood Plan and zoning regulations and require mitigation measures as appropriate. Review of subdivision proposals also offers an opportunity for public review and comment. Zoning regulations offer the most efficient means for plan implementation. Land use regulations generally establish allowable uses, set minimum lot sizes, and identify performance standards for new development.
- 4.01.050 **ISSUES:** Feedback from the public participation process indicated that regulations are considered necessary to protect the quality of life in West Valley. Consensus was that the regulations should be simple to understand and offer flexibility in application. For example, the regulations should recognize opportunities for residential development in areas having "poor" soils when services are readily available. Lot sizes should not necessarily be "fixed" but, instead, be based on a density allocation that may vary from one location to the next. Protection of private property rights is also considered to be an important element of consideration when drafting the regulations. From this perspective, regulations must offer protection of existing uses and recognize differences in land use opportunities throughout the planning jurisdiction. A local citizen's review panel is necessary to provide local input into the decision-making process. Based on the land use composition of the planning area, it would be appropriate to include representatives of the timber industry.

Section 4.02 IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

4.02.010

- 1. TO ESTABLISH A SET OF REGULATIONS THAT ADDRESS
AND IMPLEMENT THE SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
OF THE WEST VALLEY AREA**
- 2. TO INCORPORATE LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN THE
REGULATORY REVIEW PROCESS**

Section 4.03

IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

1. Establish a flexible regulatory system to guide and review development proposals
2. Provide regulatory incentives to promote the protection of ag land, forest land, and other significant natural resources
3. Provide for a regulatory system that is easy to understand and administer
4. Establish a citizen's review panel to advise the Planning Board and Board of County Commissioners on land use activities subject to review
5. Freestanding commercial signage should be prohibited
6. Coordinate the rate, amount, and location of new development with the available level of services.

CHAPTER 5 WEST VALLEY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Excerpted from the
Flathead County Zoning Regulations
*The numbering system below reflects the numbering
defined in the originating document.*

WV West Valley Zoning District
Resolution No. 955A
Adopted 4/9/97

Section 5.34 WV WEST VALLEY

5.34.010 Definition

A district to promote orderly growth and development in the West Valley area consistent with the community vision statements as expressed by the text and map exhibits of the West Valley Neighborhood Plan, County Resolution # 1226-A.

5.34.020 Permitted uses

1. Agricultural/horticultural uses, practices, and related accessory uses
2. Cemeteries
3. Churches
4. Class A or B manufactured homes (See definitions)
5. Community meeting centers, publicly owned and operated
6. Dairy products processing, bottling, and distribution
7. Day care
8. Dwelling, single family
9. Dwelling, family hardship
10. Farm/ranch/caretaker employee housing
11. Feed and seed processing and cleaning
12. Feedlots: cattle, swine, poultry
13. Grange
14. Home-based business (See related performance standards)
15. Livestock (See performance standards applicable on lots 10 acres or less in size)
16. Nurseries, landscaping materials
17. Parks
18. Post office
19. Produce stands
20. Public transportation shelter stations
21. Recreational facilities, publicly owned and operated
22. Schools
23. Silvicultural and related forest management practices
24. Temporary buildings or structures, occupied less than one year
25. Public utility installation, minor (limited to neighborhood service area)

5.34.030 Conditional Use

1. Animal hospitals/veterinary clinics
2. RV parks with no tent camping
3. Camp and retreat center
4. Class 3 Landfills
5. Communication towers, masts
6. Golf course and related facilities (dwelling lots must be approved through the cluster provisions of these regulations)
7. Gravel extraction
8. Gun clubs, shooting ranges
9. Commercial hunting ranch for small game
10. Kennels
11. Neighborhood convenience store (See related performance standards)
12. Commercial stables /riding academies
13. Temporary buildings or structures, occupied one year or longer
14. Public utility installation, major (service area beyond neighborhood)

5.34.040 Bulk and dimensional requirements

1. Minimum lot size: **1** acre.
2. Maximum density: See density performance standards.
3. Minimum yard requirements:
 - A. A 20-foot setback is required from any property line, road easement, or intermittent stream.
 - B. A 50-foot setback is required from any perennial water body.
4. Maximum height: 35 feet (agricultural buildings exempt).

5.34.050 Density performance standards

1. 20-acre density. All property within the District 1s eligible for a residential density of one dwelling per 20 acres.
2. 15-acre density. Maximum residential density shall be one dwelling per 15 acres if the following criterion is met:

- A. No more than 10% of the lot area shall have soils with Capability Classes I, II, III, or IV as identified by the 1960 Soil Survey for the Upper Flathead Valley Area.
- 3. 10-acre density. Maximum residential density shall be one dwelling per 10 acres if the following criteria are met:
 - A. The average slope of any proposed lot shall be less than 25%.
 - B. No more than 35% of the lot area shall have soils with Capability Classes I, II, III, or IV as identified by the 1960 Soil Survey for the Upper Flathead Valley Area.
 - C. All lots shall be located within a rural fire district.
 - D. A portion of each lot shall be located within 1,500 feet of a road maintained by the county and have access to and use of said road.
- 4. 5-acre density. Maximum residential density shall be one dwelling per 5 acres if the following criteria are met:
 - A. The average slope of any proposed lot shall be less than 15%.
 - B. All lots shall be located within a rural fire district.
 - C. No more than 20% of the lot area shall have soils with Capability Classes I, II, III, or IV as identified by the 1960 Soil Survey for the Upper Flathead Valley Area.
 - D. No more than 25% of the area of any lot shall be within the 100-year floodplain, wetlands, river, lake, or any combination thereof.
 - E. A portion of each lot must be within 300 feet a road maintained by the county and have access to and use of said road.
- 5. Clustering.

A bonus density of up to 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres on average is permitted by clustering (see Residential Clustering Standards).
- 6. Expansion of existing platted subdivisions.

Lands located within the perimeter of existing planned subdivisions where

lots average 2 acres or less are eligible for additional subdivision. All new or amended lots must have access and use of the water and road systems of the existing subdivision and be subject to the covenant restrictions of the existing planned subdivision.

7. Lot area and average slope determination.

Compliance with lot area and average slope requirements shall be certified by a registered land surveyor on any certificate of survey or subdivision plat. To determine the area of lakes or rivers, use the average high-water line as the perimeter of the water body. To determine the area of wetlands, the Zoning Administrator may require wetland delineation by a professional hydrologist.

8. Average slope calculation.

The average slope (S_o/o) of a parcel shall be calculated as follows: $S_o/o = .0023 \times I \times L / A$. To use this formula, a contour map of the parcel is necessary, and the contour interval (vertical distance between adjacent contour lines on the map) must be no more than 10 feet for a subdivision and 40 feet for a certificate of survey. "I" is the contour interval in feet. "L" is the total length in feet of all contour lines within the parcel. A is the area in acres of the parcel.

5.34.060 Land Use Advisory Committee.

A citizen land use advisory committee of 7 individuals shall be established by the Board of County Commissioners to advise the Flathead County Planning Board, Kalispell City-County Planning Board, Flathead County Board of Adjustment, and Board of County Commissioners, as appropriate, on all subdivision and conditional use applications. Said Committee should include representation from both the timber and agricultural industries. All members must be landowners within the district. In the instance where a landowner holds title to real property through a corporate or business name, the duly appointed representative of the business or corporation will be eligible to be a member of the district.

5.34.070 Home-based business performance standards.

1. General.

- A. Home-based businesses are permitted throughout the District.

- B. Within the West Valley district, a home-based business is defined as any occupation, profession, activity or use which is clearly a customary, incidental and secondary use of a residential lot and which does not affect the residential or agricultural character of the property or area.

2. Specific Standards.

- A. Home-based businesses are permitted in accessory buildings as well as residential buildings.
- B. A home-based business must be operated by the individual(s) who own and live on the property.
- C. Home-based business shall be architecturally compatible with the buildings in the immediate vicinity.
- D. All parking shall be maintained on site.
- E. A conditional use permit must be obtained for a home-based business generating more than 10 daily vehicle trips.
- F. Any outdoor storage of materials shall be shielded from public view.
- G. Signs for business identification are permitted, not to exceed a total sign area of ten square feet and a height of eight feet. Signs shall not be lighted and shall not rotate, move, flash, change or blink.
- H. A conditional use permit must be obtained for a home-based business having more than 5 employees.

5.34.080 Residential clustering standards.

1. General

- A. The minimum size of the tract of land subject to the cluster development shall be 20 acres.
- B. Clustering is not mandatory but may be used as an option to subdivide property.

- C. All subdivided lots or multiple dwellings on a single tract of land shall be clustered so as to prevent a scattered development pattern.
 - D. A cluster development must obtain approval as a subdivision under the Flathead County Subdivision Regulations or as a conditional use if multiple dwellings are being placed on property without subdivision into lots.
 - E. The required open space shall be exterior to the created lots and, if applicable, not be segregated from a larger remaining tract of land. The open space must remain as a single contiguous tract or a portion of a larger parent tract of land. Road and utility easements shall not be counted as open space.
 - F. The property owner shall either grant in perpetuity an irrevocable conservation easement or file with the Flathead County Clerk and Recorder a deed restriction running with the land, which shall dedicate the land as permanent open space and require that it shall not be further divided.
 - G. The preferred use of the required open space is agriculture or silviculture. Any open space 20 acres or larger in size is eligible for a single residential building site of no larger than 2 acres in size, but residential development is not permitted on smaller open space tracts. The open space and associated building site can be sold as a single tract of land but is not eligible for further subdivision.
- 2. 10-acre cluster provision. Maximum residential density in a cluster development shall be one dwelling per 10 acres, if the following criterion is met:
 - A. A minimum of 50% of the eligible property shall be dedicated as permanent open space on the subdivision plat.
 - 3. 5-acre cluster provision. Maximum residential density in a cluster development shall be one dwelling per 5 acres, if the following criteria are met:
 - A. Individual lot sizes shall not exceed 1 net acre.
 - B. A minimum of 76% of the eligible property shall be dedicated as permanent open space on the subdivision plat.

5.34.090 Neighborhood convenience store performance standards.

1. General

- A. A neighborhood convenience store in the West Valley District is permitted in accordance with strict architectural, size, use, and locational criteria.
- B. It is not the intent of these regulations to promote, encourage, or permit general retail commercial uses within the District.
- C. Within the West Valley District, neighborhood convenience store is defined as a retail establishment having a trade area that does not extend beyond the neighborhood and offering for sale a variety of convenience items, typically including prepackaged food and beverages, household items, and motor fuel.
- D. Building architecture shall be compatible to a rural residential setting by emphasizing log or wood exterior with a pitched roof line and asphalt composition, tile, or wood shingles in natural colors, and limited commercial signage.
- E. Compliance with the requirements set forth herein shall be determined by the Zoning Administrator. A site plan, elevation drawing, and other applicable materials demonstrating compliance with these performance standards shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator, and approval shall be obtained prior to commencement of construction. Appeal of any decision by the Zoning Administrator shall follow the process set forth in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations as applicable to Conditional Uses.

2. Specific standards

- A. The footprint of the commercial structure shall not exceed 2000 square feet.
- B. Minimum lot size shall be 3 acres.
- C. A maximum of 4 fueling pumps shall be permitted.
- D. The store dumpster site shall be provided to the rear of the building and be screened from public view. Any mechanical/refrigeration equipment or propane tanks located exterior to the building shall be appropriately screened from public view.

- E. All structures shall be set back a minimum of 100 feet from any lot line adjoining a public road and 35 feet from all other lot lines. Parking and other paved surfaces shall not extend into the required landscape areas.
- F. Fencing and weed control shall be provided on all commercial lot lines having frontage with a public road.
- G. Signage shall be limited to a single-faced wall identification sign not to exceed 36 square feet, except that gas price signage having maximum letter height of 8 inches may be placed below the roofline of the gas island canopy. Outside security lighting is mandatory during hours of darkness. Lighting shall be directed downward and shielded to prevent light from shining onto adjacent roads or properties. Lighting shall not blink, flash, or rotate.
- H. Parking shall be provided at a ratio of 1 space (9'X20') per 150 square feet of gross floor area.
- I. All parking, circulation, and approaches shall either be asphaltic or Portland cement concrete and appropriately striped to designate traffic flow direction and parking spaces.
- J. Landscaping consisting of grass, shrubs, and tree species shall be provided along any lot line adjoining a public road. Said landscaping shall extend the entire length of the developed frontage, except for the driveway entrances, and have a depth of at least 35 feet as measured inward from the public road right-of-way. Said landscaping shall be irrigated with an underground sprinkling system and be maintained throughout the growing season.
- K. No liquor shall be sold from the premises nor shall gaming (gambling) machines be permitted. A single upstairs apartment unit shall be permitted if architecturally incorporated into the overall building design.
- L. Exterior wall finishes shall emphasize natural wood features such as log or beveled cedar siding stained to natural wood tones. Windows shall not have mirrored glazing. The roof shall have a minimum 6:12 pitch, utilizing Class 'A' roofing material. The fueling island canopy shall have a visual expression of log or timber framing (or as otherwise modified for reasons of fire safety) with a sloped roof of a 4:12 minimum pitch in a gable shape.

- M. Fire protection measures shall be incorporated as recommended by the West Valley Volunteer Fire Department.
- N. The store shall not be open for business between the hours of 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM.
- O. Outside PA (public address) systems are prohibited.
- P. Prior to the development of a store, the landowner shall submit and implement a traffic mitigation study prepared by a professional transportation engineer.