

VALIER GROWTH POLICY



JUNE
2011

Prepared by Valier Planning Board

With Technical Assistance From:

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RESOLUTION #109

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF VALIER,
MONTANA TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED 2011 GROWTH POLICY.

WHEREAS, 76-1-604 MCA, authorizes the Town Council to adopt or revise a growth policy; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council requested the Town of Valier Planning Board to prepare a growth policy, as authorized in 76-1-106, MCA; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Valier Planning Board prepared a growth policy in accordance with Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6, MCA.; and

WHEREAS, the proposed growth policy was made available for review at the Town Office, Valier Public Library, and on the Pondera Port Authority website; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board noticed and held a public hearing on the proposed growth policy in accordance with 76-1-602, MCA; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with 76-1-603, MCA, the Planning Board considered comments, recommendations and suggestions elicited at the public hearing held on April 26, 2011 as well as written comment received through the comment period ending April 26; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board made a recommendation to adopt the growth policy with revisions; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council agenda was posted for the May 17, 2011 Town Council meeting and the agenda included the growth policy resolution of intention; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council considered public comment received at that meeting or received in writing prior to the meeting;

WHEREAS, in accordance with 76-1-604, MCA, the Town Council adopted a resolution of intention to adopt the Town of Valier Growth Policy with additional revisions from the Town Council on May 17, 2011; and

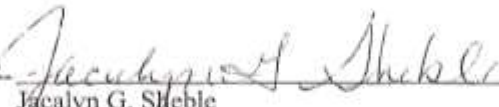
WHEREAS, the Town Council agenda was posted for the June 13, 2011 Town Council meeting and the agenda included the adoption of the growth policy;

WHEREAS, the Town Council considered public comment received at that meeting or received in writing prior to the meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Valier Town Council hereby adopts the growth policy with additional revisions from the Town Council as identified in the resolution of intention.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Town Council of the Town of Valier at a regular meeting of the Town Council held June 13, 2011.

By _____
McKenzie A. Graye, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Jacalyn G. Sheble

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIP- Capital Improvements Program

CRP- Conservation Reserve Program

CWPP- Community Wildfire Protection Plan

BNSF- Burlington Northern and Santa Fe

DES- Disaster and Emergency Service

DNRC- Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

EDA- Economic Development Administration

FAR- Floor- area ratio

HUD- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

MATL line- Montana Alberta Tie Lie

MDOT- Montana Department of Transportation

NPIAS - National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems

PCCRC - Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company

PDM plan- Pre-Disaster Mitigation plan

RC&D– Resource Conservation and Development

USDA- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

WUI- Wildland Urban Interface

INTRODUCTION

This is a growth policy for the planning jurisdiction of the town of Valier. A growth policy is a comprehensive plan or master plan. This growth policy conforms to the requirements of Montana state law (76-1-601 through 76-1-606, MCA).

This growth policy document was initiated in 2009 by Conrad, Valier and Pondera County. The three jurisdictions identified growth policy committees to begin the work. In 2010, Cossitt Consulting was hired to provide technical assistance in preparing the growth policy. The three jurisdictions continued to coordinate but each has a separate growth policy corresponding to their jurisdictional planning areas. Inventory information and maps are included in Appendix B and E for all three jurisdictions.

This growth policy consists of four main parts:

1. Background.

This section describes the overall purpose of the growth policy and the process used to create it.

2. Profile

This section provides a summary of the existing characteristics and projected future trends for Valier. It includes a short summary of the history of the Valier and discussion of land use, population, housing, economics, local services, public facilities, and natural resources.

3. Plan for the Future

This part includes a vision statement and planning goals, which describe what the town will strive to be in the future. It also includes detailed planning strategies which outline specific policies and actions to accomplish the goals. A future land use plan provides a geographic perspective of the desired future of the town. The future land use plan functions as the guide for future zoning changes.

4. Implementing the Plan

This section identifies how the growth policy will be implemented and how it will be monitored, evaluated and revised.

5. Appendices

This part consists of several sections that are referenced in or supplement the growth policy:

- A review of current town zoning regulations. The town does not currently have subdivision regulations.
- The detailed information for the Inventory of Existing Characteristics and Projected Trends for Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier

- Summaries of the various committee meetings and public open houses held as part of the growth policy development
- Summary of surveys conducted
- Maps prepared for this growth policy for the county, Conrad, and Valier
- Implementation Checklist – an aid in setting annual goals and for completing the strategies outlined in the plan

PART THREE: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This part introduces the vision statement and planning goals, which describe what Valier should strive to be in the future. Supplementing these goals are detailed “planning strategies” that outline specific policies to adopt and actions to undertake to accomplish the goals. In addition, a future land use plan provides a geographic perspective of the desired future of Valier.

VISION AND PRIMARY GOALS

Vision for Valier’s Future

A vision statement is a concise description of what a community desires for its future. It is the long-term foundation for actions to be taken as part of the 20-year plan.

The Valier vision statement is the result of discussions at growth policy committee meetings and public open houses regarding what people value most about Valier, what they would most like to retain for the future, and what most needs to be changed.

Valier Vision Statement:

Valier is a small town with quality features, including mountain vistas and lakefront. Members of the community take pride in a downtown that is an energetic place with a library, shops, service businesses, and quality schools. Family-oriented neighborhoods feature tree-lined streets with a "welcome home feeling." Trails and greenways allow people the opportunity to bicycle and walk from the town to the Lake Francis recreation area. A modern camping area invites you to spend time on Lake Francis fishing and playing.

Primary Goals

The primary goals are short statements clarifying direction and addressing key issues needed to achieve the vision.

The Valier Growth Policy is based on the following primary goals, Goals A through G. The goals interrelate and overlap with each other. It is important to consider each goal within the overall context of the Vision Statement and the other goals. Because the goals are so connected, they have not been assigned any priority order in the following list.

GOAL A: ECONOMY

Diversify and expand the economy of Valier while retaining the small town character and unique recreational and aesthetic features of the town's Lake Frances shoreline.

GOAL B: TOWN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Focus new development and town renewal on the town's historic compact land use pattern that provides for cost efficiencies in infrastructure and services, walkable distances, and open space at the town's edges.

GOAL C: TOWN APPEARANCE

Enhance town appearance to make it a more desirable place to live and work for residents and a destination for visitors.

GOAL D: HOUSING

Encourage housing and services to accommodate working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.

GOAL E: INFRASTRUCTURE – STREETS, SIDEWALKS, WATER, SEWER, LIGHTING

Provide cost efficient and effective public infrastructure for the long-term.

GOAL F: PUBLIC SAFETY

Provide for safety from natural disasters and for adequate emergency response for fire and medical care.

GOAL G: COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Build on the town's attractiveness as a recreation destination and location for part-time residents while strengthening a full-time, year-round community.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

The Valier Growth Policy is a comprehensive, long-range plan intended to guide growth and development in and around Valier. The Vision Statement is a short declaration of what Valier will strive to be. The Primary Goals further define how to achieve the vision, but are still fairly general. More detail is needed to explain how to achieve the goals and vision. The Planning Strategies of this section provide that detail.

The Planning Strategies and the Future Land Use Plan (in the next section) are the main action steps and policies for the Valier Growth Policy. The Future Land Use Plan provides specific guidance for future zoning and incorporates elements of the goals and planning strategies.

This section on Planning Strategies provides a re-statement of each goal. Following each goal, a context is provided in the form of a brief discussion of the rationale or background for the goal and identification of issues leading to the specific planning strategies. The context reflects comments from the Valier Growth Policy Committee and from public comments, resident opinion survey results, and the inventory analysis conducted by the Cossitt Consulting team. Following the discussion of context, are the objectives (desired results for each goal), and the specific Planning Strategies.

Implementation of goals and objectives is predicated on the following guiding policies:

Guiding Policies:

- Policy #1:** Identify and use applicable grant and outside funding sources to the greatest extent possible.
- Policy #2:** Consider new or additional taxing only as needed, and tied to specific objectives and outcomes.
- Policy #3:** Projects will be managed openly, with information available to the public and public involvement encouraged.
- Policy #4:** Encourage a can-do and positive attitude about the community.
- Policy #5:** Before taking actions requiring significant local investment, the Town will conduct feasibility analyses, including:
- Research on how other communities are handling similar issues.
 - Preliminary cost-benefit analysis that considers long-term costs (such as maintenance, repair, etc.) as well as initial construction/development costs.

ECONOMY

GOAL A: Diversify and expand the economy of Valier while retaining the small town character and unique recreational and aesthetic features of the town's Lake Frances shoreline.

CONTEXT

Improving the long-term economy for Valier will mean increasing the number of jobs in Valier that pay a living wage and expanding the population with workforce age individuals and families.

In 2009, persons who attended a growth policy meeting in Valier identified the following economic sectors with potential to grow in or around Valier: energy development, spin-off businesses related to energy development, importance of agriculture and possibility of agriculture value-added enterprises, clean industries, and tourism. These themes were echoed in open houses and growth policy committee meetings held in 2010-2011, and participants also added that new businesses with 25-50 employees would be a good target.

The town has some unique advantages compared to other towns of similar size in Montana—it's lake-front location, only 20 minutes from Interstate Highway, freight-rail service, and an airport. This growth policy recommends that when the population of Valier expands in the long-term that the airport be relocated outside of town limits. This would make room for new housing within the town and avoid potential conflicts between air traffic and residential uses.

Building a strong economy connects very directly to the other goals in this growth policy. Good infrastructure systems for water, sewer, streets, etc. are essential, as are health care, schools, and quality housing to accommodate a variety of income levels.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ New businesses in Valier providing new jobs with living wages
- ✓ Increase in population and younger, workforce age families
- ✓ Town has a tax base that can support needed infrastructure improvements and expansions

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy A-1: Develop and implement a long-range economic plan for Valier that builds on the town's strengths, including access to rail, water, and recreational opportunities of Lake Frances.

Strategy A-2: Coordinate county-wide economic plan for Conrad, Valier, and unincorporated areas of the county through the Pondera Port Authority.

Strategy A-3: Participate in multi-county Community Economic Development Strategy planning efforts to qualify for U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding.

Strategy A-4: Work with Pondera Port Authority to identify a grant-writer/researcher to assist with project feasibility.

TOWN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

GOAL B: Focus new development and town renewal on the town's historic compact land use pattern that provides for cost efficiencies in infrastructure and services, walkable distances, and open space at the town's edges.

CONTEXT

Nationwide, people are moving toward traditional town development with lots and blocks, with destinations such as grocery stores, schools, parks, and businesses within walking or biking distance. As people look to more healthy lifestyles, communities are expanding non-motorized recreational trail systems and urban parks. Valier's traditional town development pattern has all of these features, and the exceptional recreation opportunities of Lake Frances as well.

Providing infrastructure in a more densely developed area, such as the traditional town lot-block grid of Valier, is cheaper than providing the same services in areas where development is more spread out.

Valier has considerable undeveloped areas and vacant lots within the town limits. By working to develop these areas, the town will make existing infrastructure more cost-effective.

Some basic functions need to be addressed. The town's municipal boundary needs to be filed with the county clerk and recorder. Valier needs to adopt subdivision regulations, as required by Montana law, and will also need to revise its zoning ordinance to reflect this growth policy.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier retains its small town character and has little or no residential sprawl
- ✓ Town-type densities result in more cost-efficient provision of infrastructure
- ✓ Families move to Valier

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy B-1: Focus on infill development before annexation and develop policies for annexation and infrastructure extensions that provide for logical extension of traditional city block-grid patterns and densities.

Strategy B-2: As a long-range strategy, move the airport facility to provide more infill options when the supply of vacant home sites in town becomes used up.

Strategy B-3: Adopt subdivision regulations.

Strategy B-4: Update the town zoning ordinance.

Strategy B-5: Record the town's municipal boundary with the county clerk and recorder.

Strategy B-6: Retain greenway areas around Lake Frances and consider potential for extending trails beyond town boundary.

Strategy B-7: Use the future land use map as the guide for decision-making for future development.

TOWN APPEARANCE

GOAL C: Enhance town appearance to make it a more desirable place to live and work for residents and a destination for visitors.

CONTEXT

Valier has some buildings that are dilapidated, a few of which are not usable in their current condition. There are also undeveloped areas that are not maintained (e.g., weeds, etc.). These detract from the overall qualities of Valier. Working with landowners to identify solutions, assessing feasibility of rehabilitation or demolition, assisting where possible in identifying funding sources to improve properties, and enforcing ordinances addressing decay will improve the town appearance.

The "Future Land Use" section of this growth policy includes a number of recommendations for form and design of structures and facilities in Valier – for things like pedestrian-friendly sidewalks in the downtown areas, building setback distances, and parking.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier has a pleasant appearance for residents and visitors.
- ✓ People want to move to Valier because they like its look and atmosphere.
- ✓ More people come to Valier to recreate and visit.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy C-1: Improve the condition of commercial and residential structures and areas that are deteriorated, vacant or need repair.

Strategy C-2: Develop design guidelines or standards to improve the appearance of the town. (Refer to "Future Land Use" section.)

HOUSING

GOAL D: Encourage housing and services to accommodate working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.

CONTEXT

Housing will be needed in Valier to accommodate working families and to grow and sustain the Town. In 2005, 40% of the housing stock was markedly deteriorated and needs much repair, or is barely usable, or in worse condition.

There is a legitimate public interest in facilitating removal of older mobile homes that do not meet safety standards and replacing them with affordable site-built homes or with manufactured housing that meets the HUD code. Other older site-built homes may also be in need of major repairs, or may be uninhabitable, and these also need to be addressed.

Valier has a high proportion of elderly and the trend for the future is that this will increase. There is no senior living facility in Valier, so older persons live in their homes as long as possible and then are faced with moving to another community for more advanced care. Approximately half of all the respondents to the survey conducted in 2008 indicated a need for a senior assisted living facility in Valier. This also came up in growth policy meetings in 2009 and 2010.

In 2010 growth policy meetings, participants mentioned that people who work in Shelby, Cutbank, and Browning are interested in moving to Valier but not ready to purchase a home, and there are virtually no rentals available. There are proportionately fewer housing rental units in Valier than in Pondera County or statewide.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Condition of housing stock is improved
- ✓ Families move to Valier
- ✓ Seniors and those with disabilities are able to stay in their own homes longer and have options for quality affordable housing and assisted/senior living

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy D-1: Ensure safe, affordable housing in new construction and rehabilitation or replacement alternatives to non-compliant mobile homes and substandard housing.

Strategy D-2: Develop senior housing/assisted living options.

Strategy D-3: Encourage services to seniors and those with disabilities in their own homes.

Strategy D-4: Encourage transportation for seniors and those with disabilities (e.g., connections to Conrad; Conrad-Great Falls bus).

Strategy D-5: Facilitate development of quality rental housing for working families.

INFRASTRUCTURE – STREETS, SIDEWALKS, WATER, SEWER, LIGHTING

GOAL E: Provide cost efficient and effective public infrastructure for the long-term.

CONTEXT

Streets, water, sewer, and other infrastructure designed for cost-efficient delivery over the long-term result in lower taxes to support that infrastructure. The town of Valier is implementing the Capital Improvements Plan it adopted in 2008. Planning ahead in five-year increments is recommended to ensure comprehensive review of needs and proposed projects. Some areas of town are not served with water and sewer, and as the town grows these will need to be addressed.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier has sound, cost-efficient infrastructure that is maintained, repaired, and updated as needed.
- ✓ Infrastructure is extended as needed to growth areas within town limits.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy E-1: Continue to annually update and utilize the Valier Capital Improvements Program Plan and budgeting process.

Strategy E-2: Develop a 5-year Capital Improvements Plan so that infrastructure needs can be more comprehensively and publicly reviewed than likely through annual updates.

Strategy E-3: Improve cell phone and internet service to stay competitive with what is needed by residents and businesses.

Strategy E-4: Create a program that combines grants, local tax revenues, user fees, and loans to equitably fund the extension of town utilities to un-served parts of town.

PUBLIC SAFETY

GOAL F: Provide for safety from natural disasters and for adequate emergency response for fire and medical health care.

CONTEXT

Valier has a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Those plans have specific recommendations for actions to address public safety in Valier. The fire department and emergency medical units rely on volunteers. The emergency medical unit is about to shrink by two persons (who are retiring). The fire department is well-staffed. Attracting and retaining volunteers for both fire and medical units is an on-going challenge which could become even more difficult with an increasingly older population.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier continues to have well-trained emergency response units for fires and medical emergencies.
- ✓ Valier is prepared for orderly response to disasters and reduces situations that can make disasters worse.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy F-1: Implement strategies from the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan as they apply to Valier, including recommendations for building permits

Strategy F-2: Work to ensure fire department and emergency medical response units have personnel, equipment, and facilities to provide continued service. Actively recruit volunteers as needed.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

GOAL G: Build on the town's attractiveness as a recreation destination and location for part-time residents while strengthening a full-time, year-round community.

CONTEXT

Valier began as a working town to build Lake Frances and to serve the surrounding agricultural producers. Valier still has roots in that history and still serves that function, but increasingly over the years Valier has been shifting in part to a recreation-based economy. Visitors and residents who moved away to find work are attracted to the site, and purchase homes or lots to build later. The town is increasingly becoming a mix of persons who live and work in Valier and those who work elsewhere or who have come to retire, to vacation, or live here only part-time. It is important to weave the various life-styles together to develop and maintain the social fabric that pulls communities together and builds them for the future. Getting all residents, even those who are part-time, to contribute to the community is important for community well-being and critical for staffing volunteer functions.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Full-time and part-time residents feel a part of the Valier community and work together for its future
- ✓ Valier becomes known as a fun and friendly place to visit and to live

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy G-1: Encourage volunteerism (esp. for volunteer fire department and emergency response).

Strategy G-2: Continue existing events (such as Homesteader Days and Fishing Days) and develop new events that build community spirit and attract visitors.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan section of the Growth Policy provides a general view of future land use for Valier over the next 20 years. The Land Use Plan organizes all the expected future growth, development, and redevelopment into a pattern that is consistent with the Town's Vision Statement and Goals. The plan represents how Valier should develop over the next 20 years by showing the locations and characteristics of major land use types, such as commercial, industrial, residential, and so forth.

The Land Use Plan consists of the Future Land Use map and the Land Use Designations. This section contains the Land Use Designations which describe the Land Use Areas depicted on the Future Land Use Map. Each area depicted on the map is individually discussed. Development specifications for each area are also presented.

The Town should use the Land Use Plan as a guide for all land use decisions including all zoning decisions. The Land Use Plan should also be consulted in the planning of public improvements. In addition, the private-sector is encouraged to follow the Land Use Plan in the planning of real estate developments.

It should be noted that the Land Use Plan is intended to be fairly general. The boundaries between different types of areas are not distinct and the specifications for development in each area are general, as well. The Future Land Use Map will provide guidance for zoning decisions but it is not as precise as a zoning ordinance. Many details about land use characteristics in each type of area and the exact boundaries of areas will be worked out when revising the zoning ordinance.

As part of the planning process, two alternative Land Use Plans were initially considered – the Compact Community Alternative and the Expansive Community Alternative. Both alternatives were described in detail in previous versions of the growth policy (refer to February 2011 draft that was posted on the Pondera Port Authority website). There were two major differences between the two alternatives – future uses of the airport and lands outside the current municipal boundary.

In the Compact Community Alternative, development outside of town would occur in a way that would have less sprawling uses at the edges of town. The objective was to develop within existing municipal limits first. New development would occur at town-type densities on empty lots (or lots with dilapidated buildings), referred to as “in-fill” development. Developing at town densities increases efficiencies for water, sewer and other infrastructure. A holding zone area outside the town limits would be kept as open as possible for future potential expansion and for the logical extension of streets, water, and sewer. When vacant land in town is filled up in the long term future, the town would work with the county to re-locate the airport so those lands could be used for new in-town development. When those lands were fully developed, the town could expand as necessary into the areas outside of municipal limits.

In the Expansive Community Alternative, Valier would have more sprawling land uses. Development outside of town would likely occur on small acreages or very large lots especially if the town extended water to those locations. It would be more costly to extend and maintain infrastructure because of large lot sizes. The airport would stay in place which would push new development to outside of existing town boundaries sooner than under the Compact Community Alternative.

Many persons commented on the alternatives in response to the growth policy drafts posted on the Pondera Port Authority website in January and February, at the February open house and “Listening Sessions” held in Valier. It was clear from these comments that the airport was the most problematic concern. Some people thought that eventually moving the airport and opening up that land for residential development would be good for Valier. Others felt very strongly that the airport should not be relocated in any circumstance. There was some concern that if the traffic at the airport increased much, it could create noise problems for neighbors. Those concerns were expressed by those who wanted to keep the airport as well as those who thought it should be moved when more space is needed for more development in town.

The Valier Planning Board considered these comments and recommended a third alternative, the Compact Community with Airport Option. This alternative was the same as the Compact Community Alternative except for the airport. Under this option, at least once every five years the planning board would examine availability of land in town for new development. When information indicates that no more land would be available within 3 to 5 years, the town council would begin steps to assess feasibility of transitioning use of the airport land to other uses. This would necessitate coordination with the county, which owns the land. It would likely begin with a feasibility study of converting un-used portions of the airport to residential use (such as the western portion currently being considered for the Babe Ruth baseball fields). In the very long term, a feasibility study of total relocation may become necessary. Any feasibility study should involve the Montana Department of Transportation – Aviation Division, those who use the airport, Pondera County, and surrounding landowners. Depending on results of the feasibility study, Valier and Pondera County would need to work together to transition any airport relocation or reduction in airport land area.

The Town Council considered the Planning Board’s recommendation and public comment. The Town Council is adopting the “Expansive Community Alternative” future land use with flexibility to work with the county on options for the airport.

The following describes the Future Land Use Plan as adopted by the Town Council.

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The Land Use Designations depicted on the Future Land Use Map are:

1. Downtown
2. Residential - Town Pattern
3. Airport
4. Transitional
5. Industrial
6. Business Development
7. Open Space & Recreation

8. Holding Zone

Each of these is discussed in detail on the following pages.

Downtown: The downtown area in Valier is the old commercial core of the town. The area includes land on the Valier Highway between 4th and 8th Streets and extends along Montana Avenue between Marias and Pondera Avenues.

The area has several older, possibly historic, commercial buildings and should continue as the retail commercial center of the town. Appropriate land uses for this area include commercial, office, and public uses.

Building form is important to the character of this area. Buildings with little or no setback are common, in the traditional downtown style. Two-story commercial buildings would be appropriate here in the future. No on-site parking should be required here so that buildings can retain the downtown pattern and not be surrounded by parking lots. As need arises, community parking lot at margins of the area should be considered.

To make the area more inviting, the town should strive for a highest level of pedestrian accommodation -- wide sidewalks, curb extensions, cross walks, street furniture and landscaping.

Residential - Town Pattern: This area encompasses many of the residential blocks in Valier. The area also includes many vacant lots that could potentially accommodate more residential development. The "Residential – Town Pattern" area is intended to be primarily residential, although some non-residential uses could also be allowed if they fit into the context and character of the neighborhood. Such non-residential uses might include day care facilities or churches, which would be allowed as permitted uses. Other uses such as neighborhood restaurants or recreation-oriented activities could be considered as conditional uses, but would have to meet certain compatibility criteria (such as for parking, etc.) before being approved as a use in the "Residential – Town Pattern." The zoning regulations would further define parameters for permitted uses and conditional uses.

The concept of "Town Pattern" is that new development would occur in a pattern of streets, blocks, lots, and buildings that is similar to that of the existing town. Since all of the town is platted, new residential development could mostly be infill development. (Infill development is the development of new housing or other buildings on scattered vacant sites within a built-up area.) Overall housing densities would be similar to the current pattern in the more fully developed areas--about 3 housing units per gross acre.

The residential area should accommodate a range of housing types, from single-family units to multi-family units. Small multi-family buildings of four or fewer units can be successfully interspersed with single family units in the area.

Manufactured housing¹ should be allowed in all residential areas. The town can enact basic residential design standards (covering such things as roof pitch, eaves, siding, etc.) if there are

¹ The National Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Act of 1976 required significant improvement in the safety and quality of mobile homes. Homes that comply with the act are said to meet the "HUD

issues about compatibility with site built homes. Presently, town zoning ordinance uses out-dated terminology in reference to manufactured housing and mobile homes. The town's zoning standards should encourage good siting and design without unnecessarily limiting the use of manufactured housing.

Under the current zoning ordinance, most residential land is in the A zone. In the A zone, building setbacks, minimum lot sizes, and minimum lot widths are fairly large. These could be reduced without impairing the residential character of the area. Reducing the setbacks, lot widths, and lot sizes could make it easier to build in town and might help reduce the cost of producing new housing.

Airport: The airport would remain at its present location and would be considered for potential "Residential - Town Pattern" use when other residential building locations in municipal limits were filled in. Valier would like the opportunity to use portions of or relocate the county-owned airport at some time in the future if needed for residential growth. Valier will work closely with Pondera County and the Pondera County airport board to identify needs of the airport, siting criteria, and funding sources for relocation.

At least every five years, the planning board will examine availability of land in town for new development. When information indicates that no more land would be available within 3 to 5 years or so, the town council would begin steps to assess feasibility of transitioning use of the airport land to other uses. Valier will coordinate with the county, which owns the land. This could occur in phases--the western-most part of the airport, which is not used for airport operations, could be the first place to transition from airport to residential use. This western portion is currently being considered for the Babe Ruth baseball fields. In the very long term, a feasibility study of total relocation may become necessary. Any feasibility study should involve the Montana Department of Transportation – Aviation Division, those who use the airport, Pondera County, and surrounding landowners. Depending on results of any feasibility study, Valier and Pondera County would need to work together to transition any airport relocation or reduction in airport land area.

Industrial: The Industrial area includes the existing businesses along the railroad tracks on the northern edge of town. These uses would be encouraged to continue in the future and the addition of new business of a similar nature would also be encouraged.

Transitional: These are areas along the Valier Highway that have more spread out commercial development than the downtown and have more variety of uses interspersed with the commercial uses. The mixture of land uses can make these areas difficult to plan and

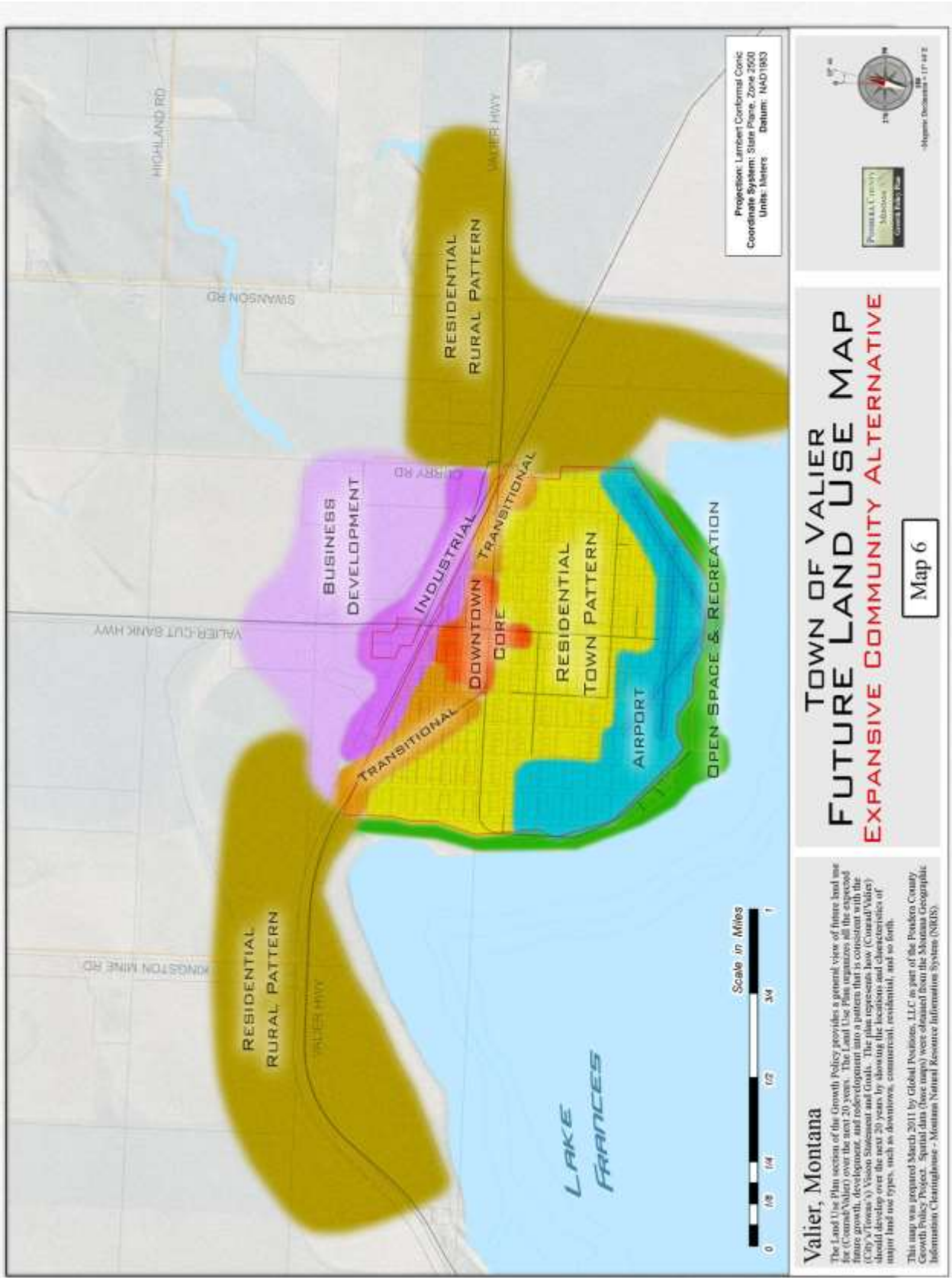
code". The HUD Code is a uniform construction code that ensures that a manufactured home, regardless of where it is built in the U.S., will meet certain publicly adopted standards related to health, safety, and welfare. Some existing mobile homes in Valier were constructed prior to 1976. These older units are referred to as "mobile homes" while the newer units should be called "manufactured housing. These older mobile homes do not meet health and safety standards and should be a focus of the Town's efforts to improve the housing stock. There is a legitimate public interest in facilitating the removal of these older mobile home or their replacement with manufactured housing that meets the HUD code.

manage. For the future, the variety of uses should remain--including retail commercial, offices, public uses, and a wide variety of residential uses. New or expanded commercial uses should be carefully designed and managed to minimize impacts to area residences. All buildings in this area will be more spread out than in the downtown--this means larger setbacks, larger lots, and on-site parking are all appropriate. Buildings would generally be no taller than two stories high.

Business Development: This area is intended as a long-term reserve for future business development. If Valier ever sought to create a business or industrial park, this would be the place to locate it. Due to demand realities, it is not likely that this area would be developed for many years. However, by identifying it now, the town can take steps to protect it from incompatible development, such as residential development. The Town can also take steps toward facilitating eventual business development on at least part of this area.

Open Space and Recreation: This area is the shore of Lake Frances and includes the Town's Recreation Area and Campground. It is intended that these uses continue in this area. Further development of recreational opportunities in this area should also be encouraged. For instance, the area could be a key component of a future walking/biking trail system in Valier.

Residential - Rural Pattern: This area is outside the present town limits. Until such areas are annexed into town, they will likely remain unzoned in the county, allowing for a variety of lot sizes and configurations. Town water service and possibly town sewer service would be provided based on feasibility. The Town of Valier will encourage town type densities and logical extension of streets and utilities, wherever water service is extended outside existing municipal limits. A fairly large land area is identified for this land use. Lakeside areas on both sides of town, which are equally well suited for this type of development, are included in this land use area.



PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This part identifies how the growth policy will be implemented and how it will be monitored, evaluated and revised. It also addresses how jurisdictions will coordinate with each other on matters related to the growth policy. Further it provides information on three other topics related to implementation and also required by state law to be in a growth policy: 1) an infrastructure strategy, 2) matters related to subdivision review, and 3) fire and wildland fire potential.

TIMETABLE AND IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Planning is a continuous process. It involves implementation (the action steps to get things done), monitoring (regular review of progress), and evaluation (how are we doing, what is working and what is not, and how can we better achieve goals), and then as needed, revisions to update goals and objectives.

Timetable for Implementation

This growth policy is a long-range plan and covers a time span of approximately 20 years.

Implementation Priorities

The Priority Action Plan is the list of the highest priority action items to start working on in the first year after plan adoption. Some of the items on the list are simple tasks and can easily be completed in a year or less. Other action items are more complex and may take years to reach the intended objective. For those items, the Priority Action Plan identifies the first tasks to get the ball rolling in the first year.

Each action item lists what agency will take the lead and primary responsibility for action. Partner agencies or organizations are listed as well. It also includes an approximate timetable for completing the projects that will extend beyond a year, and identifies if an action requires ongoing activity.

The first year includes work on the following action items:

- 1. Record the town's municipal boundary with the county clerk and recorder.**
- 2. Update zoning to conform to the growth policy.**
- 3. Begin work to facilitate more numbers of quality rental housing.**
- 4. Initiate annual review and annual work plan to implement the growth policy.**

1. Record the town's municipal boundary with the county clerk and recorder.

The town council and town attorney would work together to record the municipal boundary. State law specifies a map or plat should be filed with the clerk and recorder. This could be done within the first year of the growth policy.

2. Update zoning to conform to the growth policy.

The future land use plan sets out the framework for future zoning but is not as specific as a zoning ordinance. The town's zoning ordinance would be updated to address the future land use plan and specific strategies in the goals and objectives such as:

- Promoting infill development (using existing vacant lots and open space in town for new development)
- Retaining greenway areas around Lake Frances, and potential for trail systems
- Updating standards to improve the appearance of the town

The Valier Zoning Commission would be the lead for updating the zoning regulations and districts. The Town Council has authority in state law to appoint such a commission if one does not already exist. The planning board members who reside in the municipality often function as the Zoning Commission, if so designated by the City Council. Typically, the regulations would be drafted by specialized consultants with small town zoning code experience. The Zoning Commission would manage the project. Funding will need to be arranged through the Town Council's budgetary process. Potential outside funding sources may include Montana Department of Natural Resources renewable resources grants, Community Development Block Grant funds, and USDA Rural Development program funds.¹ It could take a year or more to update the zoning, accounting for the time it will take to go through the consultant hiring process and to allow time for public input and review. Ultimately, the Zoning Commission submits the final report to the Town Council who then make the decision on adoption.

3. Begin work to facilitate more numbers of quality rental housing.

The intent of this work would be to attract more year-round residents to Valier, particularly those with families. Currently the number of good rentals is quite limited but demand for housing in Valier appears to be relatively strong from persons with jobs in Cut Bank and Shelby. The mayor would be the lead for this action, coordinating with other agencies, such as Neighborworks (<http://www.nwmt.org/>),

¹ For more information on potential funding sources for updating zoning:

http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/cardd/ResDevBureau/project_planning_grants.asp
<http://comdev.mt.gov/CDBG/cdbgplanninggrants.mcp.x>
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/empower.htm>

Pondera Port Authority, and others with experience with public and public-private enterprises to address housing. Approval of any related budgetary items, contracts, etc. would require Town Council involvement and approval.

4. Initiate annual review and annual work plan to implement the growth policy.

The Valier Planning Board would be the lead agency to annually prepare a written summary of progress on growth policy actions and a growth policy workplan and budget for the upcoming year. Planning Board should consult with town staff in this endeavor. The annual review and workplan would be submitted to the Town Council as part of the annual budget cycle.

EVALUATION TIMELINE

Annual Review

The most important ongoing activity for any plan is monitoring progress. If no one is watching the pot, the stew will almost certainly fail. For this reason, the planning board and town staff should meet together to annually review accomplishments, celebrate successes, and set a work plan for the following year.

Five-Year Review

Communities are required by state law to review their growth policies every five years. The purpose of the review is to determine what changes need to be made to the document to keep it current, and to make sure it continues to reflect community goals and objectives. However, the growth policy can be amended at any time in the five-year period if needed.

Criteria for Revising the Growth Policy

Any revision to the growth policy should be directed by criteria for review. The following criteria for review will be used to warrant and guide revisions:

- Major changes in existing conditions or projected trends
- Modifications in the legal requirements a growth policy must meet
- Successful completion of a strategy meeting goals and objectives
- Citizens desire for changes to the growth policy
- Changes in community direction and goals
- Adoption of a plan inconsistent with the growth policy or proposed as an amendment to the growth policy

Revision Process

If the planning board determines that a revision is needed as a result of their annual review, or if the town council decides to revise the growth policy, the process to be followed is that in state law (76-1-604, MCA). At the time this growth policy was prepared, the law required a public hearing before the planning Board is required to do what. The degree of public involvement will depend on the scope of the proposed revisions. After the public hearing, the planning board will make recommendations to the governing bodies regarding the revisions. The town council then acts to adopt revisions or amendments.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This section provides general information on a range of planning tools that are applicable to this growth policy. It includes brief definitions or descriptions for each tool.

Regulatory Tools

Subdivision Regulations

Counties and incorporated municipalities must adopt subdivision regulations that comply with the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act (76-3-101 et seq., MCA). Subdivision regulations control the creation of new parcels. Regulating the division or aggregation of parcels of land ensures that development can be adequately served without adversely impacting public services and natural resources.

Zoning

The historical rationale for zoning was to separate incompatible land uses. Zoning ordinances generally address type of use, intensity of use, and space and bulk requirements. Development and design standards for such things as signage, parking, landscaping, noise, lighting, buildings, and site layout can also be addressed through zoning regulations. A zoning map and the descriptive text of districts are the two critical components of zoning regulations.

Design Standards

Design standards are different for subdivision of land and for standards applied to structures.

Subdivision Design Standards: Montana law (76-3-504, MCA) specifies the kinds of design standards that apply to subdivisions, but details of the standards are primarily left to the local government to decide.

Architectural or Development Design Standards: Typically applied through zoning, architectural design standards address such things as foundation type, roof forms, construction material, etc. In the context of this growth policy, they are suggested as a means to provide a more cohesive appearance to the community. They should not exclude manufactured housing, but instead ensure that manufactured housing and site-built housing are compatible within the same neighborhoods and zoning districts.

Building Code

Cities, counties, and towns in Montana are authorized to establish building codes.

Airport Influence Area

Airports that are part of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) are required under state law to identify an airport influence area and regulations for the area.

Policy Tools

Annexation Policy

Annexation is the process by which a municipality expands its territorial limits and jurisdictional powers. Annexation agreements and policies are generally used to help municipalities plan for expansion and provision of municipal services. In order to help plan for growth, municipalities often set annexation policy that states the conditions under which annexation will occur.

Infrastructure Extension Policy

An infrastructure policy set the conditions and criteria for approving extensions of municipal water, sewer, or storm-water systems outside municipal boundaries. Local special districts (such as districts established outside municipal areas for water or sewer) can also establish criteria for expanding the district or providing out-of-district service (if allowed). The policies provide for the logical expansion of services within the context of the growth policy.

Financial Tools

Capital Improvements Program

A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is administered by a city or county government, which schedules permanent improvements, usually for a minimum of 5 years in the future, to fit the projected fiscal capability of the local jurisdiction. The program is generally reviewed annually. Typically the first year of the CIP is a budgeting process and the remaining years are considered the actual program. The importance of a CIP for land use planning is the critical connection between where and when infrastructure is provided and what the desired land use pattern is for a community or neighborhood.

Budget/Workplan

There are a number of budget and workplan models. They generally differ by the level of review (program by program versus overall budget of a department) and how budget and workplan priorities are set (for example focusing on outputs, community goals, or program objectives). Annual budget processes allocate limited government resources to daily operations. The development and approval of departmental workplans and corresponding budgets effectively prioritize community development services, such as planning, by allocating resources to staffing, operations and capital purchases that support direct services to the public. The political process of crafting an annual budget and workplan, coupled with fluctuations in funding for local government services can make it difficult for jurisdictions to stay focused on long-term community development goals and objectives.

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION

Implementing the Valier Growth Policy will involve coordinating with other jurisdictions. This section describes how the town of Valier will coordinate with Pondera County, Conrad, and other regional, state, and federal agencies.

Town-County Coordination

State law requires that the growth policy address how town or city will coordinate with the county on matters related to the growth policy. Valier and Pondera County have a history of coordination as indicated by the inter-local agreement on law enforcement (county sheriff serves the municipality), with provision of the rural fire department, and library.

Valier and Pondera County have separate planning jurisdictions, however the town and Pondera County have jointly worked on planning efforts, such as the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan, Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and this growth policy.

The Town and Pondera County will continue to coordinate on matters of mutual interest related to this growth policy.

Of particular interest are the following:

- 1) Subdivision Review within one mile of Valier. State law requires subdivisions in the county within one mile of a city with a population between 1,000 and 5,000 to be submitted to the City for review and comment. Although Valier does not have 1,000 persons, Pondera County is willing to submit subdivisions within a mile of Valier for review.
- 2) Airport. As proposed in this growth policy, the town would like to relocate the county-owned airport at some time in the future when demand for residential development exceeds available lots in town. Valier will work closely with Pondera County and the Pondera County airport board to identify needs of the airport, siting criteria, and funding sources for relocation.

Coordination with Other Jurisdictions

Conrad, Valier, and Pondera County have the opportunity to coordinate economic development efforts through the Pondera Port Authority, located in Conrad. Conrad, Valier, and Pondera can also coordinate with other communities in a several county region through the Sweetgrass Development Corporation, and the Northcentral Montana RC&D.

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Montana law (76-1-601, MCA) requires that each growth policy include a “strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure, including drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sewer systems, solid waste facilities, fire protection facilities, roads, and bridges.”

Valier has an adopted Capital Improvements Program that is the strategy for infrastructure with the exception of fire protection facilities. The fire protection facilities are addressed in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan that has been adopted by the town of Valier.

In addition, this growth policy recommends that Valier adopt an infrastructure extension policy to establish criteria for if/when extensions outside municipal boundaries would be approved.

SUBDIVISIONS

This section provides information on how the municipality will review subdivisions. State law requires growth policies to include a statement explaining how the governing body of the jurisdiction will:

1. define the subdivision review criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a), MCA
2. evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to those criteria, and
3. how public hearings regarding proposed subdivisions will be conducted.

Since 1974, every county, city, and town has been required by state law to “adopt and provide for the enforcement and administration of subdivision regulations.” The governing bodies have also had the authority to review subdivisions for their compliance with the growth policy. House Bill 543, passed by the 2001 state legislature and signed into law by the governor, now requires that subdivision regulations be revised to conform to a growth policy within one year after a growth policy is adopted.

Review Criteria Definitions and Evaluation

The criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a), MCA are agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety. Subdivisions are evaluated for their material effect on the six criteria. The evaluation of the effect of the proposed subdivision on these criteria determines if there are significant unmitigated adverse impacts. Unmitigated adverse impacts are potential grounds for denial of a proposed subdivision.

Valier will define these criteria and establish how subdivisions will be evaluated for their impacts on the criteria by reviewing the following: 1) “model” subdivision regulations as issued by the Montana Department of Commerce’s Community Technical Assistance Program or by other entities such as the Montana Association of Counties (both of these have model prototypes), 2) subdivision regulations from other communities in Montana. The planning board, which is responsible for the subdivision regulations, will also consider local conditions, local issues, and public comment in developing the review criteria definitions.

Public Hearings

The planning board holds hearings on subdivisions. In addition, it is possible that the governing body may also hold a hearing, as long as review deadlines are met. The subdivision regulations should address the following items for public hearings: 1) noticing requirements, and 2) method of conducting the meeting. Noticing requirements in the regulations should refer to requirements of law for noticing (76-3-605, MCA).

If the municipality has public hearing requirements codified or established in written policy, these should be followed.

If there are no such local guidelines for public hearings, the following is recommended. A process and deadline for accepting written comments should be included in the notice of the public hearing. The planning board chair or mayor (depending on whether the planning board or town council is holding the public hearing) will chair the public hearing. The hearing should begin with introductions and a brief review of how the meeting will be conducted, and directions for how to make public comments at the hearing. The following is suggested as format for a public hearing: 1) Brief summary of process for subdivision review from application to final plat, 2) Review of the subdivision proposal, 3) comments from the subdivider, and 4) comments from the public. Persons making comments should be asked to speak one-at-a-time, and other guidelines for comment can be established at the discretion of the chair. It can be helpful to request that individuals avoid repeating what has already been stated, and to set time limits.

EVALUATION OF FIRE AND WILDLAND FIRE POTENTIAL

Montana law requires growth policies to include an evaluation of the potential for fire and wildland fire, including whether there is a need to:

- delineate the wildland-urban interface, and
- adopt regulations requiring defensible space around structures; adequate ingress and egress to facilitate fire suppression activities, and adequate water supply for fire protection.

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was prepared for Pondera County, and the municipalities of Conrad and Valier in 2008. The CWPP evaluates the potential for fire and wildland fire in the county. The plan mapped Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas, using mathematical formulae based on a number of factors including concentrations of structures, high risk landscapes, limiting infrastructure, and other points of concern. The CWPP also includes a number of action items to reduce fire/wildland fire potential and to improve fire suppression activities.

The CWPP addressed the fire-evaluation items needed for a growth policy, indicating need for creating defensible space around structures (e.g., reducing fire fuels around buildings), for ensuring that roads and bridges are adequate for fire-fighting vehicles and equipment, and for more fire-suppression water supplies around the county. Actions to address these needs include both voluntary and regulatory actions. Fundamentally, the county and municipalities do not need local regulations to ensure county and city roads and streets provide adequate ingress and egress, or that local government controlled water supplies (e.g., city fire hydrants) are available and in good working order, and to make sure that local government buildings and facilities have defensible space. Other non-regulatory actions that can be best accomplished with local government initiation, included assessing condition of streets, roads, and bridges to accommodate fire suppression equipment and setting priorities for addressing those needs. The CWPP also recommended a number of assistance and education programs for individual landowners to improve and maintain defensible space. The CWPP listed specific equipment, training, and volunteer-recruitment needs for the local fire departments.

The CWPP recommended identifying and mapping existing fire-suppression water supplies and identifying where new or additional sources are needed.

The CWPP includes recommendations for regulations, specifically:

- Regulations to ensure fire-safe development of rural subdivisions (county)
- Local adoption of the International Fire Code, as adopted by the State of Montana (Conrad, Valier, county)

The CWPP also recommends adopting a “policy concerning building materials used in high-risk WUI areas on existing structures and new construction.” If the policy were to be adopted, it would require a building permit system to implement.

Pondera County’s subdivision regulations do not currently require defensible space around structures; or specify standardized measures for ingress and egress to facilitate fire suppression activities, or standardized requirements for water supply for fire protection. Fire provisions design standards in the County Subdivision Regulations are very general and indicate “specific fire protection requirements for subdivisions will depend on the location of the subdivision and the capability of the local fire district or fire department.”

Considering the many actions proposed in the CWPP for defensible space, need for adequate access for fire-fighting equipment, and more fire-suppression water supplies, the following are recommended as part of this growth policy:

Implement the CWPP, specifically:

- 1) Develop specific requirements in the subdivision regulations for fire-suppression related water supplies, road and bridge capabilities, ingress/egress (at least two points of ingress/egress for emergency access for large subdivisions), and defensible space
- 2) Adopt the international Fire Code
- 3) Adopt building material standards for new construction in high-risk WUI areas

APPENDIX A

Review of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

VALIER ZONING REVIEW

Zoning is one of the most important tools for implementing a town's Growth Policy. Town zoning regulations should be revised following the adoption of a new Growth Policy so that future development and land use more closely conform to the new plan. In addition, town zoning regulations often have existing problems that warrant correction independent of changes necessitated by a new Growth Policy.

In Valier's case, revision of the town zoning ordinance would be warranted for both reasons. However, revising and updating the zoning ordinance requires a thoughtful balancing to achieve an ordinance that helps the Town with its development issues without being more complicated than the Town can handle.

Valier presently has a simple zoning ordinance that divides the town into commercial, industrial, and several residential zones. The zoning ordinance also includes specifications for parking areas, signs, and non-conforming uses. Much of the zoning ordinance dates back to 1965.

General observations about problem areas in the ordinance include the following:

- The ordinance includes some overly complex standards such as Section 11-3A-3(A) which reads: "Where lots comprising 40 percent or more of the frontage between two intersecting streets are developed with buildings have front yards with a variation of not more than 20 feet in depth, the average of such front yards shall establish the minimum front yard depth for the entire frontage."
- The ordinance relies on out-dated terminology for addressing manufactured housing.
- The ordinance provides very little in terms of good design specifications for new development projects.

The new Growth Policy recommends some newer approaches to development and land use that should be implemented through zoning. Assuming the Town adopts the new Growth Policy, the town zoning ordinance would need to be revised to accomplish the following:

- Consolidate Residential Zones: Much of the southern end of town is in the "Residence A Zone" while the other areas are in the "Residence B Zone". The Valier zoning also includes

a "Residence C Zone" that allows "multiple-dwellings" and "row-dwellings"; but no land in the town is zoned Residence C. It is probably unnecessary to have three residential zones.

A simpler and better approach would be to combine the Residence A, B, and C Zones to create one residential zone for all of town. The new residential zone should have the following features:

- Allows more variety of housing types. Allowing duplexes or multi-family units in all residential zones can be beneficial by providing more sites for more affordable housing and by increasing the diversity of neighborhoods. The zoning ordinance can include limits on such housing types to ensure they fit in to the neighborhood. For example, some communities limit multifamily structures to four-unit buildings to help decentralize them. In addition, multi-family housing can be limited to certain sites based on factors such as the capacity of the street, the adjacent land uses, and larger minimum lot sizes. For example, the regulations could require that multi-family units be located on major streets, not be adjacent to sensitive land uses, and be sited on a large enough land parcels. Such standards can be developed and incorporated in the zoning regulations as part of the conditional use process. That way, multi-family housing, particularly larger projects, would receive more thorough review through the conditional use process.
- Includes site layout and landscaping standards to ensure that larger multi-family housing projects constitute a positive contribution to the appearance of the neighborhood and community. Standards could address minimum landscaping requirements, parking lot design, sidewalks, open space and recreational area requirements, building setbacks, outdoor lighting, fencing, and other such factors that make a huge difference in how well the project looks and fits into the neighborhood. Such standards would be incorporated in the zoning ordinance and would be used during the conditional use process to ensure good design in multi-family projects.
- Allows manufactured housing in the residential zone on the same terms as site-built homes (such as requiring foundations). In the municipal zoning part of the Montana Statutes at Section 76-2-302 "manufactured housing" is defined as "a single-family

dwelling, built offsite in a factory on or after January 1, 1990, that is placed on a permanent foundation, is at least 1,000 square feet in size, has a pitched roof and siding and roofing materials that are customarily, as defined by local regulations, used on site-built homes, and is in compliance with the applicable prevailing standards of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development at the time of its production. A manufactured home does not include a mobile home or housetrailer, as defined in 15-1-101." Valier should consider to allowing such manufactured housing in all residential zones.

- Has new standards for lot size, lot width, and building setbacks. In developing new standards, Valier should seek to balance the desirable aspects of the town's current low density character with the efficiencies of more compact neighborhoods. Low density neighborhoods will have higher per-lot installation costs of utilities, streets, and sidewalks, which adds to the price of housing. Developing new standards should also involve assessment of current conditions, including existing building setbacks and the prevailing dimensions of vacant platted lots. To build a home on an existing lot in the Residence A Zone, the lot must be at least 7,500 square feet despite the fact that many original town lots are slightly smaller at around 7,000 square feet.
- Revise approach to manufactured housing: As mentioned above for the residential zone, the town should ensure that modern manufactured homes are allowed in all residential zones. With regard to older units, the town should consider prohibiting moving in of any units that do not meet HUD standards. There are different HUD standards that could be used as a basis. However, no units built before 1976 meet the HUD standards. At a minimum, the town should consider not allowing anyone to bring in and set up any of these oldest units.

Presently, the ordinance contains a "Trailer T Zone" that is not applied to any land in town. Like much of the rest of the ordinance, this section dates back to 1965 and uses out-dated terminology for manufactured housing. A lot of laws and regulations governing manufactured housing have come into effect since 1965. The best way to update the ordinance would be to eliminate the "Trailer T Zone" from the ordinance and make the other revisions addressing manufactured housing as outlined above.

- Improve the standards and procedures for Conditional Uses: The ordinance now contains a single list of conditional uses that are allowed anywhere in town. It would be better to have a separate list for each zone. Many of the presently listed conditional uses could be appropriate in any zone. But some listed uses such as hospitals, gravel mines, and truck terminals would create problems in residential areas and should be listed as conditional uses only in commercial or industrial zones. This can be corrected by each zone having its own list of conditional uses.

In addition, Valier should also improve its procedures and standards for conditional uses. The present procedures and standards (Section 11-20-6) are overly general and lacking in detail, consisting on only two short paragraphs.

- Consider design guidelines: The Town should consider adopting commercial development design guidelines to better address parking, lighting, landscaping, pedestrian facilities, and building designs. Such new guidelines could be regulatory, voluntary, or a combination.
- Revise Zoning Map: As part of revising the zoning ordinance text, it will be necessary to also revise the Zoning Map. Such revision should be coordinated with the Future Land Use Map of the Growth Policy.
- Improve zoning administration: In most every small town like Valier, there is a need for training of town officials responsible for zoning and for professional advisory services. A zoning ordinance can be difficult to understand and administer. While the actual wording of the zoning ordinance is important and the main focus of this review, the ordinance can become irrelevant when it is not properly understood and enforced. In Valier now, there are existing situations involving residential use of recreational vehicles that are inconsistent with the zoning ordinance. The Town should look for cost-efficient opportunities to improve the quality of its zoning administration.

REVIEW OF VALIER SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

All jurisdictions in Montana are required to establish regulations for review of subdivisions. Valier does not have subdivision regulations. The regulations will need to be developed to conform to state law and the provisions as outlined in the growth policy.

It is suggested that the town confer with the Community Technical Assistance Program (at the Montana Department of Commerce in Helena) before initiating the subdivision update. Typically, communities that do not have existing planning staff will contract with a planning professional to update the regulations.

APPENDIX B

Inventory of Existing Characteristics and Projected Trends for Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier

1. Population
2. Land Use
3. Housing
4. Economy
5. Public Infrastructure
6. Public Services
7. Natural Resources
8. Agriculture

Abbreviations

APD- application for permit to drill

BIA- Bureau of Indian Affairs

BNSF- Burlington Northern and Santa Fe

CEIC- Montana Census and Economic Information Center

CIP- Capital Improvements Plan

CRP- Conservation Reserve Program

CWAIC- Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Water Act Information Center

CWPP- Community Wildfire Protection Plan

DEQ- Department of Environmental Quality

DES- Disaster and Emergency Services

DNRC – See MDNRC

ESA- Endangered Species Act

FSA- Farm Services Agency

FWS- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

GNIS- National Inventory of Dams maintained by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S.
Geological Survey

HUD- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

MATL- Montana Alberta Tie Lie

MATL FIES- Montana Alberta Tie Lie, Final Environmental Impact Statement

MBMG- Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology

MDEQ- Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality

MDNRC- Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation

MDOT- Montana Department of Transportation

MITSD- Montana Information Technology Services Division

MNRIS- Montana Natural Resource Information System

MSTI- Mountain States Transmission Intertie

MT-REAP- Montana Regional Economic Analysis Project

NACO- National Association of Counties

NRCS- Natural Resources Conservation Service

PCCRC- Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company

PDM- Pondera County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan

PHMSA- Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

SSI- Supplemental Security Income

UMWI- University of Montana, Wilderness Institute

USDA- U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

US DOE- US Dept. of Energy

WTARC- Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center

1. POPULATION

1.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

Anticipating changes in population numbers and composition is essential to planning for future needs of Conrad, Valier, and Pondera County. Key findings include:

- In 2000, county population was 6,424; Conrad was 2,753, and Valier was 498.
- Data from the 2010 census will not be available until 2011.
- Population numbers are generally declining county-wide. The area of Heart Butte is a notable exception, with a 40% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- Few vacant homes (1.6%) are identified as for seasonal or recreational use.
- The County is generally older in population than the State of Montana or the Nation. In 2000, median age was 38.6 in Pondera County, 40.3 in Conrad, and 42.7 in Valier.
- In Conrad and Valier there were proportionately slightly fewer family households in 2000 compared to the state and nation.
- The percentage of persons age 65+ living alone in Conrad (16.2%) and Valier (18.6%) was considerably higher than the state (10%) and nation (9.2%).
- County lags behind the state and nation in terms of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher - 14% for Pondera County compared to 17.2% in Montana and 15.5% nationally.
- In 2000, Pondera County had the eighth highest percentage of persons ages 21 and over with a disability among Montana's 56 counties. With a rate of 85%, Valier had more than double the national rate of disabilities for persons age 65+.
- County-wide population is projected to decline to 5,280 by 2030, a decline of nearly 18% compared to 2000 census count of 6,424.

1.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences raised via public involvement relevant to this topic

Comments received at public meetings held in Valier, Conrad, Brady, and Dupuyer in 2009 raised some population-related issues: age of county residents and need for families with children (Valier and Dupuyer), American Indian cultural differences (Dupuyer), and percent of low income residents (income topic addressed economic section of this growth policy (Pondera Port Authority)).

1.3 Existing Conditions

1.3.1 Historical Population Trends and Current Numerical Estimates

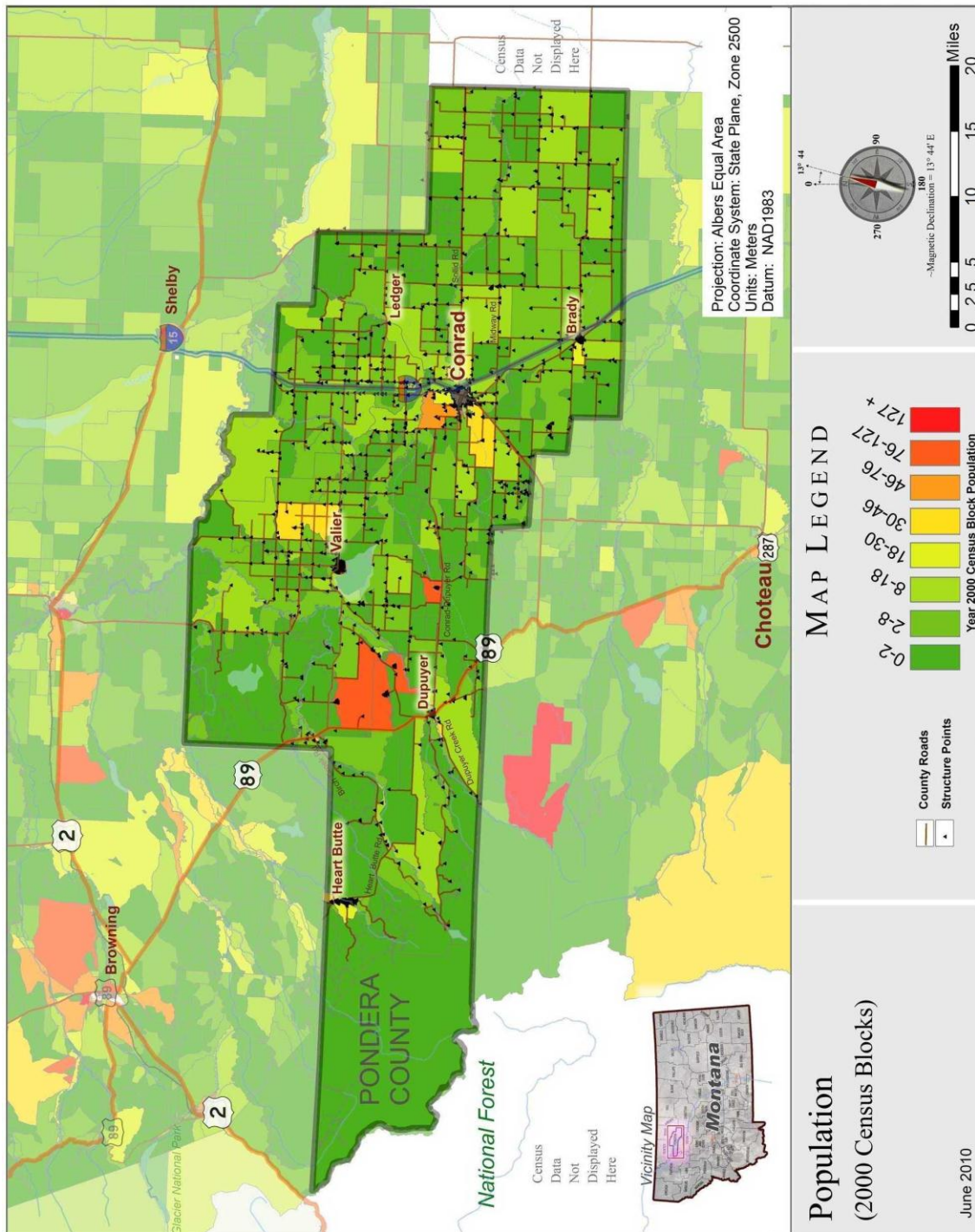
Population in Pondera County grew 12% from 5,741 persons at the time of the first decennial census of the county in 1920 to 6,424 persons in 2000. Growth occurred quickly in the first few decades, and then population began to decline in the 1960s. (Refer to Table 1.)

Population of the entire state increased by several-fold from 142,924 persons at the time it was first counted in the 1890 census to 902,195 in the 2000 census. (Refer to Table 1). Most of the State's growth occurred in Yellowstone, Missoula, Cascade, Flathead, and Lewis and Clark Counties. Many Montana counties have historic population trends similar to Pondera County and some have seen significant declines, such as Fergus County, which declined more than 40 percent since its population peak, (CEIC).

Table 1. Population 1890-2000 in Montana and Pondera County		
	MONTANA	PONDERA
1890	142,924	...
1900	243,329	...
1910	376,053	...
1920	548,889	5,741
1930	537,606	6,964
1940	559,456	6,716
1950	591,024	6,392
1960	674,767	7,653
1970	694,409	6,611
1980	786,690	6,731
1990	799,065	6,433
2000	902,195	6,424
% change 1920-2000	64%	12%

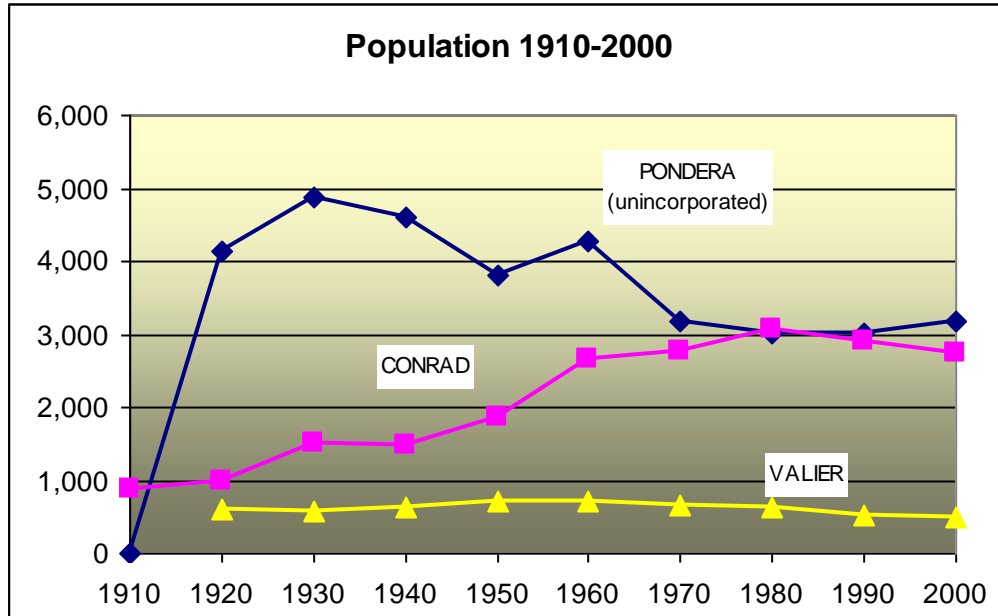
... = County had not yet been established when the decennial census of population was conducted.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Decennial Censuses of Population (Title varies per census), 1890-2000. Processed by the Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, Updated November 2002



Population in the county is concentrated in the two incorporated municipalities of Conrad and Valier, the unincorporated community of Heart Butte, which is counted separately in the census as a “Census Designated Place” (CDP), the communities of Dupuyer and Brady (which do not have separate census place designations), and the religious colonies of New Miami, Midway, Pondera, Birch Creek, and Kingsbury.

Figure 1: Population 1910-2000



Note: The counts reflect both growth annexation which occurred during the previous intercensal period. Unincorporated area = total county population less combined population of Valier and Conrad. Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Decennial Censuses of Population (Title varies per census), 1890-2000. Processed by the Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, March 21, 2001.

Conrad’s population peaked in 1980 at 3,074 and was 2,753 in 2000. Valier’s population peaked in 1960 at 794 persons and was 498 in 2000. The unincorporated areas of the county (total county area less Conrad and Valier) had a peak population in 1930 with 4,890 persons (See Figure 1). The unincorporated areas continued to decline until 1990 and then began a slight increase to 3,073. This increase is attributable to population growth of nearly 40% in Heart Butte between 1990 and 2000 (Refer to Table 2.).

Table 2. Population Change 1990-2000 in Pondera County				
			Numeric	POPULATION
	2000	1990	Change	% CHANGE****
County/City/Town/CDP*	CENSUS	CENSUS	1990 to 2000	1990 to 2000
PONDERA COUNTY	6,424	6,433	-9	-0.14
Conrad	2,753	2,891	-138	-4.77
Heart Butte CDP	698	499	199	39.88
Valier	498	519	-21	-4.05
Balance of County	2,475	2,524	-49	-1.94

* Census designated places (CDPs) are delineated for each decennial census as the statistical counterparts of incorporated places. CDPs are delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of population that are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated under the laws of the state in which they are located. **** Boundaries of Census Designated Places (CDPs) may vary from one decennial census to the next with changes in the settlement pattern; a CDP with the same name as in an earlier census does not necessarily have the same boundary. Census counts of Incorporated Places (cities and towns) reflect population change through both migration and land annexation.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Released March 21, 2001; Compiled by: Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Dept. of Commerce

A relatively low percentage of vacant homes are used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Such homes accounted for 1.6% of the total housing stock in 2000. (U.S. Census) Some places in Montana have seasonal housing rates of 20 to 30% or more, which can result in dramatic seasonal population fluctuations as well as increasing numbers of persons who own land in the county but who vote elsewhere (Cossitt).

Population density is 3.95 persons per square mile in Pondera County and 6.2 for Montana (CEIC).

Although this Growth Policy population report was prepared in 2010, Decennial census data are not typically available for a year or more after collection. Between censuses, the U.S. Census Bureau provides annual population estimates for counties and incorporated places. These data indicate continued population decline for Conrad and Valier and overall decline for the County since 2000 (See Table 3.).

Table 3. Population Estimates July 2008			
Geographic Area	April 1, 2000 Census	July 1, 2008	% Change Between Census 2000 and July 1, 2008
Pondera County	6,424	5,852	-8.9%
Conrad city	2,753	2,501	-9.2%
Valier town	498	454	-8.8%

Source: CEIC: Table 4: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Montana, Listed Alphabetically: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008 (SUB-EST2008-04-30), derived from Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Release Date: July 1, 2009

1.3.2 Population – Existing Characteristics

With the exception of Heart Butte, the county population is older than the state's overall population. In 2000, median age in the county ranged from 21.3 years in Heart Butte to 42.7 years in Valier. Median age for Montana was 37.5 and for the nation 35.3 (Refer to Table 4.).

Table 4. Median Age - 2000	
Pondera County (Total)	38.6
Conrad city,	40.3
Valier town	42.7
Heart Butte	21.3
Montana	37.5
Nation	35.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Table 5. Population Under 18 and 65 and older - 2000				
	<18 Years (Number)	<18 Years (% of Total)	65+ Years (Number)	65+ Years (% of Total)
Pondera County (Total)	1,900	29.6%	1,044	16.3%
Conrad city, Montana	725	26.3%	577	21.0%
Valier town, Montana	122	24.5%	101	20.3%
Heart Butte	308	44.1%	30	4.3%
Balance of County	745	30.1%	336	13.6%
State		25.5%		13.4%
Nation		25.7%		12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Countywide, the proportion of persons under the age of 18 to total population is more robust than that of the nation and due in large part to the very young population on the portion of the Blackfeet Reservation that falls within Pondera County. In 2000, Conrad also had a larger portion of the population under age 18 (26.3%) compared to the state (25.5%) and nation (25.7%).

The proportion of older persons is also greater than the state and the nation. In 2000, 16.3% of all county residents were 65 years or older. This proportion would also likely be higher were it not for the very low number of persons age 65+ on the Blackfeet Reservation. In Conrad and Valier in 2000, more than one fifth of the population was 65 years or older.

The 2008 census estimates indicate the population continues to get older overall, with an estimated median age of 42.9 in Pondera County compared to 39.3 for the state overall (CEIC).

Table 6. Population by Race - 2000			
	One race; White; Percent	One race; American Indian and Alaska Native; Percent	Two or more races; Percent
Pondera County (Total)	83.7	14.5	1.5
Conrad city, Montana	95.8	2.3	1.3
Valier town, Montana	92.2	5.2	2.6
Heart Butte	4.7	93.7	1.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Pondera County is predominately one race and white, with the exception of areas on the Blackfeet Reservation where the population predominately is American Indian. Off reservation, the largest non-white population is American Indian (See Table 6.).

Table 7. Type of Households - 2000				
	Total Households	Family Households	Non-Family Households	Householder 65+ living alone
	#	%	%	%
Pondera County (Total)	2,410	72.2	27.8	12.3
Conrad city, Montana	1,154	65.5	34.5	16.2
Valier town, Montana	220	65.0	35.0	18.6
Heart Butte	164	86.6	13.4	3.0
Montana	----	66.2	33.8	10.0
Nation	----	68.1	31.9	9.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

The county overall has a higher percentage of family households than the state or the nation, due to the much higher proportion of family households on the Blackfeet Reservation (86.6%). In Conrad and Valier there were proportionately slightly fewer family households in 2000 compared to the state and nation. The percentage of persons age 65+ living alone in Conrad (16.2%) and Valier (18.6%) was considerably higher than the state (10%) and nation (9.2%) (See Table 7).

Table 8. Educational Attainment – 2000		
	% High School Graduate or Higher	% Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Pondera County (Total)	34.9	14.0
Conrad city, Montana	39.0	14.3
Valier town, Montana	24.0	9.3
Heart Butte	43.3	14.9
Montana	31.3	17.2
Nation	28.6	15.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-2

In 2000, Pondera County had a greater proportion (34.9%) of high school graduates than the state or the nation, a reflection in part of the 43.3% of persons in Heart Butte who have graduated from high school. At 14%, Pondera County lagged behind state (17.2%) and national (15.5%) rates for persons with a bachelor's degree or higher (See Table 8.).

Table 9. Population with Disabilities – 2000		
	% of Population 21-64 years with Disability	% of Population 65+ with Disability
Pondera County (Total)	21.9	38.1
Conrad city, Montana	19.3	35.3
Valier town, Montana	22.8	84.6
Heart Butte	33.3	35.1
Montana	16.9	39.6
Nation	19.2	41.9

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table DP-2.

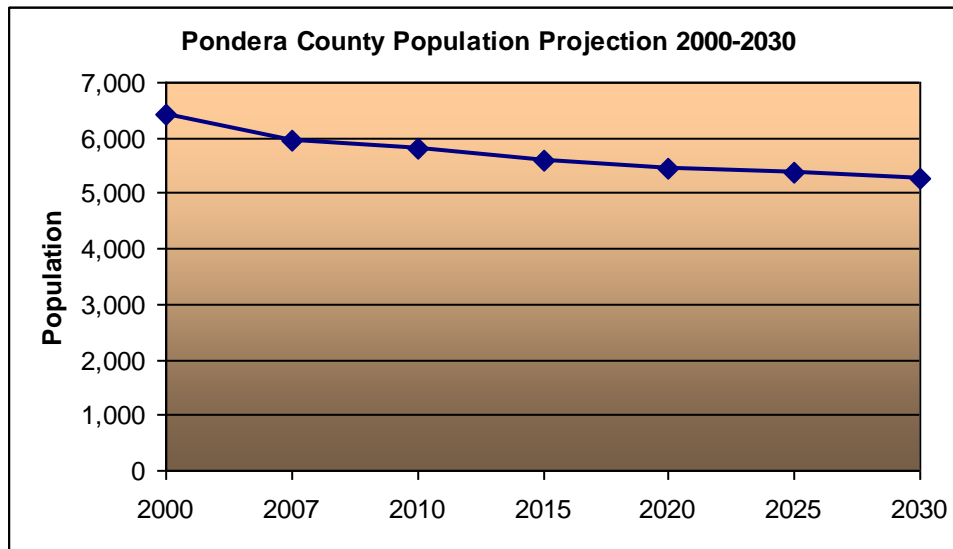
DEFINITION: People 21 years and over are considered to have a disability if they have one or more of the following: a) blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment; b) a substantial limitation in the ability to perform basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying; c) difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating; d) difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home; e) difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office; f) difficulty working at a job or business (age 21-64).

In 2000, Pondera County had the eighth highest percentage of persons ages 21 and over with a disability among Montana's 56 counties (CEIC). With a rate of 85%, Valier had more than double the national rate of disabilities for persons age 65+ (See Table 9).

1.4 Population Projections

The overall population of the county is projected to decrease over the next 20 years, according to projections released from the State of Montana. Population would decrease by nearly 18% from 6,424 in 2000 to 5,280 in 2030. Considering that the population on the Blackfeet Reservation is increasing, the projected population loss off-reservation is likely to be more pronounced than shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Pondera County Population Projection 2000-2030



Source: "Montana Population Projections" prepared by CEIC, using data from NPA Data Services Inc. issued 2008

Planning for the future will need to consider projected overall population numbers and trends towards increasing numbers and proportion of older persons.

Sources

CEIC: See Census and Economic Information Center

Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce. Data retrieved from website, May and June 2010, <http://www.ceic.mt.gov/Demographics.asp>

Map 1: "Montana County Population: Population Density 2000"

Table 1: Population 1890-2000 in Montana and Pondera County

Table 2: Population Change 1990-2000 in Pondera County

Table 3: Population Estimates July 2008

Figure 1: Population 1910-2000

Figure 2: Pondera Population Projection 2000-2030

Cossitt, Anne. Work with communities in Madison and Gallatin Counties. 2005-2010.

Pondera Port Authority. Growth Policy Meetings Summaries. 2010.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Tables DP-1 and DP-2. Retrieved from website in May and June 2010: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Table 4: Median Age 2000

Table 5: Population Under 18 and 65 and Older 2000

. Table 6: Population by Race 2000

Table 7: Type of Household 2000

Table 8: Educational Attainment 2000

Table 9: Population with Disabilities 2000

2. PONDERA COUNTY LAND USE

2.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This section discusses land use in Pondera County and the municipalities of Conrad and Valier. This discussion includes characterizations of the current landownership patterns, existing land use, development trends, and local development regulations.

Key findings include the following:

- Pondera County land use is dominated by privately-owned agricultural land without much non-resident landownership.
- County land development indicators point to low levels of development pressure and very modest rates of land subdivision.
- About 15.5 percent of Pondera County is in the Blackfeet Reservation. Most of this is tribal land which is not subject to this Growth Policy.
- The municipalities of Conrad and Valier similarly are experiencing low pressure for land development and have not had significant growth in the past decade.
- Both Conrad and Valier each have a basic zoning ordinance that divides the municipality into residential, commercial, and industrial zones.
- The County and Conrad have regulations governing the subdivision of land but Valier does not.

2.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences

Within the last few years, there have been numerous outreach efforts with regard to planning in the County and the municipalities. These efforts include surveys and meetings of growth policy committees held in 2009. These efforts have produced expressions of the issues, perspectives, and preferences of county citizens regarding many topics including land use.

In 2009 a Pondera County survey was conducted. About 120 households in the county participated. Most of the survey respondents reported living "in town." Among the survey results, the following are noted: There is strong interest for continuing historic agricultural land use, with almost all survey respondents saying this is important to some degree. However, most respondents felt that subdivision of agricultural land is not a problem in the county. The survey also included many questions about the character of future development and possible regulations that are interesting and potentially useful but not relevant to this discussion of current land use (future land use will be discussed in a subsequent section). Similarly, recent surveys in Conrad and Valier also did not include questions specifically on current land use.

2.3 Existing Conditions

Pondera County is 1,638.6 square miles in land area or 1,048,704 acres. (MNRIS, 2010a) Pondera County is 44th in size among Montana's 56 counties. (NACO, 2010) In terms of land use, the county is predominantly agricultural, with 90.8% of the land area in farms and ranches. (USDA, 2009) For a rural, Western county, Pondera County has a relatively small proportion of federal land in the county. The county includes the City of Conrad and the Town of Valier as well as several small, unincorporated places.

2.3.1 Land Ownership

Land in Pondera County is predominantly privately owned, with over 72% of the land in private ownership. Tribal ownership associated with the Blackfeet Reservation in the northwestern part of the county is the next largest ownership type at 10.4% of the county. The U.S. Forest Service and State of Montana own 9.9% and 6.0% of the land, respectively.

TABLE 1: PARCEL OWNERSHIP SUMMARY		
Owner Type	Acres	Percent of County
Private	783,078	72.1
Tribal	113,460	10.4
USDA Forest Service	107,336	9.9
State Government	64,982	6.0
Water	10,707	1.0
Other Miscellaneous Types	6,346	< 1.0

Source: MNRIS, 2010b

Of the private land, 73% is owned by county residents as indicated by having an in-county ZIP Code associated with their property tax assessment records. Another 14% of the land is owned by nearby landowners (those having the ZIP Code of their mailing address beginning with 594, the three-digit ZIP code prefix of the Great Falls postal region) (MITSD, 2010) This is a high proportion of local ownership and indicates little of the non-resident ownership that is often associated with vacation or resort areas and with land speculation.

A large portion of Pondera County, that part north of Birch Creek excluding the National Forest, is within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation. The Reservation includes 254 square miles of Pondera County or 15.5 percent of the county. Within the Reservation, there are tribal lands and private lands as well as the unincorporated settlement of Heart Butte (population 698 in year 2000). Privately owned deeded lands constitute 31 percent of the Reservation in Pondera County. These private lands are subject to this Growth Policy and the Pondera County Subdivision Regulations while the tribal lands are not.

2.3.2 Existing Land Use

Land use in Pondera County can be characterized using data from the county office of the state Revenue Department. The Revenue Department assigns a "property type" to every parcel of taxable land in the county. The property type indicates the current use of the land. Using these data, the land uses for each of the jurisdictions in the county are discussed below.

1. Pondera County (Unincorporated Area)

Agriculture is the overwhelmingly predominant use of private land in the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. Revenue Department data indicate that agricultural land and related farmsteads account for 99% of the private land in unincorporated Pondera County.

TABLE 2: RURAL LAND USE SUMMARY		
LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF AREA
Agriculture	656,190	86%
Farmsteads	100,990	13%
Tax Exempt	4,246	<1%
Residential	1,390	<1%
Vacant	832	<1%
Commercial	115	<1%
Industrial	63	<1%
TOTAL	763,826	100%

Source: MITSD, 2010.

2. City of Conrad

The City of Conrad encompasses 807 acres (1.3 square miles). In the city, the largest land use categories are rights-of-way (of streets, alleys, and highways) and residential lands. The third largest category, tax exempt lands, includes public properties such as schools, hospitals, public offices, parks, etc. Part of the tax exempt lands in Conrad is a 35-acre site that is a retirement community owned by town. The housing on the site was originally constructed by the US Air Force and was subsequently turned over to the City, who now leases it to a private property management firm.

TABLE 3: CITY OF CONRAD LAND USE SUMMARY		
LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF AREA
Rights-of-way	237	30%
Residential	236	30%
Tax Exempt	140	17%
Commercial	108	14%
Vacant	59	7%
Industrial	11	1%
TOTAL	791	100%

Source: MITSD, 2010

(Note: Original data adjusted to account for city-owned residential properties)

3. Town of Valier

The Town of Valier is 525 acres (0.8 square miles). In Valier, rights-of-way and tax exempt properties are the two largest land use categories. The rights-of-way category includes highway, street, alley, and railroad rights-of-way. The majority of the tax exempt land is county-owned land, much of which is used as the Valier Airport while a recreation area occupies another part of the land. Vacant lots are nearly as common as lots used for residential purposes. There is a small amount of industrial and commercial land in the town.

TABLE 4: TOWN OF VALIER LAND USE SUMMARY		
LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT OF AREA
Rights-of-way	214	41%
Tax Exempt	120	23%
Residential	96	18%
Vacant	65	12%
Commercial	21	4%
Industrial	7	1%
TOTAL	523	100%

Source: MITSD, 2010

2.3.3 Wilderness

A portion of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area is located within Pondera County, in the far southwestern corner of the county in the Lewis and Clark National Forest west of Swift Reservoir. The Bob Marshall Wilderness is part of the 109 million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System. Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. (UMWI, 2010)

2.3.4 Conservation

Land conservation in Pondera County includes substantial amounts of land under conservation easements. A conservation easement is a restriction placed on a piece of property to protect its associated resources. The easement is either voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner and constitutes a legally binding agreement that limits certain types of uses or prevents development from taking place on the land in perpetuity while the land remains in private hands. (The Nature Conservancy, 2010). Land under conservation easement accounts for only about 1.5% of the land area of the county but are concentrated locally, particularly in the southwest part of the county.

TABLE 5: CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN PONDERA COUNTY	
Easement Holder	Acres
US Fish and Wildlife Service	7,796
The Nature Conservancy	4,659
US Department of Agriculture	2,270
Montana Land Reliance	1,966
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	471
TOTAL	17,161

Source: MNRIS, 2010c

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is another important aspect of land conservation in Pondera County. The program encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. (NRCS, 2009)

As of June 2010, there were 71,526 acres under the CRP program in Pondera County. (FSA, 2010). This amounts to 6.8% of the entire county.

2.3.5 Zoning

Only the City of Conrad and the Town of Valier have zoning and the unincorporated area of Pondera County is not zoned. The zoning of Conrad and Valier are discussed below.

1. City of Conrad

The City of Conrad Zoning Ordinance divides the city into three residential zones, one commercial zone, and two industrial zones. Generalized information on allowed uses, dimensional requirements, and special zoning provisions are presented in the table, Conrad Zoning Districts Summary.

Conrad's zoning contains a conditional use procedure whereby any proposed use that is not ordinarily allowed at a given location may be permitted by the City Council following review by the Zoning Commission and a public hearing. This is unusual as zoning ordinances usually specify allowable

conditional uses instead potentially allowing any use. The conditional use process allows the Council to attach conditions or limitations on the proposed use to mitigate problems that might otherwise occur.

Conrad's zoning establishes minimum housing unit width requirement of 20 feet which applies to any housing unit type including one and two-family houses, multi-family buildings, and mobile homes. Mobile homes are allowed in only one of the two residential zoning districts. In the B zone, mobile homes are allowed provided they are placed on a permanent foundation. A special "B-2 Sub-zone" has been created for nine blocks in the Jones additions on the east side of Conrad. In this sub-zone, mobile home restrictions are relaxed; there is no minimum width for units, the size of units may be as small as 300 square feet (down from 750), and permanent foundations are not required.

As the following table indicates, the B residential zone is the most widely applied zoning in Conrad, followed by the C commercial zone. Un-zoned land primarily consists of the City-owned industrial tract east of I-15 and the ball field complex on the west side of the city.

TABLE 6: GENERALIZED ZONING SUMMARY, CITY OF CONRAD		
Zoning District	Acres	Percent of Area
B Residential		26%
C Commercial		24%
A Residential		17%
Un-zoned		16%
D Industrial		13%
B-2 Residential		4%
TOTAL		100%

(* Total does not include 228 acres of street rights-of-way in the city.)

Source: Folgert, 2010.

2. Town of Valier

Valier has a simple zoning ordinance that divides the town into commercial, industrial, and several residential zones. Much of the zoning ordinance dates back to 1965.

To build a home on an existing lot in the A residential zone, the lot must be at least 7,500 square feet despite the fact that many original town lots are slightly smaller at around 7,000 square feet. New lots must be at least 10,000 square feet. Overall, the A zone requirements will create spacious neighborhoods but at the cost of reduced efficiency in land use and land development. See the table, Valier Zoning Districts Summary for details.

The Residence B zone differs from the A zone in that two-family dwellings are allowed and minimum lot sizes and building setbacks are smaller. One family dwellings may be constructed on lots as small as 5,000 square feet.

The Valier zoning includes a C residential zone but no land in the town is zoned Residence C. The zone allows "multiple-dwellings" and "row-dwellings". Similarly, the "T trailer" zone is another zone that is not applied to any land in town. The zone sets up specifications for "trailers" and "trailer courts".

A wide variety of public and quasi-public uses are allowed in all zones by conditional use permit. The zoning ordinance also includes specifications for parking areas, signs, and non-conforming uses.

According to the Town's zoning map, there is a substantial area in town that is not zoned. This area consists mostly of the county-owned land along the south side of town.

TABLE: GENERALIZED ZONING SUMMARY, TOWN OF VALIER		
Zoning District	Acres	Percent of Area
Un-zoned	102	33%
B residential	82	26%
A residential	77	25%
D commercial	46	15%
E industrial	4	1%
TOTAL	310*	100%

(*Total does not include 214 acres of street rights-of-way in the town.)

Source: Folgert, 2010

2.3.6 Other Land Use Regulations

Local land use regulations other than zoning typically include regulations on subdivision development, flood plain management, and airport protection. Montana counties also typically have regulations governing waste-water system installations. Counties and municipalities may also have regulations on "wildland-urban interface" issues which typically address wildfire hazards that may exist at the edges of urban development areas.

The Town of Valier has none of these land use regulations. (Sheble, 2010) The City of Conrad has subdivision and flood plain management regulations but none of the other regulations mentioned here. (Fowler, 2010) Pondera County also has subdivision regulations and flood plain regulations. In addition, the County had adopted the minimum state requirements for its sewage disposal system regulations. (Pondera County, 2010) (Additional information needed on existence of airport regulations and wildland-urban interface regulations at county level.)

2.3.7 Municipal Growth/Annexation

Municipal growth and annexation are important considerations in a growth policy. The amount of land that a city or town annexes is generally related to amount of development pressure in the greater area. Residential construction trends are usually indicative of growth and development dynamics within a community.

In the case of Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier, all have had very little new housing development since 1999. With regard to residential construction levels, the state Department of Revenue data provide year-built for each dwelling in the database. According to that data, there have been only 56 new home constructed in the past decade. In contrast, there are currently about twelve homes under construction in the unincorporated area of the county. (Bandow, 2010)

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF DWELLINGS BY YEAR BUILT, 1999-2008	
Jurisdiction	New Dwellings
City of Conrad	10
Town of Valier	14
Pondera County - unincorporated	32
TOTAL	56

Source: MITSD, 2010

Consistent with this low amount of development activity, Conrad and Valier have not annexed any significant areas for 20 years or more, except that Conrad annexed a 49-acre parcel east of I-15 as a future industrial park. However, there is some demand for new annexations, particularly at Conrad. Under Montana law, the ability of a municipality to annex is limited unless the municipality has a new Growth Policy. The annexation powers of Conrad and Valier are limited because of the lack of a recent Growth Policy.

2.3.8 Development Patterns in Un-Zoned Areas

1. Subdivisions

In the unincorporated areas of Pondera County (which are not zoned) there has not been much subdivision activity in the past decade. Since the beginning of 1999, there have been 31 new subdivisions that created a total of 47 new lots with the largest subdivision containing three lots. (Pondera County Clerk and Recorder, 2010) This equates to an average of four to five new subdivision lots per year. By almost any comparison, this is a very small amount of subdivision activity. Visual examination of the land parcel map (cadastral map) indicates a lack of any large rural subdivision in the unincorporated area other than town sites such as Brady and Dupuyer.

Many rural counties across the U.S. are burdened by so-called premature subdivisions that are platted decades before there is market demand for the lots. Such subdivisions are invariably developed under inadequate regulatory standards. Typically, lots are too small for adequate waste water treatment and basic improvements such as roads and water systems are often missing or severely inadequate. Pondera County is fortunate to not have to deal with such a legacy.

2. Development near Municipalities

There is little in terms of significant development in areas close to the municipalities of Conrad and Valier. The Town of Valier has received inquiries about providing water service to a potential

development west of town. However, the Town presently does not provide water or sewer service outside the town limits. (Malinak, 2010)

Conrad does provide water service outside the city limits to 76 rural water customers. (Conrad Clerk's Office, 2010) As a condition to providing service, the City requires these rural water customers to agree not to contest future annexation. (Fowler, 2010) The City does not provide sewer service outside the city limits. (Anderson, 2010)

2.4 Projected Trends for Future Land Use

Pondera County's land use pattern is very strongly influenced by agriculture. Any significant and widespread reduction in the viability of agriculture could result in major land use changes.

Population growth dynamics also drive land use change. Unless there is a change from the past trends of minimal development pressure, land use patterns are not likely to change much in the near future.

New rural land uses, such as wind farms, may entail relatively unprecedented economic and land use dynamics leading to changes in the landscape that cannot be predicted based on past trends. It is important to keep abreast of such land uses so that potential impacts can be properly managed.

Small amounts of additional growth at the unincorporated rural settlements of Brady and Dupuyer should be anticipated.

Future annexation at Conrad will lead to changes in land use at the outskirts of the city. Annexation should be anticipated not only for the City-owned industrial park site but also for general growth of the city.

There should be little need for future annexation at Valier because of the large supply of vacant land in the town.

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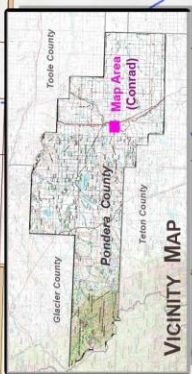
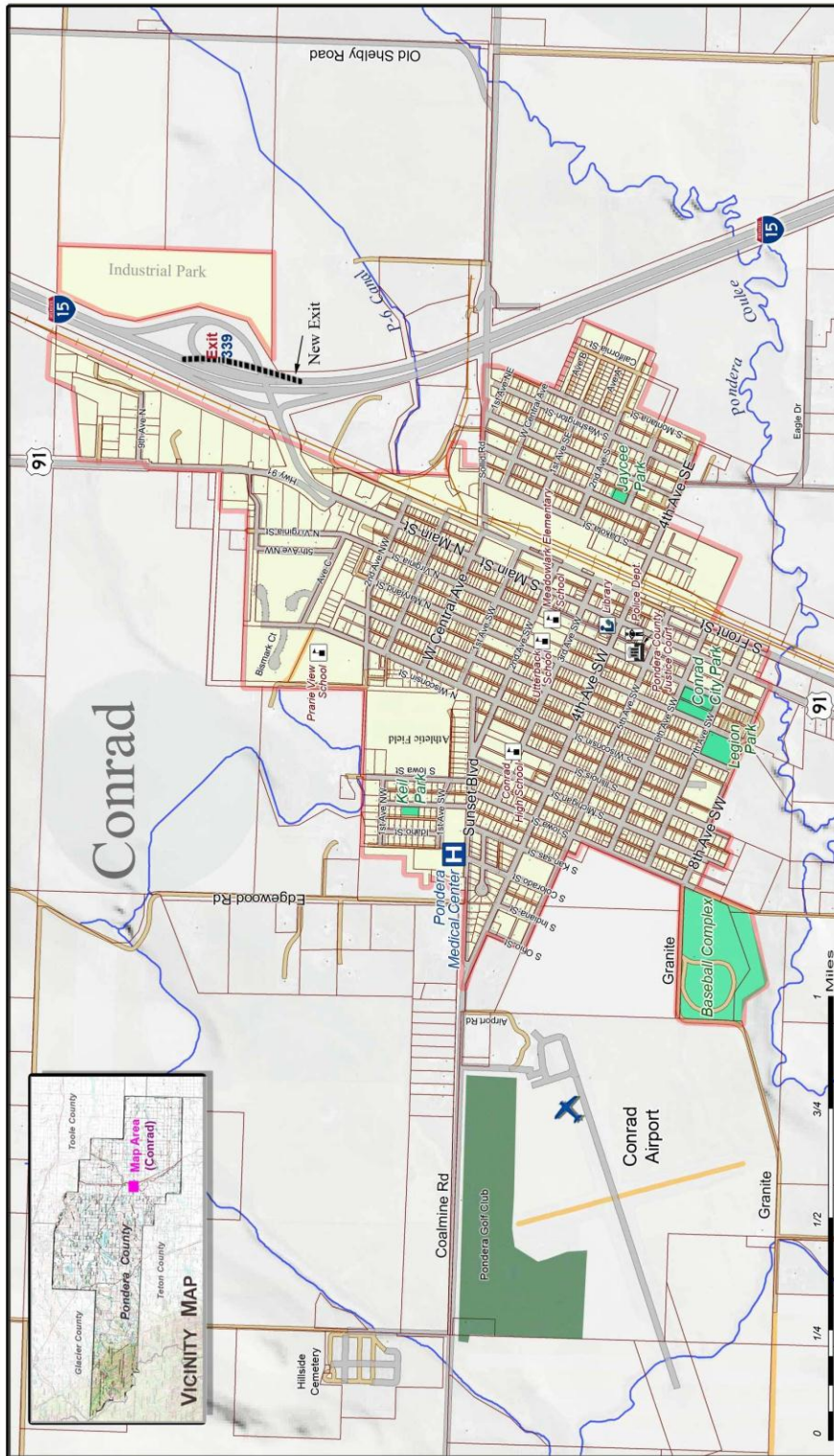
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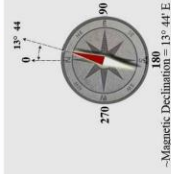
MAP LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Paved Road | | School |
| | Gravel Road | | Hospital |
| | Dirt Surface | | Police / Court House |
| | Railroad | | Library |
| | Municipal Boundary | | Park |
| | Municipal Area | | Surface Water / Ditch |

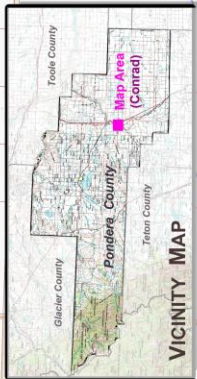
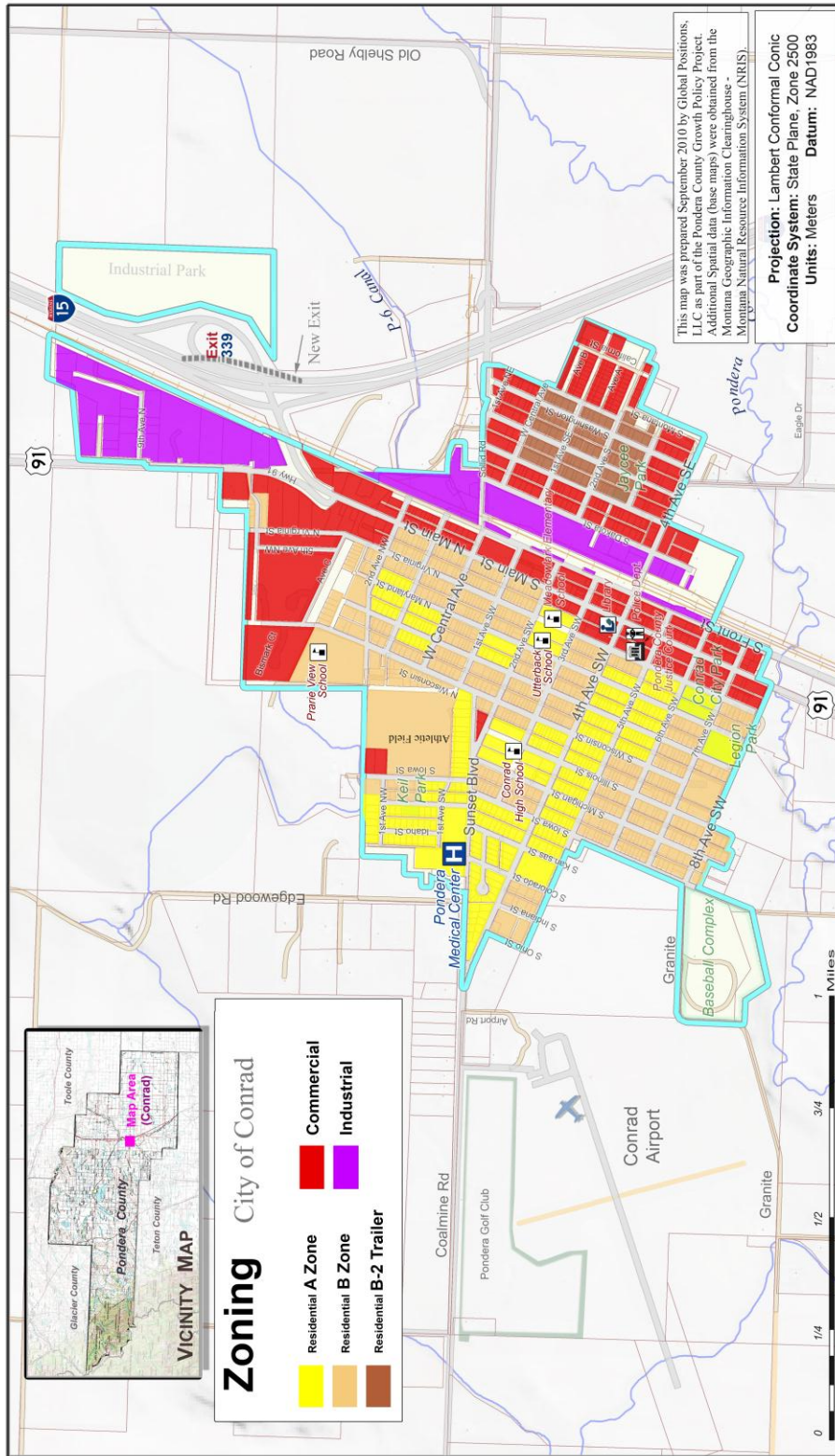
Conrad, Montana

Conrad is a city in and the county seat of Pondera County, Montana. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 1.2 square miles (3.1 km²), all of it land. Conrad is located at: *48°10'22"N, 111°56'50"W*.

Road information including surface type and names along with the municipal boundary, parks and locations of buildings provided by Pondera County E911 Dept., and the City of Conrad.



DRAFT MAP : July 2010



Zoning City of Conrad

 Residential A Zone	 Commercial
 Residential B Zone	 Industrial
 Residential B-2 Trailer	

This map was prepared September 2010 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project. Additional Spatial data (base maps) were obtained from the Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse - Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS).

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2500
Units: Meters
Datum: NAD1983

MAP LEGEND

	School
	Hospital
	Police / Court House
	Library
	Surface Water / Ditch

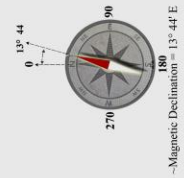
*Municipal Boundary is currently under review by the City of Conrad

Zoning Conrad, Montana

Map 6

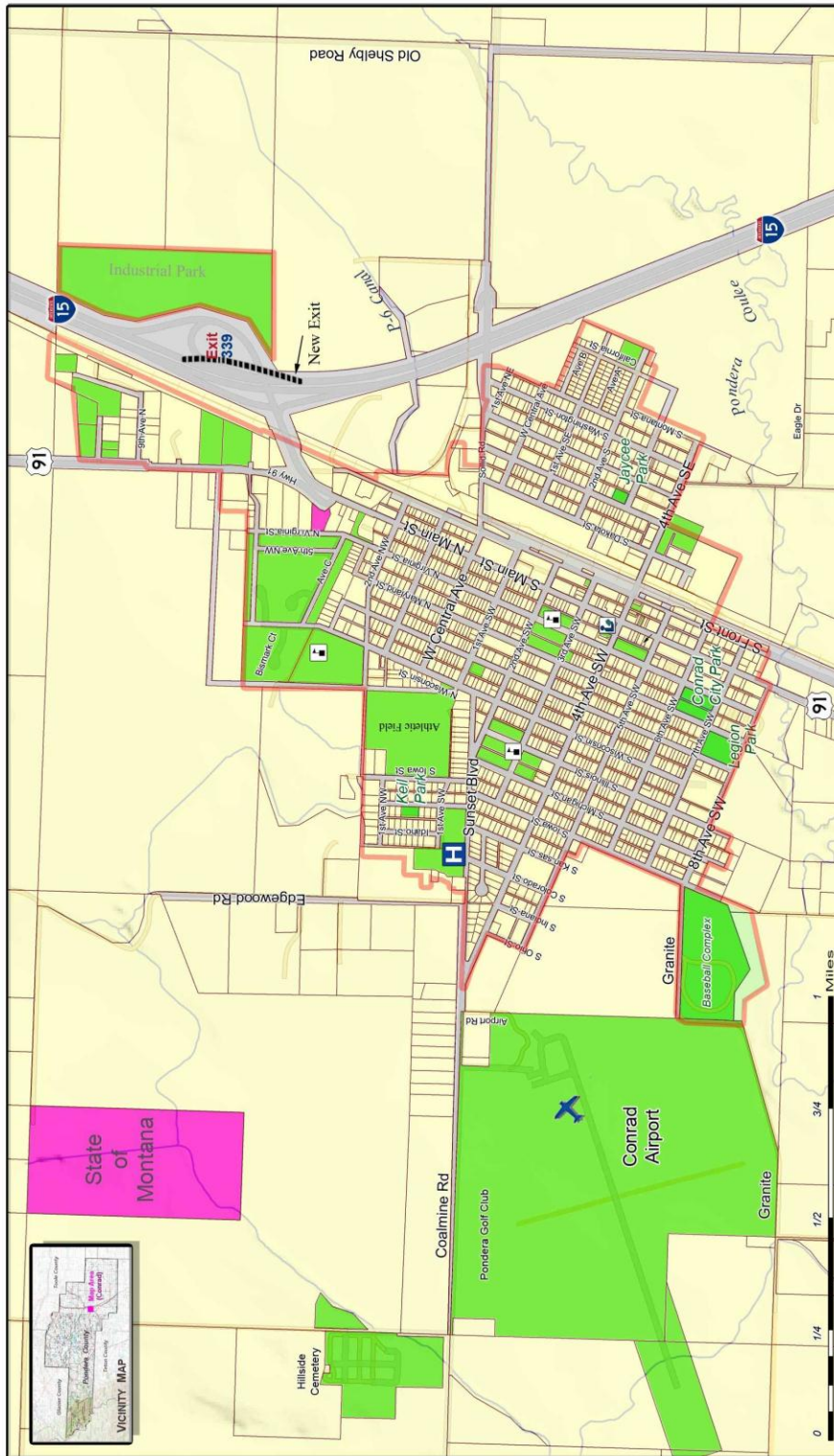
Zoning determines the size and use of buildings, where they are located and, in large measure, the densities of the city's diverse neighborhoods. This **Zoning Reference Map** provides only a brief overview of the zoning rules and regulations and is not meant to serve as a substitute for the actual regulations which are held by the City of Conrad. For background information on the development of the Official Zoning Map or to see the data used in the development of this map version of the Official Zoning Map, please visit with the City of Conrad.

Additional map information shown on this map including roads, surface type, road names the municipal boundary, parks and locations of buildings provided by Pondera County E911 Dept. and the City of Conrad.



CONRAD ZONING DISTRICTS SUMMARY

Zone	Type	Permitted Uses	Minimum Lot Area	Minimum Front Yard	Minimum Side Yard	Minimum Rear Yard	Building Height Limits	Special Provisions
A	Residential	One-family dwellings; parks; minor public facilities.	5,000 s.f.	20 to 40 ft.	6 ft.	20 ft.	40 ft.	No minimum lot width; Mobile homes not allowed.
B	Residential	Same as A zone plus: churches, public schools, hospitals, hotels, libraries, boarding houses, multiple-family dwellings, nurseries nursing homes, two-family dwellings, funeral homes.	5,000 s.f.	10 to 40 ft.	6 ft.	20 ft.	40 ft.	Mobile home parks allowed at density of 11 units per acre; B-2 sub-zone allows smaller mobile homes (300 s.f.) on individual lots and allows mobile homes without permanent foundation; B-2 sub-zone applies to nine blocks in Jones additions.
C	Commercial	Same as B zone plus: A wide variety of commercial uses including offices, retail stores, restaurants, wholesale businesses, automobile services, feed stores, machine shops, motels, limited light manufacturing and excluding hazardous or obnoxious uses.	None	None	None	None	No limit	For residential buildings, B zone yard requirements apply and minimum lot area is 250 s.f per family.
D	Industrial	Same as C zone plus: a wide variety of heavy manufacturing uses ranging from candle making to ore smelting but excluding uses that a court has declared obnoxious or offensive.	None	None	None	None	No limit	
E	Industrial	Same as D zone plus: more offensive or hazardous uses such as rendering plants and explosives manufacturing.	None	None	None	None	No limit	No land in Conrad is zoned E.



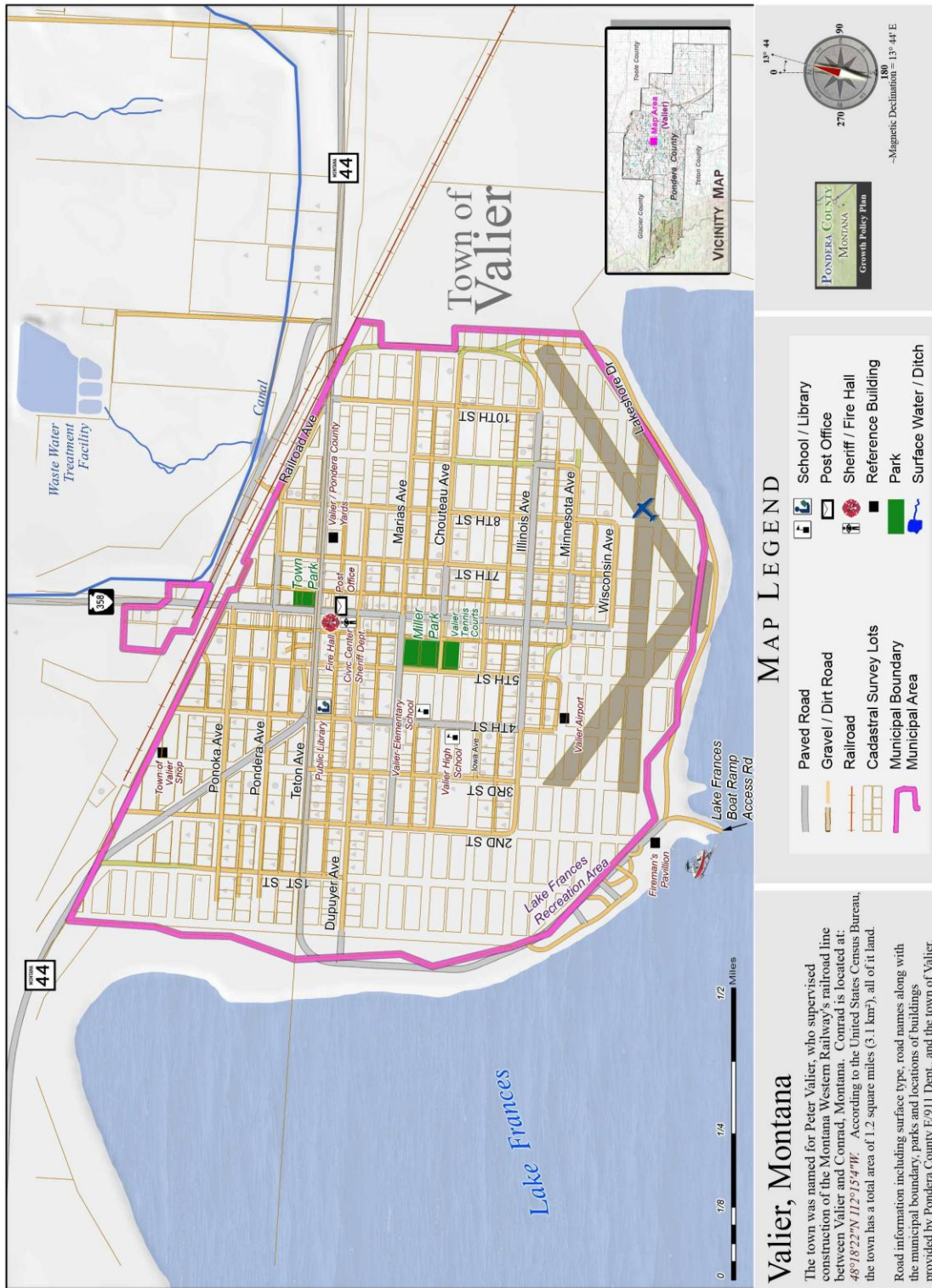
Conrad, Montana

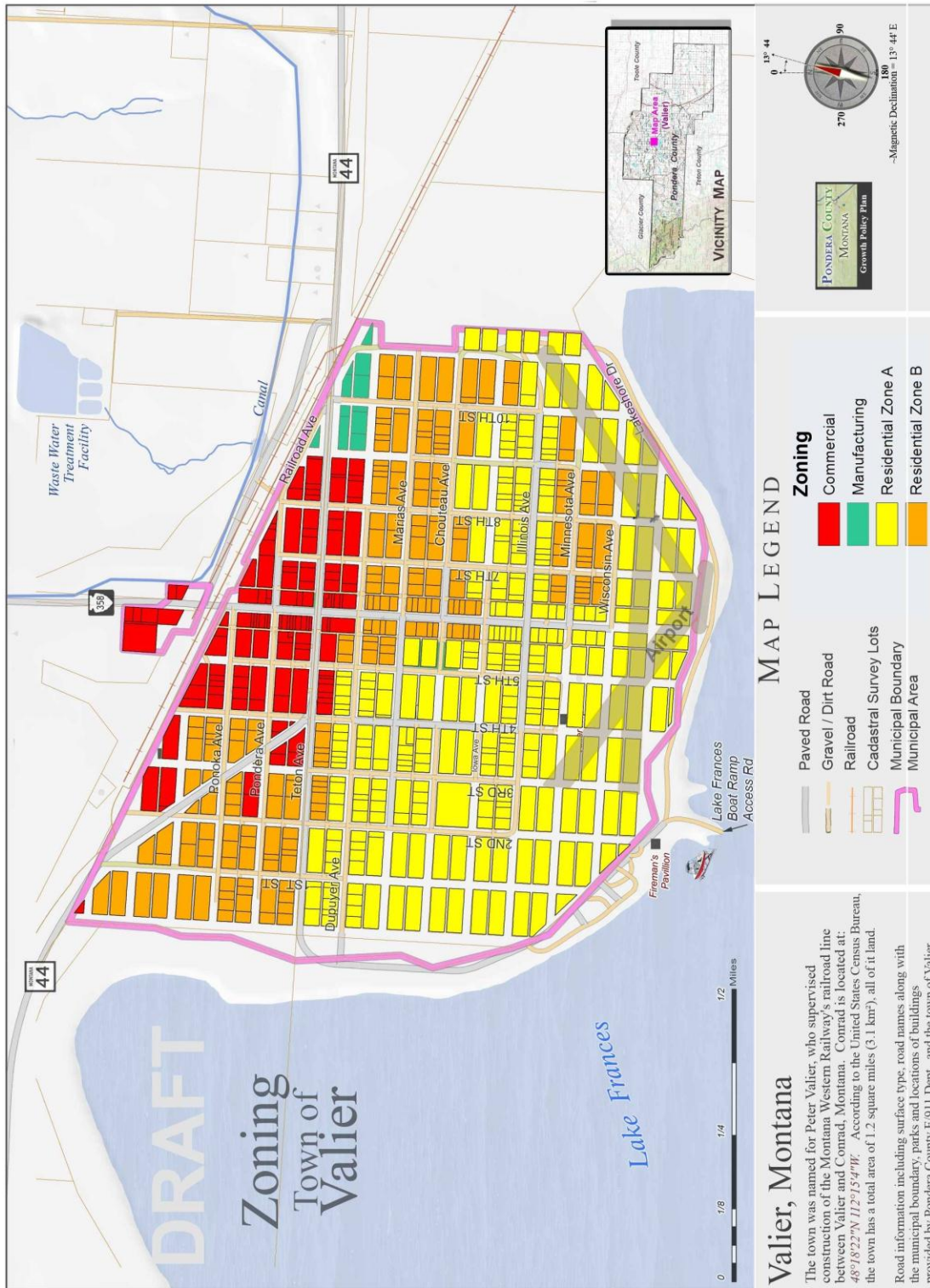
Conrad is a city in and the county seat of Pondera County, Montana. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 1.2 square miles (3.1 km²), all of it land. Conrad is located at *48°10'22"N, 117°36'30"W*.

Tax Classification from Montana Department of Revenue (DOR) Cadastral Survey Data. Road information including surface type and names along with the municipal boundary, provided by Pondera County E/911 Dept., and the City of Conrad.

MAP LEGEND

Paved Road	Local Government	School
Gravel Road	Private	Hospital
Dirt Surface	State Government	Police / Court House
Railroad	Right-of Way	Library
Municipal Boundary		Surface Water / Ditch





VALIER ZONING DISTRICTS SUMMARY							
Zone	Type	Permitted Uses	Minimum Lot Area	Minimum Lot Width	Minimum Front Yard	Minimum Side Yard	Special Provisions
A	Residential	One-family dwellings and related uses and golf courses.	10,000 s.f.	75 ft.	35 to 50 ft.	10 ft. with sum of sides 25 ft.	Minimum house size is 1,200 s.f. or 1,680 if two-story; Maximum lot coverage is 35%.
B	Residential	A zone uses plus two-family dwellings.	5,000 s.f.	50 ft.	25 ft.	8 to 20 ft.	Minimum lot area and width are 7,500 s.f and 60 ft. for lots containing a two-family dwelling; Minimum house size is 650 for two family units and 850 for any two-story dwelling; 40 % maximum lot coverage.
C	Residential	A and B zone uses plus: boarding houses, clubs, apartments, nursing homes, row houses, and two-family dwellings.	1,500 s.f. per housing unit for buildings with more than 2 units and 6,000 s.f. minimum; 4,000 s.f. for one-family units.	40 ft.	20 ft.	5 ft. with sum of sides 15 ft.	45% maximum lot coverage; 300 s.f. minimum unit size for multiple-family dwellings; No land is Valier is zoned C.
D	Commercial	A variety of commercial uses including retail stores, offices, motels, restaurants, taverns, and wholesale businesses; apartments are also allowed.	None	None	None	15 to 20 ft.	Automobile and trailer sales are allowed as a conditional use; Front and side yards required when abutting residential districts;
E	Industrial	Machine shops, maintenance shops, manufacturing, processing, storage, and wholesale uses.	None	None	50 ft.	5 ft. with sum of sides 15 ft. with exceptions.	Maximum lot coverage is 75%;
T	Trailer	Trailers and trailer courts.	None	None	None	None	No land in Valier is zoned T; This is the only zone where trailers are allowed; Trailer is defined vehicle without motive power designed for habitation; T zone includes design specifications for trailer courts.



3. HOUSING

3.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This section reviews existing numbers of housing, type of housing, condition of housing, and projected housing needs in Conrad, Valier, and the rest of Pondera County.

Key findings include the following:

- Although population is decreasing in Conrad, Valier and generally in Pondera County, there has been new residential construction over the past 20 years.
- The rate of new construction slowed considerably in the decade between 1999-2008, compared to the previous decade.
- Despite housing costs (both for homeowner and rentals) that are significantly less than the State of Montana overall, there is still a housing cost burden for many households in Pondera County.
- Of the total single and mobile housing units, 13% are in “Poor” (barely usable) or worse condition in Conrad, 15% in Valier, and 17% in the county.
- The only community in Pondera with licensed senior housing options is Conrad.

3.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences

Growth policy committee meetings were held throughout the county in 2009. In Valier, people who attended the meetings identified needs for assisted living, more low income housing, and more housing options generally. Brady was identified as being at capacity for housing, with no available units. In Dupuyer, people were concerned and interested in potential housing upgrades, local assisted living facilities, and more housing options generally. Dupuyer participants saw an opportunity for Dupuyer to function as a bedroom community for doctors working on the Reservation.

3.3 Existing Conditions

3.3.1 Number of Housing Units

According to the 2000 Census there were 2,834 housing units in Pondera County, of which 1,332 were in Conrad, 275 were in Valier, and 185 were in Heart Butte. Between 1990 and 2000, housing increased by 216 units county-wide. Heart Butte saw the highest percentage increase in housing units (43%), and it also had a similar population increase during the decade (40%). Although population declined in Conrad, Valier and the balance of the county between 1990 and 2000, new housing was added in those places during the decade.

Data from the Montana Department of Revenue (which would not include housing on tribal lands) shows that new housing in the nine year period from 1999 to 2008 slowed considerably in Conrad (10 new units) and the rest of the unincorporated area of Pondera County (32 new units). Valier, however, grew with 14 new units, a considerable growth spurt compared to the ten years from 1990 to 2000 when only two new units were added (Refer to Land Use section of this report).

Table 3.1. Change in Housing Units 1990-2000				
	2000	1990	Numeric Change	% Change
Conrad	1,332	1,257	75	6.0%
Valier	275	273	2	0.7%
Heart Butte	185	129	56	43.4%
Balance Pondera County	1,042	959	83	8.7%
Montana	412,633	361,155	51,478	14.3%

Source: US Census Bureau

3.3.2 Occupancy

Pondera County overall had slightly lower occupancy rates and slightly higher vacancy rates than the state of Montana in 2000. Vacancy rates were highest in Valier, but Valier also had the highest proportion of homes used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. County-wide, the proportion of vacant units for seasonal-recreational use is considerably less than that of the state. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of vacant housing units increased in Conrad (increase of 45 units), Valier (10 units), and Heart Butte (13 units). The increase in number of vacant units in all locations but Heart Butte (which saw significant population increase) results from population decline and housing unit increases during the decade.

Table 3.2. Housing Units by Occupancy: 2000					
	Conrad	Valier	Heart Butte	Balance Pondera	Montana
Total Housing Units	1,332	275	164	1,042	412633
Occupied	86.6%	80.0%	88.6%	83.7%	86.9%
Vacant	13.4%	20.0%	11.4%	16.3%	13.1%
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use	0.2%	5.5%	2.2%	2.3%	5.9%

Source: US Census Bureau

3.3.3 Household Size

Average household size is the total population divided by total occupied housing units. Average household size in Heart Butte is much higher than the State of Montana. The average household size in Conrad and Valier is less than the state-wide average. Even discounting for Heart Butte, the average household size in the unincorporated area of the county is greater than the state-wide average.

Table 3.3. Average Household Size: 2000	
	Average household size
Conrad	2.33
Valier	2.26
Heart Butte	4.16
Pondera County	2.63
Montana	2.45

Source: US Census Bureau

3.3.4 Housing Units by Type

The majority of all housing stock in Pondera County is single-family detached homes. In 2000, there were approximately 77 units in duplexes, tri-plexes, or four-plexes, and approximately 146 units in multi-unit complexes. The majority of these are located in Conrad. The proportion of mobile homes in Conrad (14.3%) and Valier (14.9%) were close to the statewide proportion (14.3%). Heart Butte had 6% mobile homes and the balance of the county had 10.4%. In 2005, the U.S. census estimated that Montana had the 9th highest percentage of mobile homes out of all 50 states (U.S. Census 2005).

Table 3.4. Housing Units by Type in 1990 and 2000						
Place	Conrad		Valier		Pondera County	
Year	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990
Single-Family Detached	915	855	222	213	2,081	1,955
2-4 Units	61	58	5	10	77	84
5-9 Units	80	55	6	8	173	70
10+ Units	71	63	-	2	73	66
Mobile Homes	193	185	41	39	353	387

Source: US Census Bureau

3.3.5 Housing Condition

The Montana Department of Commerce conducts periodic studies to assess the housing stock in the state. The most recent “Montana Housing Condition Study” was prepared in 2005. The data for the study is extracted from appraisal information maintained by the Montana Department of Revenue. At the municipal level, the study presents only properties taxed as residential, which are categorized as single-family homes, mobile homes, and condominiums. Housing units

taxed as commercial (including apartments, duplexes, condominiums, mixed-use structures, and townhouses) are not included in the municipal dataset.

The physical condition of residential structures is based on the overall physical condition of the interior and exterior relative to the age of the dwelling. Consideration is given to the foundation, porches, walls, exterior trim, roofing, chimneys, wall finish, interior trim, kitchen cabinets, heating system and plumbing. The condition rating categories are:

Unsound – indicates that the dwelling is definitely structurally unsound and practically unfit for use.

Very poor – indicates that the dwelling is definitely structurally unsound and practically unfit for use. Repair and overhaul is needed on painted surfaces, roofing, plumbing and heating. There is excessive deferred maintenance and abuse. Property is approaching abandonment or major reconstruction.

Poor – indicates that definite deterioration is obvious. Property is undesirable and barely usable.

Fair – indicates marked deterioration but is still quite usable. Property is rather unattractive and undesirable. Much repair is needed and many items need refinishing or overhauling. Deferred maintenance is obvious.

Average – indicates normal wear and tear relative to its age. Property has average attractiveness and is desirable. There is some evidence of deferred maintenance needed such as minor repairs and refinishing. All major components are still functional.

Good – indicates that minor deterioration is visible. Property is slightly more attractive and desirable. No obvious maintenance is required, but neither is everything new. Appearance is above the standard relative to the property's age.

Very good – indicates slight evidence of deterioration. All items are well maintained and have been overhauled and repaired as they showed signs of wear. There is little deterioration or obsolescence and a high standard of upkeep relative to its age.

Excellent – indicates perfect condition. Property is very attractive and highly desirable. All items that can be normally repaired or refinished have been recently corrected, such as new roofing, paint, furnace overhaul and state-of-the-art components. There are no functional inadequacies and all components are new or in like-new condition. Most new homes would receive a condition rating of excellent (unless constructed with substandard materials and workmanship).

Table 3.5 Housing Condition by Type of Structure, 2005									
	Conrad			Valier			Pondera		
Structure Type	Mobile	Single	Total	Mobile	Single	Total	Mobile	Single	Total
Unsound	1	8	9	1	5	6	11	56	67
Very Poor	1	29	30	0	9	9	5	80	85
Poor	20	69	89	1	23	24	44	181	225
Fair	70	196	266	8	58	66	128	405	533
Average	35	381	416	30	89	119	117	741	858
Good	7	159	166	1	32	33	25	327	352
Very Good	0	10	10	0	1	1	1	44	45
Total	134	852	986	41	217	258	331	1,834	2,165

Source: Montana Housing Condition Study 2005

Of the total single and mobile housing units, 13% are in “Poor” (barely usable) or worse condition in Conrad, 15% in Valier, and 17% in the county. These data are based on appraisal data, which does not include data on Indian trust land. Properties in “Fair” condition (marked deterioration and needs much repair) or worse condition results in a total of 40% of all properties.

The National Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Act of 1976 required significant improvement in the safety and quality of mobile homes. Homes that comply with the act are said to meet the “HUD code.” The HUD Code is a uniform construction code that ensures that a manufactured home, regardless of where it is built in the U.S., will meet certain publicly adopted standards related to health, safety, and welfare. Older mobile homes do not meet health and safety standards. There is a legitimate public interest in facilitating the removal of these older mobile homes or their replacement with manufactured housing meeting HUD standards. A preliminary analysis of older mobile home issues in Montana was prepared in 2006 and is available at the Montana Department of Commerce, Housing Division website (Community Development and Management Services, 2006).

In 2005, Conrad had 105 mobile homes built in 1979 or earlier; Valier had 18, and the balance of the county had 103 (MDC, 2005).

3.3.6 Housing Costs

Housing costs throughout the county were less than in Montana in 2000. According to the 2000 Census, housing value was roughly half that of the statewide value. Housing value was highest in Conrad and least in Valier. Rent was slightly higher in Valier than in Conrad, but overall median rent in the county was about two-thirds of the statewide median rent.

Table 3.7 Median Housing Value – 2000	
Place	Median Value
Conrad	\$71,900
Valier	\$58,600
Pondera County	\$70,500
Montana	\$131,600
Source: US Census Bureau	

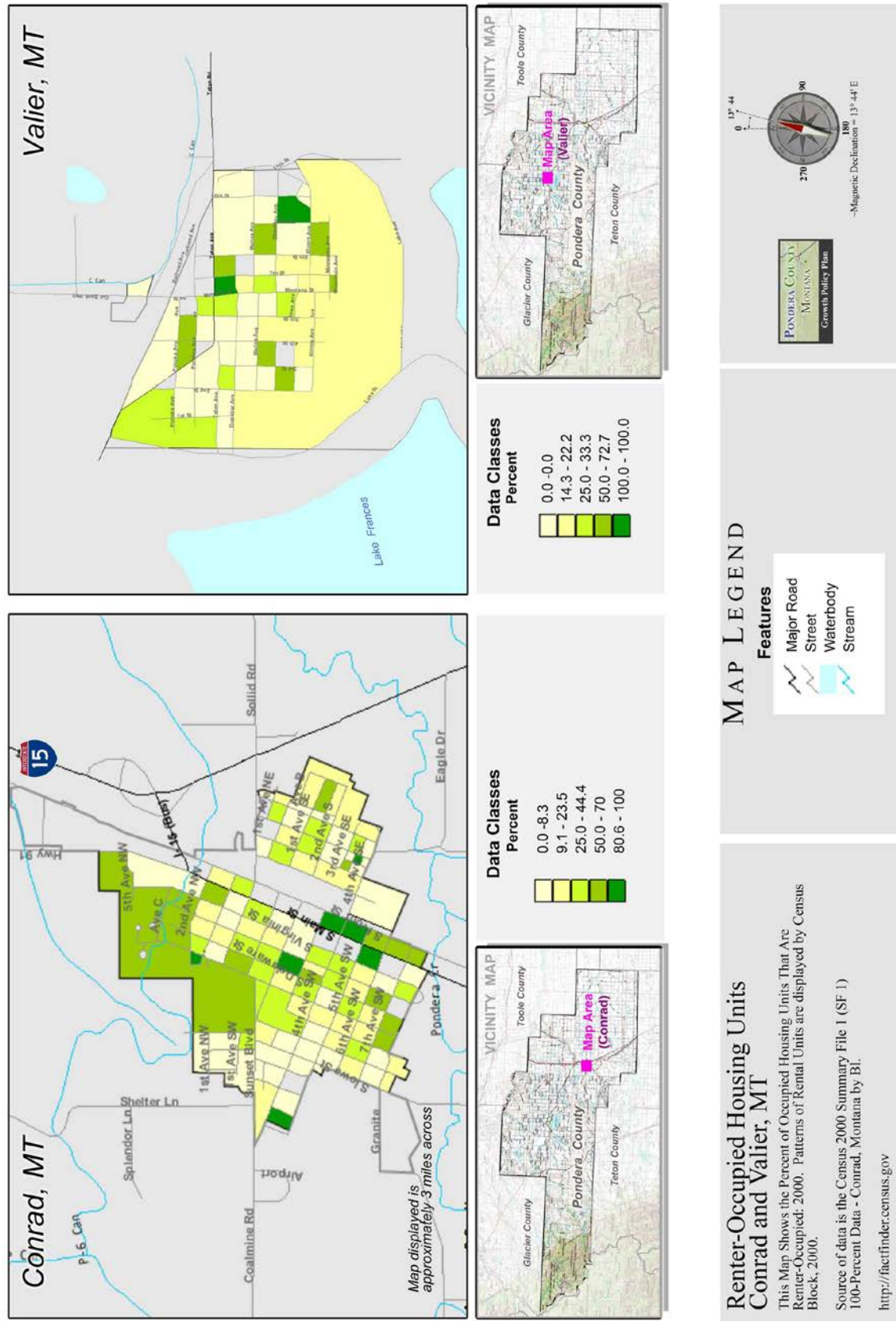
Table 3.8 Median Rent – 2000	
Place	Median rent
Conrad	\$373
Valier	\$381
Pondera County	\$367
Montana	\$552
Source: US Census Bureau	

3.3.7 Home Ownership - Renter Ratio

The county has a high ownership ratio, slightly higher than the state's. Montana is also higher than the national rate (66.2% in 2000).

Table 3.9 Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Rates – 2000		
Place	Owner occupied	Renter Occupied
Conrad	69.6%	30.4%
Valier	80.5%	19.5%
Pondera County	70.5%	29.5%
Montana	69.0%	31.0%
Source: US Census Bureau		

Figure 4.1. Renter-Occupied Housing Units in Conrad and Valier



3.3.8 Housing Affordability

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a housing cost burden when at least 30% of a household's monthly income is spent on housing costs and utilities. HUD's 30% calculation became a standard measure for qualifying for housing loans. Many lenders prefer a ratio of 30% or less of income to principal, interest, and taxes. (Montana Department of Commerce 2005) The sharp increase nationally in homeowner mortgage defaults in 2007 and resulting housing market crisis is due in large part to mortgage payments that were far in excess of what the borrowers could afford over time.

Despite considerably lower housing costs in Pondera County compared to the state as a whole, the housing cost burden is quite high. In 2000, about one of every four homeowners spent 30% or more of their income on housing in Conrad. In Valier, it was about one in seven (14.6% of the total). In Pondera County overall, approximately 23% spent 30% or more of their income on housing. Statewide, it was 21.3%. In 2000, rental costs were taking less of a bite out of household income in Conrad (where one in every four renters paid more than 30% of their income) than in Montana overall (where one in every three renters paid that much). It is more difficult to determine the effect of rental costs in Valier and Pondera County because nearly one-quarter of all respondents did not include rental cost information (U.S. Census 2000).

3.3.9 Senior and Special Needs Housing

The only community with licensed senior and special needs housing in Pondera County is Conrad.

Blue Sky Villa Retirement Village is combined with Horizon Lodge Retirement Homes in one location in Conrad. Together they have 84 assisted living private rooms and 84 independent living apartments (Retirement Homes, 2010).

Conrad Bee Hive Homes has 12 assisted living beds.

Long-term care is available at the Pondera Medical Center, with 67 beds, certified with the state of Montana for long-term care in the Pondera Medical Center (DPHHS, Regulated Health Care).

Skyview Group Homes provides a community home for seven residents with developmental disabilities. Skyview Group Homes is licensed by the State of Montana (DPHHS, Community Homes).

Valier has low income senior housing. (Growth Policy Committee)

3.3.10 Housing Assistance

There are a number of programs for assistance with rent, weatherization, energy-utility bills, housing repair and rehabilitation, and home ownership. A directory of various programs and contact information is available from:

Montana Department of Commerce, Housing Division
301 S. Park Avenue
Helena, Montana

406-841-2840

<http://housing.mt.gov>

Local programs in northcentral Montana also include:

Montana Home Ownership Network

509 1st Avenue South

Great Falls, MT 59401

406-761-5861

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

Provides homebuyer education, down payment and closing cost assistance.

USDA Rural Development: Great Falls Area Office

12 3rd Street NW

Suite 300

Great Falls, MT 59404

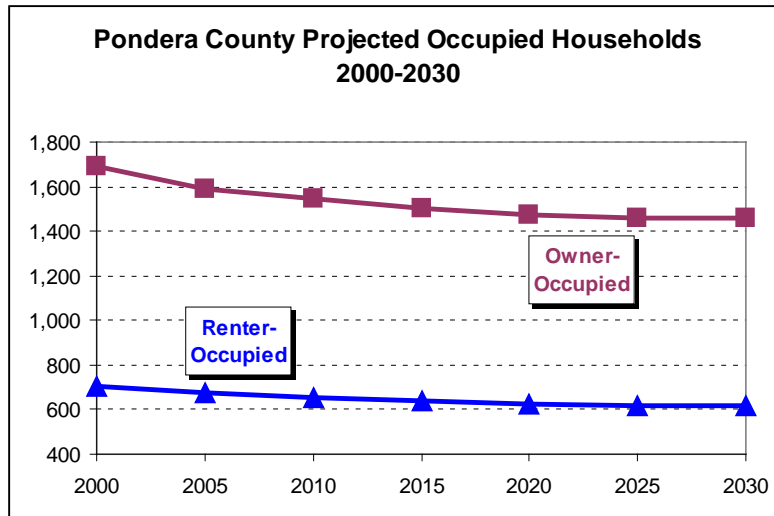
406-727-7580, extension 4

Provides assistance with a variety of homeownership, repair, and rehabilitation programs

The Pondera Port Authority has identified a need for affordable workforce housing in Pondera County. They have initiated a program to renovate housing for purchase and have projects in Conrad and Brady. The intent is to create a revolving fund to provide income for renovations and assistance with housing purchase (Curry, 2010).

3.4 Conclusions and Projected Trends

According to the Housing Needs Assessment completed in 2009 by the State of Montana, occupied housing units in Pondera County will decline from 2,410 in 2000 to 2,080 in 2025. According to the report, the steepest decline was for owner-occupied housing from 2000 to 2005 (from 1,692 to 1,587). By 2030, the report projects 1,460 owner-occupied units and 620 renter-occupied units (Montana Department of Commerce, 2009).



Source: Montana Department of Commerce 2009

According to the same study, 29% of all owner-occupied households and 34% of all renter-occupied households in Pondera County had unmet needs in 2000. Unmet housing need is defined as a household that is experiencing one or more of the following housing problems: overcrowding, severe overcrowding, cost burden, severe cost burden, incomplete plumbing facilities or incomplete kitchen facilities. (Montana Department of Commerce 2009)

In contrast to the state of Montana's forecasts, a number of new homes have been constructed in the past ten years. At the time of this report, there were 12 homes under construction in the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. The new construction may not, however, contradict the overall trend toward fewer occupied housing units. Instead, it likely reflects that the existing available units do not meet the market demand. There may be a number of reasons for this – older housing stock may have smaller square footage, fewer bedrooms, and fewer bathrooms than what is considered the norm or the desired norm in the current market. In addition, existing available housing stock may be comprised of those units with very poor condition quality or barely habitable.

Despite housing costs which are much less than the state overall, many households are experiencing a housing cost burden, where housing costs consume a larger portion of overall income. Increases in rental rates or energy costs (which is considered likely in the next 10 years) will exacerbate this problem and create more individuals who are on the edge of financial safety.

As the population ages, more elderly residents will need specialized housing or housing close to services in Pondera County. Conrad is currently the only location with specialized senior housing in the county.

If Pondera County wants to maintain or increase population base and affordable housing for the work force, it will need to plan ahead to renovate older deteriorating homes, and decommission mobile homes built prior to 1976 and those that are otherwise considered unsafe or uninhabitable.

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4. ECONOMY

4.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the economy in Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier. It describes the economy in terms of personal income; businesses and industry; and government. The section on personal income examines per capita income; household and family incomes; and poverty. It also discusses three main components of personal income – labor earnings, property/investment income, and transfer payments (primarily government issued). The section on businesses examines number of businesses, types of businesses, employment by business type, and overall wages per job. It also includes statistics on labor availability and unemployment. The section on government economics compares the taxing structure of Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier to counterparts statewide.

Most economic data sources provide information for counties and large metropolitan areas and do not include towns the size of Conrad and Valier, consequently much of the following report is focused on Pondera County.

Key findings of this section include the following:

- Agriculture is a fundamental component of the Pondera County economy. It is discussed in a separate chapter of this report. Agriculture is the reason for two processing plants (barley and mustard seed), for agricultural-related transportation employment (grain elevators), and implement dealers, and indirectly responsible for a portion of other economic sectors, such as health care, retail, etc.
- With few exceptions, personal income in Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier is less than the state or national averages and has generally languished below those averages for nearly 30 years.
- Earnings from labor have significantly decreased as a percentage of total personal income over the past three decades. Income from property/investments and transfer payments increased proportionately over time at rates much higher than the state or nation. This reflects a shrinking of the labor force as older people retire and few new young workers take their place.
- Generally, the business economy has declined in Pondera County for decades. Pondera County was categorized by the Montana Regional Economic Analysis Project as “Lagging” in employment among the 56 Montana Counties. In 2008, Pondera County ranked 56th out of the 56 counties for employment change. Its longer-term average employment growth over 1999-2008 ranked 53rd. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of business establishments in Pondera County decreased by 6.2%, ranking it sixth highest among Montana’s 56 counties for percentage loss of businesses.
- Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier are all actively seeking ways to improve their local economies. The Pondera Regional Port Authority, started in 2004, has been responsible for grants for private business development, housing, and senior center improvements. The town of Valier has improved the Lake Frances camping and fishing access area, which it manages. Conrad has an active chamber of commerce with over 100 members.

4.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences raised via public involvement relevant to this topic

Growth policy committee meetings were held throughout the county in 2009. Comments about the economy were often very general and not necessarily specific to the location to the meeting. Comments related to the economy include the following.

Comments included concerns about employment, and potential opportunities with employment opportunity with energy development, potential for positive spin-off employment related to energy, tax impact of the MATL line. Ideas for new businesses included clean industry, value-added products, grain-loading facilities for spring wheat, tourism (signage on the roads). Work force development was cited as a concern. Other comments used the following terms: grant funding, grantwriter, recovery funds for missile removal, government regulations, local medical facilities.

Some of the comments at the Dupuyer meeting did seem to relate directly to Dupuyer and included increase in small businesses/business opportunities, addition of gas station, restaurant and grocery store.

4.3 Existing Conditions

4.3.1 Personal Income and Earnings

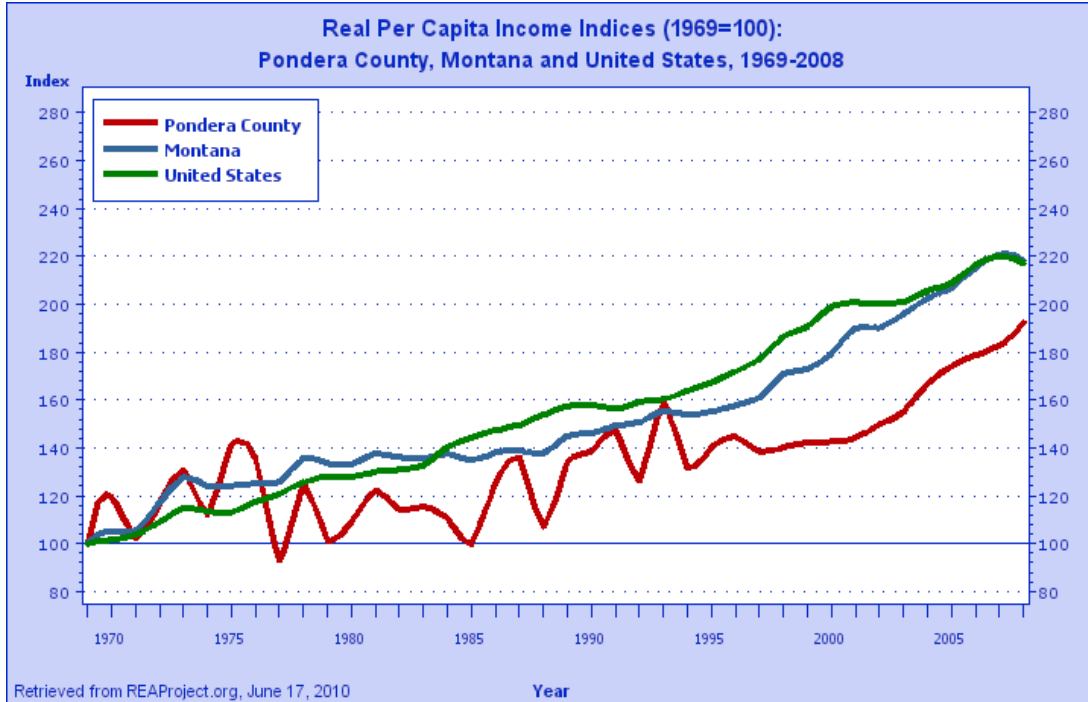
1. Per Capita Personal Income

Per capita personal income is used as a yardstick to measure economic well-being of a region's residents and the quality of consumer markets. It serves as a barometer for the economic performance of a region over time and to judge differences in relative economic prosperity between regions.

Per capita personal income is the total personal income of an area divided by its resident population. For smaller counties in particular, per capita income in any given year may be exceptionally high or low for the short run because of unusual local conditions, such as a bumper crop, a catastrophe, or a major construction project.

Farm incomes are notorious for being especially volatile year-to-year, owing to changing weather, work market conditions, and alterations in government programs. Therefore, the per capita income of farm-dependent counties such as Pondera County may exhibit sharp fluctuations over time.

Figure 4-1. Real Per Capita Income Indices



When measured in constant 2005 dollars to adjust for inflation, Pondera County's per capita income advanced 92.4%, from \$15,998 in 1969 to \$30,778 in 2008. Per capita income in 2008 was \$ 31,754 in Montana and \$ 36,839 in the nation (in 2005 dollars adjusted for inflation). The long-term growth of Pondera County's real per capita income is compared with that of Montana and the nation in Figure 4.1. Cumulative growth indices express each region's real per capita income as 100 for the base year 1969, and the per capita income of subsequent years as a percent of 1969. Pondera County's per capita income grew faster than the state or the nation between 1970 and 1975, but by the late 1970s, the rate had slowed and has stayed below the state's growth rate except for a year or two in the 1990s. (MT-REAP: Graphic Trend Analysis: Pondera County, Per Capita Income, 1969 – 2008)

The most recent per capita personal income information for municipalities of the size of Valier and Conrad is the 2000 census.

Table 4-1. Per Capita Income – 2000		
	Amount	% of U.S.
Conrad	\$15,742	73%
Valier	\$14,862	69%
Pondera County	\$14,276	66%
Montana	\$17,151	79%
United States	\$21,587	100%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Table DP-3

By 2008, per capita income in the county had increased to 84% of the national average. (MT-REAP: Graphic Trend Analysis: Pondera County, Per Capita Income, 1969 – 2008). Based on 2000 census percentages in Table 5-1, the per capita incomes of Conrad and Valier would likely have been higher than the county's overall per capita income in 2008.

2. Distribution of Income by Household

Pondera County had a ratio of rich to poor households that was roughly equivalent to the state overall. A high number means there are many "poor" families for every "rich" family. In 1999, the rich to poor ratio was 11.8. For every household in Pondera County that made over \$100,000, there were 11.8 households that made less than \$30,000. In 1999 for Montana overall, the rich to poor ratio was 13.5. By contrast, the rich to poor ratio in Glacier County was 17.4%, in Big Horn County it was 25.4%. In Yellowstone County, it was 5.5% and in Cascade County it was 8.4%. (Headwaters Economics)

3. Household Income and Family Income

Pondera County generally lagged behind the state in annual median incomes for households and families in 2000. The one exception was median family income in Conrad, which at \$42,056 was higher than the state median family income of \$40,487. Median income is the mid-point of total income – half of the households or families have income less than the median and the other half have incomes higher than the median.

For purposes of this measure, household income is the income for non-family households, which includes householders living alone. Because many older persons live alone, their income is included in the "household" category.

Table 4.2. Median Incomes 2000		
	Median Household	Median Family
Conrad	\$29,432	\$42,056
Valier	\$30,000	\$36,750
Pondera	\$30,464	\$36,484
Montana	\$33,024	\$40,487

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-3

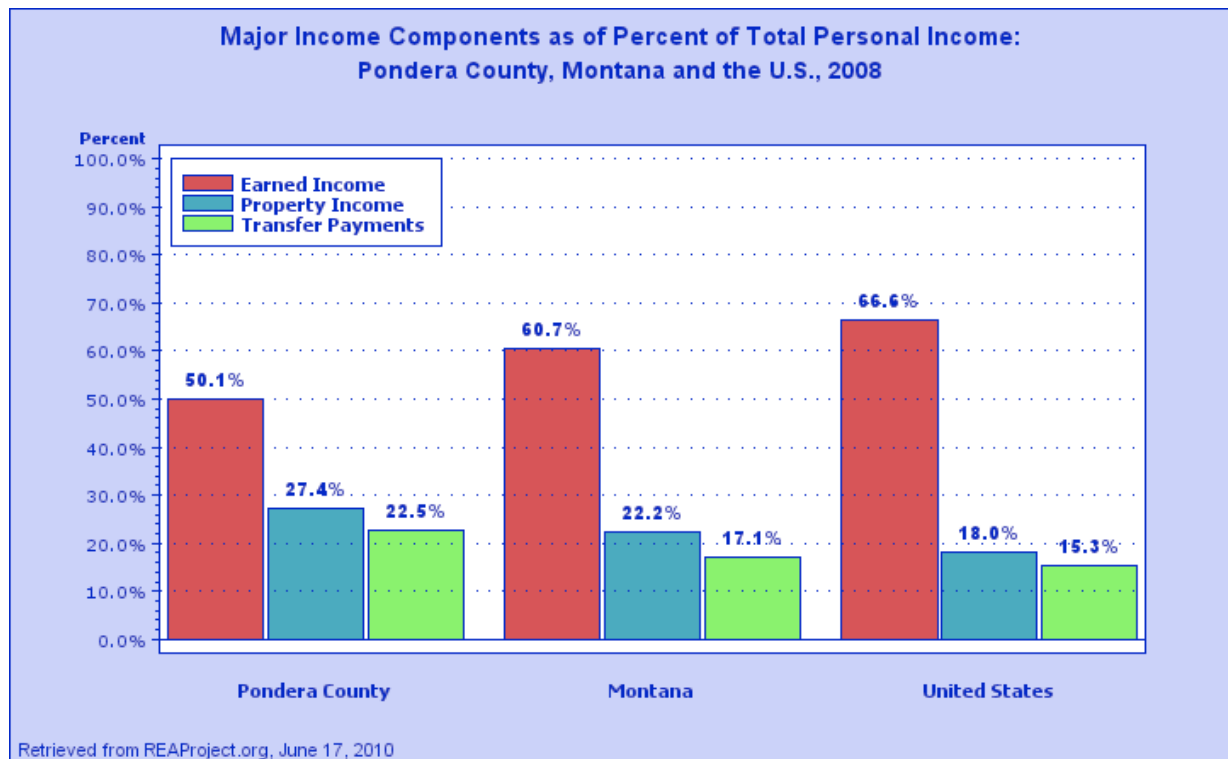
Median family income is important because it is used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a measure for determining eligibility for housing assistance. To qualify, a family must meet the low income threshold of not more than 80% of median family income. (HUD) In 2010, HUD estimated median family income in Pondera County at \$50,700. In 2010, a four-person family in Pondera County with income of \$43,350 would qualify as low income (80% of median) for rental housing assistance.

4. Components of Personal Income

The major components of personal income are earnings (either as wages or as business income) or “Non-Labor” income sources. “Non-Labor” income includes:

- Property Income: Dividends, interest, and rent (e.g., investment income)
- Transfer payments: Primarily government payments such as Social Security, disability insurance payments, Medicare, Medicaid, Family Assistance, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), unemployment insurance payments, and veterans’ benefits.

Figure 4.2. Major Income Components as of Percent of Total Personal Income



Compared to Montana and the nation, Pondera County has a much lower percentage of total income from labor earnings and a greater reliance on property income and transfer payments. In 2008, 50% of personal income in Pondera County was earned income, compared earned income at 61% for Montana and 67% for the nation.

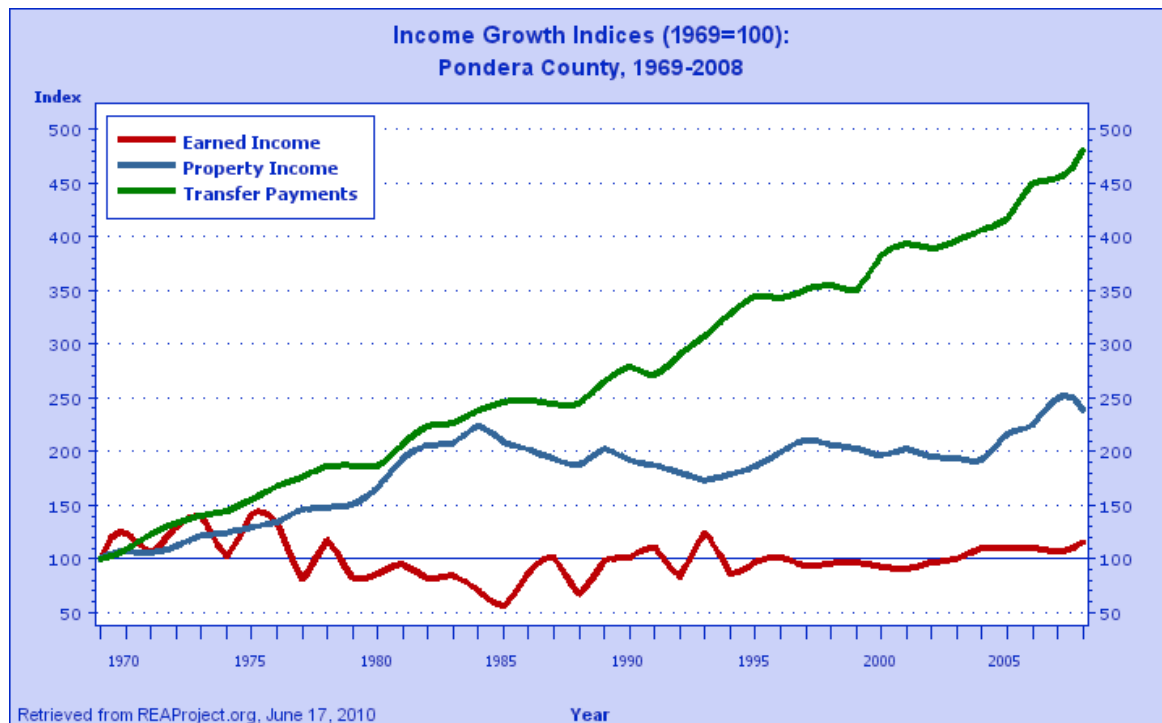
The proportion of earned income to total income has declined since 1969 in Pondera County more sharply than the state or the nation. Between 1969 and 2008, earned income's share statewide and nationally declined by -14.8% and -11.7%, respectively, whereas earned income's

share declined by -22.8% in Pondera County. In 1969, Pondera County's earned income share was 73%, about the same as the state and nation at that time.

Compared with the trend nationwide, transfer payments have played a very significant role in the changing composition of Pondera County's personal income. Nationally, transfer payments as a share of personal income advanced from 8.07% in 1969 to 15.34% in 2008, for a net gain of 7.27%. For Pondera County, transfer payments rose from 7.90% to 22.50% over 1969-2008, for a net gain of 14.60%.

The real income amount (adjusted for inflation) from all three major sources of income is shown in Figure XXX for the period 1969 to 2008. Over this period, earned income in Pondera County grew by 15.3%. Property income increased by 138.8%, while transfer payments rose 380.5%. (MT-REAP: Major Components of Personal Income)

Figure 4.3. Income Growth Indices



5. Poverty Rate

In 1999, Pondera County had a poverty rate of 18.8% (percent of persons in poverty), ranking the 15th highest poverty rate (percent of persons in poverty) of the 56 Montana counties. (CEIC, 1999 Percent of Persons in Poverty) Estimates of poverty rates are available for counties and school districts between censuses. In 2008, Pondera County was estimated to have a poverty rate of 18.2%, slightly lower than in 2000. Poverty rates in Conrad and Valier were less than that of Pondera County in 2000. In 2008, school district poverty estimates indicated that 27% of the children ages 5-17 in the Valier High School District were at or below poverty. This was the highest rate among the elementary and high school districts in Conrad and Valier.

Table 4.4. Poverty Rates, 1999 and 2000			
	2008 (Est)	2008 (Est)	1999
	5-17 years	All	All
Conrad City		NA	13.40%
Conrad Elementary School District	18.00%		
Conrad High School District	16.30%		
Valier Town		NA	8.40%
Valier Elementary School District	14.30%		
Valier High School District	27.10%		
Pondera County		18.20%	18.80%
Montana		14.10%	14.60%
United States		13.20%	12.40%

Sources:

2008 Estimates for School Districts: Susan Ockert, Senior Research Economist, CEIC

2008 Estimates for County, MT, U.S.: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

1999 Rates: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-3

4.3.2 Employment, Business, and Industry

1. Labor Availability/Employment/Unemployment

In 2000, the U.S. Census counted a labor force of 2,908 in Pondera County, of which 1,266 persons were in Conrad, and 203 were in Valier. (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-3).

Annual labor force and unemployment rates are not available for municipalities of the size of Valier and Conrad. Data for Pondera County indicate a shrinking supply of labor. The county lost 13.7% of the labor force between 2000 and 2009.¹ In part this is a factor of overall declining population and in part a result of an increasingly older population no longer in the workforce.

¹ Counts from Montana Department of Labor and U.S. Census for 2000 are not the same due to differences in methodology.

Table 4.5. Labor Force Characteristics			
	Pondera County	Montana	US
Labor Force 2009	2,572	498,907	154,142,000
Change 2000-2009	-410	30,042	11,559,000
% Change	-13.7%	6.4%	8.1%
Unemployment Rate 2000	4.8%	4.80%	4%
Unemployment Rate 2009	5.70%	6.20%	9.30%

Source:

Montana Department of Labor and Industry: "Unemployment Rates and Labor Force Statistics"

Note: annual data, not seasonally adjusted

According to the Montana Regional Economic Analysis Project, the employment in Pondera is considered to be lagging when compared with all 56 Montana counties. The Project classifies growth and performance into 4 broad categories: *Leading*, *Slipping*, *Gaining* and *Lagging*. Pondera County is classified as "*Lagging*" in that its employment growth recorded below the statewide average in 2008 and its longer-term average fell below that of the average statewide over 1999-2008. In 2008, Pondera County ranked 56 out of the 56 counties, over 1999-2008 it ranked 53. (MT-REAP: LGSL Analysis)

2. Businesses and Industry

In 2007, there were 183 business establishments in Pondera County according to the U.S. Census Bureau's annual County Business Patterns Report for states, counties, and major metropolitan areas. These businesses had a total of 1,422 paid employees as of March 12, 2008. (Refer to Table 4.6.) In 2008, there were two businesses in the county with between 100 to 249 employees, two with between 50 to 99 employees, seven with between 20 and 49 employees, and all other establishments employed less than 20 persons (County Business Patterns). Between 2000 and 2007, the number of business establishments in Pondera County decreased by 6.2%, ranking it sixth highest among Montana's 56 counties for percentage loss of businesses. (Montana CEIC, "County Business Patterns")

Major private sector businesses in the Conrad area include Pondera Medical Center, Intercontinental Truck Body (manufacturing), implement dealerships, barley processing plant, and grocery store. Major private sector businesses in Valier include Swank Enterprises (engineering firm) and grocery store.

Unique features of the business economy in Pondera County include the preponderance of agricultural production including crops and value-added processing facilities such as the barley and mustard seed processing plants (see separate section on Agriculture), presence of manufacturing in a relatively isolated location, headquarters of an engineering firm of regional significance in Valier. Pondera County also has a number of natural resources that contribute to a recreation-based economy including fishing, hunting, and camping. Lake Frances and Swift Dam are destination locations for out-of-county visitors. The town of Valier has improved the Lake Frances camping and fishing access area, which it manages.

Although the county has lost businesses, and overall industry earnings between 1998-2008 trailed Montana's overall average of 3.40%, it had significant industry earnings in 2008. In 2008, the most recent year for which data are available, Pondera County's overall industry earnings increased by 4.74% compared to the statewide average of -.51%. In 2008, Pondera County ranked 14 out of the 56 counties for industry earnings increase. (MT-REAP, LSGL Analysis Real Industry Earnings Growth) It is unclear if this was an unusual blip in a general trend or if it is an indicator of potential improvement.

Table 4.6. Business Establishments in Pondera County 2008		
Industry	Paid employees for paid period including March 12 (number)	Total Establishments
Total	1,422	183
Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Agriculture Support	0-19	3
Mining	0-19	2
Utilities	20-99	4
Construction	176	15
Manufacturing	100-249	7
Wholesale Trade	92	13
Retail Trade	287	35
Transportation and Warehousing	0-19	7
Information	19	6
Finance and Insurance	80	11
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0-19	5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	43	13
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0-19	3
Health Care and Social Assistance	299	20
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	20-99	4
Accommodation and Food Services	168	15
Other Services (except Public Administration)	69	20

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns

The County Business Pattern data do not include self-employed individuals, agricultural production employees, and most government employees. These jobs are estimated by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis annually. More than one-third of all employment in Pondera County consisted of proprietors (business owners or self-employed persons), according to 2008 estimates. Private sector employment (including proprietors) was estimated to account for 72% of all employment in Pondera County in 2008, employment by government accounted for 13%, and farm employment accounted for 15%.

Table 4.7. Employment by Industry in Pondera County 2008		
	Numbers	Percent
Total Employment	3,051	
By Type:		
Wage and Salary Employment	1,950	63.9%
Proprietors Employment	1,101	36.1%
Farm Proprietors	385	12.6%
Nonfarm Proprietors 2/	716	23.5%
By Industry:		
Farm Employment	471	15.4%
Nonfarm Employment	2,580	84.6%
Private Employment	2,185	71.6%
Forestry, Fishing, Related Act., & Other	D	NA
Mining	63	2.1%
Utilities	21	0.7%
Construction	203	6.7%
Manufacturing	86	2.8%
Wholesale Trade	160	5.2%
Retail Trade	394	12.9%
Transportation & Warehousing	68	2.2%
Information	21	0.7%
Finance & Insurance	107	3.5%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	96	3.1%
Professional & Technical Services	91	3.0%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	0	0.0%
Administrative & Waste Services	67	2.2%
Educational Services	D	NA
Health Care & Social Assistance	D	NA
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	42	1.4%
Accommodations & Food Services	139	4.6%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	195	6.4%
Government & Government Enterprises	395	12.9%
Federal, Civilian	37	1.2%
Federal Military	29	1.0%
State and Local	329	10.8%

State Government	10	0.3%
Local Government	319	10.5%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis with calculations and table prepared by the *Montana Regional Economic Analysis Project*

Notes: D= Data withheld to ensure privacy

Percentage calculations prepared by Cossitt Consulting

3. Wages

When adjusted for inflation, average earnings per job decreased between 1970 and 2008 in Pondera County. In 1970, average earnings per job were \$31,017 (in constant \$ 2005), above the U.S. average job earnings by 10% and greater than the statewide average by 23%. In 2008, average earnings per job were \$31,279 (in constant \$ 2005), 32% below the national average and 5% below the statewide average.

4. Economic Development Efforts

Pondera County is served by four different agencies working to promote business and the general economy: 1) Regional Port Authority (merged with Pondera Economic Development Corporation), 2) Valier Area Development Corporation, 3) Conrad Area Chamber of Commerce, and 4) Sweetgrass Development Corporation.

Pondera Regional Port Authority

The Pondera Regional Port Authority was created (2004) to stimulate and develop commerce, create opportunities for employment, and work towards the advancement of general welfare and prosperity within Pondera County.

Working in cooperation with the City of Conrad, the Town of Valier, and Pondera County, the Port Authority is available for business technical advice, business relocation and expansion assistance, and financial assistance. One of the Port Authority's major successes was helping Intercontinental Truck Body acquire a number of grants to expand their business, which is located approximately 11 miles outside of Conrad. The Port Authority is also working to renovate and make available housing for low-moderate income households, with projects in Brady and Conrad. They also wrote successful grants to update the senior center in Conrad, and work began on the renovation project in 2010.

The Pondera Regional Port Authority functionally merged with the Pondera Economic Development Corporation in 2010. The Port Authority submitted a grant application to renovate the old railroad depot into office space. (Curry and Pondera Regional Port Authority)

Valier Area Development Corporation

The Valier Area Development Corporation participates in a number of annual events and operates a website providing information about Valier. Approximately 50 members are listed on the Development Corporation's website. (Valier Area Development Corporation)

Conrad Area Chamber of Commerce

The Conrad Area Chamber of Commerce's mission statement is: "Through our actions, we will support and encourage growth of commerce in the Conrad market area. We will provide information, programs and promotional activities designed to stimulate use of local services by consumers to support economic growth." The Chamber hosts a website with information on upcoming events. Membership is approximately 120 entities. (Conrad Area of Commerce)

Sweetgrass Development Corporation

Sweetgrass Development is a private, non-profit corporation created in 2004 and located in Cut Bank, Montana to support economic development in the counties of Glacier, Cascade, Pondera, Teton and Toole, as well as the Blackfeet Nation. Sweetgrass Development has a website that provides general information about its services and the region it serves. The website indicates Sweetgrass Development offers a variety of economic and community development services, small business technical assistance including start up and planning, grant writing and administration, and business recruitment and retention. (Sweetgrass Development Corporation) According to Mayor Graye of Valier and Pondera Port Authority representative Cheryl Curry, Sweetgrass Development has not been active for a few years.

4.3.3 Local Government Economics

Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier operate local government in the county. Based on 2008 information, the budgets for these local governments are a little leaner than their counterparts statewide.

Total general fund appropriations in 2008 were \$1.4 million for the county, compared to a statewide average for counties with similar tax valuation (Class 3) of \$2.8 million. General fund appropriations for Conrad in 2008 were \$966,414, compared to statewide averages for other towns with similar population (Class 3) of \$1.2 million. Valier had general fund appropriations of \$113,650, compared to a statewide average of \$235,785 for all towns of similar population.

Although value of a mill is less in Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier compared to other similar jurisdictions statewide, the total mills assessed by Pondera County and Conrad are generally within the range of statewide averages. Total mills assessed in Valier were roughly half those of similar towns statewide. Value of a mill in the County was \$12,443 (compared to statewide average value of a mill of similar counties of \$17,907). Value of a mill was \$2,109 in Conrad (compared to statewide average for Class 3 cities of \$4,477. Mill value was \$533 in Valier (compared to statewide average value of similar municipalities at \$551). Total mills levied in 2008 were 193.7 in the county (compared to similar county statewide average of 164.8 mills), 143.6 in Conrad (compared to average of similar municipalities' mills at 168.72, and 85.9 in Valier (compared to average of similar towns' mills at 144.9). (Local Government Center)

According to Dan Clark, Executive Director of the Local Government Center at Montana State University, many jurisdictions across Montana are facing the maximum allowed mills set out in state law. Options for additional revenues when the mill maximum is reached include possible rate structures for certain services (e.g., water, waste-water) and/or creation of Special Improvement (municipal) and Rural Special Improvement (county) taxing districts. Although

some new transportation/utility facilities, such as the MATL, increase the overall taxable valuation, they also create additional costs, especially during initial construction. These include additional traffic impact on streets and roads and potential weed impacts and resulting additional enforcement and management.

4.4 Projected Future Economic Trends

Conrad, Valier, and Pondera County have trended behind state and national averages for personal income, business development, and job creation for decades. This has also affected revenues to the town and county governments, which in turn can affect how well streets and roads, water and sewer infrastructure, and government buildings are maintained, and level of other services provided by local government. There is a two-way link between being able to attract and retain businesses and overall economic health of the community.

The economic recession that hit the nation in 2008 has not had the same shocking dramatic effect in Pondera County. Pondera County's overall industry earnings increase of 4.74% in that year highlighted the difference, but one year's strong showing does not necessarily imply the county's economy is on a strong rebound.

Pondera County has unique advantages. It is less than an hour from Great Falls. It is along major transportation corridors – the interstate, rail lines, and power lines, such as the MATL soon to be constructed. These are important links to out-of-area markets with larger populations. The county has considerable resources— good soils and conditions for agriculture, wind power, oil, gas, natural scenic beauty, and proximity to Glacier National Park. Conrad and Valier have many excellent facilities, services, and business establishments that make the area desirable for business development and expansion.

Government, businesses, and individuals in Pondera County are working together and working hard to improve the community and to improve the business climate. The efforts of the Pondera Port Authority, Chamber, and other individual business efforts and the support provided by local government are steps in the right direction to improve and strengthen the economy. Enhancing local businesses and attracting industry and other businesses that build on the strengths of the local economy make sense for Pondera County.

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5. PUBLIC FACILITIES and INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This section discusses the public facilities and infrastructure in Pondera County and its municipalities. These infrastructure include transportation facilities, public water supply systems, public wastewater/sewerage systems, stormwater facilities, solid waste facilities, publicly-owned buildings, public parks, and telecommunication and other utility facilities. Public schools and emergency services are discussed in the public services section of this Growth Policy.

This section presents a basic inventory of public facilities and infrastructure in the county. In addition, this section reviews the capability of infrastructure to support future growth. Often in community planning, water supply and wastewater treatment are the most important factors constraining growth and development. Particular attention is focused on these aspects of public facilities and infrastructure.

Key findings of this section include the following:

- Most of the water supply and wastewater treatment systems in the county and municipalities are actively improving their systems.
- Generally, these systems are designed with the premise that little or no growth is expected in the future. Performance of these systems will improve.
- Local streets and roads at the county and municipal level face chronic funding issues.

5.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences

Within the last few years, there have been numerous outreach efforts with regard to planning in the County and the municipalities. These efforts include surveys and meetings of growth policy committees held in 2009. These efforts have produced expressions of the issues, perspectives, and preferences of regarding many topics including that of public facilities and infrastructure. Below is a synopsis of these by location.

Pondera County and Conrad: From a 2009 survey in which about 120 households in the county participated, the following were noted: most households were not satisfied with telecommunication services; most households were satisfied with water, sewer, and solid waste services; most thought the library was excellent. From Growth Policy Committee meetings, preliminary issues identified included telecommunications, Conrad I-5 North interchange, and water for future development.

Brady: From Growth Policy Committee meetings in Brady, the following preliminary issues were identified: water and sewer projects, water quality, water hauling, and issues related to the treatment process at the water plant.

Dupuyer: From Growth Policy Committee meetings held in Dupuyer, preliminary issues identified included: telecommunications, highway improvements, creating a water district, water and sewer systems, a new fire hall, and recycling. In 2006, a survey was conducted for Dupuyer in which 60 residents participated. Needs identified through the survey included water and sewer development and road improvements. Lack of an adequate water supply was the greatest problem reported.

Valier: Valier's 2007 survey had 155 residents participating. Most people were satisfied with sewer service but not water service. Streets were overwhelmingly considered inadequate while the airport was considered adequate.

5.3 Existing Conditions

5.3.1 Capital Improvements Plans

The City of Conrad has a Capital Improvements Plan dated February 2002 prepared by Morrison Maierle, Inc. Information from the plan is cited in this section as "Conrad CIP". The Town of Valier has a Capital Improvements Plan dated March 2008 prepared by Beard Environmental and Technical Assistance. It is cited as "Valier CIP". Both of these plans contain detailed information about municipal infrastructure as well as strategies and programs for improving the infrastructure.

5.3.2 Transportation

Public transportation facilities in Pondera County consist of highways, county roads and city and town streets, sidewalks, rail facilities, and airports.

1. Streets, Roads, Sidewalks

- A. US and State Highways: There are several US and Montana highways in Pondera County, which are maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT, 2008):
- National Highway System Interstates: I-15
 - Primary Highways: (Principal or minor arterials designated by the Montana Transportation Commission): U.S. 89, Montana Highway 44 (Valier Highway), Interstate 15 Business, Montana Highway 91
 - Secondary Highways (Minor arterials or major collectors designated by the Montana Highway Commission in consultation with boards of county commissioners): Montana Highways 219 (Conrad-Pendroy Road), 534 (Conrad-Dupuyer Road), 218 (Sollid Road), 365 (Brady Road), 366 (Ledger Road), 417 (F Bridge Road), 358 (Cut Bank Highway).

Conrad I-15 North Interchange: Construction of the redesigned interchange is underway with completion in 2010. The project consists of reconfiguring the existing northbound ramps from the current partial cloverleaf style to a diamond configuration. This project includes a county road to be built connecting the overpass with the east frontage road. The construction of the

county road will help alleviate the current safety concerns of emergency response access to the east side of the city of Conrad when there is a train at the railroad crossing. A MDOT rest area and City of Conrad's industrial park are planned for the areas that will be made accessible by the project. (Independent Observer, 2010)

- B. Pondera County: Pondera County maintains about 800 miles of county roads, 40 mile of which are paved roads including Price Oil Road, Old Shelby Road, Manson Road, Dupuyer-Valier Road, East Lake Road, Railroad Street in Valier, and Front Street in Conrad. All the paved roads are in bad condition due to deferred maintenance. (Stokes, 2010) The majority of improved county roads are gravel roadways that serve rural residents. These roads are generally in good condition. (Stokes, 2010) Most of the graveled county roads have 21- to 24-foot-wide graveled driving surfaces (Stokes, 2010). Many bridges in the County's systems are older and will eventually require replacement. The County Road Department is replacing smaller bridges with culverts whenever possible.
- C. City of Conrad: The majority of streets in Conrad were constructed in the late 1970s and funded through special improvement districts. Over ten miles of asphalt pavement, storm drains, curb and gutter, and sidewalks were installed. In 1998, these streets were extensively resurfaced. (Conrad CIP) The streets are now chip sealed from time to time and will likely need more extensive resurfacing in the next decade (Anderson, 2010). East of the railroad, streets are surfaced with oiled gravel. Cross streets between Main Street and Front Street were not included in the City's various special improvement districts and are consequently in poor condition. (Conrad CIP; and Anderson, 2010). The Montana Department of Transportation maintains Main Street (Highway 91), 4th Avenue SW (Highway 534), and Sollid Road (Highway 218) in Conrad.

Conrad has a fairly extensive sidewalks. However, there are numerous areas where sidewalks are lacking or in need of repair. (Anderson)

- D. Town of Valier: The town is located at the junction of State Highways 44 (Teton Ave.) and 358 (Montana St.) and the State maintains these roads in the town. The remaining streets in Valier are maintained by the Town. Most of these are gravel streets and those that are paved are deteriorating; sidewalks in town are also in poor condition or are absent. (Valier CIP) The Town's recent Capital Improvements Plan contains an inventory of street inadequacies and "Preliminary Street Improvements Priorities" which should assist the Town in maintaining and improving street conditions.

The Town has a limited amount of sidewalks and most areas of town do not have sidewalks. Sections of sidewalks are located on 4th St. leading to the school, in residential areas such as on Dupuyer Ave., and in commercial areas on Montana St. and Teton Ave.

2. Railroads

The BNSF (Burlington Northern and Santa Fe) Railway north-south line runs from Great Falls through Conrad and on to the Canadian border at Sweet Grass (MDOT Factbook). The BNSF is a class 1 railway, meaning it is the largest class of railway in terms of company operating revenues (Surface Transportation Board, 2010). A branch line to Valier serves the agricultural producers in the area (MATL FEIS, 2008). Amtrak runs north of Pondera County, with a stop in Shelby.

3. Airports

There are no passenger service airports in Pondera County (MDOT, 2008). The nearest airport with passenger service is Great Falls International Airport located about 63 miles from Conrad. Small unmanned airports are located near the towns of Conrad and Valier.

Pondera County owns and operates the Conrad Airport which is located one mile west of the city. The airport has a 4,601 foot-long asphalt runway in good condition. There is also a 2,800 foot turf runway in poor condition. There are no fixed-base operators at the Conrad Airport. (Global Air, 2010)

Pondera County also owns the Valier Airport which consists of three turf landing strips in the Town of Valier. The strips are 3,375, 2,280, and 2,140 feet long and are all in good condition. There are no fixed-base operators at the Valier Airport. (Global Air, 2010)

Private airstrips are located throughout the county serving owners and aerial applicators that serve the agricultural producers. (MATL FEIS, 2008)

4. Major Oil and Gas Pipelines

Major pipelines in Pondera County include the Conoco-Phillips and Front Range crude oil pipelines and the NorthWestern Energy gas line. (PMHSA, 2010) Many small pipelines serve the oil and gas producers traversing the project area. (MATL FEIS, 2008)

5. National Energy Corridors

No part of Pondera County is involved in West-wide Energy Corridor, an energy corridor planning effort that was required by the 2005 federal Energy Policy Act. The planning effort primarily concerned plotting the course of new electric power lines and fossil fuel pipelines across federal land. West-wide energy corridors in Montana are all located in the southwest part of the state. (US DOE, 2008)

6. Major Electric Transmission Lines

Montana-Alberta Tie Line: This transmission line is a new, high capacity, high voltage, interstate line. The line is a 300-megawatt, 230-kilovolt electrical transmission line allowing the movement of power between Alberta and Montana. The 214-mile line will tie into the Alberta grid near the city of Lethbridge and will terminate at NorthWestern Energy's Great Falls substation just north of Great Falls. (MATL FEIS, 2008)

An additional substation will be built at approximately the half-way point of the transmission line, just north of the Marias River near Cut Bank, Montana. This substation will provide a mid-point disconnect to the line and power factor support as well as a convenient interconnection point for wind farms in the area. (MALT FEIS, 2008)

The line is under construction and is expected to be in service in 2011. (Montana Alberta Tie Line, Ltd., 2010)

The line will be supported by two types of structures: steel mono-poles and H-frames made principally of wood. H-frame construction provides the best balance between structural integrity and physical and visual intrusion. Where it is desirable to minimize the footprint of the transmission line, for example to avoid excessive impact on farming operations, mono-poles are employed. Dimensions vary along the line depending on surrounding features and topography. Mono-poles in irrigated areas average 459 feet (140 meters) apart. H-frames and monopoles in non-irrigated areas average 787 feet (240 meters) apart. (MATL FEIS, 2008)

Wind Collector Lines: The proposed NorthWestern Energy Collector Project will be up to five generator lead lines (i.e. collector lines) that originate in the high wind areas of Montana and move renewable wind energy south to a new 500 kV substation at Townsend, Montana. (State of Montana, 2010)

The Collector Project consists of up to five new transmission lines in Montana that would connect new generation, primarily wind farms, to the existing NorthWestern Energy transmission system and to the proposed Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI). Most of the new proposed wind generation that would be served by the collector system would be located in north central, central, south central and eastern Montana. MSTI is a proposed 500kV transmission line that would run near Townsend, Montana to near Midpoint, Idaho. (NorthWestern Energy, 2009)

5.3.3 Public Water Supply Systems

1. City of Conrad

The Conrad water system has Lake Frances as its source. Water is treated near the source by conventional filtration (Anderson, 2010) and chlorination. Storage is provided at the treatment plant by a pair of one-million gallon storage reservoirs. Treated water is piped to Conrad where it is distributed by gravity to 1,283 services (about 2,500 people). (MDEQ, 2002b)

The treatment plant operates at about half its capacity. Water shares on Lake Frances more than exceed the capability of the plant. In all, Conrad has an ample water system in terms of quantity available for future growth. (Anderson, 2010)

The distribution system is comprised mainly of 30- to 35-year old asbestos-concrete pipe. In general, the water distribution system is in good shape and no major upgrade or replacement program is anticipated. The City has no separate irrigation system so lawn and landscaping watering is done with treated water. (Anderson, 2010) The City provides limited water service outside the city limits and presently has 76 services outside the city. (Conrad City Clerk, 2010)

In the future, Conrad's water supply may be replaced or supplemented by water provided by the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority. The Authority is the non-tribal part of a larger project that will also provide water to the Chippewa-Cree tribe's Rocky Boy's Reservation. The system is under construction and will use the Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell) south of Chester as its source. (MDNRC, 2010)

The municipal and rural water systems involved in the project include: Town of Big Sandy, Town of Dutton, Hill County Water District, Loma County Water & Sewer District, North Havre County Water District, Oilmont County Water District, City of Cut Bank, City of Havre, City of Shelby, Town of Sunburst, Sweetgrass Community Water & Sewer District, and Tiber County Water District. Three other community water supply systems - Brady County Water & Sewer, Town of Chester, and the City of Conrad – are currently approved as provisional members, and will be supplied with regional water provided that the project sponsors can receive authorization for a higher project ceiling from Congress. The Authority will also contract for the delivery of water with private individuals and other entities such as water users association and several Hutterite colonies. (MDNRC, 2010)

Construction of the project, which began in August 2006, is expected to take 10 years, at a minimum, depending on federal funding levels. (Chippewa Cree Construction Corporation, 2010)

2. Town of Valier

The Town's water system consists of four groundwater wells that are all located within the town. The wells range from 37 to 65 feet in depth. The water system includes a 60,000 gallon elevated storage tank. The distribution system consists of asbestos-cement, cast iron, and PVC piping. There are 275 active service connections serving 479 residents, the school, and local businesses. (MDEQ, 2003; Valier

CIP). The treated water is also used for lawn and garden irrigation and water restrictions have been instituted in summer months. (Valier CIP)

The Valier CIP has identified several system needs including installation of water meters, back-up power supplies, water main and valve improvements/replacements, a new water tank, and implementation of source water protection practices. The Town is presently undertaking a \$2.7 million water project to add meters, construct a 250,000 elevated storage tank, drill a new well, rehabilitate one of the current wells, and add telemetry controls to the system. This work should be completed in 2011. (Malinak, 2010) These improvements will greatly enhance system operations which are currently limited by inadequate storage and potentially overused by unmetered services. (Malinak, 2010)

3. Brady County Water/Sewer District

The unincorporated town of Brady has water service provided by the Brady County Water and Sewer District. The district's water system has 114 service connections serving a population of about 225 people. (O'Brien, 2010). The source is water from Bynum Reservoir and Arod Lake. The distribution system is mostly 1940s-era asbestos-cement pipe that presently leaks 45% of the water delivered to the system. That coupled with inoperable fire hydrants indicates the need for major improvements. The district uses a 40,000 gallon elevated storage tank which also needs replacement. (O'Brien, 2010)

Water quality is a problem and the system has not been able to meet federal Safe Drinking Water Act standards. Engineers for the district have recommended additional treatment processes to solve the problem (O'Brien, 2010).

4. Tiber County Water District

The Tiber County Water District serves most of Pondera County east of I-15 with treated water. The District also serves parts of Choteau, Liberty, Teton, and Toole Counties. The entire District serves about 750 people through 300 service connections. The water system includes intakes at the Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell), a treatment plant near the reservoir, distribution system consists of approximately 680 miles of steel and PVC pipe, and several storage reservoirs. In addition, each customer is required to have a cistern with a 500-gallon minimum capacity in the event of a main break. (MDEQ, 2002a)

5. Rural Residential Cisterns

Water wells in much of the county are not suitable for domestic use. Consequently, most rural residents west of Interstate 15 from Conrad to Brady have cisterns filled from a municipal water supply fill site (most residences east of I-15 are on the Tiber system). (MDEQ, 2002a) The City of Conrad sells an average of 367,000 gallons per month at its fill station. (Conrad City Clerk) In rural areas around Valier, well are better dependence on cisterns is less common and in the Dupuyer area, shallow wells predominate. (Rose, 2010)

6. Other Water Systems

A number of other water systems exist in the county and are regulated as public water supply systems because they serve a significant number of people. These systems include those of the Birch Creek, Kingsbury, Midway, New Miami, and Pondera Colonies. These systems serve an average of 102 people each. (MDEQ, 2010)

5.3.4 Public Waste Water/Sewage Facilities

1. City of Conrad

Conrad's sewage collection system was originally constructed in 1913 and was expanded in the 1960s to areas east of the railroad. The system was expanded again in the 1970s with the Northeast Interceptor and most recently to areas north of Avenue C. (Conrad CIP) In 2002, the piping for about 14 blocks was upgraded to larger-diameter plastic pipe. The collection system consists of clay-tile pipe west of Main Street and asbestos-concrete pipe to the east.

The collection system uses two lift stations to overcome gravity and pump sewage through the collection system and ultimately on to the treatment plant. One lift station is in Central Avenue between the cross streets of Maryland and Delaware. The other is on second Avenue between Montana and Washington Streets. (Conrad CIP)

The treatment plant, located 1.5 mile north of the city was originally constructed in 1958. Over the years, the plant has undergone a series of significant upgrades. Presently, a \$5.5 million upgrade project is underway to allow the plant to comply with current discharge requirements and with anticipated ammonia limits in 2011. (Independent Observer, 2009)

The current treatment plant upgrade project was designed with an allowance for future growth in Conrad. The present population of Conrad is about 2,700 people. The upgraded plant is designed to accommodate the equivalent of 4,000 people. This would allow for substantial growth, should it occur, without penalizing current residents with costly facilities that may never be used. (Meyer, 2010)

The City does not provide any sewer collection service to areas outside the city limits. In general, the collection system is in fair shape and no extensive upgrades are anticipated. (Anderson, 2010)

2. Town of Valier

Valier's wastewater treatment system, originally constructed in 1908-1910, has recently undergone significant improvements that addressed outstanding needs. The 2007 sewer rehabilitation project improved about 5,000 feet of sewer lines, several manholes, and 75 connections and added ultraviolet disinfection to the treatment plant. (Valier CIP). Prior to this effort, the Town has made substantial upgrades to the treatment plant, adding a new lagoon-based facility in 1999. The Town has also consistently made incremental improvements to the collection system since 1999. (Valier CIP) The

system has designed capacity for a small amount of growth--to serve about 110 more people than current usage. However, there is some difficulty operating the plant so that it meets discharge standards and therefore actual capacity for additional services is probably much less. (Malinak, 2010)

3. Brady County Water/Sewer District

The district is currently completing three major improvements to its wastewater treatment system. First, the collection system is being replaced; secondly, the treatment lagoons are receiving liners; and lastly, a solar-powered spray irrigation system is being constructed to dispose of effluent on a 2.5 acre hay field. These improvements should address outstanding needs with the wastewater system. The rehabilitated system was not sized to accommodate future growth and there is not much excess capacity in the system. (Brien, 2010)

5.3.5 Storm Water Facilities

1. City of Conrad

The City maintains storm water facilities consisting mainly of reinforced concrete pipe, most installed when with original street paving project of the 1970s. (Conrad CIP) There are no storm drains on the east side of the city. The storm water collected in the pipe system is discharged to natural drainages at the north and south ends of the city (Anderson, 2010).

2. Town of Valier

Storm water facilities are general lacking in Valier as most streets and roads do not have curb and gutter installed. (Malinak, 2010)

5.3.6 Solid Waste Facilities

There is one general purpose, solid waste landfill in Pondera County. The North Montana Joint Refuse Disposal District landfill near I-15 on Highway 44 handles municipal solid waste from the member jurisdictions (Glacier, Pondera, and Teton Counties and Conrad, Choteau, Cut Bank, Valier). (Broesder, 2010) The District also operates a construction and demolition debris landfill at Conrad. The landfill is an unlined, class 2 facility with expansion potential for as much as 45 years of service. The landfill site includes seven disposal areas, two of which are full and capped, a third which is in use, and four more that are reserved for future expansion. (Collyer, 2010)

In Conrad, the City collects solid waste for disposal at the main landfill. In Valier, the Town contracts with a private business for collection of its solid waste. Outside Conrad and Valier, Pondera County residents can use roll-off sites at Brady, Conrad, Dupuyer, and Valier. (Collyer, 2010)

Recycling of a variety of goods and waste presently occurs at a variety of locations in the county. Recycling efforts are increasing in popularity in Pondera County. It is likely that through recycling more

waste will be diverted from the landfill in the future and thereby extending the life of the facility.
(Collyer, 2010)

5.3.7 City and County-Owned Buildings

Pondera County (Broesder, 2010)

- The County Courthouse in Conrad
- Road shops in Conrad, Valier, and Dupuyer
- Airport buildings at Conrad and Valier
- Hospital building and grounds in Conrad
- Fire halls in Brady, Dupuyer, and Valier
- Community Center in Conrad

The City of Conrad owns and maintains the following facilities (Anderson, 2010):

- Conrad Public Library
- Public Works Building and City Shop
- City Office
- Conrad Fire & Ambulance Station

The Town of Valier owns and maintains the following facilities (Valier CIP):

- Town Hall/Civic Center
- Town Shop

5.3.8 Public Parks

Pondera County (Broesder, 2010)

- City park in Dupuyer
- City park in Brady
- Swift Dam Park

City of Conrad (Anderson, 2010)

- Lion's Club Park and swimming pool
- Legion Park
- Ball fields complex
- Jaycee Park
- Keil Park

Town of Valier (Valier CIP)

- Miller Park
- A recreation area on Lake Frances leased from Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company
- Town Park on Main

5.3.9 Telecommunications and Other Utilities

Telecommunications: There are two telecommunications providers in Pondera County. (Broesder, 2010) 3 Rivers Communications offers long distance, local dial-up Internet, High Speed Internet, combined wireless broadband and local phone, digital TV, satellite high speed Internet, and competitive local telephone service in addition to traditional local telephone service. (3 Rivers, 2010) Qwest provides broadband internet, digital TV, digital long distance and local telephone, and wireless telephone service. (Qwest, 2010)

Other Utilities: NorthWestern Energy provides electric power and natural gas service to locations in Pondera County. Glacier Electric Coop provides power in location at the western end of the county. (Curry, 2010) Sun River Electric also provides power in the county (Hermance).

5.4 Projected Future Trends for Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Brady County Water District System: The Brady water system requires substantial improvements to meet drinking water standards. Remedial improvements are being planned. In addition, within the next ten to twenty years, the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority may provide a better source for the District. Pending these changes, development of the area will be impaired by lack of an adequate drinking water source.

Dupuyer water and sewer: The unincorporated Dupuyer area has no centralized or public water system. Concerns about water quality in Dupuyer should be further investigated along with the feasibility of providing a public water supply to the area.

North Central Montana Water Regional Water Authority: The eventual arrival of the water service from the Authority has the potential of easing source water problems for many locations in Pondera County. It is possible that provision of a new water source to rural areas of the county may have a growth-inducing affect outside of built-up places.

Roads and Streets: In the county and in the municipalities, deteriorating road, bridges, and street conditions are a common concern. Disrepair, substandard conditions, and funding shortages may together act as a significant constraint on growth and development of the county and its towns.

Expansion potential: Public water and wastewater treatment systems in the county typically do not have large amounts of excess capacity. This lack of capacity would certainly constrict any substantial amounts of growth, particularly in the near future. Rapid growth is not expected either. But if the area starts begin to experience more rapid growth than has occurred in recent history, planning for expansion of these facilities will be important.

Telecommunications: Telecommunications are growing ever more important to economic development. Small independent entrepreneurs as well as larger communications-based businesses

such as back offices and call centers are locating to rural regions with excellent telecommunications services. Improvement of telecommunications services could be a tool for economic development in the county.

Wind farms: Wind farms for electric power generation will be more feasible in the county as new transmission capacity is brought to the area. Localities experiencing extensive wind power projects have had to address worker housing shortages, road system impacts, and changes to scenic landscapes among other issues. In the future, Pondera County may have more need to address such issues.

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6. LOCAL SERVICES

6.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This chapter of the growth policy reviews public services provided or sponsored by local government and a few that are managed by local civic groups and volunteers. The following covers local government generally, law enforcement, fire protection, disaster and emergency services, health care, education, transportation, libraries, and social services.

Key findings include the following:

- Pondera County has a critical access hospital and rural health clinic – the Pondera Medical Center. Not all rural counties have this amenity.
- The county has a low crime rate compared to other counties in Montana.
- Pondera County has libraries, senior centers/community centers in both Conrad and Valier.
- Pondera County has several fire districts and rural fire departments. All are in need of equipment and these needs and other issues are described in the Pondera County Community Wildlife Protection Plan.

6.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences raised via public involvement relevant to this topic

Growth policy committee meetings were held throughout the county in 2009. Comments from those meeting that were relevant to local services include the following. (Note that comments as recorded were sometimes cryptic and it isn't always clear exactly what was intended.)

Comments from Valier included:

Medical care and time to get to a medical facility; Transportation; Schools and education; Long distance learning; Ambulance – EMS volunteers, Training requirements for EMS, Fire, and Bus Drivers; Recycling – receptacles for items; Community facilities: swimming pool, new fire hall, library; Day Care – Child Care; Construction of a separate facility for senior citizen activities; cleaning up town

Comments from Conrad included:

Library Bookmobile to rural areas- communities such as Dupuyer and Brady as drop off points

Comments from Brady included:

School Building and possible uses: Open gym, Technology center, Senior services for meals, Good access to I 15; Community Center completion in Conrad, During construction use Brady school facility; Senior activities, services; Possible bus stop service; Senior transportation issues; Use of local medical facilities; Current transportation from Brady to Dutton for activities for a fee

Comments from Dupuyer included:

Public Safety – EMS, Law Enforcement, Quick Response Unit; New Fire Hall- Available fire training; Recycling- containers at roll off sites; Medical care/Hospitals- Residents travel to Great Falls, Shelby, Choteau, Conrad- No long term relationships with doctors

6.3 Existing Conditions

6.3.1 Government

Government in Pondera County consists of municipal (Conrad and Valier), county, state, federal, and tribal (Blackfeet Indian Reservation).

1. Local Government

County and municipal governments are local governments. It is the level of government that most people are familiar with. Local governments provide public water and sewer (typically in towns, but also via Rural Improvement Districts in the county), libraries, garbage disposal, conduct elections, provide police and fire protection, maintain and plow roads and streets, and collect property taxes (which include state-assessed taxes).

Since the adoption of the Montana Constitution in 1972, local governments have the option of several different forms of government. The 1972 Constitution also provided for local governments to be self-governing. Historically, counties and municipalities had only general government powers, or only those powers granted to them by the legislature and in state law. If a local government has gone through the process to be self-governing, it has all the powers not specifically denied by state statute, the Montana Constitution, or local charter. Most self-governing governments have a charter, which basically sets out how the government will operate, and defines the structure, powers, privileges, rights, and duties of the local government unit and the limitations on the government. Montana law allows for five optional forms of government in addition to the traditional form for counties and municipalities. The optional forms are: commission-executive, commission-manager, commission, commission-chairman, and town meeting. Town meeting form of government is an option only for those municipalities with less than 2,000 residents (Erickson, **date**).

Of Montana's 56 counties, three are self-governing charter governments. Of Montana's 127 municipalities, 41 are self-governing, and 32 operate with a charter (Local Government Center). Type of local government may be changed either by a petition of the voters, or by local government review. Every 10 years, each local government unit in Montana must hold an election on the question of conducting a local government review. If the question is approved,

then a second election is held to establish a study commission that will conduct the actual review (Erickson, **date**).

The town of Valier is a non-charter commission-executive form of government with general governing powers. There are five members on the Valier Town Council.

Conrad is a charter commission-executive form of government with self governing powers. There are five members on the Conrad City Council.

Pondera County is a commission form of government with general governing powers. There are three members on the Pondera County Board of Commissioners (Local Government Center).

2. State, Federal, and Tribal Government

The State of Montana presence in Pondera County consists of offices for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Department of Transportation maintenance shop (both of which are in Conrad), and the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station outside of Conrad. Federal government includes the U.S. post offices in Conrad, Valier, Brady, Dupuyer, Heart Butte, and Ledger; and the USDA offices in Conrad with Farm Services Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Services (formerly Soil Conservation Services). In addition, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs has a presence on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

The Blackfeet Indian Reservation is 1.5 million acres, a portion of which is within Pondera County. The Blackfeet operate under a tribal council form of government. The seat of government operations is in Browning, located in Glacier County. Privately deeded lands within the Reservation boundary are subject to land use regulations of the state and county (such as subdivision law).

6.3.2 Law Enforcement

Law enforcement in Pondera County is primarily provided by the Pondera County Sheriff, Conrad Police Department, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Valier contracts with the county for law enforcement, which is provided by the County Sheriff. In June 2010, County Commissioners approved a two-year agreement with Valier for the services for an amount of \$53,000 per year, paid by Valier. There are two resident deputy officers in Valier (Independent Observer, June 2010).

County Sheriff's offices are located in Conrad. The county has a resident deputy in Dupuyer.

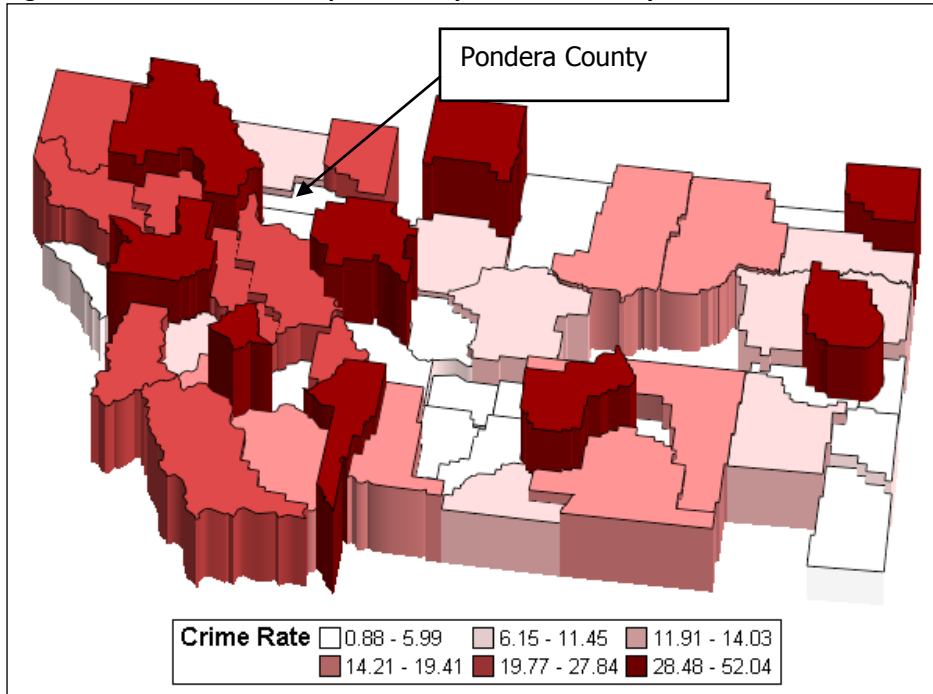
Pondera County and Conrad share a detention facility located in Conrad. The facility has capacity for 13 persons, including some single cells (Sawyer, 2010).

Law enforcement within the boundaries of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation is provided by BIA, County Sheriff, state highway patrol, and/or FBI, depending on the circumstance. Crimes involving non-Tribal members as both perpetrators and victims on deeded lands are within the County Sheriff's jurisdiction. Receipt of 911 calls depends on local determination. Most of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation 911 calls go directly to Browning. The area around Birch Creek has

its calls received by Pondera County Sheriff. The County Sheriff responds to domestic disputes in Heart Butte, but cannot actively enforce laws or make arrests there. The County Sheriff also responds to road accidents. There is a combination of Pondera County Roads, state highways, and BIA and tribal roads on the Indian Reservation in Pondera County. Determination of which laws apply and which jurisdictions have authority is sorted out on a case-by-case basis (Kuka, 2010).

Pondera County has a low crime rate compared to the rest of Montana, as shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Crime Index Rate per 1,000 by Montana County



Source: Montana Board of Crime Control

High priority topics for the Pondera Sheriff's office are addressing drug abuse through prevention education and issues related to medical marijuana (Kuka, 2010).

6.3.3 Fire Protection

There are a number of entities providing fire protection in Pondera County. These include the Pondera County Rural Fire District, City of Conrad Fire Department, and Heart Butte Volunteer Fire Department. Wildland fire fighting in the county is augmented by the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (U.S. Forest Service, Lewis and Clark National Forest), based in Augusta, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Central Land Office in Helena, and Bureau of Land Management.

The Pondera County Rural Fire District covers most of Pondera County and is comprised of rural departments stationed in Brady, Conrad, Dupuyer, and Valier. Each of these departments is staffed with volunteers. The City of Conrad Fire Department covers fires within the city limits (Pondera County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Committee).

Issues identified in the Pondera County Community Wildfire Protection Plan include:

- Need for readily accessible, year-round water resources available for use by local fire departments (e.g. dry hydrants). Once developed, these water sources need to be mapped and use agreements need to be made between landowners, local fire departments other fire-fighting agencies.
- Recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters, training, funding, and equipment needs for local volunteer fire departments.
- Missile silos – approximately 50 sites and missiles with nuclear warheads in Pondera County. Issues include coordinating fire suppression near these sites in times of increased security.
- Oil and gas pipelines and major overhead transmission lines, including the Montana Alberta Tie Limited.
- Issues with access to residences east of the railroad in Conrad; there can be long delays when there is a train on the tracks.
- Fuel build-up in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields.

6.3.4 Disaster and Emergency Services

Pondera County has a Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Office. The DES Coordinator is also the County Rural Fire Coordinator and Floodplain Administrator. The county has enhanced-wireless 911 call capabilities.

The Pondera Medical Center in Conrad manages two ambulances in Conrad and one in Valier. The ambulances serve the entire county (Erickson, **date**).

6.3.5 Health Care

The Pondera Medical Center in Conrad is the only hospital in Pondera County. It is a Critical Access Hospital and Rural Health Clinic with 20 acute care inpatient beds and a 59 bed extended care facility. The Center treated 1,942 patients in 2009 through its emergency center.

Services include extended care, home health, inpatient, lab, nutritional, occupational, physical, radiology, respiratory, sleep, surgical, OB, and visiting specialists- Pediatrician, urologist, podiatrist, ophthalmologist, and orthopedist (Pondera Medical Center).

Maris Healthcare-Valier Clinic is a part-time clinic (open Wed. 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.) in Valier (Valierian, 2010).

The closest major medical facility is in Great Falls.

6.3.6 Transportation Services

The Northern Transit Interlocal Bus runs from Shelby to Great Falls, with a stop in Conrad, on Mondays and Thursdays. Northern Transit is a partnership of the communities of Conrad, Cut Bank, and Shelby and the counties of Pondera, Glacier, and Toole. The service provides wheelchair access, and will also provide transport to scheduled medical providers, the Great Falls International Airport (Northern Transit Interlocal Bus).

6.3.7 Education

There are five school districts in Pondera County: Conrad, Valier, Heart Butte, Dupuyer Elementary, and Miami Elementary.

In Conrad, there are two elementary schools. Meadowlark serves Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade and had attendance of 159 students in October 2008. Prairie View Elementary serves 4th and 5th graders and had a population of 91 students. Utterback Middle school, grades 6-8, had a total of student population of 150 in October 2008. Conrad High School had 189 students (Montana Office of Public Instruction).

The Valier School District manages the public schools in Valier as well as the Kingsbury School Attendance Center. In October 2008, the Valier School (Pre-Kindergarten- 6th grade) had 98 students, the middle school (grades 7-8) had 39, and the high school had 58 students. The Valier School District provides the teacher for the Kingsbury center (grades Pre-Kindergarten through 8) and the Colony provides the land and building. There were eight students at the Kingsbury attendance center in October 2008 (Montana Office of Public Instruction).

Heart Butte Elementary (grades Pre-Kindergarten through 6) had 92 students in October 2008, the middle school (grades 7-8) had 22, and the high school had 51 students (Montana Office of Public Instruction).

The community of Brady is within Dutton-Brady School District, a consolidation of the Brady and Dutton School Districts which took place earlier in the decade. The school building in Brady belongs to the Dutton-Brady School District and it has been for sale for three years. The consolidation made sense at the time because there were few students at the Brady school, and Dutton was the closest school system. As it turned out, most students, do not attend school in Dutton but instead attend in Conrad, which accepts them as out-of-district without additional charge. The residents of Brady are working together to attach their land to the Conrad school district so that the Conrad School District receives the state funds and property taxes associated with the Brady students (Stone, 2010).

The Dutton-Brady School district also includes three schools on colonies in Pondera County. Bridge Creek and Pondera Colonies are between Valier and Dupuyer both have attendance centers (similar to Kingsbury in Valier District). The combined population of these two centers is approximately 50 children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 8. There is an elementary school (Pre-Kindergarten through grade 8) at the Midway Colony, which is about 5 miles west of Brady. In 2009 there were approximately ten students at the school (Stone, 2010).

There is one private school in Pondera County – the Conrad Christian school west of Conrad (Pre-Kindergarten through 8), with approximately 16 students in 2009-2010. Approximately 15 students were home-schooled in the county in 2009-2010 (Stone, 2010).

The closest post-secondary education institutions are in Browning (the Blackfeet Community College), and in Great Falls (Montana State University – College of Technology and two private colleges) (Office of the Commissioner).

6.3.8 Library

Both Valier and Conrad have libraries, both of which are funded jointly by the municipalities and Pondera County (Independent Observer June 16, 2010). Both libraries are open Monday through Friday.

6.3.9 Social Services

The Conrad Center for Mental Health is part of the Center for Mental Health that serves 13 counties in North-central Montana. It is the only mental health center in the county (Center for Mental Health 2010).

The Pondera County Health Department provides a variety of services including immunizations, the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program, tobacco use prevention programs, and limited home visits for new mothers and lactation counseling (Bonser, 2010).

There are senior centers in Valier and Conrad.

6.3.10 Attractions and Recreation

Conrad has a 9-hole golf course, swimming pool, baseball complex, bowling, health club, theater group, movie theater, active trap club, civic center (in process of renovation at time of this report), and the Transportation and History Museum.

Valier has the campground and boat access on Lake Frances, civic center (senior center), and two parks.

6.4 Conclusions and Projected Future Trends for Local Services

Pondera County, Conrad, and Valier have generally quite good local services—medical, fire protection and medical. Local residents generally are proud of the quality of the local schools. The provision of inter-city bus service, senior centers, libraries in two communities open five days a week are services not seen in other rural Montana counties.

Issues for the future include the long distances between rural residents and law enforcement and medical services. Given the proximity to the Interstate Highway, there is more potential for illegal drugs to enter the county. Pondera County also has a higher proportion of deaths from accidents compared to the State of Montana overall. The rate of non-motor vehicle accident deaths in the county is 74 deaths per 100,000 persons, compared to 61 for the state. The rate of motor vehicle accident deaths is 64 per 100,000, compared to 26 for the state overall.

(Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services). The county has ambulance vehicles in two different locations, which is important for response, but distance to medical facilities can be great. Pondera County is fortunate to have the critical access hospital at the Pondera Medical Center in Conrad. It can be challenging to retain these facilities as population continues to decline and funding is harder to obtain.

Issues for Brady students and community have surfaced since the formation of the Dutton-Brady School District. The community is struggling with the vacancy of the school and looking for alternate uses. The longer the building stands vacant, the harder it will be to recover to a usable purpose.

Although population is declining, the county and municipalities are faced with growing senior populations that will also have specialized health care, transportation, and other needs. The communities have already made progress in a number of areas, including the operating senior centers in Conrad and Valier, the Interlocal Bus service.

As reported in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, there are many needs of the local volunteer fire departments. Pondera County has not experienced the boom of rural residential development that has occurred elsewhere in the state and which can significantly add to the problem of protecting structures from wildfire. Just keeping up with the historical and existing needs is difficult for many of the departments, which reported difficulties recruiting, retaining, and training fire-fighting volunteers.

Despite challenges of volunteer recruitment, which is not unique to Pondera County, there are indeed many active volunteer organizations, such as the fire departments, and other civic groups that are working to keep and improve public services such as community centers and libraries.

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7. NATURAL RESOURCES

7.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

- Precipitation, elevation, and topography are varied across the county. The diversity of soils, vegetation, and wildlife distribution vary with these factors.
- Western areas of the county are more fire prone due to steeper slopes and heavier fuels.
- The higher elevations in the western tip of the county provides key habitat for a variety of important species including elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and the two species in the county listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, grizzly bear and lynx. Wolves have been listed and de-listed over the course of the past year and status will be in flux with pending litigation and possible congressional legislation.
- Grizzly bear numbers have been increasing with a resulting increase in corresponding sightings and expansion of range to the east.
- In general, streams in the county that have been surveyed for impairment support the entire range of uses. Probable sources for waters in the county that do not fully support uses relate to either flow alterations from diversions or agricultural uses, or both.
- Flood plains have not been designated or mapped in the county.
- Air quality in the county is presumed to be good.
- All of the 17 water discharge permits in the county have expired, including the municipal waste water discharge permits.
- An area of the Rocky Mountain Front has been determined by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places to be an eligible Traditional Cultural District. The Forest Service in consultation with the Blackfoot Tribe will give consideration to this situation in decision making related to all proposed uses (recreation, oil and gas development, and others) on the National Forest lands within this district.
- Noxious weeds are present in the county and primarily spread by roads and waterways. Noxious weed spread is an economic burden to the county and agricultural producers, and diminishes wildlife habitat.

7.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences raised via public involvement relevant to this topic

Comments received at public meetings held in Valier, Conrad, Brady, and Dupuyer in 2009 raised some natural resource-related issues: noxious weeds (Valier, Dupuyer), flood-prone areas and flood map problems (Conrad, Dupuyer), water quality (Brady, Dupuyer), water quantity, wildlife management for bear, mountain lions, and deer (Dupuyer). (Cossitt Meeting Notes, April 2010).

7.3 Existing Conditions

7.3.1 Water Resources

1. Lakes and Streams

The county sits on the east side of the Continental Divide, rising all the way to the divide, and drains into the Marias River. The Marias eventually flows into the Missouri River. Badger, Birch, and Dupuyer Creeks, along with the Dry Fork of the Marias are the primary tributaries to the Marias flowing generally west to east through Pondera County dropping from approximately 8000 to 3400 feet above sea level.

The county has three sizeable bodies of water. Swift Reservoir, created by a dam, is filled by both the South and North Forks of Birch Creek. Lake Frances on the south edge of Valier, also created by a dam, is filled by Dupuyer Creek. Alkalai Lake sits in the northwest corner of the county. Many small lakes dot the glaciated areas of the high country in the National Forest.

2. Wetlands

According to the National Wetland Inventory, there are 27,913 acres of wetlands in Pondera County. This is comprised of 15,084 acres of freshwater emergent wetland, 2302 acres of freshwater forested/shrub wetland, 1731 acres of ponds, 6970 acres in lakes, 391 riverine acres, and 321 acres of “other” wetlands. The wetlands are found across the county.

The U.S. Army Corp has issued “404” wetland permits for 100 locations in the county since 1990. Approximately one third of these permitted locations were issued to Cenex in 1995 for a buried oil pipeline. Other permits were issued for road and bridge construction and repair, dyke maintenance and repair, and one for a fisheries improvement project (MNRIS “Map of Corp 404 Wetlands Permits”).

3. Aquifers and Wells

Domestic water comes from a number of geological formations across the county. According to the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, sandstone and limestone formations, shale, glacial till, and alluvium all produce well water in Pondera County (Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology).

The overview for Pondera County in the Groundwater Information Center at the Bureau of Mines and Geology provides the following information about wells in the county. There are 1391 wells recorded in the county. The deepest well is 2080 feet, the shallowest well is 3 feet deep. The oldest well on record is January 1, 1885. The most recent well as of May 17, 2010, was April 4, 2010. There are 12 statewide monitoring network wells in Pondera County.

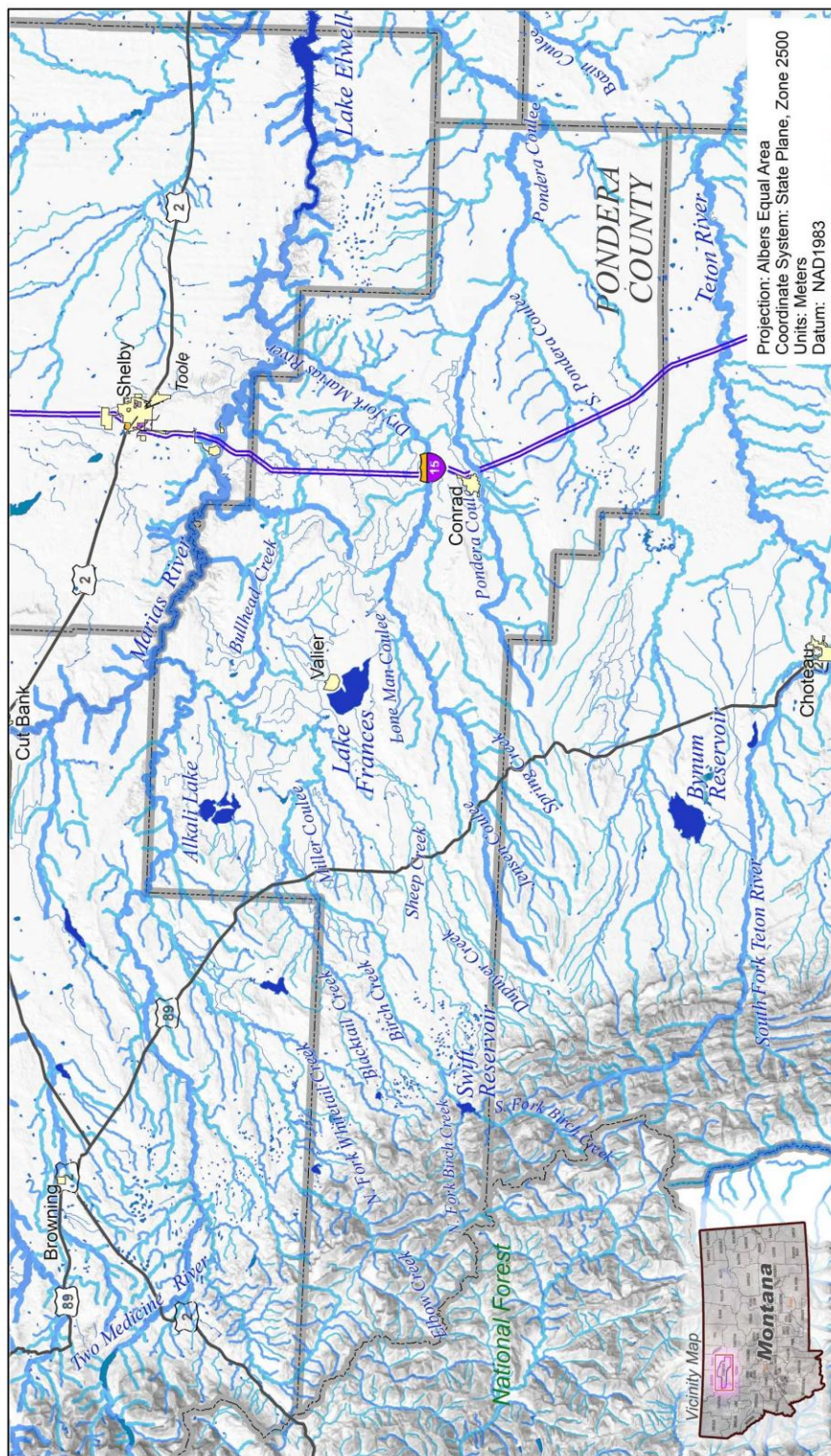


Table 1: Wells by Depth	
Well Depth in Feet	Number of Wells
0-99	1155
100-199	193
200-299	29
300-399	7
400-499	1
500-599	1
600-999	0
>1000	5
	1391

Source: Montana Groundwater Information Center, May 2010

Most of the wells in the county are less than 100-feet deep and a small number of wells are greater than 1000-feet.

Table 2: Reported Water Uses	
Reported Use	Number of Wells
Monitoring	680
Domestic	350
Stockwater	341
Irrigation	41
Test Well	41
Geotech	34
Public Water Supply	25
Unknown	22
Other	2
Unused	8
Research	7
Commercial	2
Medical	1
Total	1554

(Note: Some wells report more than one type of use)

Source: Montana Groundwater Information Center,
May 2010

The Groundwater Information Center also maintains records of how many wells were recorded in each of the past 20 years. The highest number of wells recorded in one year was 136 in 1994. The second highest year for wells was 1993 with 116 wells. The previous five years have had 13 wells in 2009, 33 wells in 2008, 37 wells in 2007, 50 wells in 2006, and 93 wells in 2005 (Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology).

4. Irrigation Systems

(Note: The following information was excerpted from "Irrigation in Montana, A Preliminary Inventory of Infrastructure Condition" PBS&J, Missoula, January 2009 for Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.)

One of the largest privately run irrigation systems in Montana can be attributed in part to consolidation of lands claimed under the Desert Land Act. W.G. Conrad and his brothers obtained title to some 50,000 acres in the area around Conrad which became a large part of the ground now served by the Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company (PCCRC). Successors in interest to the Conrad Brothers used the provisions of the Carey Land Act to organize a large irrigation project to serve this land and other adjacent ground. Under the provisions of this act, two companies were formed in 1909. One consisted of the owners of the land within the project and the other was the construction company that was contracted to build the ditch system. The Carey Land Act Board accepted the project as complete in 1953. At the time of the final acceptance, 72,000 acres were authorized for irrigation.

Currently approximately 80,000 acres of ground are irrigated in the county from the PCCRC and the Brady Canals (Cossitt Meeting Notes, April 2010).

5. Dams

There are no state or federal dams in Pondera County. The National Inventory of Dams maintained by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey (GNIS) show 41 dams in the county. Swift Reservoir and Lake Frances have been created by dams. The Pondera County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (PDM Plan, 2004) indicates that a failure of the Swift Dam could cause loss of life and significant property damage. Failure of the Lake Frances Dam would likely only result in property damage. Dams in the county are used for flood control, fire protection, irrigation, and stock watering (PDM Plan 2004).

6. Water Rights

Pondera County is situated in watershed 41P, the Marias Watershed. According to the Water Resources Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, this watershed is currently being examined. This means that no decrees, temporary, preliminary, or final have been issued (DNRC Basin Location and Adjudication Status Map, March 2010).

7. Water Quality

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Water Act Information Center, CWAIC, the Dry Fork of the Marias, the Marias River, and the South Fork of Birch Creek have been fully assessed and support all uses (<http://cwaic.mt.gov>). The findings are based on biological, habitat, and physical/chemical assessment. The uses that are fully supported include agricultural, aquatic life, drinking water, industrial, primary contact recreation, and warm or cold water fishery.

Birch Creek from Blacktail Creek to the Two Medicine River fully supports agricultural, drinking water, and industrial uses. Aquatic life and primary contact recreation are partially supported and there is insufficient information to determine support of the cold water fishery. Birch Creek from Swift Dam to Blacktail Creek has not been assessed. Pondera Creek/Coulee has not been assessed for agricultural, drinking water, industrial, or primary contact recreation, but partially supports aquatic life and cold water fishery uses based on physical/chemical assessment.

Dupuyer Creek (North and South Forks to the mouth of Birch Creek) has been assessed biologically, for habitat, and physically/chemically. Agriculture, drinking water, and industrial uses are fully supported. Primary contact recreation is partially supported. Aquatic life is not supported and there is insufficient information to determine support for the cold water fishery. Low flow alterations, nitrates, sedimentation, and water temperatures are the probably causes for uses that are not fully supported in Dupuyer Creek.

In general, probable sources for waters in the county that do not fully support uses relate to either flow alterations from diversions or agricultural uses, or both.

Based on data extracted on April 24, 2010, there are 17 entities with water discharge permits located in Pondera County. According to the Environmental Protection Agency's data base, none of the permits are current.

Table 3: Facilities with Discharge Permits			
NPDES ID	Name	Expiration Date	Description
MTG10157	Birch Creek Colony	7/31/2005	General livestock
MTG580022	Brady County Water/Sewer Dist.	9/30/2004	Sewerage
MTG010164	Camrose Colony	7/31/2005	General livestock
MT0020079	Conrad Waste Water Treatment	4/30/2011	Sewerage
MTR101234	Conrad SW	12/31/2006	Highway and street Construction
MTG651005	Heart Butte Lagoon	No info	Sewerage
MTR101809	Lake Francis Intake	12/31/2006	Heavy construction
MTG010209	Midway Colony	8/31/2006	Hogs
MTR101608	Midway Colony	12/31/2006	Heavy construction
MTR101947	MDT-Dupuyer	12/31/2006	Highway and street construction
MTG010168	New Miami Colony	12/31/2005	General livestock
MTR000368	Northern MT. joint refuse	9/30/2006	Refuse systems
MTG010163	Pondera Co. holding pond	7/31/2005	General livestock
MTR102220	Pondera Co. C&R Co.	No info	No info
MTG010127	Sill Feedlot	7/31/2005	Beef cattle feedlots
MT0021792	Valier Waste Water Treatment	4/30/2010	Sewerage
MTR101008	Valier-West Project	12/31/2006	Heavy construction

Source: <http://oaspub.epa.gov/enviro>

7.3.2 Air Quality

Air quality is important to county residents for health and visual quality. Pondera County is currently in an unclassified status which means that air quality regulators believe all standards for air quality are being met, but insufficient monitoring is occurring to verify that assumption.

Under the Clean Air Act, the state of Montana is responsible for permitting operations which discharge between 25 and 100 tons per year. Larger projects must undergo a PSD or prevention of significant deterioration review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. According to the Environmental Protection Agency there are currently seven facilities in the county that produce and release air pollutants (USEPA, Facilities with Discharge Permits). These facilities are

the Balko Inc-Ledger Field Compressor Station, Busch Agricultural Resources, Buttrey Food Stores, and Conrad Cooling and Heating in Conrad. The Genesis Lake Francis Compressor Station, the Lake Francis Compressor Station, and the Shelby Williams Field Station are the additional sites located within Pondera County that produce and/or release air pollutants. Detailed information on each facility is available on line at the EPA web site.

The Clean Air Act of 1970 provided three designations of air quality. Class One is the most pristine and offers the greatest level of protection from future deterioration. In a Class One airshed, ambient sources are limited and there is a system of review for proposed new sources of air pollution. Permitting within a Class One airshed would allow only a very small amount of deterioration. All major new projects within a 100 kilometer radius of a Class One airshed are subject to review since they could affect the air quality of that airshed. There are no Class One airsheds in Pondera County. The two closest Class One airsheds are Glacier National Park (www.nps.gov) and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area (www.fs.fed.us).

Impacts to air quality come from a number of sources within the county. Air quality in the county is affected by natural processes and human activity. In agricultural areas, tillage, pesticide application, burning, and animal waste can all affect air quality. Travel on unpaved roads throughout the county and gravel operations raise significant amounts of dust. Emissions from the burning of fossil fuels are caused by vehicles and structural heating.

Impacts to air quality may also come from outside of the county. In both grassland and forest habitats, wildland fires can result in large amounts of smoke. Air quality is also affected by meteorological conditions such as wind and temperatures. Relatively low population density combined with climactic conditions which produce a constant dispersal of air pollutants have contributed to the good air quality found in Pondera County.

Potential impacts to air quality in the county, whether the activity occurs within or adjacent to the county, should be carefully considered along with the benefits of future development. Air quality is of significant importance to the health, quality of life, scenic quality, and economy of Pondera County.

7.3.3 Fish and Wildlife

The diversity and extent of high quality habitat in the county supports a wide range of wildlife species. These species are enjoyed by residents and viewers, hunted for sport, and used for commercial purposes. In addition to numerous ungulates, Pondera County is home to two species of bears, mountain lions, fur-bearers, a variety of birds, and non-game species.

The county has the full complement of big game ungulates including antelope, white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, big horn sheep, and mountain goats. Each species has different habitat needs. Antelope are found in the eastern two-thirds of the county. Whitetail and mule deer are found throughout the county as are black bears. Whitetail deer especially have proven themselves to be very adaptable to human presence.

The area richest in intact wildlife habitat and numbers of species in the county is that area along and up into the Rocky Mountain Front. The area is home to deer, elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, moose, wolves, mountain lions, black bear, and grizzly bears.

Game damage to agricultural operations occurs sporadically throughout the county. Deer and elk are responsible for damage, but at present the damage is mostly attributable to antelope. (Olson, May 2010.) Elk and numbers of other species are affected by the quality and extent of habitat available and landowner tolerance. According to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Biologist, Gary Olson, most of the property in the county (estimated 80%+) is open to at least some hunting. (Olson, May 2010) The majority of private land leasing for hunting occurs for pheasant hunting. Sharp-tailed grouse and Hungarian partridges are also hunted in the county.

With the exception of antelope, ungulates are found all along the Rocky Mountain Front. In general, sheep, goats, elk, and moose range higher in elevation along the Front during the summer, and winter down along the creeks and at the base of the Front. Public lands provide the summering habitat and winter range is a combination of public and private land.

Black bears range throughout the county. Grizzly bear numbers are steadily increasing in the county. The grizzly population in the Northern Continental Divide is estimated to be increasing at 3% per year. And as the population increases, individuals are dispersing from the west and north (Bob Marshall Wilderness Area and the Blackfoot Reservation) to the east. Grizzly bears have large home ranges with some males ranging up to 1000 square miles. Habitat in the county provides a diversity of food sources for grizzlies.

Animals classified by the state as fur-bearers are found in the county as well. These include; mink, muskrat, beaver, otter, and bobcats. Several trappers operate in the county. The highest density of mountain lions is found in the west half of the county. Olson estimates that the population of lions in the county is stable at or slightly below a 20-year average.

Wolves, previously listed under the Endangered Species Act, have been de-listed. Montana held its first hunting season for wolves in 2009. One of the wolves harvested during that first season was taken just west of the county. Olson believes that wolves are so far transient in the county, but that there have been attempts to establish a pack.

Pondera County also has upland game birds and raptors. Pheasants have been introduced and provide good hunting opportunities in the county.

The county is home to a diverse fishery, including both cold- and warm-water species. Brook, rainbow, and west slope cutthroat trout are all present in county streams. Longnose dace, suckers, sculpins, shiners, chubs, minnows, stickleback, northern pike, and walleye are also found in streams and lakes in the county. Angling is available to county residents and serves as a draw to the county by non-residents. Lake Frances is noted for walleye, perch and a few northern pike. More information can be found related to fisheries in the county, including angler days and management, on the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' web site (<http://fwpiis.mt.gov>).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) maintains a listing of all species classified as endangered, threatened, or candidate under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA.) Pondera County has two wildlife species listed as threatened under the ESA. Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Table 4: Species Classified Under the Endangered Species Act	
Species Designation	Species Name
Threatened	Lynx
Threatened	Grizzly bear

Source: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered>.

- The status of wolves under the Endangered Species classifications alternated from not listed in April 2010, then listed by court order. In March 2011, the listing had changed again and gray wolves (*canis lupus*) were classified as “experimental, non-essential.” (USFWS website) The status of wolves is in flux with pending litigation and possible congressional legislation.

7.4 Unique and Important Habitats

The Rocky Mountain Front provides important high-quality habitat for many species. The Marias River is also important. The river provides a movement corridor for bears, ungulates, and fur-bearers--in addition to the fishery. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks recently purchased land in Pondera and neighboring Toole County to create the Marias River State Park and Wildlife Management Area. Approximately 1200 acres of this new state park are situated in Pondera County. (Olson, May 2010)

While there are opportunities for conflict between humans and wildlife, the numbers of incidents have been small. Land conversion that compromises wildlife habitat has slowed considerably with the economic downturn and is not currently a significant concern in the county. There is potential for conflict between wildlife and people, and the more people there are on the landscape, the greater the potential becomes. Managing development to minimize loss of critical habitat and minimize the number of attractants will benefit both humans and wildlife.

7.4.1 Geology, Soil and Minerals

1. Geology

According to the Soil Survey, the county “is underlain by a thick sequence of Cambrian to Cretaceous-aged sedimentary rocks that range in age from 600 to 65-million years. These rocks dip gently to the west and consist of both marine and terrestrial sediments.” The Rocky Mountains on the western edge of the county formed during a time of compression and uplift with extensive folding and faulting. Some early lake and streambed sediments now stand out as elevated terraces. Glaciation both eroded and deposited material on the plains.

2. Soils

The Pondera Soil Conservation District was established in 1945. (*Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties*, 2003)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station has prepared a Soil Survey. *The Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties, Montana*, was issued in 2003. The survey includes all lands in Pondera County except for the Lewis and Clark National Forest and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The lands within the Blackfeet Reservation within Pondera County are included in the *Soil Survey of Glacier County Area and Part of Pondera County, Montana*, published in 1980. The Soil Survey lists the acreage and proportionate extent of each of the soil types present in the county. The survey also contains detailed maps showing the locations of the soil types. Information in Part II of the Soil Survey can be used “to plan the use and management of soils for crops and pasture; as rangeland and woodland; as sites for buildings; sanitary facilities, highways, and other transportation systems, and parks and other recreational facilities; and for wildlife habitat. This information can be used to identify the potentials and limitations for each soil and specific land uses and to help prevent construction failures caused by unfavorable soil properties.” (*The Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties, Montana, 2003*)

3. Minerals

Pondera County has produced significant amounts of oil and gas since the late 1920’s when deposits were discovered in the Sweetgrass Arch. (*Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties*, 2003) Exploration and leasing in the county has slowed in recent years and is not active along the higher elevation Rocky Mountain Front due to the Traditional Cultural area. More information can be found in the Cultural Resources section of this chapter.

Outcrops of moderate to good quality bituminous coal are distributed throughout the Pondera and Teton County area, but the total volume is small. Despite some personal use, the deposits have not been economically valuable to date. Pondera County contains no major hard rock mining districts. However, small amounts of titanium, iron, and zircon have been produced in the area. (*Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties*, 2003)

4. Sand and gravel resources

The Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG) in cooperation with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has mapped potential gravel-bearing areas and permitted gravel pits in Pondera County. DEQ is the permitting agency for gravel pits in the state of Montana. Active, pending, and inactive gravel pits were mapped. According to the work by the DEQ and MBMG, there are 21 active, no pending, and no inactive permitted gravel pits in the County.

MBMG also prioritized gravel bearing areas as either Priority 1 or Priority 2. The most extensive Priority 1 areas are linear and follow the beds of Dupuyer Creek, Birch Creek, the Marias River, and the Dry Fork of the Marias. The Priority 2 gravel-bearing areas in the County are found

This map displays potential gravel-bearing areas and permitted gravel pits in Glacier National Park and the surrounding region of Montana. The map includes various geographical features such as lakes (Alkali Lake, Lake Elwell, Lake Frances), reservoirs (Bryant Reservoir), and rivers (Flathead River). It also shows major roads like Highway 89 and Highway 2, and towns like Browning and Glacier. A legend identifies gravel-bearing areas by priority (Priority 1 in red, Priority 2 in yellow) and permitted gravel pit status (Active in pink, Pending in purple, Inactive in blue). A scale bar indicates distances up to 20 miles, and a north arrow is provided. A vicinity map of Montana shows the location of the study area in the northwest corner of the state.

Potential Gravel-Bearing Areas and Permitted Gravel Pits

Geologic Map and associated data Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology
Gravel Pit Locations from Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

June 2010

7.4.3 Vegetation

1. General – types of vegetation and distribution

Vegetation varies across the county with elevation and precipitation. According to the Soil Survey, Conrad averages 11.91 inches of precipitation annually and Valier averages 12.7 inches. By contrast, the higher elevation western reaches receive 60-85 inches per year. ((Montana NRIS)

Land cover maps confirm that the highest western slopes are timbered with evergreens, the foothills have mixed evergreen and deciduous vegetation, the central area of the county is covered in grasslands, and the eastern portion of the county is used for hay/pasture, and small grain production. Woody wetlands are not uncommon in the foothill areas and follow several of the drainages.

Table 5. Landcover Types in Pondera County		
Category	Acres	Percent
Urban	1,644	0
Agricultural	331,391	32
Upland Grassland	494,659	47
Moist shrubland	25,702	2
Dry shrubland	172	0
Moist shrub/grassland	373	0
Dry shrub/grassland	172	0
Tree/grassland	2,771	0
Mixed deciduous/aspen	16,934	2
Mixed deciduous	10,176	1
Moist conifer forest	34,615	3
Conifer forest	30,199	3
Mixed moist forest	12,966	1
Mixed deciduous-conifer	409	0
Standing burned or dead	80	0

(Source: Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2007)

2. Species of Concern or T&E

Threatened wildlife species are discussed in the Fish and Wildlife section of this chapter. According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program, Pondera County has 11 plant species of special concern. The species are as follows.

Table 6: Plant Species of Special Concern in Pondera County			
Common Name	Scientific Name	State Rank	Status
Peculiar Moonwort	Botrychium paradoxum	S2	At risk
Dense-leaf Draba	Draba densifolia	S2	At risk
Lackschwitz Fleabane	Erigeron Lackschwitzii	S3	Potentially at risk
Rocky Mountain Twinpod	Polygonum austinae	S2S3	Potentially at risk
Dwarf saw-wort	Saussurea densa	S1S2	At high risk, at risk
Round-leaved orchis	Ameriorchus rotundifolia	S2S3	At risk, potentially at risk
Crawe's sage	Carex crawei	S2	At risk
Saprow's egg Lady Slipper	Cypripedium passerinum	S2	At risk
Northern Wildrye	Elymus innovatus	S1	At high risk

Source: Montana Natural Resource Information System (<http://mtnhp.org>)

3. Noxious Weeds

The Pondera County weed district has had a weed management plan since 1987. The weed district implements the County Noxious Weed Control Act. The Noxious Weed Management Plan for Pondera County is updated every two years. As stated in the plan, the goals of the Weed District are:

- 1) Provide management of noxious weeds on all land or right-of-way owned or controlled by the county or municipality;
- 2) Work cooperatively with private, state, and federal land managers to control noxious weeds and maintain native rangeland and cropland ecosystems.
- 3) Provide weed education and materials, workshops, and meetings for the county and public.

The current noxious weed situation is described in the Noxious Weed Management Plan (2008) as follows:

- Spotted Knapweed infests the Birch Creek drainage from Swift Dam to where it runs into the Marias River, with substantial scatterings of Leafy Spurge, Russian Knapweed, Houndstongue, and Whitetop.
- The Dry Fork of the Marias is primarily infested with Spotted Knapweed. Whitetop is also established along with Houndstongue with a large infestation of Leafy Spurge from Ledger north to the Marias River.
- The Marias River is infested with all of the common noxious weeds, including Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed, Russian Knapweed, Houndstongue, Perennial Pepperweed, Bindweed, and Canada Thistle.
- Pondera Creek is primarily infested with Whitetop. Canada Thistle, Russian Knapweed, and Houndstongue are spread throughout the County.

- Dupuyer Creek and Sheep Creek have scattered Leafy Spurge patches, with quite a bit of Houndstongue, and Spotted Knapweed, especially from Dupuyer to Birch Creek.
- The Montana Department of Transportation highways are heavily infested with Spotted Knapweed, Canada Thistle, Field bindweed and scattered infestations of Leafy Spurge and other noxious weeds. The rights-of-ways, having traffic from other areas of the state and nation are a constant threat for the introduction of noxious Weeds from other areas that are not currently established locally. The state highways are a primary source of spread for noxious weeds and infestations are in direct proportion to the amount of vehicle traffic. Pondera County Weed District maintains state rights-of-ways with an active integrated management program. The 200 miles of state rights-of-way have around 5000 acres in Pondera County.
- The County rights-of-ways also have continual noxious weed problems, again directly proportional to the amount of traffic. The problem is held in check with maintenance spraying.
- Rights-of-ways are continually re-infested with noxious weeds as vehicles are a primary source of noxious weeds from area to area. Pondera County has about 1400 miles of county roads amounting to 7000 acres of rights-of-ways.

Weed District Supervisor, Steve Becker, reports that spotted and Russian knapweed, leafy spurge, and field bindweed are his greatest concerns (Becker, May 2010). In general weed infestations have come from the western part of the state and are spread in the county by vehicles, and water.

The county uses education, prevention, early detection, biological, cultural, mechanical, and chemical means to prevent and combat noxious weeds. The county has received grants from the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund to purchase herbicides, spray, equipment, and sheep fencing to support weed control efforts. The county also assists groups of local landowners through grants to help with weed control costs. The county weed district inspects forage that will be sold as weed free. Most public lands now require weed seed free feed/hay.

Pondera County treats weeds along county roads, state highways and some lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The railroad and Forest Service treat their own properties. However, recreational traffic accessing the National Forest lands in the western part of the county contributes to weed issues along those access roads. The county's weed management plan addresses gravel pits, subdivisions, utility rights-of-ways, and weed management in cities and towns.

7.4.4 Cultural Resources

State and federal land managers are required to conduct cultural resource inventories when ground disturbing activities are proposed on their lands. There is no such requirement for private lands. To date, 104 historic and 56 archeological sites have been recorded in Pondera County. Of that number, four have been nominated to and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A National Register designation affords special protection for publicly-owned sites and access to technical expertise and tax benefits for privately-owned sites (Murdo, **date**).

Table 7: Sites Listed on the National Register of Historic Places		
Name	Closest City	Property Type
Conrad City Hall	Conrad	Building
Froggie's Stopping Place on the Whoop-up Trail	Conrad	District
Two Medicine Fight Site	Browning	District
Valier Public School	Valier	Building

Source: Damon Murdo, Montana State Historic Preservation Office

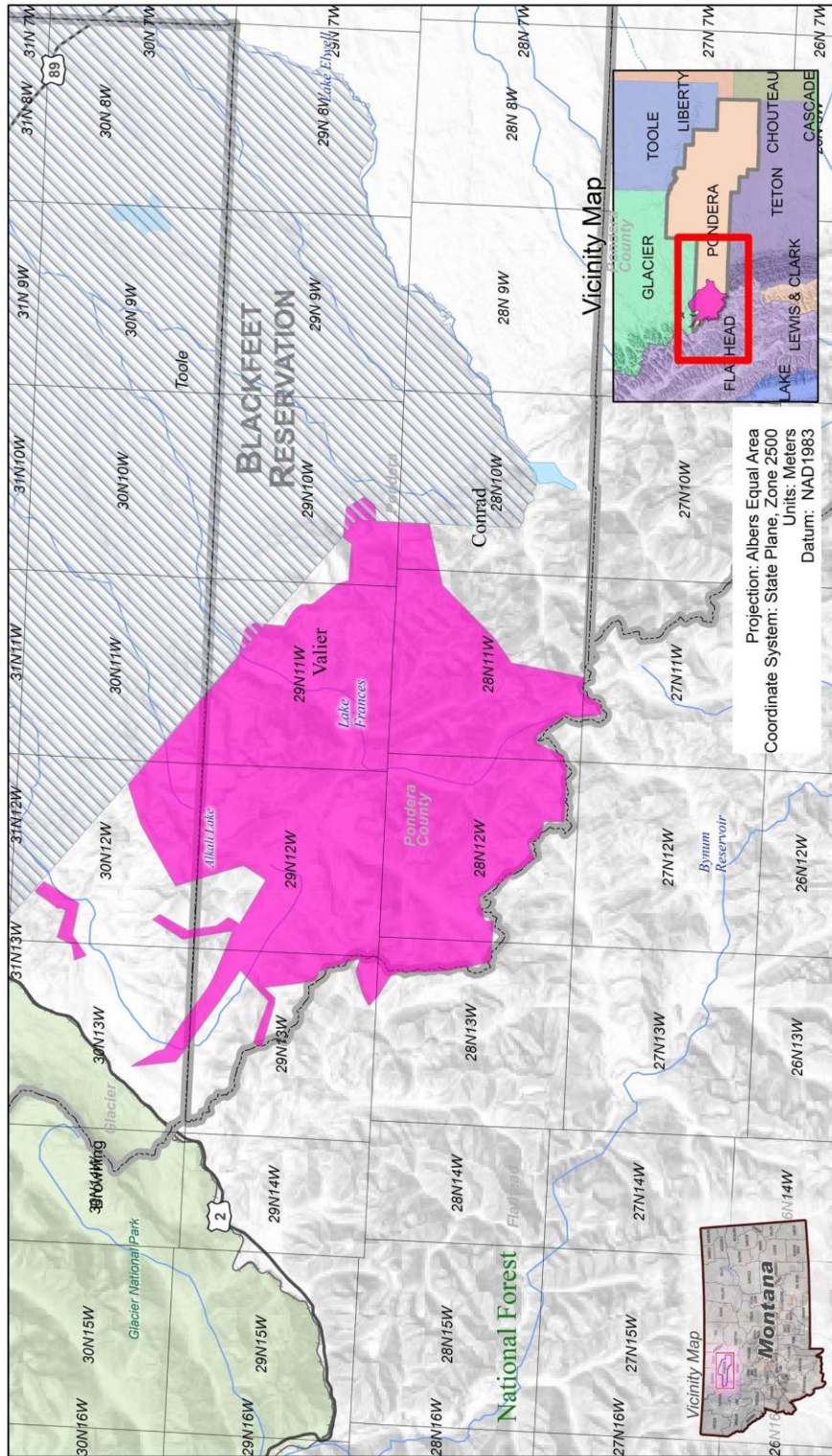
The “Badger-Two Medicine Blackfoot Traditional Cultural District” the first of its kind in the nation, is situated in western Pondera, Glacier, and Teton Counties. The district is made up of individual sites located within the exterior boundary, with location information protected for these individual sites. Although the district is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Keeper of the National Register determined the district eligible for listing on January 31, 2002. This designation means that federal land managers must treat the property as if it was listed on the National Register.

The Keeper commented “The Badger-Two Medicine Blackfoot Traditional Cultural District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and B in the area of Ethnic History: Native American. The remote wilderness area is associated with the significant oral traditions and cultural practices of the Blackfoot people, who have used the lands for traditional purposes for generations and continue to value the area as important to maintaining their community’s continuing cultural identity. Under Criterion B the area is directly associated with culturally important spirits, heroes and historic figures central to Blackfoot religion and traditional lifeways and practices” (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002).

Since the original determination by the Keeper, two studies have been completed. The studies completed by both the Forest Service and Tribe have recommended expansion of the cultural district boundary. To date, adjustments to the boundary are only recommendations. The boundary agreed to by the Keeper, referred to by the Forest Service as the “core district” is the boundary that the Forest Service recognizes in its decision making. The boundary issue is still evolving (French, May 2010).

The importance of the cultural district related to land use and the potential for future development is that both the Blackfeet Tribe and Lewis and Clark National Forest will consider potential impacts to the values of the district for any activities that might be proposed. The most likely activities would be oil and gas development and recreation.

Oil and gas leasing on the Rocky Mountain Front is under a moratorium. No new leases are being issued. The policy of the current administration is to encourage relinquishment of existing leases along the Front through incentives or buying out. The application for permit to drill (APD) that triggered the original identification of the cultural



district is still in place, but has been suspended. The suspension is not expected to be lifted soon because the Tribe and Forest Service have not identified mitigation for potential impacts to cultural district in the event drilling were to proceed (French, May 2010).

The Lewis and Clark National Forest recently went through a process to update their Travel Management Plan. The decision in the travel plan was based in part on consideration of the cultural district, treaty rights, and consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe. The decision restricted motorized travel on Forest roads and trails in the Badger-Two Medicine area with a few restrictions. The travel management decision is currently in litigation (French, May 2010).

New development has the potential to adversely impact historic and archeological sites. The county has no mechanism in place to inventory or assess potential sites located on private lands.

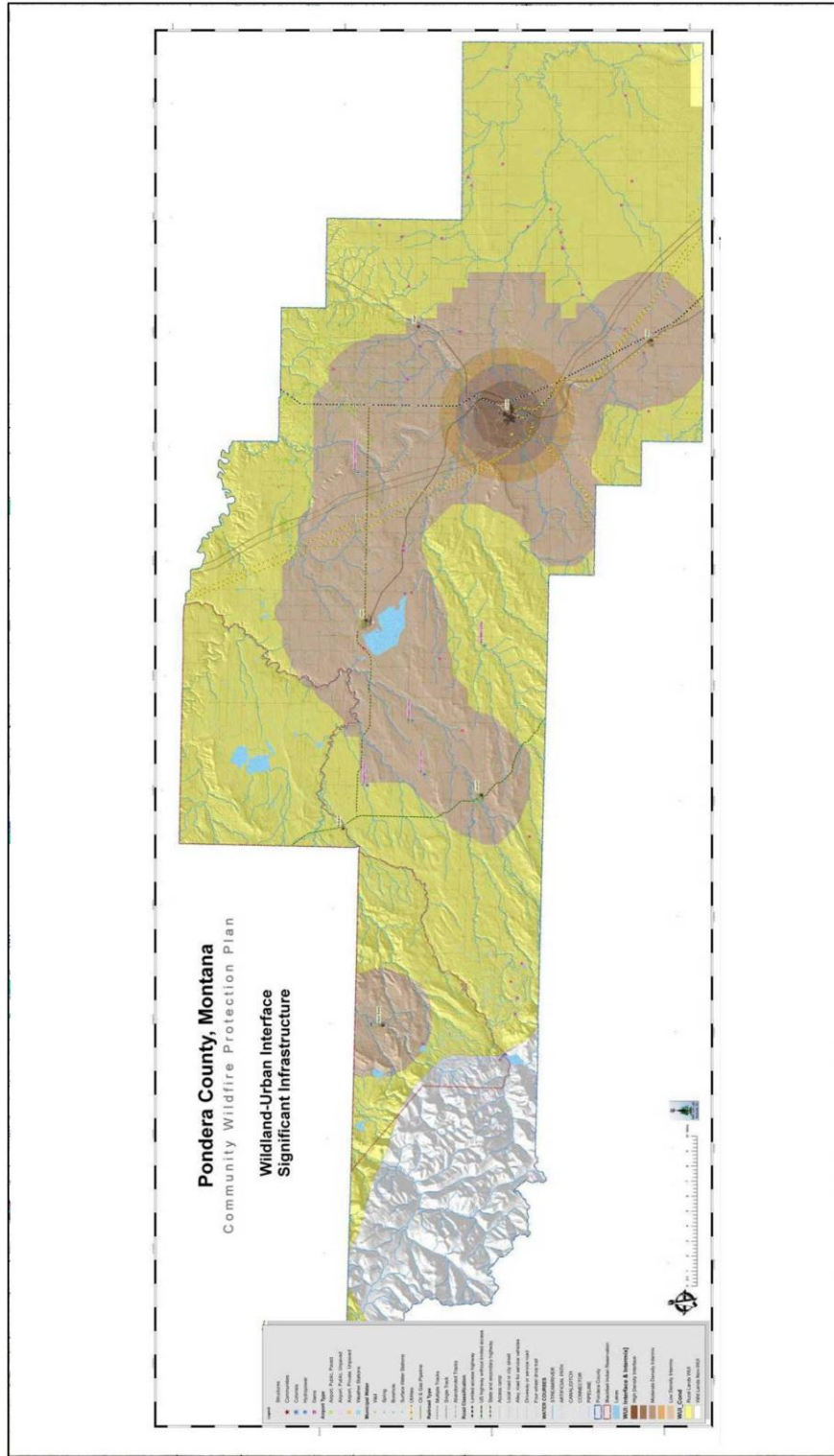
7.4.5 Hazard Areas

1. Seismic Activity

According to the Pondera County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (2004), the west end of the county and Valier are more seismically active than the Conrad area. This is due to proximity to the Continental Divide and faults in Flathead County to the west. Past earthquakes have been felt in the county, but there has been no documented property damage. No injuries or loss of life have occurred from earthquakes in Pondera County.

2. Wildland Fire

The county completed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in May 2007. In general, the wildland fire hazard increases from east to west due to both steeper slopes and heavier fuels. The CWPP defined and mapped areas of low, moderate, and high density interface. Local jurisdictions in the county should consider risks of wildland fire for proposed development.

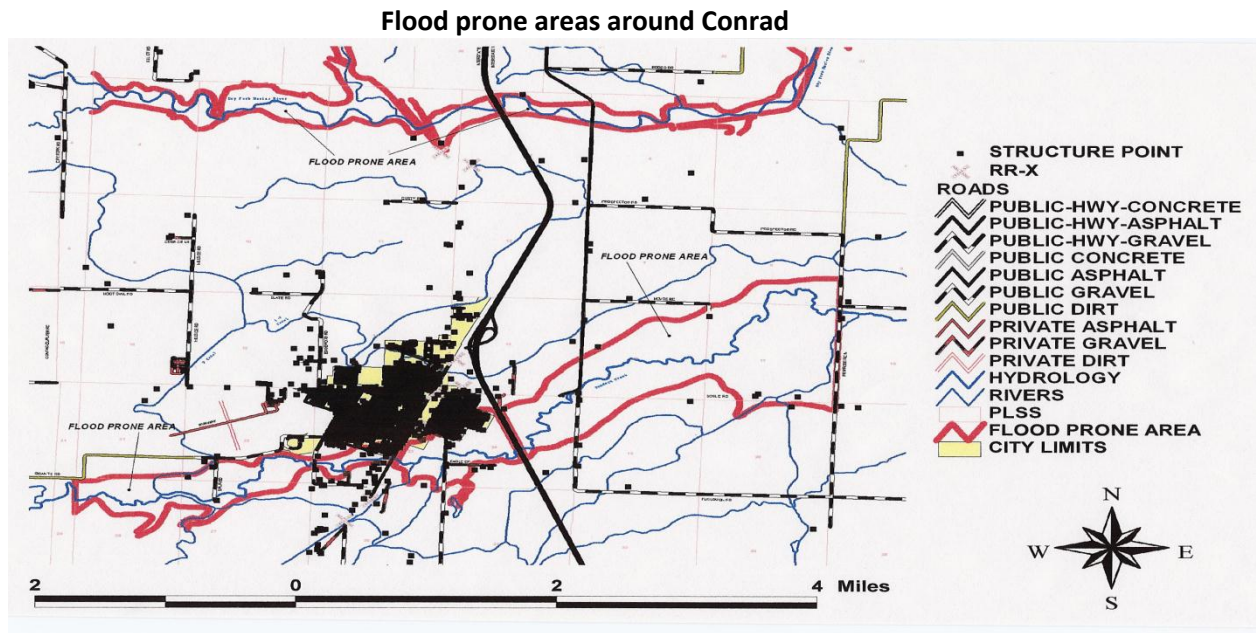


Wildland-Urban Interface and Significant Infrastructure

Map from Pondera County, Montana, Community Wildfire Protection Plan Appendices Page 10.

3. Flood Prone Areas

According to the 2004 and 2008 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans for the county, flood plains have not been designated or mapped. The PDM Plan reported that periodic minor flooding occurs in the county and that the south edge of Conrad appears to be the most flood-prone developed area in the county. The level of confidence by the County Floodplain Administrator in this information is low.



Source: 2008 Pondera County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan

4. Steep Slopes

Topographic relief is most dramatic in the western portion of the county where the foothills rise up through mountainous country to the Continental Divide. According to the U.S. Geological Survey map in the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (PDM Plan), western areas of the county have slopes from 45-60%, while slopes in the eastern portion are from 0-4%. The Pondera County PDM Plan (2004) states that slope failure is generally not a concern in the county.

5. Areas of High Wind Speed

Average annual wind speeds range from 12 – 13.5 miles per hour to over 19.5 miles per hour. Generally wind speeds are lighter on the eastern side of the county and highest on the Front. The Heart Butte area is the developed area of the county that is subject to the highest wind speeds. A wind speed map of the county can be found in the Montana State Library's Natural Resource Information System at <http://nr.is.state.mt.us>. According to the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan for the county (2004) windstorms are frequent occurrences in the county and have caused significant damage in the past. Winds of 100 mph have been recorded during historic events. The state's "Existing and Potential Wind Farms" map does not show locations for wind power development in Pondera County. There is an existing wind farm just north of the county line.

6. Hazardous Materials – Remediation Sites

There are no existing or proposed EPA Superfund sites in Pondera County (USEPA, **date**). There are 20 facilities that reported hazardous waste activities, but none are large quantity hazardous waste generators in the county. The entities that engage in activities with hazardous materials include AT&T Valier, Bob's Auto Service, Cargill Inc, Cenex Crude Oil Pipeline, Conrad City Shop, Conrad Cleaners, Conrad Motor and Tire, Conrad Rural 2 4-D Spill, Conrad Tire Company Storage, Courtesy Ford, Econo Wash, Heart Butte Used Oil Collection Site, Intercontinental Truck Body Paint Room, Joe Russell Trucking, Lee Harrington Residence, LVI Environmental Services, MSE Environmental Inc, USBIA Blackfeet Indian Tribe, Van Motors Inc, and Zomer Truck Company (USEPA, **date**).

7.4.6 Scenic Resources

Consideration for the visual resource can help maintain the overall naturally appearing landscape while recognizing that there are some areas where human activities are evident to the eye, but hopefully not dominant. The highest visual quality exists when the landscape has had little alteration and appears intact when viewed. In general, as human activity becomes more evident to the eye, visual quality decreases. A heavily altered landscape appears fragmented and the eye is drawn to human activities rather than natural features. Some examples of landscape alteration in Pondera County which are visually evident include; roads, transmission lines, billboards, and gravel operations.

Although it is difficult to place a dollar value on scenery, scenery should be considered a significant economic asset for Pondera County. County residents and visitors value the outstanding natural appearing landscape which is an important facet to the quality of life in the county and a draw for recreationists, current residents, and potential future residents.

The landscape in Pondera County is highly scenic with diversity in naturally occurring patterns, shapes and textures. Views in the county include the alpine country on the west end of the county with permanent snowfields, mountain lakes in walled cirque basins, rugged peaks and mountain slopes, less dramatic rounded mountains, deep canyons and waterfalls, rock outcrops, high open benches, river bottoms, pastoral grazing scenes, hay lands, croplands, and dry lands. Vegetation is also diverse with low-growing vegetation on the foothills, timber on the wetter mountain slopes, steep, rocky, dry slopes and open, grassy treeless or thinly timbered areas. Areas of aspen along the Rocky Mountain Front display vivid colors in the fall.

In addition to transportation corridors, communities also have a high visual sensitivity.

Table 8: Scenic Characteristics of Major Transportation Corridors

Highway	Segment	Scenic features/character
State Highway 44	I-15 to Intersection with Hwy 89	Pastoral foreground, scattered residences Lake Frances key feature to south of road at Valier Rocky Mountain Front in background to west
State Highway 89	Choteau to Browning	Dramatic Front rising to the west Rural, rolling grassy hills, scattered residential to east
I-15 (Veterans Memorial Highway)	Conrad to Shelby	Open rolling hills, pastoral, agricultural foreground, distant mountains to west
County 534	Conrad to Swift Dam	Dupuyer Creek crossing Broken foothills and Rocky Mountain Front rising to west

7.5 Projected Future Trends for Natural Resources

Potential future development in the western areas of the county in particular, may be fire-prone due to steeper slopes and heavier fuels.

Wildlife can be both an economic draw and a source of potential conflict. Grizzly bear and wolf numbers are both increasing with corresponding dispersal to the east. Development in the county should seek to minimize human-wildlife conflict to protect public safety and minimize economic losses.

Noxious weeds will continue to be spread by vehicles along roads, and by water. Noxious weeds will remain an on-going issue due to the economic and habitat impacts.

New industrial development of any significant scale may need to consider potential impacts to the Class One airsheds located to the west.

Additional site-specific information about flood-prone areas would be helpful to ensure new investments are not made in at risk areas.

Oil and gas development along the Rocky Mountain Front is not likely to occur on public lands under current policies.

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8. AGRICULTURE

8.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

This section examines agriculture in Pondera County in terms of land use and inventory and production.

Key findings include:

- Agriculture continues to be an important economic activity and land use for Pondera County. Total agricultural sales for the county in 2007 were \$75,108,000. Agricultural production in the county is diverse and includes a variety of crops and livestock.
- The 2007 Census of Agriculture reports that government payments to farms in the county totaled just over \$9 million in 2007 with the average payment per farms receiving payments was \$22,160.
- The county ranks in the top ten counties in Montana’s statewide rankings for barley, oilseeds, milk and dairy, and hay production, and hogs and poultry numbers.
- Strong current malting barley supplies may produce less return for county farmers in the short-term.

8.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences

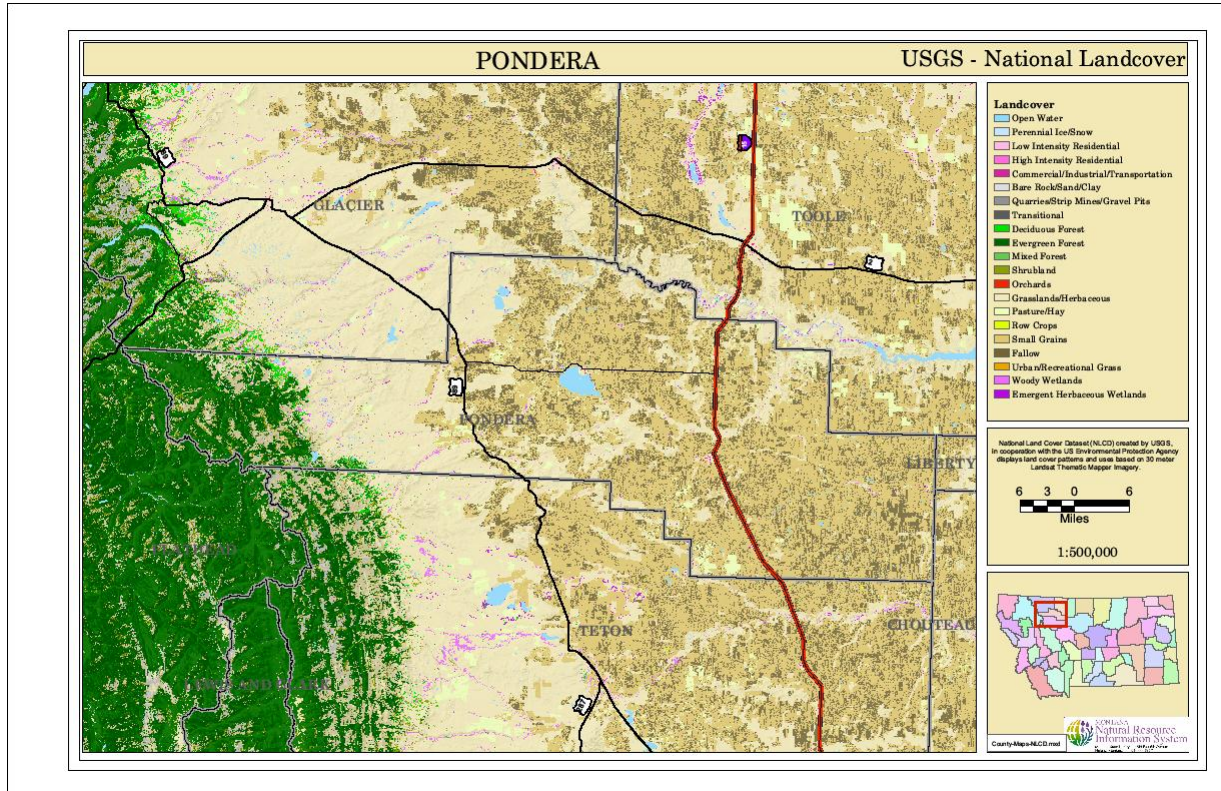
Growth policy committee meetings were held throughout the county in 2009. Comments that were received (and recorded) from those meetings included agricultural use of Lake Frances, right to farm, protecting land, and developing value-added goods from local agricultural products.

8.3 Existing Conditions

8.3.1 Land Use: Size and Number of Farms and Ranches

Farms and ranches constitute the largest land use in Pondera County with 944,486 acres of land in farms. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, there were 542 farms in the county in 2007. The number represented a 4% increase in the number of farms (520) from 2002. The average size of farm in 2007 was 1,743 acres, an increase of 1% in size from 2002. Approximately half of the 542 farms are over 1,000 acres in size. Very few farms are smaller than 10 acres. (USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture)

Figure X. Land cover for Pondera County



As shown in the above map roughly two-thirds of the county is in small grain production. Pondera County has both dryland and irrigated crop production. State appraisal data for the county for 2008 shows 423,193 acres of tillable non-irrigated land in the county. The two main dryland crops are barley and wheat. Because most of the area does not receive enough annual precipitation to produce a profitable crop every year, many producers use a crop-fallow-rotation system to assure a successful crop. (Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties, Montana, 2003)

According to state appraisal data, there are 84,000 acres of irrigated land in Pondera County. The irrigated land is used mainly for malting barley, feed barley, spring wheat, and hay and pasture. The benches and terraces along Birch Creek are the largest concentration of irrigated acres in the county. Irrigation is applied through contour-ditch, random-ditch, graded-border, and sprinkler systems. (Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties, Montana, 2003) The two main irrigation systems in the county are the Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company and the Brady Irrigation District. (Dan Picard, County Extension Agent) Land capability and yields per acre of specific crops are provided by soil type in the soil survey.

8.3.2 Inventory and Productions

Crop sales from the county are almost double the value of sales from livestock. Total agricultural sales for the county in 2007 were \$75,108,000. Crop sales represented 64% of the total at \$48,379,000 and livestock and poultry sales, 36% of the total sales at \$26,730,000. The total market value of products sold in 2007 was up 56% from 2002. Average market value of products sold per farm in 2007 was \$138,576. (2007 Census of Agriculture)

Table 1: Montana Pondera County Data – Cattle and Calves 2005-2010			
Year	Cattle All	Beef Cows	Milk Cows
2005	22,300 head	15,800 head	700 head
2006	28,000 head	18,000 head	900 head
2007	31,300 head	17,200 head	800 head
2008	34,700 head	18,800 head	900 head
2009	30,300 head	21,000 head	900 head
2010	30,500 head	18,300 head	900 head

Source: 2010 Montana Agricultural Statistics

Approximately one-quarter of the farms in the county (131 farms) had less than \$1,000 in annual sales value in 2007. Another quarter (129 farms) had sales of between \$100,000 and \$249,000. (2007 Census of Agriculture)

The 2007 Census of Agriculture reports that government payments to farms in the county totaled just over \$9 million in 2007 with the average payment per farms receiving payments was \$22,160. While the total amount of payments was up 5% from 2002, the average per farm was down by 7%.

Table 2: Montana Pondera County Data – Hogs and Pigs 2005-2008		
Year	District	Hogs All
2005	20	22,500 head
2006	20	24,000 head
2007	20	26,900 head
2008	20	23,000 head

Source: 2010 Montana Agricultural Statistics

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2007 Census of Agriculture, Pondera County ranked in the top ten for value of sales, number of acres, and/or numbers of inventory for several agricultural products. The county ranked:

- Number one in Montana in 2009 for barley production (96,000 acres yielding 6,220,000 bushels.) (Montana Agricultural Statistics)
- Number one in Montana in 2007 for both the inventory number (27,325) and the value of sales of hogs and pigs (\$6,296,000.)
- Number one in Montana in 2007 for pullets for laying flock replacement (17,278 pullets.)
- Number two in the state in 2007 for acres of barley for grain (74,747 acres.)
- Number three in Montana in 2007 for layers (35,256 layers.)
- Number three in Montana in 2007 for the value of sales of other crops and hay (\$711,000.)

- Number five in Montana in 2008 for the production and rank of durum wheat.
- Number five in the value of sales of the commodity group grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas (\$45,587,000.)
- Number six in Montana in 2007 for the value of the commodity group milk and other dairy products from cows (\$2,501,000.)
- Number six in Montana in 2008 for the production and rank of winter wheat.
- Number seven in Montana in 2007 for acres of field and grass seed crops. (Specific acreage information can not be disclosed by the USDA.)
- Number seven in Montana in 2007 for numbers of broilers and other meat-type chickens (7,600.)
- Number eight in Montana in 2009 for the total sheep inventory and rank.
- Number ten in Montana in 2007 for cash receipts from farm marketings and rank.

Table 3. Pondera County Crop Totals for 2009				
Commodity ↑	Planted All Purposes	Harvested	Yield	Production
Wheat Winter All	107,600 acres	103,600 acres	46 bushel	4,779,000 bushel
Wheat Durum	12,000 acres	11,300 acres	64.5 bushel	727,000 bushel
Wheat Other Spring	61,300 acres	61,100 acres	43.5 bushel	2,652,000 bushel
Barley All	96,000 acres	93,000 acres	67 bushel	6,220,000 bushel
Canola	2,400 acres	2,400 acres	1,890 pounds	4,526,000 pounds
Peas Dry Edible	3,100 acres	2,900 acres	1,450 pounds	42,000 hundredweight
Hay Alfalfa (Dry)		29,000 acres	2.75 tons	80,000 tons
Hay Other (Dry)		13,000 acres	1.85 tons	24,000 tons

Source: 2010 Montana Agricultural Statistics

According to Agricultural Research Station associate, John Miller, 2009 production of malting barley was very good and resulted in overages or amounts exceeding what farmers had under contract. Good supplies overall resulted in a full pipeline for barley and the overages were not purchased for malt. Healthy stockpiles of barley may affect short-term profitability with purchasers requiring producers to store production on the farm. Busch Ag operates a receiving elevator for malt barley in Conrad and sells seed from the facility in Fairfield.

Table 4. Pondera All Barley, 2005-2009				
Year	Planted All Purposes	Harvested	Yield	Production
2005	103,000 acres	100,000 acres	58 bushel	5,806,000 bushel
2006	92,500 acres	90,500 acres	56 bushel	5,103,000 bushel
2007	86,000 acres	76,000 acres	42 bushel	3,221,000 bushel
2008	86,000 acres	84,000 acres	64 bushel	5,352,000 bushel
2009	96,000 acres	93,000 acres	67 bushel	6,220,000 bushel

Source: 2010 Montana Agricultural Statistics

Pondera County also produces winter wheat, springwheat, lentils, corn, legumeseed, durum, canola, dry peas, alfalfa hay, and other wheat and hay, oats, and triticale. Pondera is also a leading producer for canola in the state producing 4,526,000 pounds in 2009.

Table 5: Montana Pondera County Data – Wheat All, total for crops 2005-2008

Year	Planted All Purposes	Harvested	Yield	Production	Yield per Net Seeded Acre	Net Seeded
2005	179,000 acres	176,200 acres	47.4 bushel	8,358,000 bushel	46.7 bushel	179,000 acres
2006	177,800 acres	176,800 acres	47.5 bushel	8,393,000 bushel	47.2 bushel	177,800 acres
2007	182,700 acres	179,700 acres	31.9 bushel	5,736,000 bushel	31.4 bushel	182,600 acres
2008	196,600 acres	186,800 acres	41.5 bushel	7,781,000 bushel	40.5 bushel	191,600 acres

Source: 2010 Montana Agricultural Statistics

The county is home to a mustard processing plant. There are approximately 500 acres of mustard planted in the county. Pondera also is home to a number of top producers of purebred cattle. There are two agriculture implement dealers located in Pondera. (Dan Picard, County Extension Agent)

8.3.3 Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center

Pondera County is home to the Western Triangle Agricultural Research Center (WTARC.) The research center has three employees and a 75-acre farm. Research by the WTARC also occurs off site on plots scattered across several area counties including Pondera, Toole, Choteau, Teton, Liberty and Glacier—depending on the year. Soil fertility, small grain variety tests, pulse crop (peas, chick peas, and lentils) variety tests, oil seed tests, cultural practices, and wheat-stem sawfly management research projects are all conducted by the Center. (John Miller, WTARC research associate, personal communication, June 21, 2010 and <http://ag.montana.edu/wtarc/about/htm>)

8.4 Conclusions and Projected Future Trends

Agriculture continues to be a mainstay of the basic economy in Pondera County. Despite annual fluctuations in income and expenditures, overall agricultural production brings in a considerable amount of revenue to the county, as evidenced by sales of \$75 million in 2007. Much of the income filters out of the county in purchase of goods and services purchased elsewhere; still the activity supports many related businesses in the county, including two implement dealers. To those familiar with the effects of CRP on other rural agricultural community businesses, this is a significant accomplishment.

As in other agricultural communities across the nation, the farmers and ranchers are generally getting older, and there are fewer persons working on the operations than a half century ago. The challenge facing rural communities is to enhance employment opportunities related to agriculture and to retain locally larger proportions of the gross agricultural revenue. Pondera County has made some strides toward those efforts with the mustard processing plant, and barley malting facilities.

Sources

Dan Picard, MSU Pondera County Extension Agent

<http://ag.montana.edu/wtarc/about/htm>

John Miller, WTARC staff, personal communication, June 21, 2010

Montana Agricultural Statistics

Soil Survey of Choteau-Conrad Area; Parts of Teton and Pondera Counties, Montana, 2003

USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture

APPENDIX C

Committee Meetings and Open House Meetings

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

MEETING WITH PLANNING BOARDS AND GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEES FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

Wednesday, April 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Conrad Public Library

Meeting Summary

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members: Chris Berg, LeAnn Hermance, Paul Kronebusch*, Dan Picard, Cheryl Curry, Kenneth Wheeler, Sr.*
- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members: Karla Breeding*+, Judy Ellis+, Laurie Eisenzimer+, Debbie Wilcox, Chris Berg+
- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members: Leo Malinak, Kurt Christiaens
- Others: Sandy Broesder (County Commissioner, County Planning Board), Ralph Caputo (Conrad Planning Board), Wendy Judisch (Conrad Planning Board), Corinne Rose (County Sanitarian), Jim Yeagley (County Contract Planner)
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt, Ken Markert

* Also on Pondera County Planning Board

+ Also on Conrad Planning Board

Meeting Purpose:

Introduce Consulting Team; Board/Committee member expectations; Review Project Approach and Schedule; Decisions on Logistics

Discussion:

- Responses to the question: "What are your expectations for this growth policy?"
 - Need a workable tool, something that can be implemented
 - Address septic issues; where to put waste from septic pumping
 - More industry and jobs
 - Build on local natural resources to strengthen economy

- Clarify floodplain
 - Need adequate water, sewer
 - Help with tough choices for the future
 - Planning to keep industry and housing and increase both and to improve local infrastructure
 - Growth policy should be made available to economic interests (prospects?) to promote local economy
 - Clarify planning and promote the local economy
 - Make us more competitive in grants
 - Vision for the area
- Cossitt reviewed the overall approach to the growth policy and passed out draft outlines. There will be 8 meetings with the Growth Policy Committees over the course of 12 months. In the first few months, the consultant team will present background inventory information. After that the committee will work on goals and objectives. There will be two public meetings: one in the middle of the project and another when the growth policy is near completion. The Growth Policy Committees will finalize the draft with consideration for public comments received, and then make their recommendation to the Planning Boards. The Planning Boards will hold a public hearing before making their recommendation to the County Commissioners and Mayors of Conrad and Valier.

Decisions and Follow-Up:

- The Pondera County and Conrad Planning Boards have authorized the Growth Policy Committees to prepare the Growth Policy and submit to the Planning Boards.
- Valier will be appointing a Planning Board soon, hopefully with the same membership as the current Growth Policy Committee.
- There will be three separate growth policies – one for the county, one for Conrad, and one for Valier. The “background inventory” will be prepared as a single document for all three jurisdictions and be incorporated by reference into each separate growth policy.
- Committee members directed the consultant team to prepare a survey for the county. The previous county survey had poor response. Ken Markert will prepare a written plan for the survey (e.g., type, process, etc) and submit to the committees. Target timeframe for the survey is between the first and second public meetings.
- Committee members accepted the proposed Committee Charter with no changes. The Charter is the basis for how the Growth Policy Committees will operate.
- Cossitt will check schedules and get back with proposed meeting dates and times. The next will be in June. Committee members agreed that last Wednesday of the month works, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Conrad library.

- Submit news articles on this effort (to be prepared by consultant team) to Cheryl Curry who will submit them to the papers in Conrad, Valier, and Great Falls and to the radio stations (as announcements as relevant).
- Cheryl Curry is the spokesperson for all Growth Policy Committees.

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

MEETING WITH GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEES FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

Wednesday, June 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Conrad Public Library

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Cheryl Curry, LeAnn Hermance, Ron Jones, Ali Newkirk
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Trina Jo Bradley, Chuck DeBoo, Mark Grubb, Jack Holden, Ken Johnson, Paul Johnson, Aaron Jones, Paul Kronebusch, Dan Picard, John Shevlin, Kenneth Wheeler Sr.
- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Karla Breeding*⁺, Laurie Eisenzimer⁺, Debbie Wilcox
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Judy Ellis, Barbara Shepard
- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: None
 - Not Attending: Rod Christiaens, Kurt Christiaens, Jack Holden, Diana Ketcheson, John Majerus, Leo Malinak, Jerry Sullivan
- Others: None
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

* Also on Pondera County Planning Board

⁺ Also on Conrad Planning Board

Meeting Purpose:

Work on vision statements for each jurisdiction. Review inventory information to date.

1. Follow-up to First Meeting

Anne Cossitt reported that since the last meeting, the consultants had spent most of their time working on background inventory information and maps. To date, three reports have been submitted: 1) Population, 2) Natural Resources, and 3) Public Facilities (Infrastructure).

2. Vision Statement

In response to the questions, “What makes this place special?” and “What would you want to retain into the future for Conrad, Valier, and Pondera County?”, Growth Policy Committee members responded with the following:

Conrad

- Well laid-out, clean town
- Well-maintained and pride of ownership
- Sense of community – people take care of each other
- Small town atmosphere
- Safe
- Lots for kids to do
- Good Housing
- Centrally located – 1 hour to Glacier National Park, 50 minutes to Great Falls, 1.5 hours to Showdown Ski Area
- New gym, new auditorium in high school
- New shooting range facility
- Great 9-Hole golf course
- New community center

Valier

- “Valier has Everything”
- Valier really has a lot for a town of 500 people—the lake, grocery store, regional newspaper, regional employer (engineering firm)
- Good schools
- Medical clinic

Dupuyer

- Community Hall—and wonderful annual play
- Gateway to the Boone and Crocket Club’s Elmer Rasmussen Education Center (the education center is in Teton County, just over the county line about .5 mile, but the way to get there is via Dupuyer

Brady

- Nice school in Brady sitting empty—community wants to do something with that school – academy? Extended care?
- Sees a role as a commuter community for Great Falls – only about 35 minutes from Great Falls – has small town atmosphere --- issue is there isn't much available housing

Pondera County (general)

- Family, Friends, Community
- Beautiful nature, open space, Big Sky Country
- Best resource is our people
- Rural lifestyle
- Fishing and Hunting
- Quality Schools
- Good Housing

3. Inventory

Anne Cossitt reviewed key points of each of the inventory reports with a power point presentation and with maps. Discussion points raised by Growth Policy Committee members are included below each topic.

Population

- Most people in the county are residents for purposes of the census—e.g., list this as their primary residence, but in fact many people in the county actually go south for the winter, so they aren't necessarily permanent year-round residents
- Older people may stay in their own homes longer in Valier because there is no senior living center in the town. So if they want to stay in their community, they have to stay in their own homes.
- People come to Pondera County because it's known to be an easy place to collect welfare and to find cheap housing.
- Where possible, distinguish Heart Butte from the rest of the county's unincorporated areas. Heart Butte statistics are so different from the rest of the county, they skew results. Same may also be true for the colonies, which also tend to have more young children than the rest of the unincorporated areas of the county.

- Why no statistics for Dupyer and Brady? Brady and Dupuyer do not have separate statistics (like Conrad, Valier, and Heart Butte) because they are not incorporated municipalities nor a “census designated place.” Heart Butte is a census designated place.
- Dupuyer is not really growing.
- Valier—out-of-county ownership there more than anywhere because of Lake?

Natural Resources

- Ground water is good in some places – closer to front range—e.g., Dupuyer.
- Discussion of “Important Places” in the County:
 - Rocky Mountain view
 - Oil and Gas (but note that oil and gas and logging on federal forest system lands not allowed currently)
 - Water, Water!
 - “Rock City” north of Valier— sandstone formations
 - Lake Frances – huge recreation draw
 - Charlie Lincoln Ranch – FWP site recently acquired on both sides of Marias River
 - Fishing and Hunting—but maybe less so than before along front range - issue of grizzlies along fishing rivers near front range
 - Lewis and Clark site on Two Medicine river
 - Swift Dam – recreation

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

- MATL will NOT be completed in 2010; maybe it will get started this year. The sub-station is almost done.
- Key findings at front of this report were contradicted by information in the report that indicated there was capacity in water and sewer systems (or these were currently being expanded)
- Dupuyer- they tried at three different elections in 4 years to get a water and sewer system district. Failed by more votes each time. Concern is that water wells are shallow and therefore there is a greater potential for contamination from septic systems.
- It'll be at least ten years before a water line connects to Brady—just no funding

4. Wrap-up

Those present discussed possible reasons for such poor attendance at the meeting and possible solutions (see follow-up notes).

Decisions and Follow-Up:

- Cheryl Curry will:
 - Check to see if the Pondera Port Authority can also “host” the Growth Policy website
 - Talk to John Shevlin to see if he can include information about upcoming Growth Policy meetings on his weekly radio show
 - Copy of growth policy work to date to the Health Fair later this summer/fall

- Anne will:
 - prepare a news release regarding this meeting and another for upcoming meeting
 - copy planning board members and elected officials regarding growth policy meetings and information
 - Get “review copies” of Growth Policy work to-date to city halls (Valier and Conrad) and to county court house. Purpose is to set it out as display copy on the counter so people can see how this is progressing.
 - Distinguish unincorporated areas of county separate from Heart Butte where possible.

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

MEETING WITH GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEES FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

Wednesday, July 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in Pondera County Court House

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Cheryl Curry, LeAnn Hermance, Ron Jones, Paul Kronebusch, Dan Picard, Kenneth Wheeler Sr.
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Trina Jo Bradley, Chuck DeBoo, Mark Grubb, Jack Holden, Ken Johnson, Paul Johnson, Aaron Jones, Ali Newkirk, John Shevlin,
- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Karla Breeding*⁺, Laurie Eisenzimer⁺, Judy Ellis, Barbara Shephard
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Debbie Wilcox
- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: None
 - Not Attending: Rod Christiaens, Kurt Christiaens, Leo Malinak, Jerry Sullivan
- Others:
 - Valier: Cathy Brandvold, Judy King (Planning Board Members); Mayor McKenzie Graye
 - Pondera County: Commissioners Cynthia Johnson and Sandra Broesder
 - Kit Finlayson and Lois Miller
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

* Also on Pondera County Planning Board

⁺ Also on Conrad Planning Board

Meeting Purpose:

Continue working on Growth Policies—prepare for public open houses, work on vision statements and draft goals for each jurisdiction, review background inventory

5. Follow-up to First Meeting

Pondera Port Authority is hosting the Growth Policy website. Cossitt Consulting is now sending notices of upcoming meetings to Growth Policy Steering Committee members, planning board, and city and county officials. Completed all portions of the inventory in draft format.

6. Vision Statement

Anne Cossitt presented draft vision statements for each jurisdiction, using information received at the June 30 steering committee meetings. Those present suggested several changes resulting in the vision statements below. Each vision statement is a work in progress at this time.

SUGGESTED PONDERA COUNTY VISION:

Pondera County is ~~the undiscovered~~ a unique treasure of Montana. We value our family, friends, and community, hard-working agricultural background, small town rural lifestyle, and fishing and hunting. We embrace opportunities for economic development, diversity and better lives, respectful of the extraordinary natural and human resources of our county.

SUGGESTED CONRAD VISION:

Conrad is a vibrant city of families and neighbors, with a historic downtown and quiet neighborhoods that reflect pride of ownership and friendliness. Conrad is the ~~quiet, small town-center jewel~~ of the Northern Montana Rocky Mountain Front, with ~~plenty an~~ abundance of activities, services, and amenities. Within a short drive, there is access to more urban activities ~~right in town~~ and diverse recreation. ~~and urban activities within a one-hour drive.~~

SUGGESTED VALIER VISION:

Valier is the small town that has it all—lakefront recreation, camping, fishing, airport, mountain vistas, shopping, regional employers, quality schools, shady tree-lined family neighborhoods, and residents who care about each other and their town.

7. Inventory

Anne Cossitt briefly reviewed key points of each of the inventory reports for economy, public services, housing, agriculture, and land use with a power point presentation and with maps. Those present had some comments as noted below:

Public Services:

- Take out the information on the high rate of accidental deaths in the county; it changes from year to year and it doesn't really belong under the discussion of public services.
- Take out the information on the empty school building in Brady – rephrase it as a building available for another use and put into the section on the economy

Agriculture

- The numbers need to be updated with the newest report.

Housing - There is low income senior housing in Valier

8. Developing Broad Goals

Cossitt presented a one-page example of goals, and then asked those present what goals they wanted, resulting in the following list:

- Septic disposal issue in rural areas (county- Conrad)
- Protection of agricultural heritage and rights (county)
- Code of the West (county)
- Flood prone/ flood plain map (not Valier)
- Keep our young people in communities here- Come Home Pondera Program
- Valier- Expand opportunity at airport for private planes to bring in recreationists (town has airport zone)
- Expand tourism- something to draw people into town (entire county)
- Enhanced and expanded senior care opportunities (Valier) esp. long term (entire county)

- Need more moderate income housing- workforce housing (entire county)
- Address blighted homes and other buildings, inc commercial (entire county)
- Fire department needs- new buildings, equipment, ect.
- Emergency services- Volunteers and training
- Enhance internet and cell service countywide- cell service bad all over, internet good in Conrad, 3 Rivers has fiber optic cable in eastern part of county, Pondera county is under-served; Identify- map of existing
- Annexation policies
- Weeds
- Water discharge permits
- Medical marijuana (Valier, county)

9. Open Houses in Valier and Conrad

County Commissioner Cynthia Johnson indicated that due to a late harvest, it would be better to shift the next meeting to a few weeks later. Cossitt will review schedule and get back to the committees. It was tentatively agreed that the meetings would either be September 21-22 or September 28-29.

Cossitt suggested that the first day the meeting be held in Valier, with a steering committee meeting from 5:30-7:00 p.m. and an open house from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. The next day the meeting would be held in Conrad with the same schedule. Those present agreed generally to that concept.

Cossitt described the open house format. This is an informal gathering, not a public hearing. At each location there would be maps and materials for review. There will be two consultant team members at each meeting to answer specific questions and to make a short presentation. Steering committee members are asked to attend open houses and be available to discuss process and listen to comments.

10. Wrap-up

Decisions and Follow-Up:

- Cossitt will get back on dates for next meetings and open houses
- It was requested that the steering committee meetings be scheduled from 6:30-8:30, instead of 5:30 – 7:30 (exception is upcoming meetings scheduled to take place just before the open houses).

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

September 28, 2010 at Valier Civic Center

SUMMARY

Attending:

Mike Yakos

Ken Wheeler

Tom Hoover

Velda Loch

McKenzie Graye

Leo Malinak

Judy King

Cheryl Curry

Ron Jones

Ali Newkirk

Open House Purpose and Format:

The meetings are an opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the growth policies, ask questions, and provide comments and feedback. Exhibits, maps, and background information were on display and available for review and comment. Consulting Team Members Anne Cossitt and Ken Markert attended to explain materials and answer questions. Cossitt and Markert had a brief power point presentation explaining process. Handouts included a list of initial ideas about goals, which was also included space for comments that participants could return at the open house or send in later.

Comments Received:

- How would/should the town of Valier expand?
- The municipal boundaries do not currently include the area of the railroad, but what if in the future the railroad is abandoned? Should the town think about including the area of the railroad in the town limits?
- The land where the airport is now would be an excellent place for Valier to grow within its own boundaries. Since the land is adjacent to the lake, it would a prime location for other uses. There was discussion in the group present of the pros and cons of the airport existing location.
- A question was raised about the possibility of creating a HUB zone for industrial development near/adjacent to Valier.

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

MEETING WITH GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEES FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

Tuesday, September 28, 5:30 -7:00 p.m., in Valier Civic Center

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Cheryl Curry, Ron Jones, Ali Newkirk
 - Not Attending either in Valier on Tuesday- Sept 28 or Conrad Sep 29: Chris Berg, Trina Jo Bradley, Chuck DeBoo, Mark Grubb, Jack Holden, Ken Johnson, Paul Johnson, Aaron Jones, Paul Kronebusch, John Shevlin
- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: None in Valier
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Debbie Wilcox Karla Breeding*⁺, Laurie Eisenzimer⁺, Judy Ellis, Barbara Shephard
- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: Judy King, Tom Hoover
 - Not Attending: Kurt Christiaens, Leo Malinak, Cathy Brandvold, Jeff Cleveland, Cary DeBoo, Renee Gabbard
- Others:
 - No Guests at the Steering Committee meeting
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt, Ken Markert

* Also on Pondera County Planning Board

⁺ Also on Conrad Planning Board

Meeting Purpose:

Continue working on Growth Policies; review additional elements of the growth policy, refine initial broad goals.

11. Follow-up to July Meeting

Meeting for August was rescheduled to end of September per request at meeting in July. Since July, work has been focused on getting ready for the public open houses and other elements of the growth policy. Meeting summary of the July meeting was posted on the Port Authority website.

12. Survey Questionnaire

Ken Markert reviewed the process and schedule for the upcoming questionnaire. Steering committee members discussed what questions they wanted to see on the survey. Ken reviewed the nine questions he laid out as options, but indicated the Committee would need to narrow the list to 4 or 5 questions. Growth Policy Committee members concurred their preference was to include questions #4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 from the draft survey, along with #10 (which Ken encouraged should be used regardless because it is an open-ended question), and #1 (if there was room). It was suggested that some of the items for #3 could be moved to question #4 (e.g., recreation opportunities).

13. Other Elements of the Growth Policy

Anne Cossitt reviewed materials on two requirements for growth policies.

Fire/Wildland Fire requirements.

For fire/wildland fire, 76-3-601, MCA states that the growth policy will include:

An evaluation of the potential for fire and wildland fire in the jurisdictional area, including whether or not there is a need to:

- Delineate the wildland-urban interface; and
- Adopt regulations requiring
 - Defensible space around structures
 - Adequate ingress and egress to and from structures and developments to facilitate fire suppression activities; and
 - Adequate water supply for fire protection

Pondera County has a Community Wildfire Protection Plan with a number of specific recommendations that address the Growth Policy requirements. Cossitt recommended that the jurisdictions implement the recommendations of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Requirements related to Subdivision Review. State law (76-3-601, MCA) requires the growth policy include:

A statement explaining how the governing bodies will:

- Define the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a); (Note that these are the criteria used to determine the impact of subdivisions on agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, local services, and public health and safety) and
- Evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a);
- How public hearings regarding proposed subdivisions will be conducted.

Cossitt outlined several different options for the growth policy committee members. No decision was made on a specific recommendation. (Note that the following evening in Conrad, Cossitt indicated that a simple proposal would be to outline a process for “how” each of the subdivision pieces would be met. The growth policy could state that the planning board would consider the definitions and criteria in the model regulations that are available from the Montana Association of Counties, also any new model regulations that might come from the Montana Community Technical Assistance Program (in Dept of Commerce), and local experience in Pondera County. Cossitt indicated the county regulations already address public hearings, and she had only a few suggested changes (as noted in the handout).

14. Refining Draft Goal Statements

Committee ran out of time and did not discuss draft goal statements.

15. Wrap-up and Next Steps

It was suggested that annexation be a topic for the next steering committee meeting. It was also suggested that it was time for Valier’s Growth Policy Committee to meet on its own to address the specific needs of the town of Valier.

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

September 29, 2010 at Conrad High School Commons

SUMMARY

Attending:

Brian Fladstone

Judy Ketterling

Rick Moss

Mary Ann Ries

Bev Widhalm

Shane Sullivan

Harold D. Olson

Betty M. Olson

Ron Prewelt

Juanita Prewelt

Cathleen Reafferty

Jim Morren

Jim Miller

Lois Miller

Wendy Judisch

Steering Committee Members Present:

LeeAnn Hermance, Dan Picard, Karla Breeding, Barbara Shephard

Open House Purpose and Format:

The meetings are an opportunity for members of the public to learn more about the growth policies, ask questions, and provide comments and feedback. Exhibits, maps, and background information were on display and available for review and comment. Consulting Team Members Anne Cossitt and Ken Markert attended to explain materials and answer questions. Cossitt and Markert had a brief power point presentation explaining process. Handouts included a list of initial ideas about goals, which was also included space for comments that participants could return at the open house or send in later.

Comments Received on Initial Goal topics (at meeting or on comment sheets):

- There are a lot of veterans in this town – what can be done to assist veterans with disabilities, work for veterans and services for veterans?
- Need to address not just housing overall, but rental housing in this plan. There is a need for rentals for young families, elderly individuals, and low to middle-income families and individuals
- “More recycling – especially cardboard and plastics. There are multiple small initiatives in towns but nothing comprehensive. Surely there are grants we can pursue to support this. Additionally I think it’s important to find ways to attract and support/sustain new businesses in Conrad.
- “Code of the West” - need more information about what that is
- What is the medical marijuana issue?
- Something needs to be done to assist Brady

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

MEETING WITH GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEES FOR PONDERA COUNTY, CONRAD, AND VALIER

Wednesday, September 29, 5:30 -7:00 p.m., in Conrad High School Commons

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: LeeAnn Hermance, Dan Picard
 - Not Attending either in Valier on Tuesday- Sept 28 or Conrad – Sept 29: Chris Berg, Trina Jo Bradley, Chuck DeBoo, Mark Grubb, Jack Holden, Ken Johnson, Paul Johnson, Aaron Jones, Paul Kronebusch, John Shevlin
- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members
 - Attending: Karla Breding*+, Barbara Shephard
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Debbie Wilcox, Laurie Eisenzimer+, Judy Ellis
- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: Leo Malinak
 - Not Attending either in Valier or Conrad: Cathy Brandvold, Jeff Cleveland, Cary DeBoo, Renee Gabbard
- Others:
 - No Guests at the Steering Committee meeting
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt, Ken Markert

* Also on Pondera County Planning Board

+ Also on Conrad Planning Board

Meeting Purpose:

Continue working on Growth Policies; review additional elements of the growth policy, refine initial broad goals.

16. Follow-up to July Meeting

Meeting for August was rescheduled to end of September per request at meeting in July. Since July, work has been focused on getting ready for the public open houses and other elements of the growth policy. Meeting summary of the July meeting was posted on the Port Authority website.

17. Survey Questionnaire

Ken Markert reviewed the process and schedule for the upcoming questionnaire. Steering committee members discussed what questions they wanted to see on the survey. Ken reviewed the nine questions he laid out as options, but indicated the Committee would need to narrow the list to 4 or 5 questions. Growth Policy Committee members concurred their preference was to include questions #2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 from the draft survey, along with #10 (which Ken encouraged should be used regardless because it is an open-ended question). Dan Picard was going to talk to a few farmers/ranchers to see if there might be changes to the way #5 was worded. Those present agreed that “stream-side vegetation” item should be deleted from #5.

18. Other Elements of the Growth Policy

Anne Cossitt reviewed materials on two requirements for growth policies.

Fire/Wildland Fire requirements.

For fire/wildland fire, 76-3-601, MCA states that the growth policy will include:

An evaluation of the potential for fire and wildland fire in the jurisdictional area, including whether or not there is a need to:

- Delineate the wildland-urban interface; and
- Adopt regulations requiring
 - Defensible space around structures
 - Adequate ingress and egress to and from structures and developments to facilitate fire suppression activities; and
 - Adequate water supply for fire protection

Pondera County has a Community Wildfire Protection Plan with a number of specific recommendations that address the Growth Policy requirements. Cossitt recommended that the jurisdictions implement the recommendations of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Requirements related to Subdivision Review. State law (76-3-601, MCA requires the growth policy include:

A statement explaining how the governing bodies will:

- Define the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a); (Note that these are the criteria used to determine the impact of subdivisions on agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, local services, and public health and safety) and
- Evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a);
- How public hearings regarding proposed subdivisions will be conducted.

Cossitt indicated that a simple proposal would be to outline a process for “how” each of the subdivision pieces would be met. The growth policy could state that the planning board would consider the definitions and criteria in the model regulations that are available from the Montana Association of Counties, also any new model regulations that might come from the Montana Community Technical Assistance Program (in Dept of Commerce), and local experience in Pondera County. Cossitt indicated the county regulations already address public hearings, and she had only a few suggested changes (as noted in the handout).

Those present agreed that the requirement for addressing subdivision would be best met by the process outlined by Cossitt.

19. Refining Draft Goal Statements

Committee ran out of time and did not discuss draft goal statements.

20. Wrap-up and Next Steps

Next meeting will be in November.

Committee requested more information on the International Fire Code.

VALIER GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Valier Civic Center

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Valier Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: Cathy Brandvold, Jeff Cleveland, Renee Gabbard, Leo Malinak,
 - Not Attending: Cary DeBoo
- Others:
 - Mayor McKenzie Graye, Tom Hoover
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

Focus specifically on goals and land use for town of Valier. Also provide status report on overall project effort and schedule, etc.

21. Follow-up to September Meeting

Last meeting was in September and included a steering committee meeting and open house in Valier and another in Conrad. At the steering committee meeting in Valier, participants requested that the next round of steering committees be focused on each individual jurisdiction and that information on annexation be provided.

22. Survey Questionnaire

Surveys have gone out to a random sample of persons who own property in the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. The deadline for responses is in a few weeks and we should have results by the next open house.

23. Summary of Annexation Process

Anne Cossitt reviewed a two-page summary of the annexation process in Montana.

24. Draft Future Land Use Maps for Valier

Committee members discussed the alternative future land use maps for Valier –1) the “Compact Community Alternative” and 2) the “Expansive Community Alternative.” In the Compact Community Alternative, most development would occur at town densities and infill would be promoted before annexation or extension of city services. As the town fills in vacant lots, efforts would be made to re-locate the airport in the long-term (20 years or more) to provide for more residential building within city limits. In the Expansive Community Alternative, the airport would stay in city limits, development would outside of existing town limits in a sprawling rural residential pattern with lots varying in size from one acre or so to much larger. Participants selected the “Compact Community Alternative” with no changes.

25. Draft Broad Goal Statements

Participants discussed the following issues;

- Need to address vacant-abandoned derelict buildings –need to demolish or repair/upgrade
- Most sewer extensions will also require lift stations
- Desire to have businesses move in that would be clean industry and employ 25-50 persons
- High school is losing students; we need to do something to get families here to stay to keep school viable
- People are interested in moving to Valier as a bedroom community (to Shelby, Cutbank, Browning), but there are no rentals available—there is a market for duplexes, rentals

The following changes were suggested to the draft goals:

Goal A: Economy – add discussion in strategies that includes need to look at what other similar communities are doing to stimulate their economies; identify the need for a grantwriter

Strategy C-1: Change as follows: *Improve condition of commercial and residential buildings ~~arees~~ that are deteriorated, vacant or need repair.*

Strategy C-3: Note need to coordinate with the county on cell and wind tower facilities as these will mostly be located outside of town limits.

Strategy E-2: Change as follows: *~~Consider developing~~Develop a new five-year Capital Improvements Program every five years (with first in 2013) so that infrastructure needs can be more comprehensively and publicly reviewed than likely through annual updates.* (Note: the town has already committed to developing a five-year program)

Strategy F-2: Change as follows: *Support fire department and emergency medical response to ensure continued service and actively recruit volunteers.* (Note: the ambulance department is now five persons with two about to retire.)

Strategy G-2: No change, but note that existing events include Homesteader Days and Fishing Days.

26. Other Elements of the Growth Policy

Cossitt briefly reviewed other elements of the growth policy, including inter-jurisdictional coordination – how the town and county will coordinate on matters related to the Growth Policy.

27. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Next meeting will be Tuesday, January 25, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and the purpose will be to finalize draft plan for open houses.

VALIER – CONRAD - PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 15, 10a.m. - noon

Conrad Library

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: Cheryl Curry, LeeAnn Hermance, Ron Jones, Paul Kronebusch, Dan Picard, Ken Wheeler
 - Not Attending: Chris Berg, Trina Jo Bradley, Chuck DeBoo, Mark Grubb, Jack Holden, Ken Johnson, Paul Johnson, Aaron Jones, Ali Newkirk, John Shevlin,
- Others:
 - None
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

Focus specifically on goals and land use for the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. Also provide status report on overall project effort and schedule, etc.

28. Follow-up to September Meeting

Last meeting was in September and included a steering committee meeting and open house in Valier and another in Conrad. At the steering committee meeting in Valier, participants requested that the next round of steering committees be focused on each individual jurisdiction and that information on annexation be provided.

Growth Policy Committee Membership. Anne Cossitt reviewed Pondera County Growth Policy Committee membership status with those present. Many of the members have never attended any meetings or have only attended one meeting. Many have never responded to the phone calls and email messages requesting a response about attending an upcoming meeting. Chris Berg indicated that he no longer could serve. Committee Members asked Anne to follow up with other members who have never attended or only attended once to see if they still want to serve. At this point, those present agreed that it was late to be including people who had not participated to date.

29. Survey Questionnaire

Surveys have gone out to a random sample of persons who own property in the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. The deadline for responses is in a few weeks and we should have results by the next open house. Cheryl Curry reported that response rate to date was 37%.

30. Summary of Annexation Process

Anne Cossitt reviewed a two-page summary of the annexation process in Montana.

31. Draft Future Land Use Maps for Pondera County

Committee members discussed the draft future land use map for the unincorporated areas of the county. Participants concurred that the future land use map looked about right and had no specific changes. The group did, however suggest some changes to the narrative as follows:

Page two under “Planning Direction for the Agricultural Area”

Third bullet that reads: “Energy-related development including oil and gas production and wind energy are appropriate for provided they do not impair agricultural operations. Committee members felt that “do not impair” could be interpreted to mean no impacts – when in fact energy-related development could be generally compatible and minimally impact agricultural operations and that would be acceptable.

Fourth bullet: “Major subdivisions are not appropriate for this planning area.” Need to clarify that major subdivisions would be appropriate within some of the expansion areas around towns.

Last bullet: “New developments should avoid diminishing the available water or otherwise harming existing agricultural irrigation and drainage systems.” More information or clarification is needed on this as it is not clear what this is intended to address.

Page three: typo on last bullet – delete the word “including” from the sentence.

32. Draft Broad Goal Statements

Participants discussed the following items:

- Acronyms: Be sure and spell these out the first time they are used.

- Add a strategy in this document to support or encourage the Brady School to be once again part of Pondera County school system (instead of its current administrative location as part of the Dutton School District).

Goal A: Economy – Add specifics about the Pondera Port Authority and the RC&D in Shelby. Spell out Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Goal B: County Land Development Patterns

- Add in a strategy to adopt a “Right-to-Farm” policy
- B-5 strategy – “infill” needs to be defined

Goal C: Public Safety

- C-3 – This needs to be re-worked in coordination with LeeAnn Hermance, Floodplain Coordinator – the county is in the process of determining what should be done with floodplain analysis on Pondera Creek (note: Pondera Creek flows south of Conrad; Pondera Coulee is to the north).

Goal E: Infrastructure

- E-3. “Mitigate the growth-inducing affects of new water supply pipelines as new lines are extended to rural areas of the county.” Delete word “rural” and replace with “unincorporated.” What would “mitigation” be?
- E-4 – Add regional water projects to potential effects to county roads and bridges.

Goal F: Drinking Water

Note: the water at the Dupuyer School is not potable.

Goal G: Natural Areas

Delete the 2nd bullet – it can too easily be confused with the trans-continental wildlife corridor effort, which is not supported locally.

33. Other Elements of the Growth Policy

Cossitt briefly reviewed other elements of the growth policy, including inter-jurisdictional coordination – how the town and county will coordinate on matters related to the Growth Policy.

Those present also suggested that the Growth Policy be titled the “Comprehensive Plan” as many people do not see the county as growing and it is confusing.

The Committee members present suggested that Cossitt see if the growth policy committees of Valier and Conrad would be available to meet on Wednesday Feb 23, prior to the open house in Conrad. It was suggested that the steering committee meeting be from 6:00-7:30 and the open house from 7:30 to 9:00. Primary purpose of the combined steering committee meeting would be to discuss future development and coordination on lands outside municipal boundaries.

34. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The County Commissioners have requested that the next Pondera County Growth Policy Committee meeting be held on January 27, Thursday from 10 a.m.- noon. (Note: this per conversation held between Anne Cossitt and Commissioner Cyndi Johnson after the Steering Committee meeting.)

Cossitt offered to also meet with folks in Dupuyer and Brady when she comes for the next meetings in January. Dan Picard suggested doing it in the morning at the Co-op in Brady. Cossitt asked for at least one steering committee member to attend in Brady and Dupuyer. Dan said he could not make the session in Brady and Paul Kronenbusch was suggested. In Dupuyer, the general store was suggested. Cossitt will contact Ali Newkirk.

Cossitt will prepare a news article regarding the listening sessions in Dupuyer and Brady, once dates times finalized.

Committee members requested Anne to bring the maps that were presented at the September open house. These can be used to set up information posts at various locations (like banks). Cheryl Curry offered to assist.

VALIER – CONRAD - PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

CONRAD GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Conrad Library

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Conrad Growth Policy Committee Members:
 - Attending: Karla Breeding, Laurie Eisenzimer, Barbara Shephard, Rick Moss
 - Not Attending: Debbie Wilcox, Judy Ellis
- Others: None
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

Focus specifically on goals and land use for Conrad area. Also provide status report on overall project effort and schedule, etc.

35. Follow-up to September Meeting

Last meeting was in September and included a steering committee meeting and open house in Valier and another in Conrad. At the steering committee meeting in Valier, participants requested that the next round of steering committees be focused on each individual jurisdiction and that information on annexation be provided.

Committee members suggested Anne Cossitt call Debbie Wilcox since she has not attended the last few meetings.

36. Survey Questionnaire

Surveys have gone out to a random sample of persons who own property in the unincorporated areas of Pondera County. The deadline for responses is in a few weeks and we should have results by the next open house.

37. Summary of Annexation Process

Anne Cossitt reviewed a two-page summary of the annexation process in Montana.

38. Draft Future Land Use Maps for Pondera County

Committee members discussed the alternative future land use maps for Conrad—1) the “Compact Community Alternative” and 2) the “Expansive Community Alternative.” In the Compact Community Alternative, most new development would occur at town densities with less sprawling land use. In the Expansive Community Alternative, city edges would become less distinct as low density development extends around the town. Participants selected the “Compact Community Alternative” with the following changes/comments:

- Existing Land Use- Zoning Summary (presented previously but also reviewed at this meeting): the summary left out the “Trailer Park Zone- Mobile Home Park” description.
- Discrepancy in zoning district titles in map and in narrative: Low Industrial – Limited Commercial. Participants preferred “Low Industrial” to “Limited Commercial” and “Heavy Industrial” to “Industrial”
- Page 4, first bullet under “Industrial” –“Uses” – the description is the same as for “Low Industrial” (Limited Commercial). Needs to change to reflect heavier uses in the paragraph that describes “Industrial.” Also, need to specifically reference the highway rest stop as a public use and provide other examples if applicable of acceptable public uses.
- Note that the area in dark purple (area along railroad tracks) on the map floods easily – if it rains heavily there is standing water in this area
- Page 6, second paragraph. Narrative describes four primary expansion areas, but looks like only three on the map.
- Karla Breiding said she would provide a map of the airport influence area.
- Page 6, last paragraph before “Expansive Community” -- add city water to last sentence that says” City sewer service should not be extended here except for town-pattern development.”
- Clean up typos.

39. Draft Broad Goal Statements

Participants discussed the following items:

- Strategy E-4 (re: Main Street corridors) – add landscaping to the list of possible improvements

40. Other Elements of the Growth Policy

Cossitt briefly reviewed other elements of the growth policy, including inter-jurisdictional coordination – how the town and county will coordinate on matters related to the Growth Policy.

41. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Committee members suggested the meeting on January 26 be held from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Also suggested that there be a Conrad coffee shop “listening session” when Cossitt returns in January (similar to the sessions in Brady and Dupuyer). Karla Breeding offered to check to see if the mayor would be interested in attending.

VALIER – CONRAD - PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

VALIER GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 25, Civic Center in Valier

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Valier Growth Policy Committee and Planning Board:
 - Attending: Cathy Brandvold, Jeff Cleveland
 - Not Attending: Kurt Christaens, Renee Gabbard, Tom Hoover, Judy King, Leo Malinak
- Others:
 - Mayor McKenzie Graye, Cheryl Curry, Joseph Evans
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

To review draft growth policy prior to public meeting in February; finalize schedule and approach

1. Follow-up to Previous Meeting

No changes to the meeting notes from previous meeting.

2. Survey questionnaire – update

Cossitt briefly reviewed the county survey results; pointing out that nearly three-quarter of all county landowners would like to see development in or near existing communities, which coincides with the Valier’s preference for new development within town limits.

3. Review-Discussion of Initial Draft Plan

Cossitt quickly discussed the basic components of the plan, pointing out that Part 4 includes the timeline for implementation as well as other miscellaneous requirements of state law. These include certain provisions for subdivisions, wildland fire, infrastructure strategy. She pointed out that the subdivision section does not include definitions for the “608(3)(a) criteria,” the

topics that a subdivision must be reviewed against to determine any significant effects and necessary mitigation. Instead, the growth policy identifies the process for determining definitions and the “evaluation” of impacts. The mayor will check with the town attorney to determine if identifying process (instead of individual definitions and evaluation criteria) is adequate for the growth policy.

Much discussion on the two alternative land use plans. Cossitt reviewed information on the airport obtained from the Aviation Division of the Montana Department of Transportation.

Committee members agreed to release the draft plan as is for the next open house in February.

4. Priority-Setting

Those present agreed that the top priorities to begin in the first year would be to file the municipal boundary with the clerk and recorder, update zoning to conform with the growth policy, begin work to facilitate more quality rental housing, and initiate annual review and annual work plan to implement growth policy.

5. Format for Open House-Public Meeting

Open house format with formal presentation like last time worked fine. Those present were open to the combined county-town format, as was done in the first open house. Those present agreed on 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 for open house and no separate growth policy committee meeting before or after.

Cossitt will prepare two articles for the newspaper outlining issues prior to the open house.

6. Listening Session

Group decided to have a “listening session” at the One Stop on Wed a.m. following the open house (7-8:30 a.m).

7. Growth Policy Committee and Coordinating with Planning Board and Town Council

Kurt Christiaens has attended only the first meeting. Cossitt was requested to contact to see if he still wants to be active. Cossitt is also to call Judy King to clarify role on planning board.

8. Finalize Schedule/Approach

After the public open houses, the growth policy committee and planning board will finalize the draft growth policy via email with Cossitt Consulting. A conference call can be arranged if needed. The next time the consultant will come to Valier is to attend the planning board hearing. Cossitt Consulting will prepare notices for the public hearing, which will be held in April. Once the planning board makes its recommendation after the public hearing, the town council will make its decision. It is anticipated that the decision could be finalized in May.

9. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Cossitt will prepare for the public open houses in Valier.

VALIER – CONRAD - PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

CONRAD GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, January 26, Conrad Library

5:30-7:30 p.m.

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Conrad Growth Policy Committee
 - Attending: Karla Breeding, Judy Ellis, Laurie Eisenzimer, Richard Moss, Barb Shephard
 - Not Attending: Debbie Wilcox
- Others:
 - Gary Dent, Wally Larson, Betty McBratney, Jay Taylor
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

To review draft growth policy prior to public meeting in February; finalize schedule and approach

10. Follow-up to Previous Meeting

No changes to the meeting notes from the previous meeting.

11. Listening Session – results

Karla Breeding, Laurie Eisenzimer and Judy Ellis attended the “listening session” at the Home Café in Conrad on Wednesday morning from 7:30-9:00 a.m. along with Anne Cossitt. Contact was made with about 12-15 people, some of whom had not heard of the growth policy, and some of whom had received surveys or had attended the open house. Of those who were interested in discussing, most had questions rather than opinions.

12. Survey questionnaire – update

Cossitt briefly reviewed the county survey results; pointing out that nearly three-quarter of all county landowners would like to see development in or near existing communities, which

coincides with the Conrad's preference for new development in municipal limit (and for municipal limits to expand as needed).

13. Review-Discussion of Initial Draft Plan

Committee agreed to submit the draft growth policy to the public (for the open houses) as is with the following changes – use the latest future land use section (presented at the meeting) and add a specific strategy to encourage rental housing (similar to Valier's). Also noted that there are some typographical errors in Part Two – incorporation date of Conrad and population projection was incorrect (too low).

The committee discussed the land to be zoned that the city owns for the new industrial commercial park east of the north interstate interchange. What is in the plan now is fairly general and includes commercial, light-industrial, and offices. The group discussed the possibility of a truck stop or hotel up in that area. They agreed to leave the description as is.

Committee members also agreed that a motel on the south end of Conrad (as discussed at last meeting) was not likely a possibility and should not be specifically addressed in the plan. Currently there is little space in the municipal limits for a hotel/motel on the south end of the city and developing it south of city limits could encourage strip development.

Those present also clarified that Pondera Coulee should be called Pondera Creek.

14. Priority-Setting

Those present agreed that the priorities for the first year should include filing the municipal boundary, zoning update, rental housing, and annual review and annual workplan for growth policy implementation.

15. Format for Open House-Public Meeting

Open house format with formal presentation like last time worked fine. Those present were open to the combined county-city format, as was done in the first open house. Those present agreed on 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 for open house and no separate growth policy committee meeting before or after.

Cossitt will prepare two articles for the newspaper outlining issues prior to the open house.

16. Growth Policy Committee and Coordinating with Planning Board and City Council

Corrections were made to the lists for Conrad. Cossitt will contact City Clerk for current list of planning board members. There is overlap between membership of Growth Policy Committee, Planning Board, and City Council. Cossitt encouraged good communication with planning board and council so that members anticipate the plan and understand how it was created so that adoption of the growth policy is a smooth process.

17. Finalize Schedule/Approach

After the public open houses, the growth policy committee will finalize the draft growth policy via email with Cossitt Consulting. A conference call can be arranged if needed. The draft growth policy will then be forwarded to the Planning Board with Growth Policy Committee recommendation to adopt. The next time the consultant will come to Conrad is to attend the planning board hearing. Cossitt Consulting will prepare notices for the public hearing, which will be held in April. Once the planning board makes its recommendation after the public hearing, the city council will make its decision. It is anticipated that the decision could be finalized in May.

18. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Cossitt will prepare for the public open houses in Conrad.

VALIER – CONRAD - PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

PONDERA COUNTY GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 27, Conrad Library

10:00 a.m - noon

Meeting Summary - DRAFT

Attending:

- Pondera County Growth Policy Committee
 - Attending: Cheryl Curry, LeeAnn Hermance, Paul Kronenbusch
 - Not Attending: Ron Jones, Ali Newkirk, Dan Picard, Kenneth Wheeler
- Others:
 - Commissioner Sandy Broesder, Wendy Judisch
- Consultant Team: Anne Cossitt

Meeting Purpose:

To review draft growth policy prior to public meeting in February; finalize schedule and approach

19. Follow-up to Previous Meeting

No changes to the meeting notes from the previous meeting (OK as changed per edits from Dan Picard).

20. Listening Session – results

Ali Newkirk hosted the listening session in Dupuyer. There were only a handful of people who stopped by. There were general questions about the growth policy and also concern expressed about water quality in Dupuyer. The school has water that is non-potable, but their well is deep, so it is not the same as the issue of pollutants in the shallower aquifer that is the source of most drinking water supply in Dupuyer. Also, people clarified that not everyone shares the concern of drinking water in Dupuyer.

Paul Kronenbusch attended the listening session with Anne Cossitt in Dupuyer. Kronenbusch and Cossitt spoke with about 10-12 individuals there. There were general questions and specific concerns raised about Brady – the school, in particular—but nothing that would indicate a change in the plan as currently drafted.

21. Survey questionnaire – update

Survey respondents Forrest L. and Georgina M. Long won the dinner at the Lighthouse and Donovan and Reta Weisgram won the dinner at Joe’s Steakhouse.

Cossitt reviewed survey results with committee. The committee walked through each response to the question regarding possible goals for land use planning to determine if any additional goal or objective was needed for the plan. The committee agreed that the responses validated what was in the plan and felt that the plan goals and future land use section adequately covered the survey responses on this question. No changes were needed to the plan as a result of the survey responses (other than to add survey results as background information).

22. Review-Discussion of Initial Draft Plan

Changes noted as follows.

Planning Area Boundary – jurisdictional area of the planning board has not been filed. Part One, page 1, includes a recommended boundary – it needs to be amended to indicate the area includes “deeded” lands within Blackfeet Reservation that are wholly owned by non-tribal members. Cossitt will send Sandy Broesder the process outlined in law for filing planning area boundaries.

Public Safety Goal – add information in context portion about the PDM plan updates and need to address Dupuyer floodplain.

Change planning strategy F-1 to read: Encourage privately initiated analysis of drinking water quality in the Dupuyer area.

Part Four-Coordination with Municipalities (page 5): Check on correct notification for Conrad (2 miles) regarding subdivision review and comment. County will submit subdivisions within one mile of Valier for review. Also add statement regarding coordination on expansion areas around each municipality.

Those present agreed that the county could coordinate with incorporated municipalities on preferred land use patterns in future expansion areas identified in the growth policies for Valier and Conrad.

OK'd change from name of document from "growth policy" to "comprehensive plan."

23. Priority-Setting

Those present agreed that the priorities for the first year should include updating the subdivision regulations, addressing floodplain matters, implement the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan recommendations, and annual review and annual work plan for implementing the growth policy.

Paul Kronenbusch said that another committee he is on keeps a checklist of the actions items in their plan and lists which have been accomplished. Cossitt suggested she could prepare an initial checklist to accompany the growth policy.

24. Format for Open House-Public Meeting

Format at last open house worked fine. The county open house will be held in conjunction with the open houses in Valier and Conrad.

25. Committee Membership

Those present indicated that those persons who have not attended a meeting or only attended one meeting should be removed from the Growth Policy Committee. Sandy Broesder said that she is no longer on the Pondera County Planning Board, per the recommendation of the Montana Association of Counties consulting attorneys.

26. Growth Policy Committee and Coordinating with Planning Board and County Commissioners

There is overlap between membership of Growth Policy Committee and Planning Board. Cossitt encouraged good communication between Growth Policy Committee and other planning board members and County Commission so that adoption of the growth policy is a smooth process.

27. Finalize Schedule/Approach

After the public open houses, the growth policy committee will finalize the draft growth policy via email with Cossitt Consulting. A conference call can be arranged if needed. The draft growth policy will then be forwarded to the Planning Board with Growth Policy Committee

recommendation to adopt. The next time the consultant will come to Pondera County is to attend the planning board hearing. Cossitt Consulting will prepare notices for the public hearing, which will be held in April. Once the planning board makes its recommendation after the public hearing, the county commission will make its decision. It is anticipated that the decision could be finalized in May.

28. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Cossitt will prepare for the public open houses in Conrad and Valier.

GROWTH POLICIES FOR CONRAD, VALIER, AND PONDERA COUNTY
SUMMARY OF FEBRUARY OPEN HOUSES AND LISTENING SESSIONS

February 22, Open House – Valier, 7:00-8:45 p.m.

Participants: 6

Anne Cossitt presented an overview of the results of the county survey and also work on the growth policies for Valier and Conrad to date.

Discussion during the open house included the following:

Generally, those present liked the concepts of the “compact town alternative” but do not want to see airport moved. Someone indicated that larger airplanes will need a bigger airport anyway. Those present indicated they might need to re-assess moving the airport if the planes were bigger or there was a lot of noisy traffic. Cheryl Curry suggested keeping the airport in the long-range plan and assessing every 5 years with scheduled plan updates. Everyone seemed to be OK with using the northwest portion of the airport—it’s currently being proposed as the area for new Babe Ruth baseball fields, which could transition to residential use in the long-term.

Some people seemed to think the holding area (Compact Town Alternative) was preferable to the “status quo” of the “rural-residential” and others wanted to be able to build as they pleased.

There was general consensus that the proposed zoning within town boundaries was a good idea.

February 23, Listening Session – Valier – One Stop; 7-8:30 a.m.

Spoke with a half dozen or more folks there. Comments included the following:

“You can’t turn the land north of the railroad into business area, it’s too valuable for grain production.”

“This place could really take off with the oil and gas development that’s occurring (going to occur) in Cutbank and Heart Butte. That could result in 150 or more new jobs.”

“This town just won’t let anybody do anything. Someone wanted to build a new shop (construction related) but he didn’t have sewer connection so they wouldn’t let him build. That’s just not right.”

“Airport needs to stay.” Reasons varied: good for town to have planes fly there; my house is on edge and I have a view but if they put houses there I will lose my view.

“Airport needs to go.”

Airport was designed so that planes do not fly over town (look at runway layout). Most used runways are the east west – as that is direction of winds.

Most people seemed OK with using NW portion of airport for residential expansion as needed.

February 23, Listening Session – Valier- Panther Café, 11:00 a.m. - noon

No one was interested in talking. Handed out the info sheet with the web site address to a 6-8 persons.

Wednesday, Feb 23 – Conrad Open House, 7:30 -9:00 p.m.

Participants: 13

Anne Cossitt presented an overview of the results of the county survey and also work on the growth policies for Valier and Conrad to date.

Discussion during the open house included the following:

Several comments and questions related to mobile homes. One fellow wants to see mobiles without foundations in their own mobile home courts; they can be quite nice and he grew up in one. Not the kind of thing that is on the east side of the tracks in Conrad, but something much nicer.

What is the difference between a mobile home and manufactured housing? Mobile homes are pre-1976. Manufactured housing is post 1976. They can still be “mobile” – without a foundation and ready to be picked up and hauled by truck. Most new manufactured housing is intended for more permanent foundations.

There is a wide variety of quality in manufactured housing. Need for standards to address. Otherwise afraid today’s manufactured homes will just end up being like pre-1976 mobile homes.

In future land use, focus on infill on vacant lots and also decrepit buildings that should be torn down – where is the help/aid/resources to help with decrepit structures?

APPENDIX D

Public Opinion Survey - 2008

TOWN OF VALIER

No. Rec'd: 155 = 54%

Valier, Montana (thru 01/19/08)

Community Opinion Survey Tally

1. How do you rate Valier as a place to live? (Check one)			Good 97	Average 51	Poor 7
2. How many years have you lived in Valier?			< 5 YRS 31	5 - 10 21	10+ YRS 103
3. Age of Head of Household?	18 - 29 6	30 - 39 18	40 - 49 30	50 - 65 54	Over 65 47
4. Education of Head of Household?	< 9 YRS 5	Diploma 56	Vo-Tech 15	College 68	Master's 11
			Yes	No	No Opinion
5. Are you satisfied with the quality of educational programs in the area?			104	24	27
6. Does the area need more Women, Infant and Children Programs?			33	58	64
7. Are more convalescent/nursing homes needed?			48	63	44
8. Does Valier need an assisted living facility?			76	43	36
9. Are you satisfied with medical services provided?			100	36	19
10. Are there adequate services for senior citizens?			76	40	39
11. Do you believe that sufficient financial services are provided locally?			90	43	22
12. Is there adequate business development and management assistance available locally?			50	55	50
13. Do you own your home?			140	11	4
14. Is adequate low-income housing available within Valier?			70	46	39
15. Are you satisfied with your water service?			63	86	6
16. Would you support water meters to assure fairness in user charges based on the amount of water you actually use, and to promote system-wide conservation?			80	62	13
17. Is Source Water Protection important to you?			133	10	12
18. Are you satisfied with your sewer service?			120	20	15
19. Are your neighborhood's street conditions adequate?			38	111	6
20. Are emergency services (police/fire protection) adequate?			125	22	8
21. Is the City-County airport adequate to meet our future needs?			79	26	50
22. Are disabled/handicapped access and facilities adequate in town?			99	29	27
23. Would you support seeking state or federal assistance to make improvements within Valier?			128	7	20
24. Would you support user fees or rate increases to make road improvements and other necessary improvements in Valier?			87	49	19

[illegible]

***Please return completed survey to Becky Beard at BETA
by December 17, 2007.***

Thank you!

Beard Environmental & Technical Assistance (BETA)
P.O. Box 85
Elliston MT 59728-0085
Tel. (406) 492-6590

APPENDIX E

MAPS

Valier

- 1) Base" map
- 2) Water-sewer maps
- 3) Public-Private ownership
- 4) Tax classifications – all
- 5) Zoning
- 6) Future Land Use Map



Town of Valier

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
 Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2500
 Units: Meters Datum: NAD1983

VICINITY MAP

Valier, Montana

Map 1

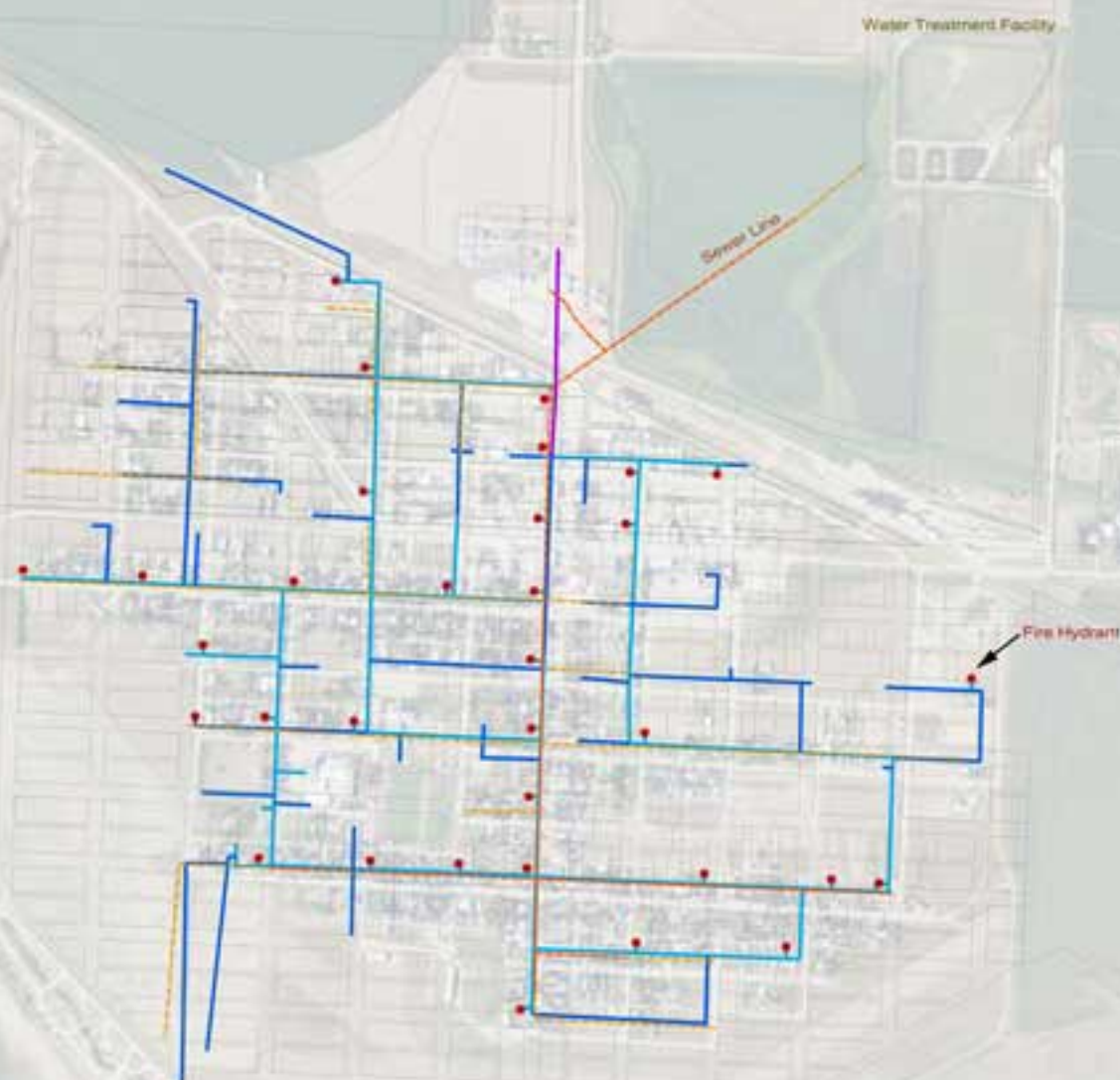
This map represents a base map for the town of Valier, Montana. The town was named for Peter Valier, who supervised construction of the Montana Western Railway's railroad line between Valier and Conrad, Montana.

This map was prepared September 2010 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project. Road information, the municipal boundary, parks and locations of buildings provided by Pondera County E/911 Dept. and the town of Valier.

MAP LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Paved Road | | School / Library |
| | Gravel / Dirt Road | | Post Office |
| | Railroad | | Sheriff / Fire Hall |
| | Cadastral Survey Lots | | Reference Building |
| | Municipal Boundary* | | Park |
| *Town of Valier is currently reviewing the municipal boundary | | | Surface Water / Ditch |





Water and Sewer Town of Valier

Map 2

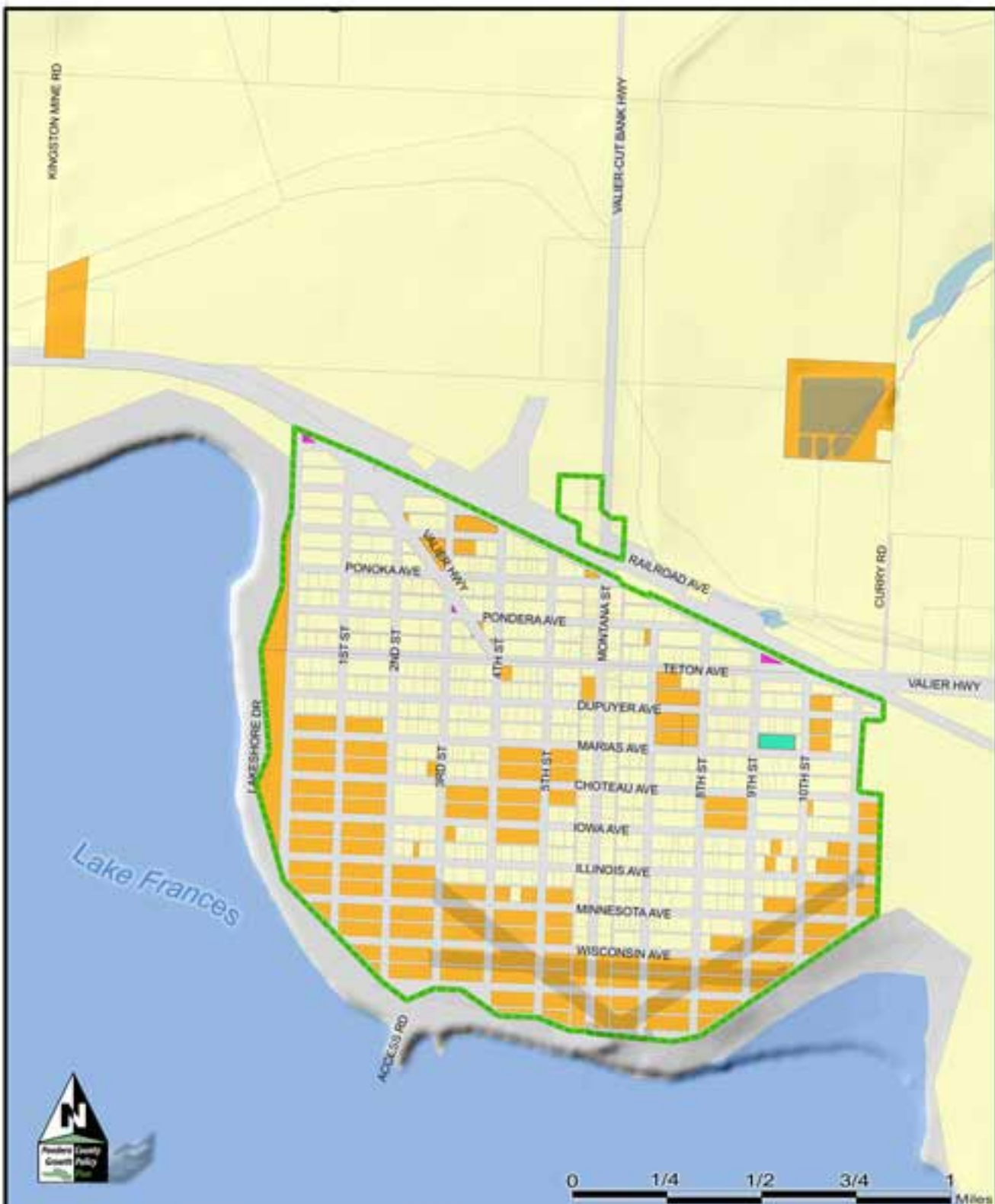
This map provides an overview of the water and sewer infrastructure in the town of Valier. This map is intended to be used as a general guide and planning tool. Data were digitized and entered into GIS mapping system using hand-colored paper maps held by the town. Contact the town of Valier to see the official maps.

This map was prepared September 2010 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project. Spatial data (base maps) were obtained from the Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse - Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS).



-Magnetic Declination = 13° 44' E

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
 Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2500
 Units: Meters Datum: NAD1983



Land Ownership Valier, MT

Map 3

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2500
Units: Meters Datum: NAD1983



Land ownership information shown on this map is from the Montana Cadastral Survey data. The cadastral survey information simplifies subtleties in land ownership by providing cadastral information in different components, cadastral reference (GCDDB PLSS in Montana), parcels, and related coincident geometry trust lands, stipulations, subsurface rights, boundaries, etc). Montana Cadastral Framework is built primarily upon the measurement based cadastral reference of the Geographic Coordinate Database (GCDDB) maintained by the BLM, with tax parcels as defined by the Department of Revenue.

This map was prepared September 2010 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project.

Legend

Ownership

- Private
- Local Government
- State Government
- Tribal
- Right of Way

Map Features

- Municipal Boundary*
- Water Feature
- Waterbody

*The base of water is currently showing the municipal boundary.

Land Use Tax Classification Town of Valier

Map 4

Legend

Land Use Tax Classification

-  exempt property
-  residential urban
-  vacant land rural
-  commercial urban
-  residential rural
-  agricultural rural
-  industrial rural
-  industrial urban
-  farmstead rural
-  non-valued property

 Valier Municipal Boundary *

 Waterbody (National Hydrography Dataset)

Land Use Classifications were derived from the Montana Cadastral Survey Data which is a digital map dataset developed by the State of Montana - Department of Revenue. This digital map and attribute are considered the Mass Appraisal System (CAMA) database.

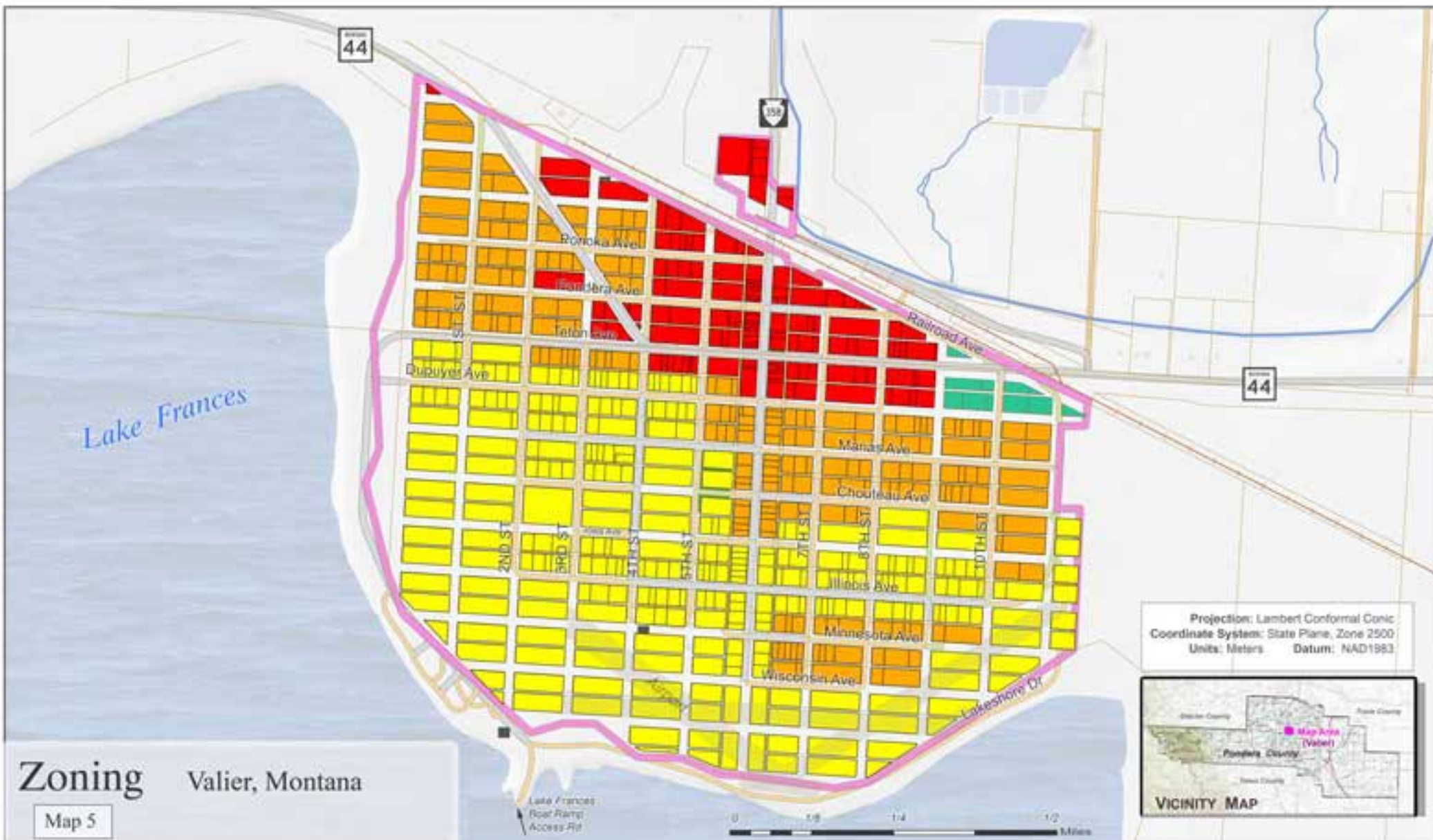
This map was prepared September 2008 by Global Positioning, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project.

* Valier Municipal Boundary is currently under review by the town of Valier.

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2000
Units: Meters Datum: NAD1983

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 Miles





Zoning Valier, Montana

Map 5

Zoning information displayed on this map is for informational purposes only. Contact the town of Valier to review official zoning information.

This map was generated from paper maps that were colored and hand-shaded by the town of Valier staff. Road information including surface type and road names along with the municipal boundary, parks and locations of buildings provided by Pondera County E/911 Dept. and the town of Valier.

This map was prepared September 2010 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project.

MAP LEGEND

Zoning

- Commercial
- Manufacturing
- Residential Zone A
- Residential Zone B

Other Map Features

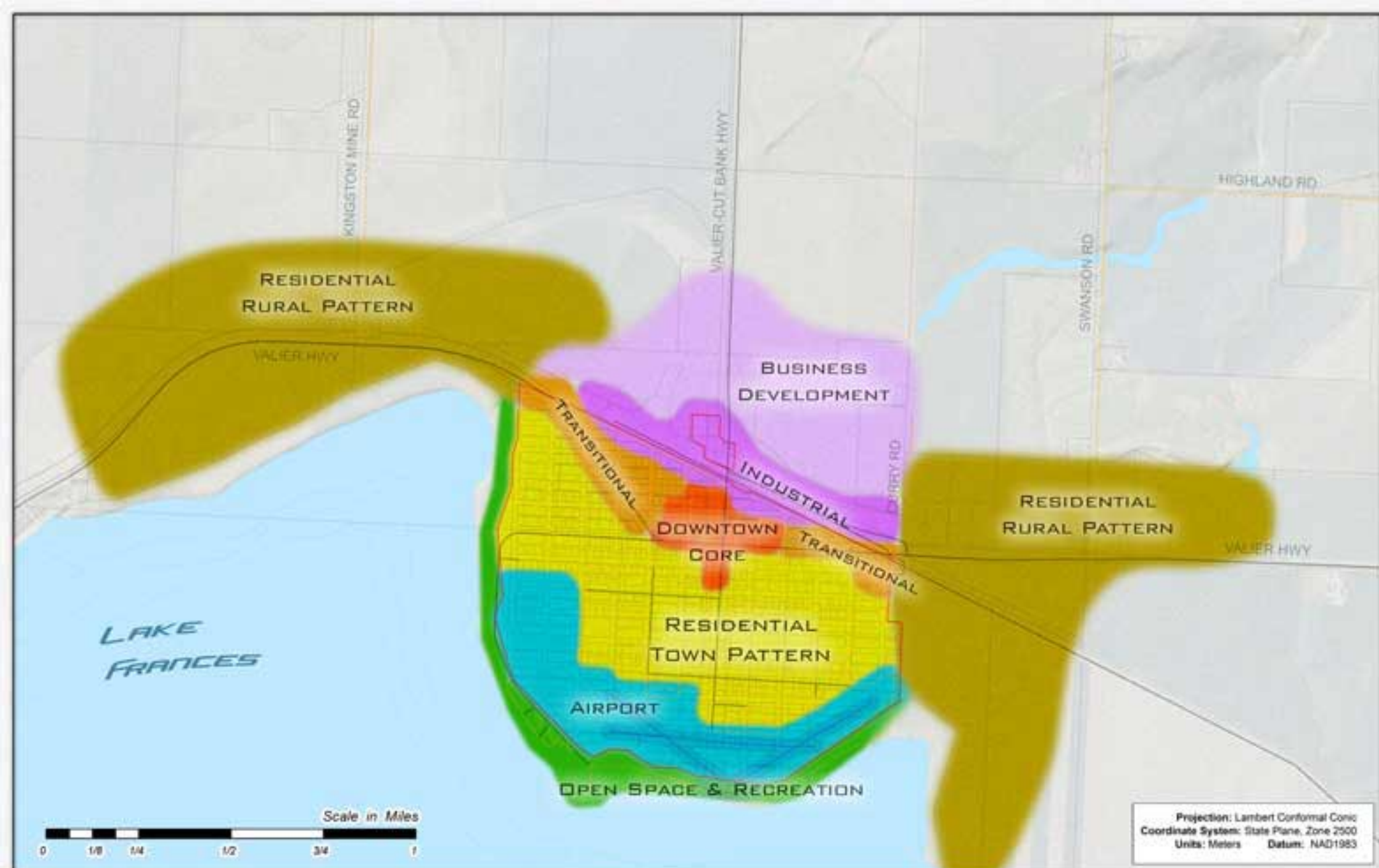
- Paved Road
- Gravel / Dirt Road
- Railroad
- Lots and Blocks
- Municipal Boundary*

Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic
Coordinate System: State Plane, Zone 2500
Units: Meters Datum: NAD1983



*Magnetic Declination = 13° 44' E

* Town of Valier Municipal Boundary is currently under review



Valier, Montana

The Land Use Plan section of the Growth Policy provides a general view of future land use for (Conrad/Valier) over the next 20 years. The Land Use Plan organizes all the expected future growth, development, and redevelopment into a pattern that is consistent with the (City's/Town's) Vision Statement and Goals. The plan represents how (Conrad/Valier) should develop over the next 20 years by showing the locations and characteristics of major land use types, such as downtown, commercial, residential, and so forth.

This map was prepared March 2011 by Global Positions, LLC as part of the Pondera County Growth Policy Project. Spatial data (base maps) were obtained from the Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse - Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS).

TOWN OF VALIER FUTURE LAND USE MAP EXPANSIVE COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVE

Map 6



APPENDIX F

Implementation Checklist

The following is a checklist to track the implementation of the growth policy.

Each year the Planning Board should review recommend a workplan for the subsequent year and submit that to the governing body for incorporation into the annual budget. The Planning Board should put a date in the “start date” column for projects approved for that year.

The Planning Board should also annually identify accomplishments and put a completion date next to the appropriate strategy.

VALIER GROWTH POLICY - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Date Started	Date Completed		
		Goal A	Diversify and expand the economy of Valier while retaining the small town character and unique recreational and aesthetic features of the town's Lake Frances shoreline.
		Strategy A-1	Develop and implement a long-range economic plan for Valier that builds on the town's strengths, including access to rail, water, and recreational opportunities of Lake Frances.
		Strategy A-2	Coordinate county-wide economic plan for Conrad, Valier, and unincorporated areas of the county through the Pondera Port Authority.
		Strategy A-3	Participate in multi-county Community Economic Development Strategy planning efforts to qualify for EDA funding.
		Strategy A-4	Work with Pondera Port Authority to identify a grant-writer/researcher to assist with project feasibility.
		Goal B	Focus new development and town renewal on the town's historic compact land use pattern that provides for cost efficiencies in infrastructure and services, walkable distances, and open space at the town's edges.
		Strategy B-1	Focus on infill development before annexation and develop policies for annexation and infrastructure extensions that provide for logical extension of traditional city block-grid patterns and densities.
		Strategy B-2	As a long-range strategy, move the airport facility to provide more infill options when the supply of vacant home sites in town becomes used up.
		Strategy B-3	Adopt subdivision regulations.
YEAR 1 PRIORITY		Strategy B-4	Update the town zoning ordinance.
YEAR 1 PRIORITY		Strategy B-5	Record the town's municipal boundary with the county clerk and recorder.
		Strategy B-6	Retain greenway areas around Lake Frances and consider potential for extending trails beyond town boundary.

VALIER GROWTH POLICY - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Date Started	Date Completed		
		Strategy B-7	Use the future land use map as the guide for decision-making for future development.
		Goal C	Enhance town appearance to make it a more desirable place to live and work for residents and a destination for visitors.
		Strategy C-1	Improve the condition of commercial and residential structures and areas that are deteriorated, vacant or need repair.
		Strategy C-2	Develop design guidelines or standards to improve the appearance of the town. (Refer to “Future Land Use” section.)
		Goal D	Encourage housing and services to accommodate working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.
		Strategy D-1	Ensure safe, affordable housing in new construction and rehabilitation or replacement alternatives to non-compliant mobile homes and substandard housing.
		Strategy D-2	Develop senior housing/assisted living options.
		Strategy D-3	Encourage services to seniors and those with disabilities in their own homes.
		Strategy D-4	Encourage transportation for seniors and those with disabilities (e.g., connections to Conrad; Conrad-Great Falls bus).
YEAR 1 PRIORITY		Strategy D-5	Facilitate development of quality rental housing for working families.

VALIER GROWTH POLICY - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Date Started	Date Completed		
		Goal E	Provide cost efficient and effective public infrastructure for the long-term.
		Strategy E-1	Continue to annually update and utilize the Valier Capital Improvements Program Plan and budgeting process.
		Strategy E-2	Develop a 5-year Capital Improvements Plan so that infrastructure needs can be more comprehensively and publicly reviewed than likely through annual updates.
		Strategy E-3	Improve cell phone and internet service to stay competitive with what is needed by residents and businesses.
		Strategy E-4	Create a program that combines grants, local tax revenues, user fees, and loans to equitably fund the extension of town utilities to un-served parts of town.
		Goal F	Provide for safety from natural disasters and for adequate emergency response for fire and medical health care.
		Strategy F-1	Implement strategies from the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan as they apply to Valier, including recommendations for building permits.
		Strategy F-2	Work to ensure fire department and emergency medical response units have personnel, equipment, and facilities to provide continued service. Actively recruit volunteers as needed.
		Goal G	Build on the town's attractiveness as a recreation destination and location for part-time residents while strengthening a full-time, year-round community.
		Strategy G-1	Encourage volunteerism (esp. for volunteer fire department and emergency response).

VALIER GROWTH POLICY - DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

[illegible]