



CITY OF WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS & MEAGHER COUNTY

Consolidated City/County Growth Policy



**DOCUMENT ADOPTED:
FEBRUARY 9, 2021**

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Consolidated City/County Growth Policy
adopted by the City Council and the County Commission on
February 9, 2021

Prepared by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The consolidation of the White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County Growth Policies was completed over a four-month period starting in October of 2020 running through January of 2021. The primary purpose of this consolidated growth policy is to:

1. Be a guiding document, NOT a regulatory document.
2. Establish the foundations for where and how the City and County will grow. This includes a Master Plan or Future Land Use Plan for the City which focuses on where and what type of new growth is desirable within the municipal boundaries.
3. Provide a framework for governmental regulations, such as updating subdivision regulations in the County and developing a zoning code in the City.
4. Balance community needs with the protection of individual property rights.
5. Strengthen and diversify the economy.
6. Provide adequate community services and infrastructure.
7. Provide essential emergency services.

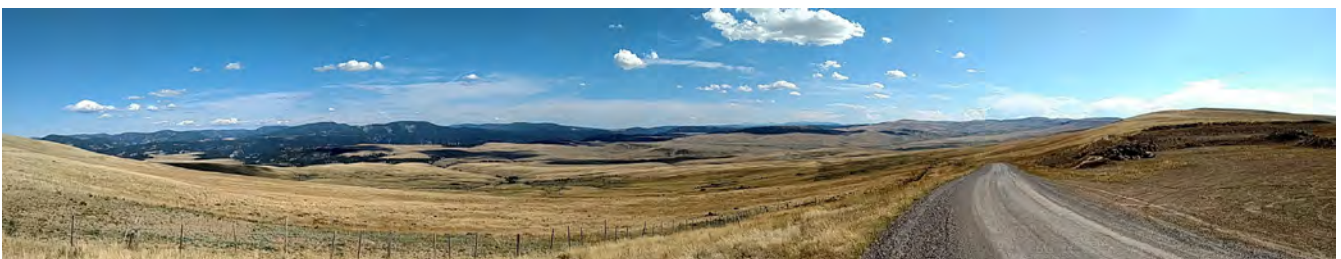
The consolidation of the City and County Growth Policies was done in response to the potential changes which are on the horizon for both jurisdictions. Like many communities in the Rocky Mountain West, the City and the County have seen their share of fluctuation in population and prosperity related to having a natural resource economy. For many years, agriculture and timber were the primary industries for residents in both jurisdictions. In recent years, increased tourism and the establishment of more independent businesses have started to create new and unique opportunities. These trends are likely to continue, particularly in White Sulphur

Springs, thus making it a more vibrant and resilient community.

This document uses the term “City” to refer to the jurisdictional area of the City of White Sulphur Springs and is meant to cover all City residents. The term “County” is used to refer to the jurisdictional area of Meagher County that is located outside of White Sulphur Springs and is meant to cover all County residents. The term County also includes all of the unincorporated communities in the County such as Checkerboard, Lennep, Martinsdale and Ringling.

Looking forward, the City and the County see the potential for new natural resource development with the Black Butte Copper Mine and the Gordon Butte Pumped Hydro Project. As of August 2020, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (“MT DEQ”) had issued final approval for the Phase I Bonding for the Black Butte Mine project, thus Phase I Development surface construction can begin at the mine site. With regards to the Gordon Butte project, as of July 2019, Absaroka Energy, the project owners, had received construction and operation permits from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. According to utility news organization, Utility Dive, in 2019 the owners had also found financing for the project through an equity investment from Denmark’s Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP), although construction has not begun. Thus, each project appears to be moving forward.

Given these high-profile projects, it is likely additional natural resource development will occur in the county in the future and may proceed unchecked without the comprehensive plan to be found in this Growth Policy. The challenge becomes balancing the City’s and the County’s historical legacy alongside new economic opportunities and realities while ensuring the continued prosperity of their residents. These assets include: their central Montana location, access to extensive public lands, natural mineral hot springs,



proximity to a downhill ski facility, multi-service medical facilities, upgraded school facilities, a newly reconstructed Main Street, and the historic character and charm of a City 75 miles from the nearest stoplight.

At the same time, the City and the County face challenges similar to many other locations in the West, primarily related to aging infrastructure and aging populations coupled with limited resources to address all of their needs. In this way, the Black Butte Copper Mine specifically provides new opportunities to resolve some of the infrastructure issues within the City and County based upon its potential impacts. This consolidated Growth Policy provides a general overview of the projected growth in the City and County using the now available detailed analysis from Sandfire Resources required by the State's Hard Rock Mining Impact Program.

INTRODUCTION

White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County are located in the heart of central Montana. The City and County are known for their rich history in agriculture (ranching and farming), tourism (located directly between two national parks and adjacent to the famed Smith River), mining (formerly a center for silver, copper and gold) and recreation. Recreational activities include hiking, biking, fishing, floating, hunting, skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and four-wheeling. These assets all add to the attraction of the area.

In addition to agriculture, the City and County were once known for their timber and milling industries. With the closure of the mills and a severe downturn in the logging industry during the early 80's, the City and County suffered significant economic loss and saw population decreases.

White Sulphur Springs, which serves as the County Seat, is the economic, social, and cultural focal point of the County. White Sulphur Springs offers City and County residents a medical center, a K-12 school system and a business community which provides primary support for the entire area. The City and Meagher County governments, along with state

agencies, support a significant number of employees. In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Postal Service provide services to the City and County residents, and the White Sulphur Springs Ranger District manages this area of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest.

The consolidation of the City and County Growth Policies is intended to help the residents of both jurisdictions plan for the future in a way which will continue to support current residents and attract new ones.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the consolidated White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County Growth Policy is to guide City and County officials and residents in addressing current and future opportunities and issues and to provide clear, consistent decision making in both jurisdictions. Those decisions should consider and focus on the physical, environmental, economic, fiscal, and social characteristics of both the City and County.

The consolidated Growth Policy is also meant to guide City and County officials and residents, to provide quality public facilities including but not limited to streets/roads, bridges, public buildings, water, sewer, utilities, parks and recreation facilities, and affordable housing. Also essential is the provision of exceptional public services like education, law enforcement, fire protection, health care, and overall City and County administration. This plan should help retain/expand existing businesses, create new businesses, provide more jobs and generally improve the quality of life for residents in the City and County.

This Growth Policy provides the enabling authority which will allow the City and County to adopt reasonable land use regulations based upon state statute, accept government grants or loans, and implement those measures in order to enhance each jurisdiction's strengths and abilities.

After setting the stage and presenting the issues, the plan gives the residents and the leaders of the City

and the County a list of goals and actions to achieve their vision.

RESIDENT OUTREACH PROCESS

The process of gathering resident input used to create this consolidated Growth Policy involved several steps. The first step involved reviewing the information and guidance collected during the development of the 2015 County document and the 2017 City document and transferring it into the consolidated document. This included the goals, objectives and actions-policies listed in the 2015 County Growth Policy and the 2017 City Growth Policy, which were identified by the City/County Planning Board as still being relevant.

The City/County Planning Board's outreach process for the consolidation process, conducted between October 2020 and January 2021, included the following steps:

- Creation of a project website to help share information about the project, including the schedule and draft documents, as well as to collect resident comments.
- Mailing of a project postcard to City and County residents to provide an alternative method of sharing information and directing them to resources and contact information about the project.
- Three Planning Board work sessions to discuss the consolidation of the documents. The work sessions were available via Zoom video conferencing due to concerns about in person meetings and the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Posting of the draft consolidated Growth Policy on the project website, and City and County websites and making hard-copies available for those without access to the internet at City Hall, the County Courthouse, and the Public Library.
- City/County Planning Board hearing in mid-January 2021 to collect resident comment and guidance on the draft Growth Policy and for the Board to make a recommendation to the governing bodies.
- Joint City Council and County Commission hearings in late January 2021 to formally adopt the consolidated document.

PLANNING FOR UNCERTAIN GROWTH

Due to remaining uncertainty about the future of projects such as the Black Butte Mine and the Gordon Butte project, projecting population and economic growth in the City and County can be challenging. Should these projects be fully developed, it is likely the City and County will experience a burst of significant growth. This poses a challenge to the task of growth planning, meaning that accommodations must be made to facilitate new residential development while ensuring flexibility and resilience in City and County policies. Policies that take into consideration existing conditions, such as current housing stock, should be a priority. Effective policies will build upon existing conditions, such as the possibility of improving the City and County's housing stock without the risk of overbuilding new homes and flooding the market.

KEY ISSUES

The following are the key issues which the City and the County are facing:

1. Historic declines in key market indicators such as tax base, population, income, employment, and school enrollment all challenge the City and County in providing and maintaining public facilities and services while trying to create a growing, vibrant local economy.
2. Economic and residential growth should occur in a manner that protects the unique character of the City and County and ensures the success of current residents and existing businesses.
3. The full operation of the Black Butte Mine would have positive impacts on the general population, workforce population, tax base and tax revenues, private sector economic growth, and school enrollment. The mine would also increase the need for and costs of providing and maintaining public facilities and services and would increase the need for new or rehabilitated housing within the City and the County. The mine would also create a decision point for the City and the County to determine what measures should be used to direct a majority of the new residential growth and

development into appropriate locations in or adjacent to the City.

4. Streets in the City are in poor condition in many locations. The issue is exacerbated in some locations where underlying water and/or sewer lines are deteriorating and need to be replaced.
5. A significant number of housing units in the City and County are in a deteriorated or deteriorating condition. Programs should be pursued to rehabilitate or replace housing in poor condition. Should the Black Butte Mine continue forward, this becomes even more urgent.
6. City and County residents want new growth and development to be located in appropriate and compatible locations and to be designed and constructed to ensure the health, safety, and livability of all residents.
7. There is no public transportation into or out of the City or County, so elderly, disabled, and low-income residents are challenged to receive necessary out-of-county medical, dental, and other services.
8. Some public buildings, such as the County Jail, are in need of complete renovation or full replacement in order to provide safe, efficient, and cost-effective service.
9. The City and County need to attract additional healthcare options such as dental and vision services.

CITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the goals, objectives and policies developed specifically for the City of White Sulphur Springs.

Economic Development

Goal: Promote economic development by expanding or stabilizing employment, income, the local economy, and tax base.

Objectives:

1. Diversify the City's economic base and tax base by encouraging growth in basic industries (e.g., processing, manufacturing, tourism/travel, natural resources).
2. Promote the development of tourism, recreation, and cultural resources to expand the economy and broaden the tax base.
3. Stimulate the retention and expansion of existing business as well as recruit or develop new businesses.
4. Work with the County and other partners to encourage the development and recruitment of new business opportunities.
5. Support business opportunities which strengthen employment, income, and the tax base.
6. Support the development of home based technology dependent business and employment opportunities.

Policies:

The City and the County will coordinate with the Meagher County Chamber of Commerce, and Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC) and other partners to implement the following policies:

- **Policy 1.** Maintain the focus of business assistance on basic sector businesses, including those which promote recreation, travel, and tourism.
- **Policy 2.** Promote recreational and cultural opportunities and quality of life offered by our small-town environment.
- **Policy 3.** Protect identified locations which are particularly suitable for residential, commercial, or industrial uses from attempts to locate conflicting or incompatible uses or development.
- **Policy 4.** The City and County will cooperate to encourage economic growth that embraces local capacity and capabilities to develop new start-up businesses, recruit new businesses, and help existing businesses with expansion plans.

→ **Policy 5.** Encourage onsite economic development services including staffing and office hours in the City and County including but not limited to MBAC staff or other relevant organizations.

Land Use

Goal: Foster logical land use development which ensures suitable amounts of land are designated for the future needs of residential, commercial, and industrial uses and for public facilities without encroaching or conflicting with neighboring uses including agricultural operations.

Objectives:

1. Utilize land use planning and regulation to support a compatible mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development to accommodate growth and minimize conflict with adjacent uses such as agricultural operations.
2. Infill development through the development/redevelopment of lots within the City is the priority for encouraging new growth.
3. The annexation of new lands will be a secondary priority for encouraging new growth in the City.
4. New subdivisions within the City or being annexed into the City shall meet all City standards and regulations.
5. Support the continued use of land use permits within the City for new construction and changes to the footprint of existing structures.
6. Consider the adoption of state building codes to ensure safe construction practices if deemed necessary in the future.
7. Establish development patterns that are well-designed and ensure properties have access to public services.
8. Ensure that new developments are located and designed to be safe from natural disasters.
9. Institute a land use permitting system and adopt City-wide zoning regulations as a means of assuring the historical integrity of the City

while ensuring harmonious future growth and protecting agricultural operations.

10. Coordinate with the County to develop a process to guide and review new subdivisions that ensures the projects will meet the standards necessary to facilitate future annexations as appropriate.

Policies:

The City will:

- **Policy 1.** Discourage development in areas of constraints, such as high groundwater, flood hazards, shallow bedrock, and natural drainage ways unless special design, construction, or other techniques can overcome the constraints.
- **Policy 2.** Encourage new development to locate in desirable locations through revised subdivision regulations, land use regulations, and extension or upgrading of City infrastructure..
- **Policy 3.** Use updated subdivision regulations to ensure comprehensive lot and block patterns and street access, quality installation and provision of utilities, and to ensure that infrastructure construction, particularly water, sewer and street facilities are paid for by developers and property owners. City subdivision regulations will require developers to provide grading and drainage plans and proper removal of stormwater run-off.
- **Policy 4.** Conduct hearings and institute City-wide zoning based on an analysis of existing use and future land use mapping provided in this plan.
- **Policy 5.** Consider the adoption of state building codes to ensure safe construction practices if deemed necessary in the future.



Public Facilities and Services

Goal: Provide adequate public facilities and services to serve current and future residents and businesses at reasonable public cost and within expected tax projections.

Objectives:

1. Provide quality, cost-effective, properly designed City facilities, and services, including streets, water, sewer, fire protection, parks and recreation, and law enforcement; and provide adequate on-going maintenance of those facilities and services.
2. Support adequate community services provided by Mountainview Medical Center, Meagher County Ambulance, White Sulphur Springs Volunteer Fire Department, Meagher County Senior Center, Meagher County Historical Association, and other organizations.
3. Coordinate with Meagher County, the White Sulphur Springs Public Schools, and other partners to achieve and track efficiency through shared services and facilities where feasible.
4. Develop and maintain a 5-6-year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) to help provide sound and effective public facilities in the City.
5. Maintain and anticipate adequate levels of equipment and qualified personnel to provide proper and functional operation and maintenance of City facilities and services.
6. Coordinate with the County to facilitate a transportation program to transport elderly, handicapped and low-income citizens to needed out-of-town medical, dental, and other services.

Policies:

→ **Policy 1.** The City will make available water and sewer services only to properties located within the City boundaries. Adjacent properties will be provided those services upon annexation. In exceptional cases, where property is isolated from the City boundaries, and the property has no other reasonable means of obtaining the service, the City may extend water and/or sewer services without annexation, provided the property owners pay the costs of extension.

→ **Policy 2.** Water and sewer hook-up fees should reflect the actual costs of connecting to the City systems or of extending the facilities. Developers and property owners will be responsible for paying for the costs of extending services to new residential and commercial development or their renovation or reconstruction, as applicable. The City may approve special districts as a means of financing the extension of such services.

→ **Policy 3.** New, expanded, or upgraded water and sewer facilities will meet engineering and construction standards approved by the City Council, and will be inspected for compliance with those standards. Where possible, new facilities will be designed and constructed to minimize maintenance and operating costs.

→ **Policy 4.** New or extended city streets will closely follow the present street pattern and be approved by the City Council. New and extended streets must meet engineering and construction standards approved by the City Council and be inspected to ensure proper construction.

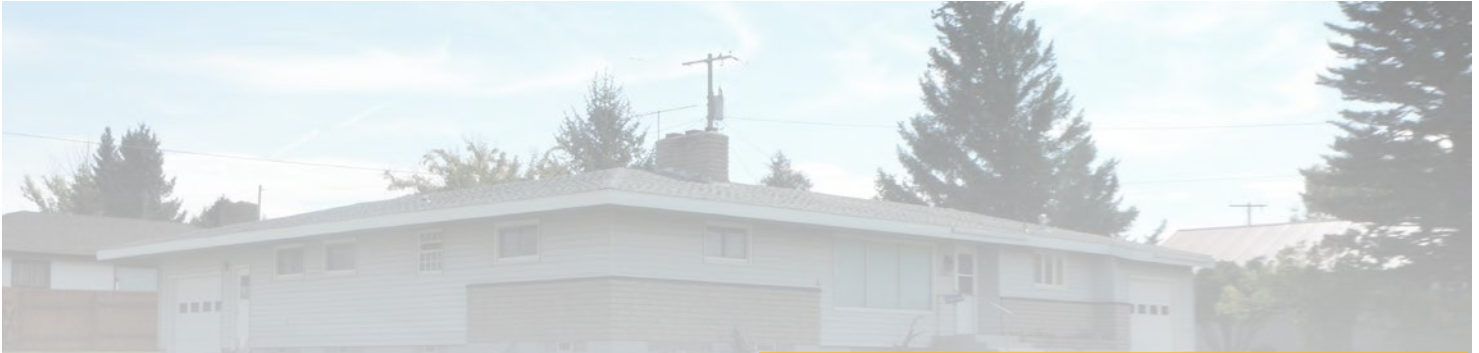
→ **Policy 5.** The City will undertake combined water/sewer line replacements and street re-paving projects where old, deteriorated, or inadequate water/sewer lines underlie streets needing repair. The purpose of these combined projects is to avoid repaving recently repaired streets in order to repair or replace broken water or sewer lines.

→ **Policy 6.** Facilities will be properly maintained and operated by trained personnel according to approved procedures to minimize deterioration and the need for repair or replacement.

→ **Policy 7.** Before approving new public facilities, the City Council shall consider whether funding for future operation and maintenance costs will be available.

→ **Policy 8.** The City will try to achieve efficiencies by coordinating with Meagher County and the White Sulphur Springs Public Schools to find opportunities for sharing costs of providing facilities and services.

→ **Policy 9.** The City will coordinate with the County to maintain and improve the public transportation program for seniors, low-income and disabled residents to obtain out-of-county medical, dental, and other services.



Housing

Goal: Encourage a variety of safe, housing options to meet the needs, preferences, and incomes of White Sulphur Springs’ residents.

Objectives:

1. Encourage a range of housing options that are safe and energy-efficient for all residents, including but not limited to our workforce, the elderly, low-income persons, and persons with disabilities.
2. Develop strategies to rehabilitate or demolish uninhabitable housing within the City that protects private property rights.

Policies:

The City will:

- **Policy 1.** Maintain understanding and knowledge of appropriate state and federal housing programs.
- **Policy 2.** The City and the County will partner with non-profits, property owners, developers, and realtors to encourage and facilitate new housing and housing rehabilitation which serves, and is affordable for, all income sectors of the White Sulphur Springs community.
- **Policy 3.** The City, County and partners will work to identify funding mechanisms to help developers and property owners pay for the disposal of the debris from demolished unsound or poor housing.

Public Communication and Information

Goal: Foster open communication and flow of information with City and County residents, businesses,

Meagher County departments, state and federal agencies, public schools, and other organizations.

Objectives:

1. Ensure City and County residents and businesses are informed of the City’s plans and actions relating to the physical, economic, fiscal, and social development of the City.
2. Ensure opportunities for local residents to be aware of, and participate in, the City’s plans and actions.
3. Evaluate available meeting spaces in the City to identify locations with adequate physical areas for in-person meetings when physical distancing is required.
4. Evaluate available communication technologies to facilitate public participation when in-person meetings are not feasible or safe.
5. Collaborate with County, state, federal, school agencies and affected private organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, MBAC, Human Resources Development Council, USFS, local service clubs).

Policies:

- **Policy 1.** The City will openly communicate with and inform local residents, businesses, and agencies of City plans and actions, through printed and electronic media and open meetings. The City will offer every possible opportunity for citizens to express their ideas and opinions on City plans, actions, and activities.
- **Policy 2.** The City will explore upgrades to its electronic communication systems to facilitate distance meeting opportunities.

COUNTY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the goals and objectives developed specifically for Meagher County and include unincorporated communities such as Checkerboard, Lenep, Martinsdale and Ringling.

Economic Development

Goal: Support agricultural operations within the County while developing and expanding other business sectors, including manufacturing, tourism, and retail sales, and taking advantage of available natural resources.

Objectives:

1. Encourage and facilitate producer access to cost-effective and efficient management practices.
2. Promote local consumption of local agricultural products.
3. Develop access to programs to expand or develop local businesses and recruit outside firms or individuals.
4. Promote the City and County as a Live, Work, Play Community for both new residents and potential employers.
5. Cooperate with the City to encourage economic growth that embraces local capacity and capabilities to develop new start-up businesses, recruit new businesses, and help existing businesses with expansion plans.
6. Market the existing high-speed internet to home-based professionals and others.
7. Encourage public and private sector services that can help retain existing services/businesses and create new business opportunities.

Policies:

The County will coordinate with the City, the County Chamber of Commerce, Montana Business Assistance Connection and other partners to implement the following policies:

→ **Policy 1.** Encourage agricultural producers use the most cost-effective and efficient management practices.

→ **Policy 2.** Increase consumption of local agricultural products.

→ **Policy 3.** Create opportunities for value added agricultural products.

→ **Policy 4.** Develop the capacity to effectively assist in expanding or developing local businesses and recruiting outside firms or individuals.

→ **Policy 5.** Encourage public and private sector services that can help retain existing services/businesses and create new business opportunities.

→ **Policy 6.** Market the existing high-speed internet to home based professionals and others.

Land Use

Goal: Protect agricultural operations within the County while facilitating logical residential development (permanent and temporary) with an eye on protecting public health and safety and providing necessary services, encouraging development of safe and reasonably priced housing for all residents. This will be done with an emphasis on coordination between City and County land use planning and infrastructure.

Objectives:

1. The developers of new subdivisions shall provide their projects with infrastructure including but not limited to wastewater treatment, drinking water, on-site roads, utilities, and fire protection water supplies.
2. New subdivisions should be located where they can be safely and efficiently provided with emergency services and should be provided access via public rights of ways and roads.
3. Roads accessing new development should be built to County Subdivision Standards.
4. Fire protection and Firewise requirements such as ingress/egress and water supplies should be provided to new developments.
5. The County needs to better understand the location and extent of floodplains within its jurisdiction.

6. Focus new residential development into existing communities such as the City.
7. Ensure efficient use of public resources for the construction of infrastructure that serves new development.
8. Provide predictability for property owners and land developers.
9. Ensure that the subdivision review criteria used to review subdivisions in the County adequately protect agricultural operations.

Policies:

The County will:

- **Policy 1.** Update the Subdivision Regulations.
- **Policy 2.** Develop and adopt Buildings-for-Lease-or-Rent regulations per statutory requirements.
- **Policy 3.** Develop a coordinated process with the City to guide and review new subdivisions that ensures the projects will meet the standards necessary to facilitate future annexations into the City as appropriate.
- **Policy 4.** Work with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Floodplain Program and FEMA to examine the potential for new and updated floodplain mapping in the County.

Public Facilities and Services

Goal: Work with the City and other partners to develop and maintain essential services and infrastructure in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This includes but is not limited to law enforcement, fire protection, high-quality medical services, services for seniors and other dependent persons, educational service, roads and bridges, public buildings and park and recreation facilities.

Objectives:

1. Adequately maintain County buildings, facilities, roads, and bridges that are essential for the safe and efficient use of City and County residents.

2. Provide public health and safety services such as law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services with the resources to serve City and County residents efficiently and effectively.
3. Support Mountainview Medical Center’s designation as a Critical Access Hospital.
4. Support the operation of the Senior Center facilities.
5. Support the retention of high-quality teaching staff.
6. Utilize cash in lieu of parkland dedications from future subdivisions to help develop and maintain City and County parks and recreational facilities.
7. Coordinate with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the United States Forest Service (USFS) to ensure good recreational facilities on public lands in the County.
8. Sponsor and support grant applications and other funding mechanisms to help maintain and improve community services.

Policies:

- **Policy 1.** Develop a Comprehensive County Capital Improvements Plan that identifies and prioritizes County equipment and infrastructure needs.
- **Policy 2.** Establish a coordinated program to effectively allocate the Hard Rock Mining Impact funds from the Black Butte Mine project for infrastructure needs in the City and County.
- **Policy 3.** Coordinate infrastructure and facility maintenance and replacement with the City.
- **Policy 4.** Develop a County-City Park and Recreation Plan for the development and maintenance of existing and future facilities.
- **Policy 5.** Support senior services as needed.
- **Policy 6.** Support the operation and maintenance of the County’s museums.
- **Policy 7.** The County will not accept maintenance or replacement responsibility for new subdivision roads or bridges.

- **Policy 8.** Encourage the retention of high-quality medical staff at the Medical Center and the maintenance and improvement of its medical equipment.
- **Policy 9.** Provide law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical personnel with the training, equipment, and facilities they need.
- **Policy 10.** Examine the potential to pay emergency service personnel commensurate with the time they spend on-call and working.
- **Policy 11.** Develop partnerships with surrounding jurisdictions such as counties and fire districts to provide fire protection and emergency medical services to the more remote areas of the County.

Housing

Goal: Promote a variety of safe, housing options to meet the needs, preferences, and incomes of County residents.

Objective:

1. Encourage a range of housing options that are safe and energy-efficient, for all residents. This includes but is not limited to our workforce, the elderly, low-income persons, and persons with disabilities.
2. Develop strategies to rehabilitate or demolish uninhabitable housing in the County that protects private property rights.

Policies:

- **Policy 1.** County staff will maintain an understanding and knowledge of appropriate state and federal housing programs.
- **Policy 2.** Work with partners including non-profits, property owners, developers, and realtors to encourage and facilitate new housing and housing rehabilitation that serves, and is affordable for all residents of the County.

- **Policy 3.** The County, City and partners will work to identify funding mechanisms to help developers and property owners pay for the disposal of the debris from demolished unsound or poor housing.

CITY AND COUNTY TODAY

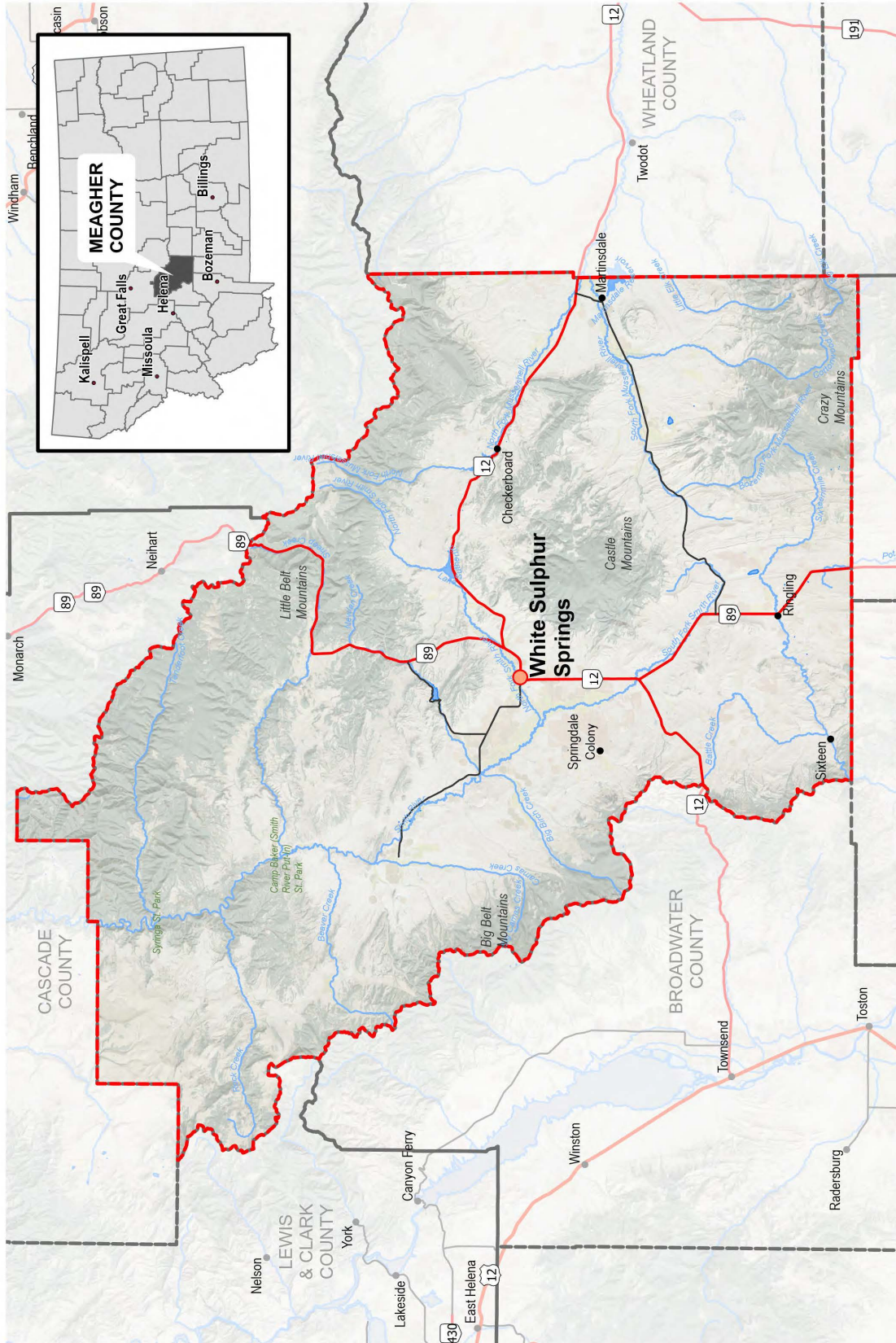
Geography

White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County are set in a central Montana landscape characterized by flat glaciated plains, broad river valleys, and high forested mountain peaks with panoramic vistas. White Sulphur Springs itself is located on the banks of the North Fork of the Smith River and surrounded by the Lewis & Clark-Helena National Forests.

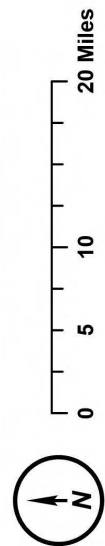
The County is comprised of 2,395 square miles, or 1,458,335 acres of land, slightly larger than the state of Delaware. Coupled with a population of approximately 1,968 this equates to a population density of about 1.21 persons per square mile of land.

The County contains portions of four major mountain ranges, including the Big Belts, Castles, Crazyes, and the Little Belts. Mountain elevations in the County range from 9,700 feet at the top of Mount Edith in the Big Belts to 4,000 feet where the Smith River leaves the County. These mountain ranges form the headwaters for iconic rivers such as the Musselshell, Shields, and Smith. The Smith is the predominant river, flowing for nearly forty miles north through the County until it enters Cascade County and then into the Missouri River. The Musselshell flows easterly and then north into the Missouri River and the Shields flows southerly into the Yellowstone River. There are also four substantial reservoirs located within the County, including Bair Reservoir, Lake Sutherlin, Martinsdale Reservoir and Newlan Creek Reservoir.

White Sulphur Springs had an estimated population of 939 people in 2018 (US Census Bureau ACS). The City is the seat of and the largest community in the County, which had an estimated population of 1,968 people in 2018 (US Census ACS). The City gained its name from the high mineral content, naturally occurring hot springs in the valley. The County is named after



City & County Location Meagher County, Montana



General Thomas Francis Meagher an Irish patriot and hero of the American Civil War. Please note that the name “Meagher” is phonetically pronounced “Maar.”

The state capital, Helena, is 76 driving miles west of the City (about one hour and 20-minutes) and is the closest major center for goods and services. Bozeman is 80 driving miles south, or about 1 hour and 30 minutes away and Great Falls is 97 driving miles north (approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes). Major transportation corridors through the City and County include US Highways 89 and 12 which connect White Sulphur Springs to Townsend, Livingston, and Great Falls. Other routes include State Secondary Highway 294 which connects the unincorporated communities of Martinsdale and Lennep with US 89 and US 12 and State Secondary Highway 360 which provides access to the area around Fort Logan and the middle reaches of the Smith River. There is no active passenger and freight rail transportation networks in the City or County.

Cultivated agriculture is found in the County’s larger stream drainages such as those of the Smith and Musselshell Rivers. Ranching is prevalent on pastureland elsewhere in the County.

Recreational opportunities in the County and around the City are numerous and include hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, and boating. Major recreation sites include a developed hot springs resort in the City, Showdown Ski Area and Silver Crest Winter Trails on Kings Hill and access to the lands managed by the Helena Lewis and Clark National Forest.

A Brief History

The history of the City and the County goes back to pre-European settlement when Native Americans used the natural healing powers of the City’s namesake mineral springs.

The City’s website offers the following history of the settlement of early White Sulphur Springs:

“The hot springs have been frequented by Indians for many years. Crow Chief Plenty Coups recalled pilgrimages by warriors to the medicinal mud baths. In 1886 James Brewer stumbled onto the area as the stagecoaches rumbled through the Carroll Trail. Brewer

first called the spot Brewer Springs and developed the hot springs into a stage stop and resort.

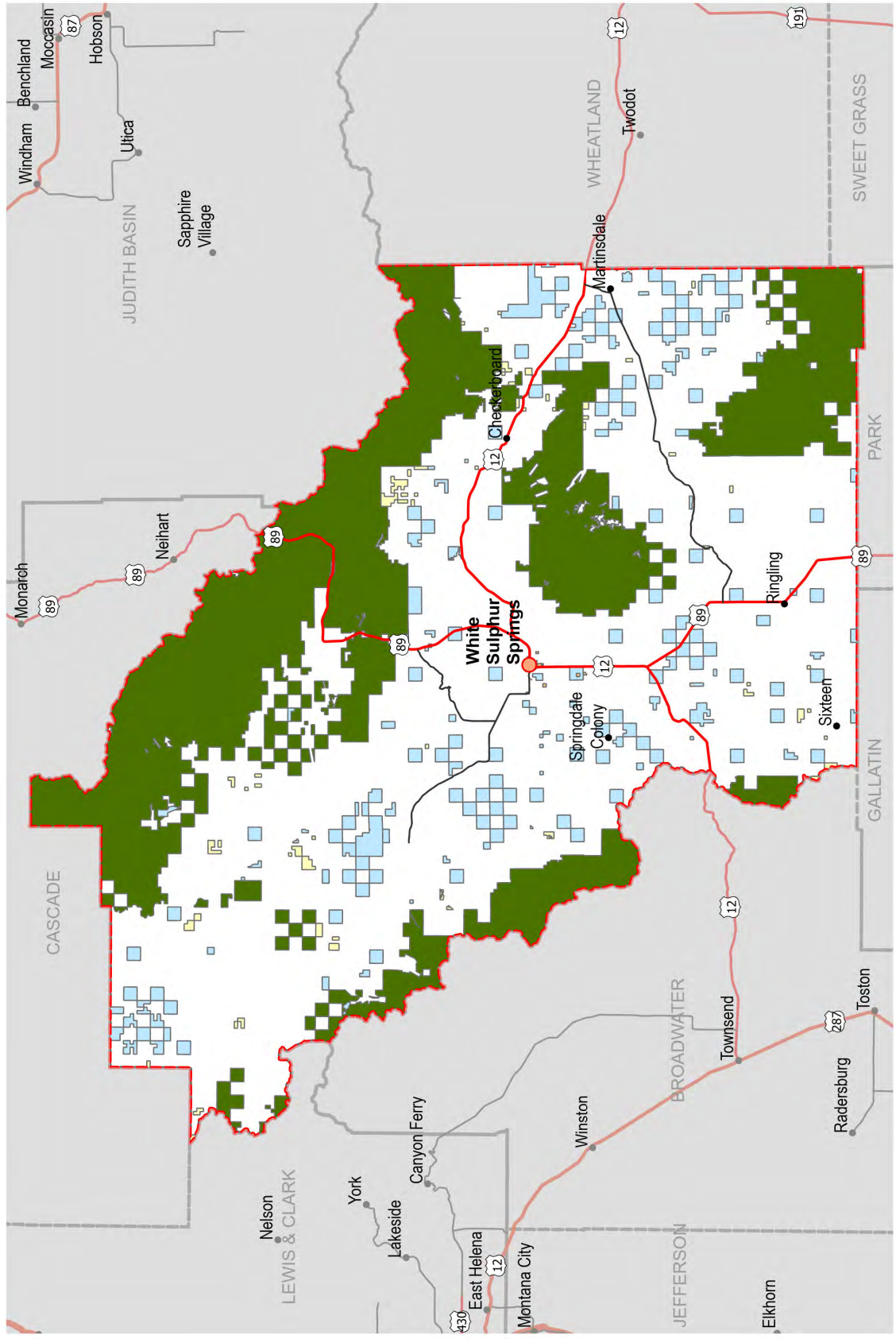
The Smith River Valley, with White Sulphur Springs as its trading center, was once the home of buffalo and later of prospectors working the Castle Mountain lead and silver mines. Since the days of Fort Logan, White Sulphur Springs has been famous for its fine cattle (from Cheney’s Names on the Face of Montana, Mountain Press Publishing Company). Weathered homes and out-buildings at the nearby ghost town of Castle are all that remain of the 1880s silver mining boom.” <http://www.whitesulphurspringsmontana.com/>



“Meagher County was created in 1867 as part of the original Montana Territory. It was named after the Civil War general Thomas Francis Meagher, who was the acting governor of Montana from 1865 to 1867. The original County comprised 20,000 square miles, until it was reduced in size to 2,395 square miles with the creation of neighboring counties.

The County has seen dramatic swings in its economic fortunes. Early in its history, there were gold rushes in the Big Belt Mountains and copper, lead and silver discoveries in the Castle and Little Belt Mountains. The timber industry also played a major role in the economy of the County until the late 1990’s when there was a nation-wide decline in timber prices and harvests.

A silver mining boom in the Castle Mountains precipitated the development of the Jawbone Railroad which was built from Lombard up to Six Mile with plans to provide service to the boom in the Castles. The railroad went bankrupt during one of the “silver crashes” at the turn of the 20th century. Ultimately, an east-west section of the Jawbone became the Milwaukee Railroad.



Land Ownership Map Meagher County, Montana



- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- State of Montana
- County Government
- City Government
- Private Lands

Ringling, MT was named after John Ringling—one of the 7 Ringling brothers from the world-renowned Ringling Brothers Circus. John was the president of the White Sulphur Springs and Yellowstone Park Railway (WSYP). The WSYP was constructed in 1910 and ran 22.8 miles between Ringling and White Sulphur Springs. The railroad played a large part in bringing tourism to Meagher County, due in large part to the station stop in Ringling for the main line of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad (aka the Milwaukee Road) transcontinental railroad.

John Ringling purchased a summer home and the hot springs in White Sulphur Springs. He had dreams of building a hotel resort on the hot springs which would attract more tourists when his circus came to town and increase his railroad’s profits. However, when the Great Depression hit, John Ringling lost nearly all of his fortune and was unable fund his dream hotel. In 1980, more than 40 years after Ringling’s death, both the Milwaukee Road and the WSYP were abandoned.”

Climate

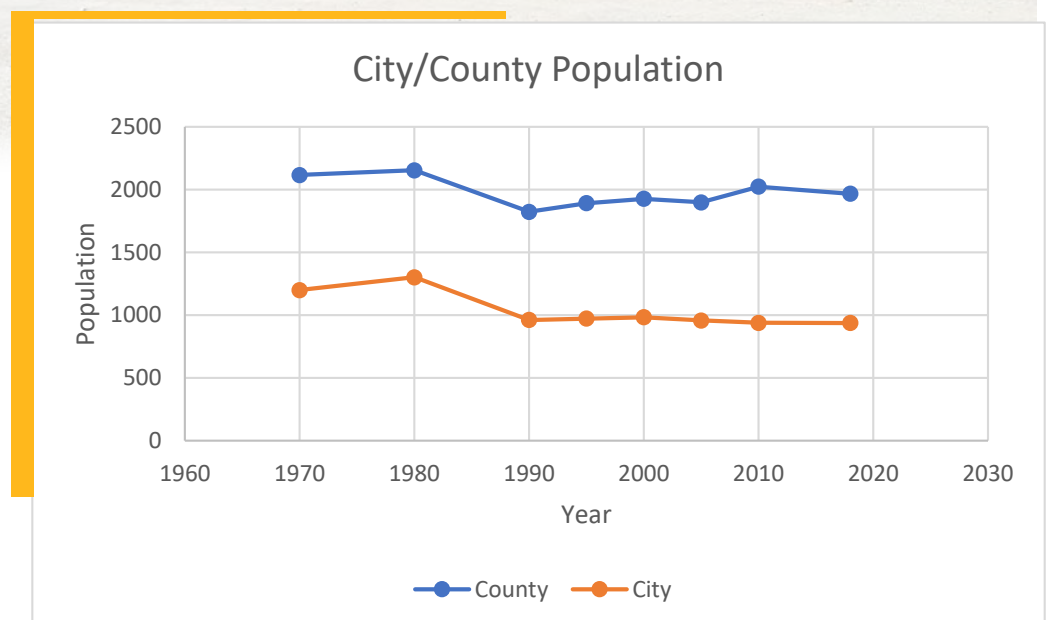
The City itself is situated at an elevation of about 5,020 feet and a latitude of 46 degrees and 32 minutes north. The area surrounding the City is characterized by low, flat valleys and steep buttes with few trees in the lowlands and heavily forested highlands. The City and County experience a semi-arid continental climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cold winters. The average annual rainfall in

the City is 12.9 inches (US Climate Data 2016). May and June experience the most significant rainfall. The City and County are located in the Northwestern Great Plains ecoregion, characterized by rolling grasslands, savanna, wildlife-abundant breaks, and pine forests, depending on elevation, slope, and aspect (Ecoregions of Montana 2000).

Population

The population in the City and County has been in decline over the past 100 years. From 1910 to 2010, the entire County saw a decline from 4,190 people to 2,024 or over a 51% change. (Montana Department of Commerce, Census and Economic Information Center). According to the American Community Survey (ACS) of the Census Bureau between 2010 and 2018, the population in the County declined from 2,024 people to 1,968 or approximately 3%. (Montana Department of Commerce, Census and Economic Information Center). In the same timeframe (2010-2018), the ACS shows that the population of the City declined from 1,147 to 939 people or 18%. It is important to note that the ACS indicates the data for the City’s 2018 population has a “medium” reliability and should be used with caution.

The estimated age structure for both the City and County shows there has been a significant decline in both jurisdictions for the Under 18 age bracket and the 45-64 age bracket. There was also a decline in the



City's age bracket of 18-34. As mentioned in the City's previous Growth Policy, this age group is most likely being attracted to larger nearby population centers like Helena or Great Falls or are leaving the region entirely in search of education and economic opportunities. The County has seen a significant increase in the number of people in the age bracket 65 and over. This is a trend similar to many of the other rural counties in the state.

The median age in the City and County in 2018 was respectively estimated at 46.6 and 45.9 years old, which is significantly older than the median for the state of Montana in 2018, estimated at 39.8 years of age. The aging population in both jurisdictions may eventually strain the availability of local healthcare and senior services, particularly with respect to the loss of younger workers who could care for them.

proximity to the timber resource and a source of fresh water, the town became a hub for the logging industry. Once rail connections were built to the area in the late nineteenth century, White Sulphur Springs gained access to shipping channels via the national railroad network.

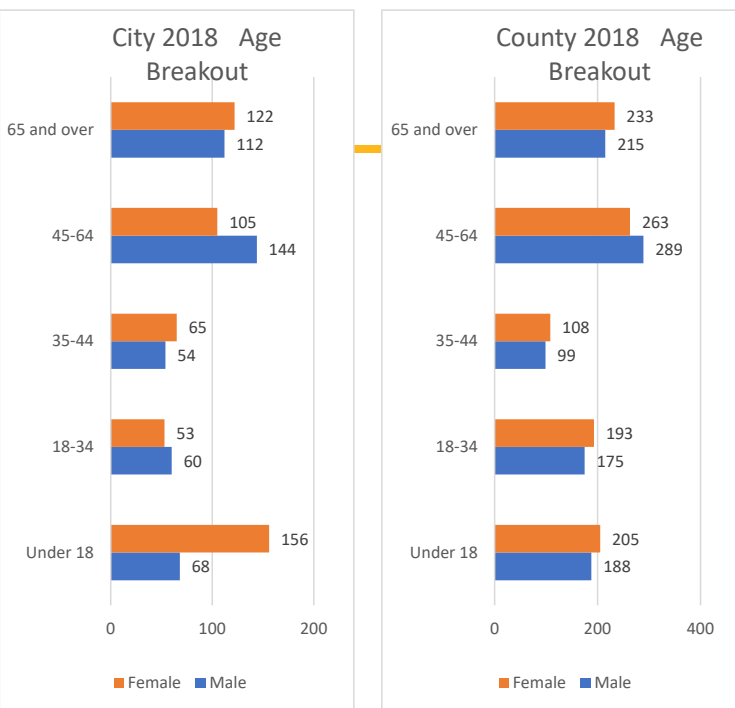
Agriculture

Agriculture in Meagher County is largely ranchland or field crops; however, the latter is limited to relatively level river drainages such as the Smith River and Upper Musselshell Valleys. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, the market value of all agricultural products sold in the County was over \$36 million. In addition, the County had an inventory of over 50,000 head of cattle and over 3,000 sheep. In 2017, cropland in the County by acreage was over 47,000 acres in hay/forage, almost 6,000 acres in barley and almost 5,500 acres in wheat. Grass pastureland is found nearly everywhere else in the County below the evergreen forest tree line and is suitable for cattle production.

Jobs

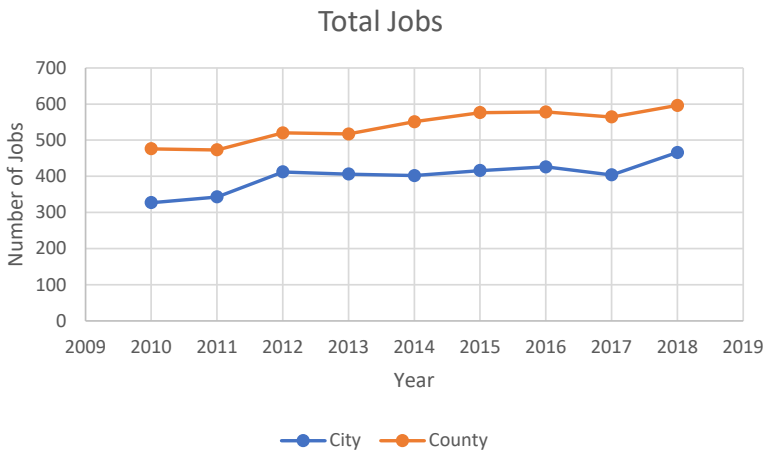
US Census Longitudinal Employment Housing Dynamics estimates from 2010 to 2017 indicate both the City and the County had a steady increase in total jobs. In this seven-year period, total jobs in the City increased by about 23.5%, or about 77 jobs being added. In the same period, jobs grew at a rate of 14.5% in the County by adding almost 70 jobs. Jobs within the City accounted for about 74% of all jobs in the entire County. The remaining 26% of jobs were widely dispersed throughout the County.

The Mountainview Medical Center, opened in 1953, is the largest employer in the City and County. Located on Main Street in White Sulphur Springs, the center is a Critical Access Hospital and Nursing Home, which employs between 68 and 72 people. Other large employers in the City and County include White Sulphur Springs High School, the Bank of the Rockies, and the Spa Hot Springs Hotel. The remaining jobs are found in small one to four employee companies providing many different services.



Economy

Hot mineral-rich springs put the City on the map, but at different times during the City's history, the local economy shifted between the logging industry, agriculture, mining, and tourism. The City is located strategically between productive forest lands in the Little Belt, Big Belt, and Castle Mountains. Having



\$90 million or close to 57%. The 2018 figure was made up of labor earnings (41%) and non-labor income (59%). Non-labor income includes income dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments (i.e. government retirement and disability insurance benefits, medical payments).

From 1970 to 2018, farm earnings in the County shrank from \$14.6 million to \$6.8 million, a 53.6 percent decrease. This is contrasted by the fact that during the same time frame non-farm earnings grew from \$21.4 million to \$33.5 million, a 56.5 percent increase.

The City exhibits a fairly diverse economy in terms of job sectors. In 2017, the largest job sector was Healthcare, with almost 18% of total jobs in the City, largely influenced by Mountainview Medical Center. This was followed by Recreation and Hospitality at almost 21% and education with 16% of the total.

The County's economy mirrors the City in terms of job sectors, with the exception of employment in agriculture. In 2017, the largest job sector was agriculture with 20% of the total jobs. This was followed by Healthcare with almost 14% of total jobs, then recreation and hospitality at almost 16% and then education with 12% of the total. The number of healthcare jobs in the County is again influenced by Mountainview Medical Center in the City.

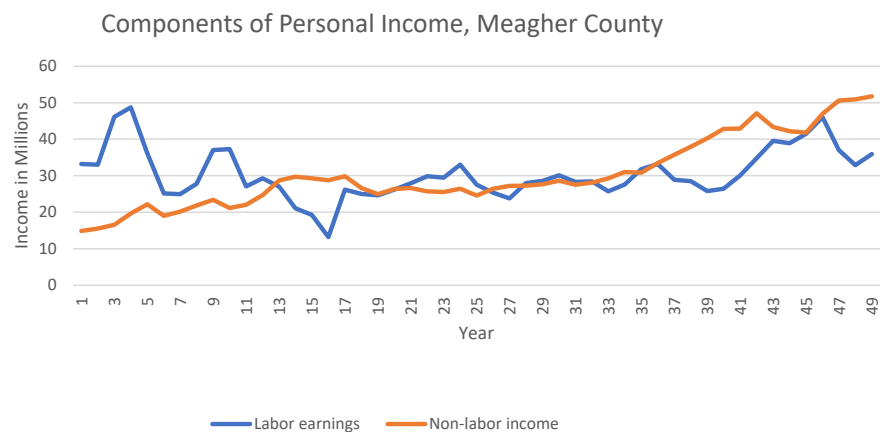
Unemployment

Based on US Census estimates, unemployment rates in the County have fluctuated over the nine-year period between 2010 and 2019. Rates peaked at 8% in 2010 as the nation-wide economic recession worsened, and then rates fell to 3.5% in 2019. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on unemployment in the County are unknown at this time, but it is likely job losses have occurred due to the pandemic. According to data from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, as of September 2020 there were an estimated 40 people unemployed in the County for an overall unemployment rate of 4.3%.

Personal Income

Personal income is a measure of the various earnings received by working individuals in an area. Personal income is the total amount of money derived from wages, salaries, investment enterprises, and other sources. Personal income data is collected at the county level and can be compared as farm and non-farm categories.

From 2000 to 2018, personal income in the County increased from approximately \$56 million to almost



Tax Base and Tax Revenues

Based on figures from the Montana Department of Revenue, the market value of property in both the City and the County has increased steadily, while the taxable value has remained relatively stable.

In 2014, the market value of all property in White Sulphur Springs was just over \$37 million. By 2020 this figure had increased to over \$89 million, a 128% increase. During the same timeframe, taxable values in the City only increased from just over \$1 million to \$1.37 million.

In 2014, the market value of all property in the County was just over \$273 million. By 2020 this figure had increased to over \$429 million, a 57% increase. During that same timeframe, taxable values in the County increased only slightly from just over \$8 million to \$9.2 million.

School Enrollment

Total enrollment at the City's two schools was 213 in the 2018 school year, down 32% from 1995. School enrollment in the White Sulphur Springs Elementary in the 2018-2019 school year was 121 students. During the same period, enrollment at White Sulphur Springs High School was 70 students.

In 1995, Meagher County had two other rural elementary schools in Lennep and Ringling. In 2011, both of these schools were annexed, bringing those students to the White Sulphur Springs School District. Despite a dramatic decline since then, recent figures indicate enrollment may be stabilizing at both the Elementary and High Schools.

Traffic Routes and Volumes

According to the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), there are a total of 698 road miles in the County, with 159 miles being state highways and 539 miles of other roads, including County roads and City streets. MDT indicated in 2020 there were over 95,000 daily vehicle miles traveled (DVMT) in Meagher County, 63% of which were traveled on state highways.

Additionally, MDT records average annual daily traffic (AADT), which is the number of vehicles which pass a point on a roadway over one year averaged per day. These figures create an estimate of traffic volumes on major roadways. US Highway 89/12 through White Sulphur Springs continues to have the most traffic, as it links the City to other larger population centers such as Great Falls to the north and Livingston to the south.

Main Street Improvements

The City's Main Street has undergone major renovations, which included reconstruction of Main Street and new streetlights which reflect the street's historic character. The public investment reflects a community-wide downtown revitalization effort in White Sulphur Springs.



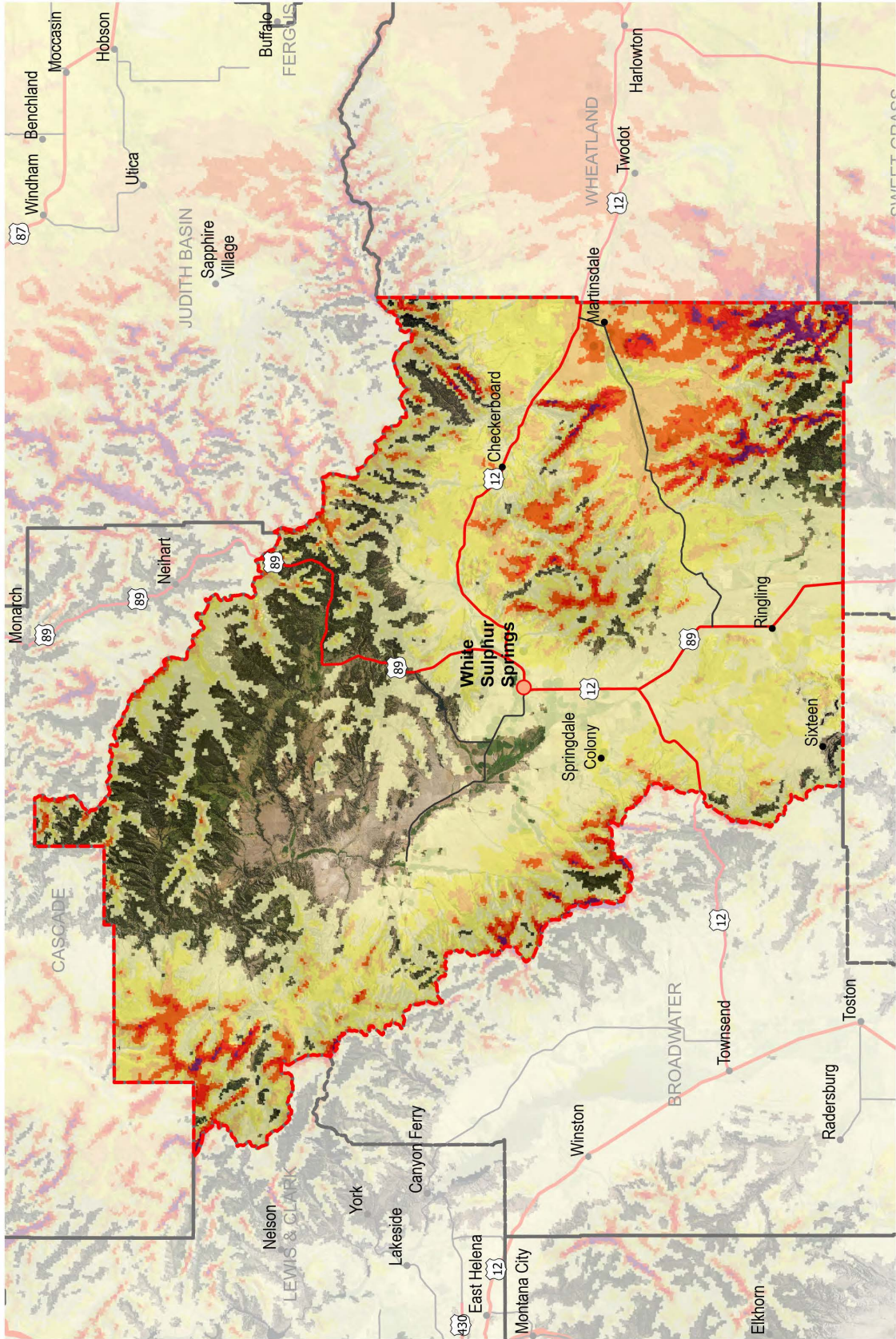
Business and Other Community Amenities

White Sulphur Springs' Main Street is home to many restaurants and retailers which offer local goods and services as well as employment opportunities. These amenities include sporting goods and outfitters, gas and service stations, eateries, bars, banks, grocers, clothing retailers, and lodging. There are no national large-format retail franchises in the City.

NATURAL RESOURCES

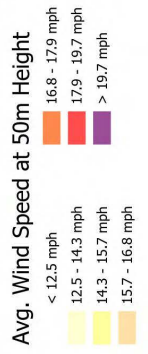
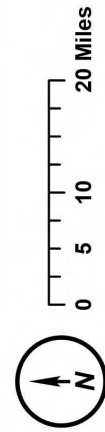
Wind

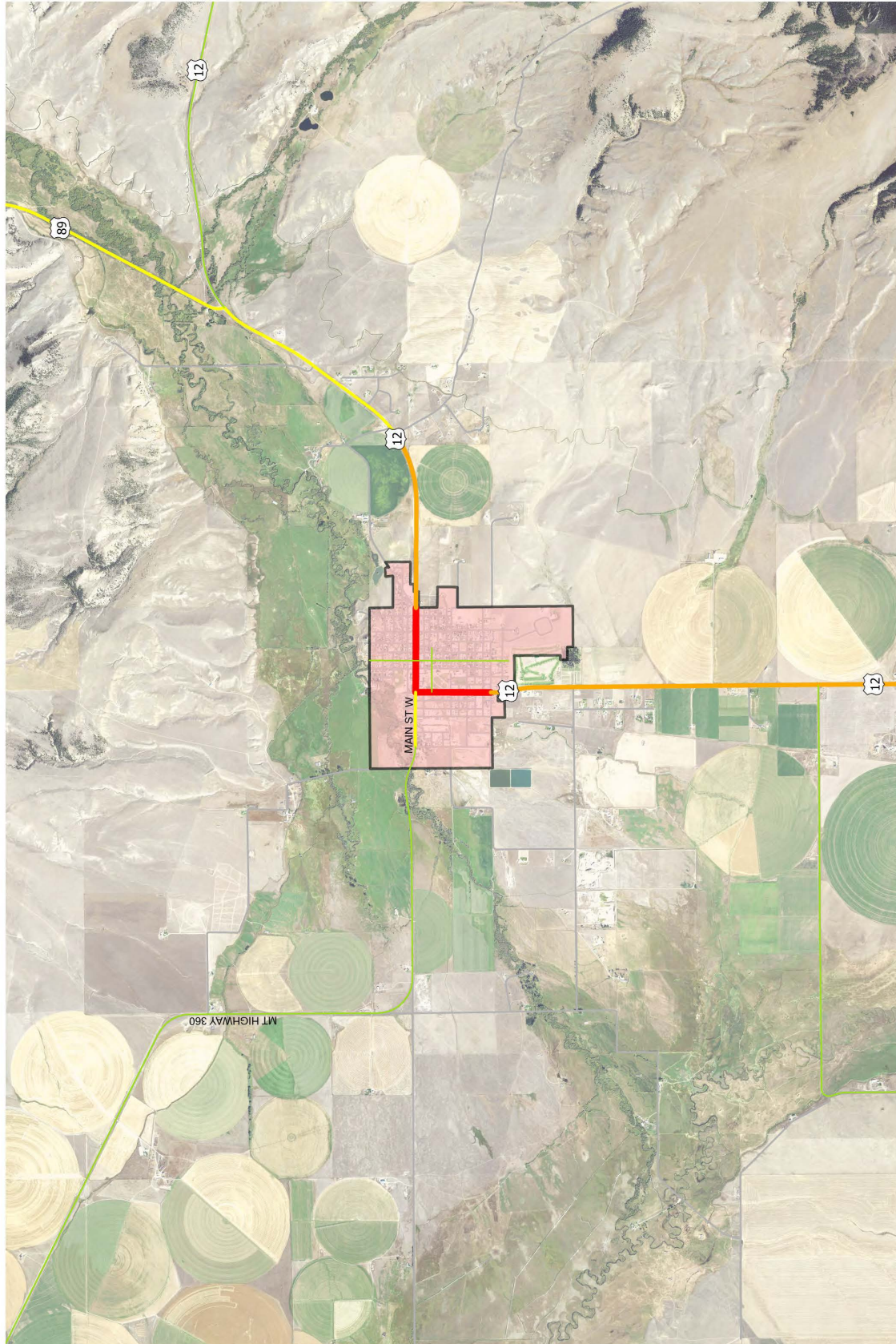
Like much of central Montana, the area around White Sulphur Springs and the rest of Meagher County generally has high average wind speeds, which may be suitable for developing electrical wind power generation. Should wind power be developed near



Average Windspeed Meagher County, Montana

Windspeed data provided by National Renewable Energy Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, 2010





Average Annual Daily Traffic
White Sulphur Springs
 Meagher County, Montana

Average Daily Traffic Count

- ≤500
- 500-1000
- 1000-1500
- >1500

Data provided by State of Montana,
 Montana Department of Transportation, 2014

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

N

the City or in the County, temporary impacts would likely be directed to existing communities, with White Sulphur Springs being the main center for housing and commerce. The potential for wind power development in the County should be monitored.

Forestry

Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs have a long history of forestry and timber production. The City was once the center of a vibrant industry, with timber mills and rail infrastructure, which occupied much of the western portion of the original townsite. International timber policy and economics have since changed the industry, dramatically reducing it in the County. Nonetheless, timber resources in the County are still significant.

Hard Rock Mining

The area north of White Sulphur Springs has significant proven mineral resources. The Black Butte Copper Mine project proposed by Sandfire Resources America, Inc. could have significant impacts upon the City and the County. The proposed project site is located approximately 15 miles directly north of White Sulphur Springs, or about 18 driving miles via US Highway 89. The mine will include facilities such as mill buildings, tailing and process water ponds, rock stockpiles, plant buildings, and access roads. Sandfire Resources has provided mitigation strategies and reports via the Hard Rock Mining Board, which outline the impacts the project may have on local economics, housing, and environmental conditions.

Sand and Gravel Resources

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality permits opencut mining operations throughout the state, including gravel pits. The Opencut Mining Act (82-4-401 MCA) regulates the mining of gravel, clay, scoria, soil materials, bentonite, sand, or peat. Opencut mining operations that remove more than 10,000 cubic yards of materials and overburden are subject to DEQ regulations and require a permit issued to the operator by the DEQ. Operations on certain federal or state lands may be exempt, pursuant to a

determination by the state Board of Environmental Review.

According to the MDEQ database, there are fourteen (14) opencut mining operations in the County. Three gravel pits are located within one (1) mile of the town. <https://mtdeq.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=47a9175031b343c0b77ee9b67330b679>

EVALUATION OF THE WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

The City has determined that the services and conditions for fighting wildland fires are adequate within and adjacent to the City.

The County is facing increased residential development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Development in the WUI poses challenges for the County, State and Federal agencies providing wildland fire protection. In many instances, residential areas in the County's WUI are accessed by poorly constructed, dead-end roads, and often times there is little or no space between vegetation and the structures. Protecting residential homes built in the WUI is expensive and often puts officials in the difficult position of choosing between either protecting structures or the safety of firefighters.

Meagher County developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2008 and then updated it in 2014. The CWPP was created to assist the County, Meagher County Fire Department and the Federal and State agencies in the identification of private and public lands which are at risk of severe wildland fires and to explore strategies for the prevention and/or the quick suppression of such fires. The 2014 update included, prioritization of hazardous fuel mitigation areas.

http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/docs/fire-and-aviation/wui/meagher_cwpp.pdf

http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=http%3A%2F%2Fmaps7.arcgisonline.com%2Farcgis%2Frest%2Fservices%2FUSDA_USFS_2014_Wildfire_Hazard_Potential%2FMapServer&source=sd

When the County updates its Subdivision Regulations, it will consider addressing WUI issues such as Firewise requirements related to water supplies, road construction, improving access, limiting dead-end roads, and requiring defensible space between residential structures and vegetation.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Community facilities and services include things such as public buildings, infrastructure (street/roads/bridges/water/sewer), law enforcement, fire protection and senior services



City Facilities and Buildings

The City shops are located in the northeast portion of the City on Laramie Street and City Hall is located on Hampton Street near the City Park. The Meagher County Courthouse and other departments are located on West Main Street in White Sulphur Springs. The City wells and a sewer lift station are located in the northeast corner of the City on City-owned property. A new 560,000-gallon tank provides storage for City water which is filtered and chlorinated to produce very high-quality public water. Additional upgrades to municipal water and sewer infrastructure are underway.

Airport

White Sulphur Springs Airport is the only operational public airport in the County and is located three miles south of White Sulphur Springs. The airport has a 6,100-foot asphalt runway and aviation fuel is

available. The property encompassing the airport is sufficient for further expansion of the facility if needed.

As the City and its surrounding area see new growth, the County may want to consider protecting the functional airspace around the airport through Airport Affected Area Regulations as allowed by statute (Title 67-7-203 MCA). Airport Affected Area Regulations are meant to maintain and improve airport safety and would primarily affect tall structures such as cellular communication towers or tall buildings.



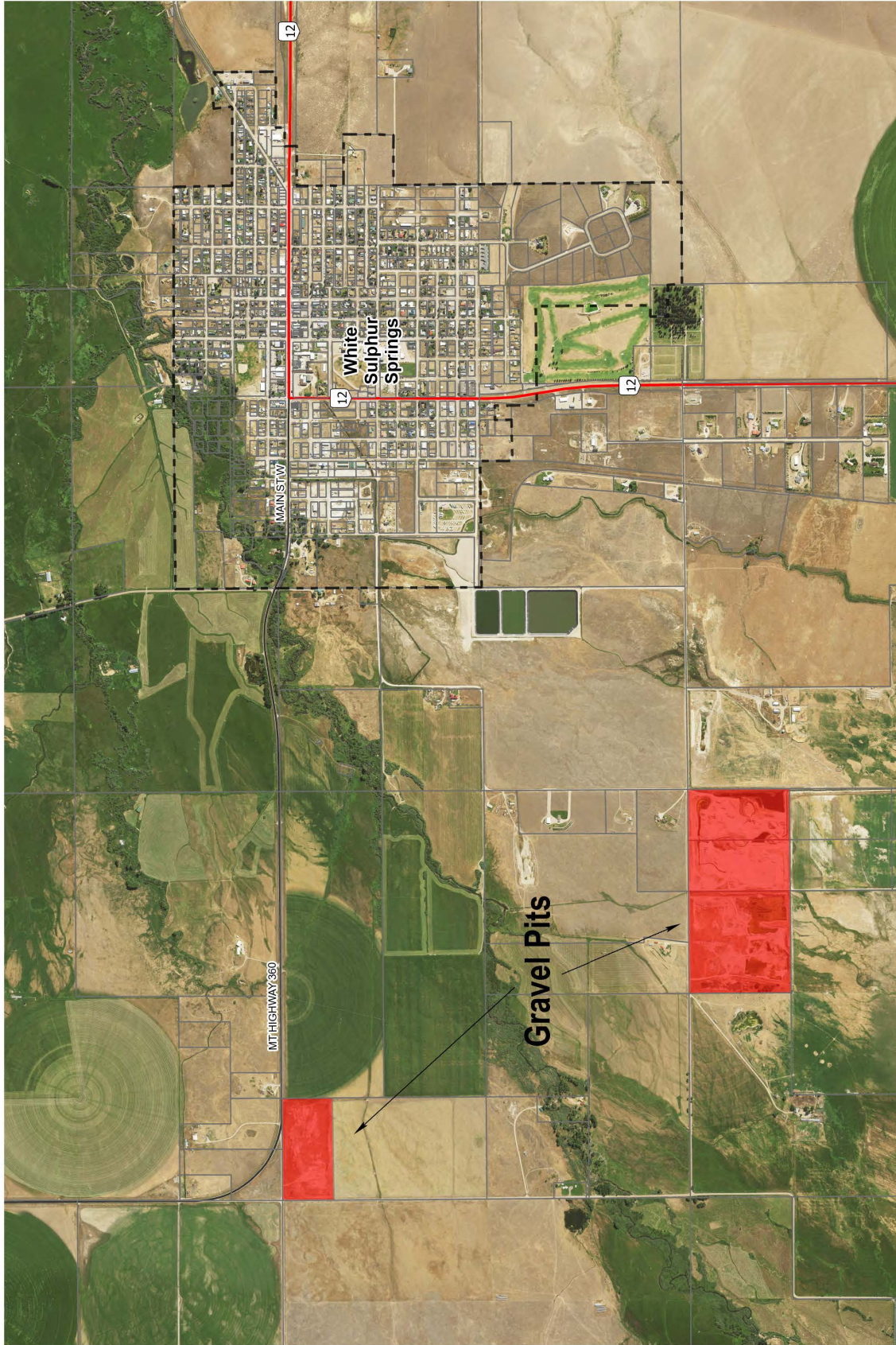
Meagher County Community/Senior Center

The current senior center/pre-school facility was constructed in 1995. The community/senior center portion of the facility includes a kitchen and dining area capable of serving up to 64 people. It also contains a recreation room. The pre-school is operated separately from the senior center, but centrally located doors allow access between the two facilities. Meagher County Senior Citizens Association operates the center as a non-profit under an inter-local agreement with the County. The Center serves all City and County residents and is often rented for weddings and other community gatherings.

Emergency Medical Services

There are currently 11 certified emergency medical technicians (EMT's) and 3 ambulances which provide emergency medical services in the City and County residents.



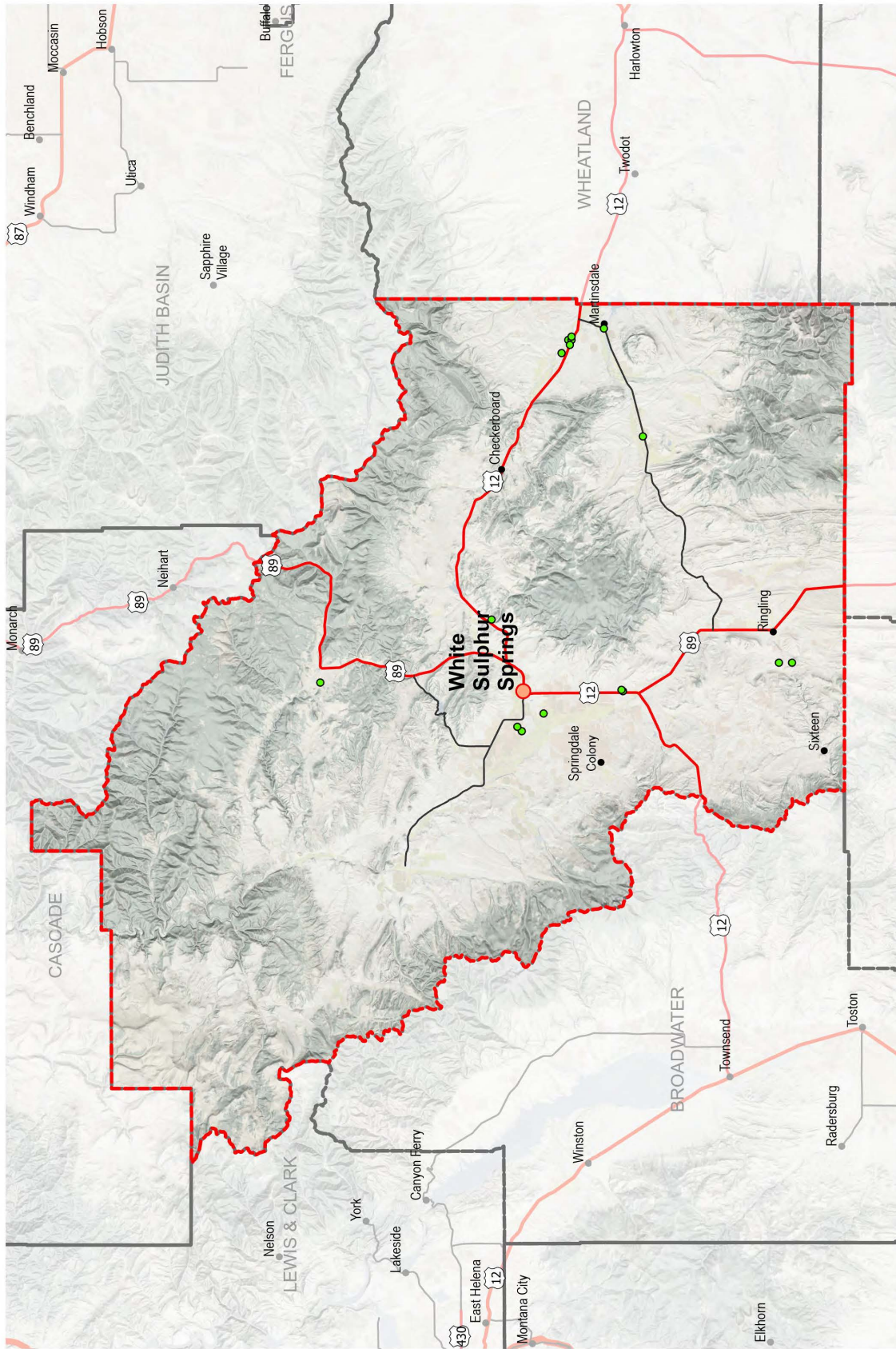


Gravel Pit Locations White Sulphur Springs Meagher County, Montana

- Gravel Pit Location
- White Sulphur Springs Town Boundary
- Owner Parcels



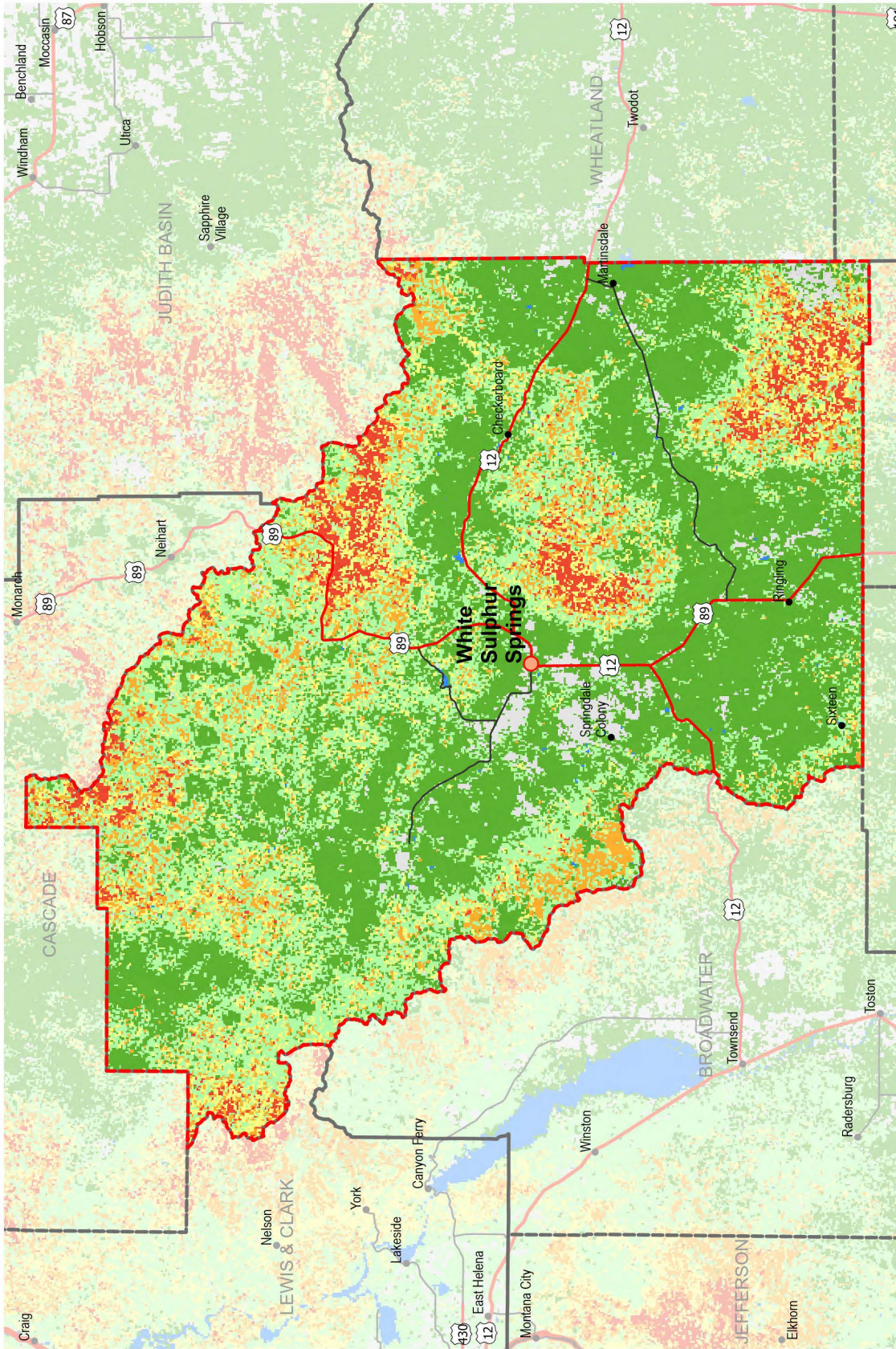




Gravel Pit Locations
Meagher County, Montana
Gravel pit data was provided by State of Montana, Department of Environmental Quality, 2020.

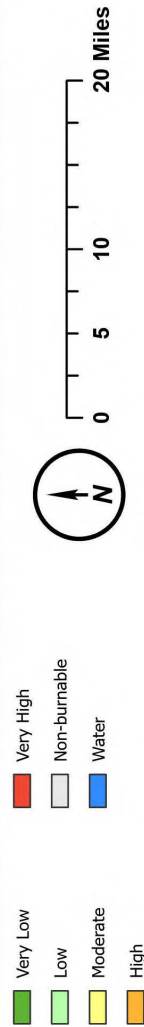


- Gravel Pits
- White Sulphur Springs
- Communities



Wildfire Hazard Potential Meagher County, Montana

Wildfire Hazard Risk data provided by USDA USFS - Rocky Mountain Research Station 2018



Fire Protection

There are four fire protection agencies located within the County:

- City of White Sulphur Springs Volunteer Fire Department
- Meagher County Volunteer Rural Fire
- Martinsdale Fire Service Area
- Grassy Mountain Fire District

These agencies are manned by 34 volunteer firefighters and their equipment included:

- 24 (Type 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6) engines and tenders located throughout the County.
- 12 dry hydrants throughout the County.

Healthcare

Mountainview Medical Center is the County's only hospital and is designated as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH). The Medical Center is a non-profit corporation and provides inpatient, outpatient, long term care, diagnostics, and emergency services. The Center has 25 beds and a full-time staff that includes: two Medical Doctors and two Physician's Assistants, one Podiatrist, one Chiropractor, and one Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor. The emergency department is staffed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The facility has a full service lab, physical therapy, and radiology services.

Law Enforcement

The Meagher County Sheriff Department serves as the law enforcement agency for residents of both the County and the City. The Department's staff includes the Sheriff, Under Sheriff, two full-time deputies, four reserve deputies, one 911 communication



officer supervisor (dispatch supervisor) and five dispatchers. The Department is in need of a modern law enforcement center in order to provide efficient and safe services and to meet modern building code and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The County Food Bank is also located in the basement of the Sheriff's Office.

Museums

The County has two museums, the Meagher County Museum located in White Sulphur Springs and the Bair Family Museum in Martinsdale.

The Meagher County Museum is known locally as the "Castle" and was built as a mansion in 1892 by Byron Roger Sherman. The building is in original condition with 12 rooms, hardwood floors, Italian marble in the bathrooms and light fixtures of crystal and brass. The Meagher County Historical Association operates and maintains the museum.

The Charles M. Bair Family Museum is named after Charles M. Bair, who went into the ranching business in 1891 and became one of the area's most successful sheep ranchers. The museum is located adjacent to the Bair family home in Martinsdale and features four art galleries which exhibit the Bair family's art collection. The museum is operated by the Bair Family Trust.

Roads and Bridges

The County Road Department maintains approximately 200 miles of roads. Most of these roads are gravel surfaced and provide access to ranch and farm operations and to the surrounding public lands. In addition to roads, the County has maintenance responsibilities for ten bridges.

For a County with low taxable values, it is critical that the maintenance and replacement of roads and bridges be done in as a cost-effective manner as possible. This situation is made even more challenging by the fact the County has responsibility for maintaining the roads used to access the Smith River launch site at Camp Baker. This includes Fort Logan Road and the Smith River Road. There are 26 road miles from White

Sulphur Springs to Camp Baker. Almost 5,000 people float the Smith River annually and most of those people access Camp Baker via Fort Logan Road and the Smith River Road. This is a significant amount of vehicle traffic, which does not account for traffic from guides and other people supporting the operations of floaters. The County would like to develop a partnership with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to identify additional sources of funding to help cover the costs of maintaining those roads. The County would also like to develop a partnership with the USFS in order to ensure the maintenance of County roads used to access Forest Service lands is adequate.



Solid Waste

According to the DEQ, the County has two licensed solid waste facilities: The Meagher County Solid Waste Transfer Station and Meagher County Solid Waste Landfill. The transfer station can process no more than 10,000 tons of waste annually. The transfer station and landfill are located ½ mile southeast of White Sulphur Springs. The landfill is classified as a Class III facility by the DEQ and may accept only Group III wastes. Group III wastes include wood wastes and non-water-soluble solids such as bricks, rock, and cement. The primary waste dropped at the facility is tree branches and leaves, which the County burns on-site.

Solid waste from City and County residents, which cannot be landfilled in the County is transported by private contract hauler to the Great Falls Landfill, a distance of almost 110 miles.

Special Districts

Martinsdale Water and Sewer District

The Martinsdale Water and Sewer District operates and maintains a drinking water system for the

unincorporated community of Martinsdale which serves approximately 75 people. The District's system includes a 200,000-gallon bolted steel water tank, two spring sources and approximately 12,000 feet of transmission piping.

General Issues-Special Districts

The County has identified issues with the management of taxation for some of its special districts, including the Martinsdale Water and Sewer District and the Grassy Mountain Fire District. The County would like to examine the potential to coordinate tax management for all of its districts.

Telecommunications

Residents in the City have access to what is known as Fiber To The Home (FTTH), which is the provision of high-speed broadband internet service through the installation and use of optical fiber connected directly to individual buildings such as residences, apartment buildings and businesses and can provide very high-speed Internet access. FTTH dramatically increases the connection speeds available to users compared to the current technologies being used in many Montana communities. FTTH marketed correctly could provide the City and the County with a competitive edge in attracting businesses and home based professionals.

Triangle Communications provides telecommunications services, including broadband internet, local and long-distance telephone to Meagher County. Verizon and AT&T are the cellular telephone providers in the County.

Despite a good telecommunications network in the City, many areas of the County are underserved by both cellular communications and broadband. This is an issue that should be addressed.

Electrical Utilities

Residents in the City and the County have to regularly deal with the loss of electrical power service due to failures to the electrical transmission system. In fact, according to a story carried by most Montana newspapers, in April of 2019 the County Commission declared an emergency due to the loss of electrical

power to 1,400 County residents for over 10 hours due to the failure of a substation in Two Dot, Montana.

The instability of the electrical grid is not only an issue for public health and safety, but also impacts the economy of the City and County. Thus, both entities would like to consider the development of a secondary power source to ensure the stable flow of electrical service to residents. Such a source could include a solar farm or the generation of electricity by wind generation.

HOUSING

The City and the County aspire to provide high quality and affordable housing for their residents. Therefore, the availability and condition of housing in each jurisdiction becomes an important issue. The vast majority of residential structures in the City and County are single-family homes or mobile homes. A few multi-family structures, mostly apartments, exist in the City. The economic reality is affordable housing is often easier to develop when multiple units are included in a building, such as apartment buildings of multi-plex's.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2018 there were 1,386 total housing units in the County. Of those, 569 units were located within the City. Housing units include single-family homes, apartments, and housing such as condominiums and townhomes. ACS indicates the median age of housing in the County dates to 1972 and to 1962 in the City. Thus, both jurisdictions have a relatively aged housing stock.

The Montana Building Industry Association (MBIA) tracks housing starts by county and according to MBIA, in 2017 Meagher County had six (6) housing starts and in 2018 there were eleven (11) starts.

MONTANA MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The Montana Department of Commerce administers the Montana Main Street Program. The program was established in 2005 and is currently serving thirty (30) communities across the state and is a collaborative

effort between the Montana Office of Tourism at the Montana Department of Commerce. The program helps communities strengthen and preserve their historic downtown commercial districts by focusing on economic development, urban revitalization, and historic preservation through long-range planning, organization, design, and promotion.

The City could potentially benefit from certification in the state Main Street program, as an added investment in both the public and private realms could boost revitalization of the downtown's storefronts.

A VISION FOR WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

White Sulphur Springs will have maintained its small town, rural community character. It will amplify its history and historical features. The public facilities and services will be in good condition, adequate to serve the existing and future population and businesses. The community will enjoy a strong economy, with good jobs available. The commercial sector will comprise a diverse mix of available goods and services to serve the needs of local residents and businesses.

The community will have quality, affordable health care, with the presence of a qualified hospital and clinic, and a local pharmacist. Residents will have access to and enjoy city parks, ball fields, a golf course. Quality education will be provided by a sound elementary school and high school. A balance of affordable, safe, and healthy housing will be available for rent or ownership.

A compact, efficient land use development pattern will provide safe, healthy residential neighborhoods, efficient and convenient commercial areas, and functional and safe industrial areas for processing and manufacturing goods.

A VISION FOR MEAGHER COUNTY

The philosophy of this Growth Policy is to ensure the property rights of residents, maintaining the County's

rural character and lifestyle, and encourage economic development.

County residents will work to maintain their existing industries, such as agriculture and tourism, while attracting dynamic, community minded people interested in making the County their home and place of business. Part of the approach is to take advantage of the County's assets, such as excellent broadband internet access and the responsible development of abundant natural resources. In addition, strengthening the economy and attracting new people, families and businesses will require a solid foundation of infrastructure and community and emergency services. Therefore, the County will provide efficient and cost-effective services such as roads, medical care, schools, law enforcement and fire protection.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The population of the City and the County has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years, and current estimates have the population in a slight decline. Since the adoption of the 2015 County Growth Policy and 2017 City Growth Policy, new population projections have been completed, which provide clarity to this discussion, particularly in light of the Black Butte Copper Mine.

Black Butte Copper Project Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan: August 2018

Sandfire Resources America, Inc. developed its Impact Plan to meet the requirements of the Montana Hard Rock Mining Impact Act, Property Tax Base Sharing Act and associated Administrative Rules. The Plan was accepted and approved by the Montana Hard Rock Mining Impact Board in May of 2019. The Impact Plan was meant to project the fiscal impacts of the Black Butte Project upon the City and the County and identifies mitigation measures for those projected impacts. Population projections were part of the Plan.

According to the Plan, construction of the mine and associated facilities "will take two to three years and require an estimated workforce of 70 to 115

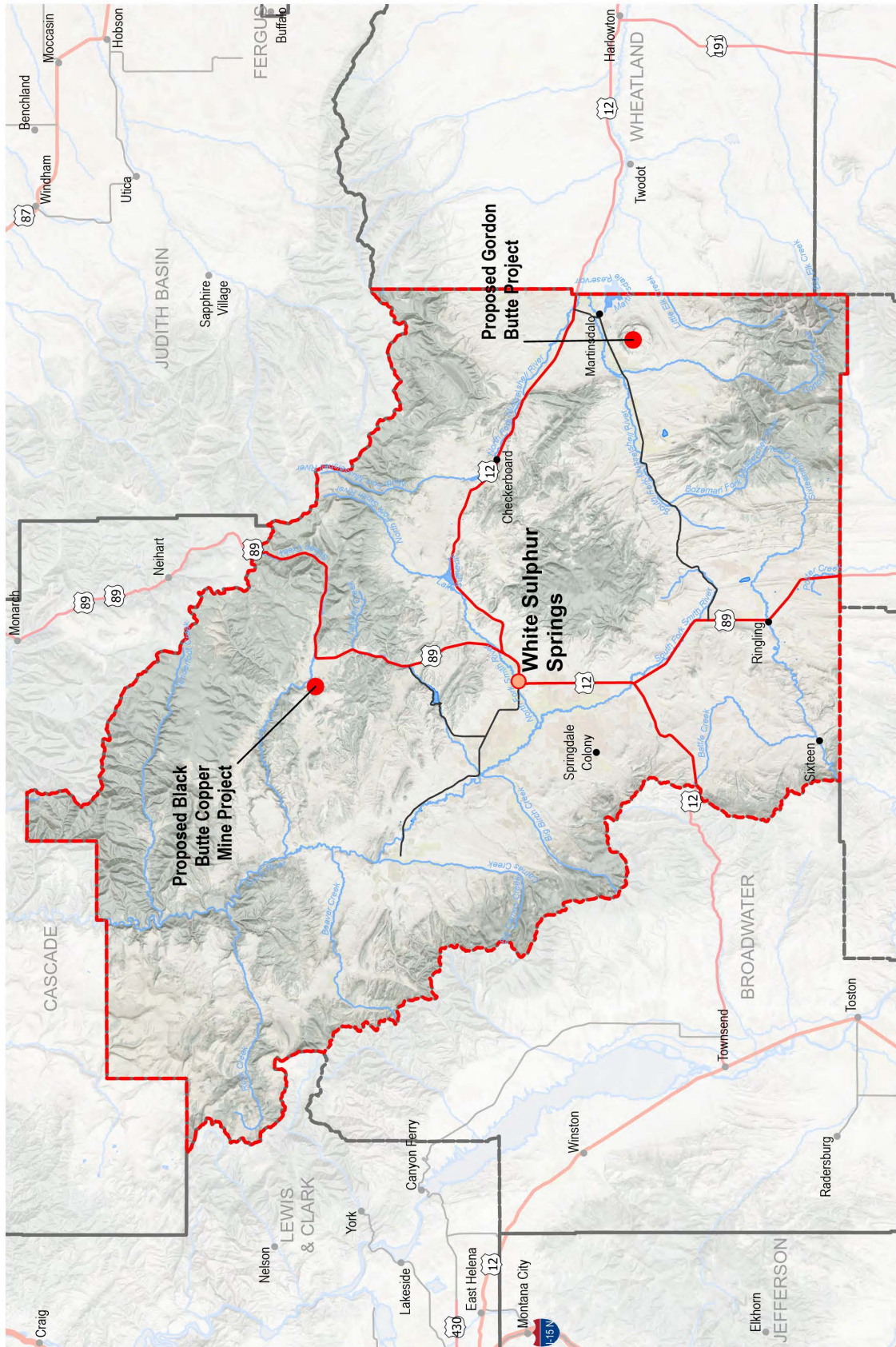
contractors during a given year based on construction scheduling." The Plan estimates: "during the construction phase, 50% of non-resident construction contractors are projected to stay in White Sulphur Springs on a temporary basis." This translates into a range of 35 to 57 workers staying in the City during the construction phase.

With regards to the operation of the mine, the Plan states, "it will require an estimated workforce of 235 employees" over the predicted 11-year life span of the operation. The Plan used the figure of 2.46 for an "employee household size" and predicts 250 additional people will live in the area around White Sulphur Springs. The Plan also estimates that: "Among employees moving into Meagher County, 50% are estimated to stay in White Sulphur Springs." If these figures are accurate, this would mean an additional 225 people would be living in the City or an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ of the current population.

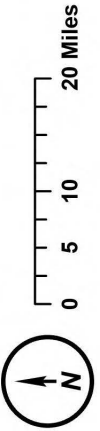
Gordon Butte Environmental Impact Study: September 2016

In addition to the Black Butte Copper Mine, the other major natural resource project proposed in the County is the Gordon Butte Pumped Hydro Power project. The project would be located near the community of Martinsdale. The Impact Study identifies construction labor to be between 100 to 350 personnel over the three-year construction period. The study assumes that only five to ten percent would reside within Meagher County (a maximum of 100 at peak construction). The study goes on to indicate that this population will be dispersed across existing communities in Meagher County, but also will attract workers from Billings, Livingston, Bozeman, and other regional communities.

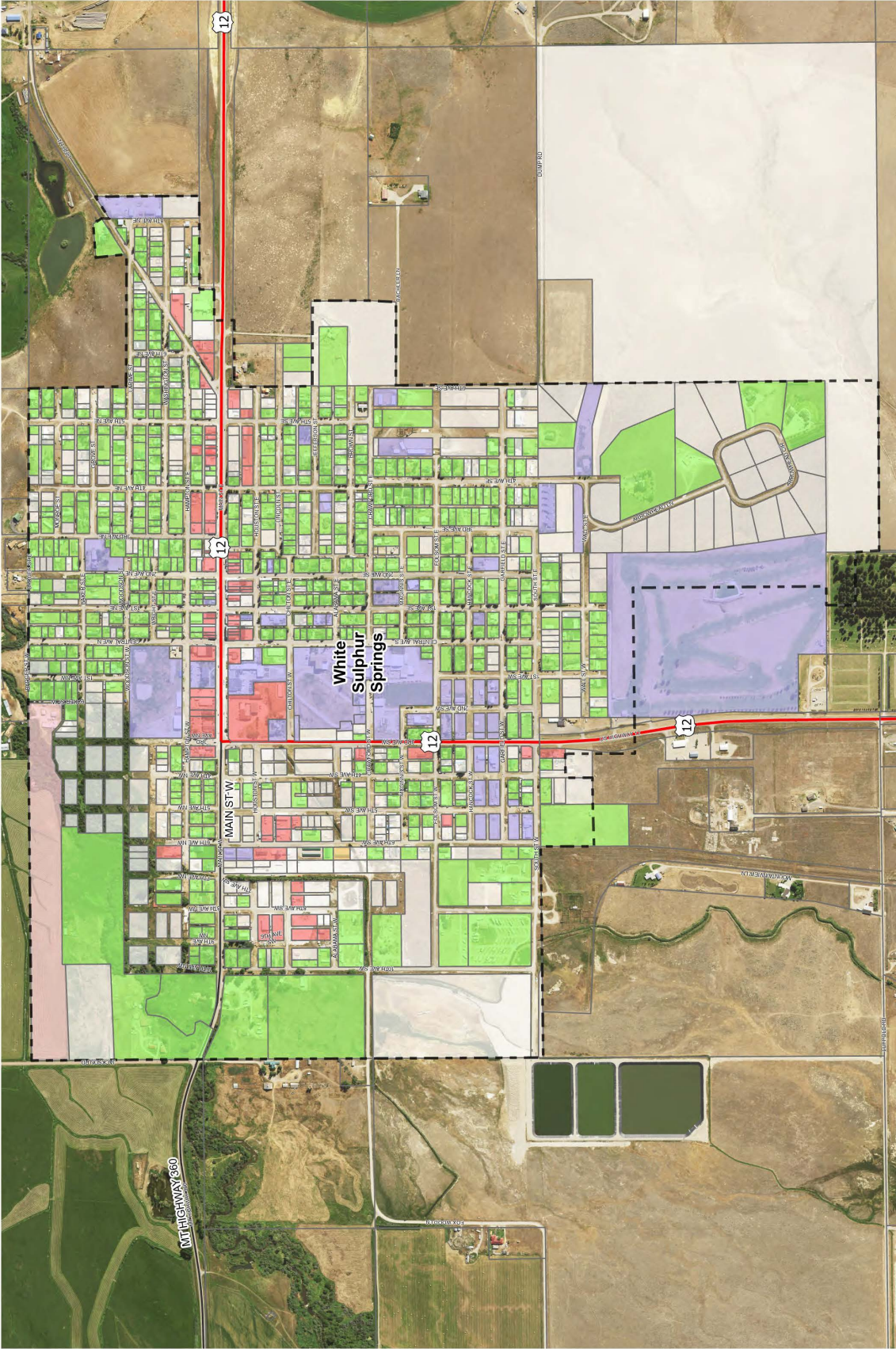
During the operations phase of the project, it is estimated that 60 additional residents would reside within the County. The study goes on to say that the existing vacant housing units could accommodate the additional population.



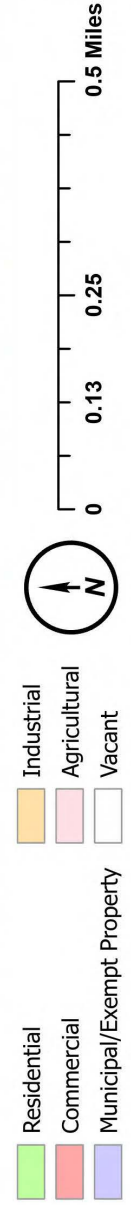
Natural Resource Development Sites
Meagher County, Montana



● Development Opportunity Sites



Existing Land Use White Sulphur Springs Meagher County, Montana



CITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES – CAPACITY - FOCUS AREAS

Even if each of the Black Butte Mine and Gordon Butte projects are fully developed, it should be noted that the City has an adequate land area within the existing community boundary to accommodate additional growth. A large proportion of the existing housing stock could be rehabilitated, and many of the vacant lots in the City could be converted to residential uses while ensuring the protection of private property rights. Nonetheless, the community does have the capacity to support projected growth.

The implications of this fact on land use in and around the City are that limited change is necessary in terms of annexing new land into the City. There is sufficient room for the City to grow within the existing municipal limits. It should be recognized, however, that two primary new growth areas along the highway corridor do provide some opportunities for expansion of the City. This should come as a secondary priority to infill development. Much of the demand for expansion should be driven solely by the need for additional commercial and/or light industrial needs, which would have a positive impact on the City's tax base.

With regards to the Hard Rock Mining Impact payments, which will be coming from Sandfire Resources to the City and County, it is recommended that as much effort as possible be placed on investing in infrastructure and the built environment within the City, rather than focusing on expansion beyond the existing City limits or in the rural areas of the County.

If and when it becomes necessary to consider growth adjacent to and outside of the City, it will be critical for the City and County to work closely together to plan for and guide future subdivisions near or adjacent to the City limits. This includes but is not limited to cooperation on annexation, infrastructure needs and land use regulations.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES - FOCUS AREAS

Fiscal Impacts of Growth

Any significant increase in low-density housing in the rural areas of the County could have major financial implications for the County as it would be more expensive for the County to provide services to housing that is not located near existing communities such as White Sulphur Springs. Rural residential development poses many challenges for the County. The farther away development is located from the County's established communities, the more expensive it becomes to provide services. The more road miles traveled by residential traffic, the more expensive maintenance becomes. The longer the distance from law enforcement, fire protection, and ambulance services, the more it costs to provide those services and the longer the response time.

Fiscal impact studies of rural development done on behalf of Beaverhead County in 2007 and Gallatin County in 2009 verify this. These analyses found it would cost both Counties studied significantly more in tax dollars to provide emergency services and road maintenance to new residential subdivisions if they were not located near existing communities.

Subdivision Regulations – New Development

In addition to the cost of providing basic County services, people building new permanent or seasonal structures are often attracted to properties in the WUI. Home construction in the WUI increases the burden upon the County, State, and Federal agencies when called upon to provide fire protection.

Also, agricultural operations and residential development are not always compatible, and the location of residences near ranches and farms can make it much more difficult for producers to run their operations efficiently and safely.

It is with these issues in mind that the County would like to encourage new residential development to be located near or adjacent to existing communities such

as White Sulphur Springs, Checkerboard, Lennep, Martinsdale and Ringling.

In addition, the County wants to ensure that new residential development is provided with elements that ensure safe and affordable housing. Some of these elements include:

- Minimizing natural or man-made hazards.
- Providing legal and physical vehicular access which meets adopted County Standards.
- Ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Adequate public safety services such as law enforcement, emergency medical services and fire protection services including fire protection water supplies.

The County Subdivision Regulations will be reviewed and updated to ensure they help meet these elements and others as identified by the City/County Planning Board and County Commission. In addition, the County will examine how new septic systems are reviewed and approved and will consider improvements to that process.

Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations

Along with Subdivision Regulations, state statute (Title 76, Chapter 8, Montana Code Annotated) requires every jurisdiction in the state to adopt regulations addressing the lease or renting of buildings for residential and commercial purposes. The exception to this requirement is if certain criteria are met, such as the existence of zoning regulations in the jurisdiction. Since there are no zoning regulations in effect in the County, regulations for the lease or rent of buildings should be considered for adoption in the near future, particularly as the development of the Black Butte Mine progresses forward.

Floodplains in the County

There are no mapped floodplains in Meagher County except within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City.

Accurate flood mapping could be an essential tool for the County to help residents avoid or minimize damage

to life and property caused by future flooding. Accurate flood hazard maps are meant to determine areas of risk by showing the extent and expected water depths/levels for specific areas that may be flooded. Such mapping in combination with floodplain regulations could help the County ensure that new residential and commercial developments would not be located in such areas of risk.

If the County decides to examine the development of floodplain mapping it should work closely with the Floodplain Program at the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to begin an educational process for County residents and staff to understand the process for developing the maps and the ramifications, including the potential need for floodplain regulations.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) -County

There are numerous County facilities, including the County Courthouse and County Jail that do not meet the standards required by the ADA to provide safe and efficient access to County services for residents with disabilities. The County, in cooperation with the City, will consider completing an ADA assessment of all of its facilities to identify and prioritize projects to improve ADA compliance.

CITY FUTURE LAND USE AND GROWTH AREAS

The City's future land use map is a blueprint for enacting land use regulations. Areas for future growth are designated locations where the City can target the development of public services to encourage growth. The proposed future land use map considers areas within and outside the City boundaries.

Within the City

Developing land inside the City rather than on rural land without services is an efficient and cost-effective policy for future growth, which can be driven by the availability of public infrastructure and vacancy of land.

One particular development opportunity area exists south of Main Street between 10th Ave West and 3rd Ave West on land formerly used for railroad-oriented activities. These parcels are under-served by public infrastructure such as water and sewer and many of the lots are vacant.

Additionally, there are several vacant parcels of various sizes in platted additions and subdivisions. These are generally zoned residential and exist in the City's established neighborhoods as well as the Arrowhead Meadows Estates subdivision. Land uses in these areas should match the historical and existing character of the development. Along Main Street, for example, buildings and uses should be consistent with the historic storefront retail shopping environment.

City Land Use and Urban Design

Downtown/Main Street



The downtown is largely defined by Main Street, the City's key commercial corridor. The central business area generally extends north to Hampton Street, south to Houston Street, West to 4th Avenue SW, and east to 3rd Avenue SE. The City's primary businesses are located here, which include grocery stores, markets, banks, food and beverage establishments, the Meagher County Courthouse, hotels and tourist amenities, gas stations, and retail shops which front the sidewalk. The latter provides a desirable retail shopping environment where pedestrians can glimpse products in storefront windows as they walk along the street. This urban design is found on Main Streets

across Montana. The amount and condition of the retail environment in White Sulphur Springs has, however, changed over the years.

In addition to retail storefronts, a key element of a downtown's urban design are sidewalks. Main Street sidewalks were reconstructed in the summer of 2016 and are in excellent condition.

The recent investment in downtown infrastructure improvements creates a substantial economic benefit to the community.

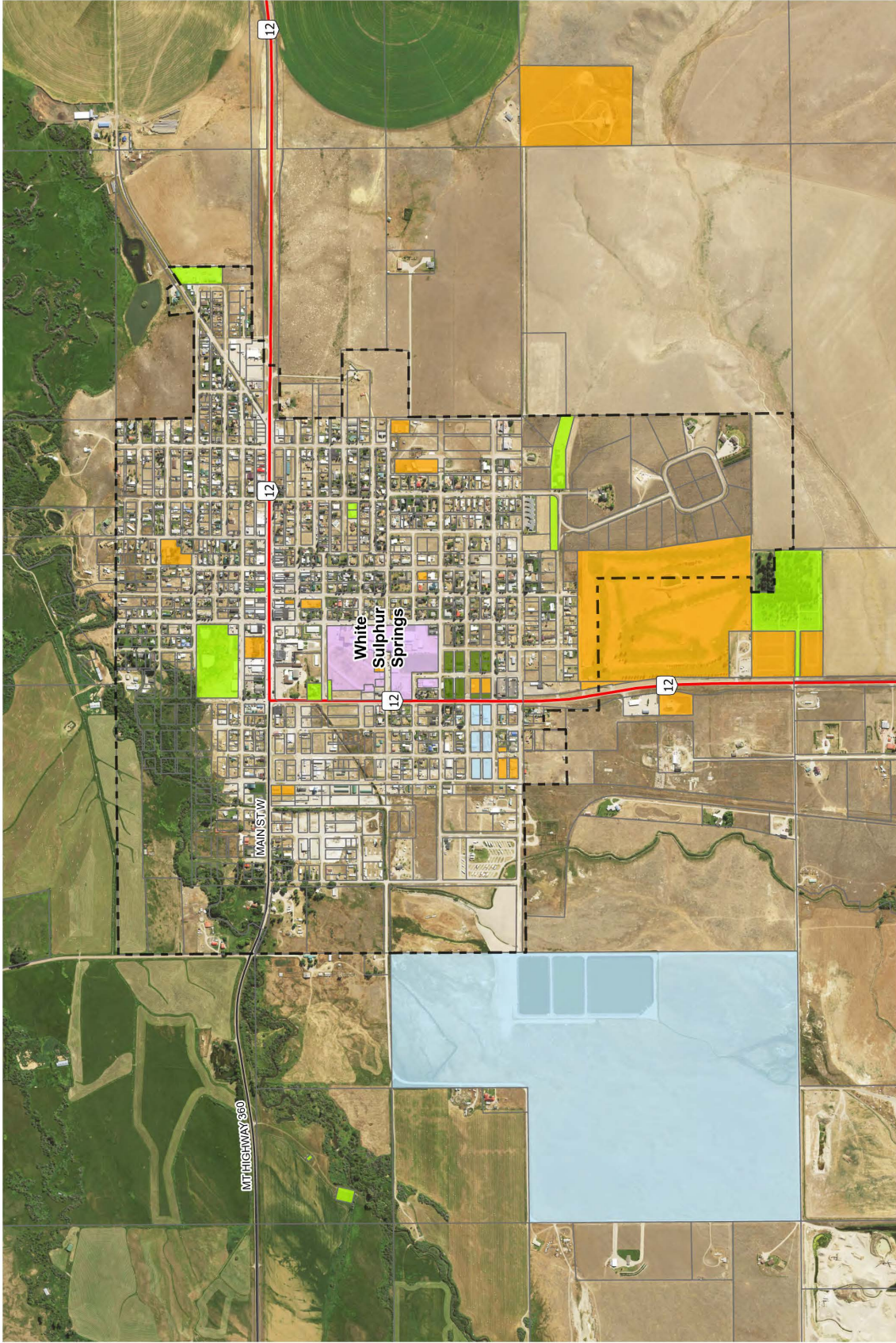
US Highway 89 Corridor (City)

US Highway 89 is described as the north/south corridor of the highway, which transitions into 3rd Avenue SW as it enters the City from the south. The urban design and land use vision for this area can be described as a "highway commercial" corridor. Highway commercial can be described as large buildings and facilities associated with commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses which require sites with high visibility and accessibility along the highway. Activities may include transportation and warehousing businesses, large garages, storage facilities, gas and service stations, convenience stores, hotels, or motels.

Signage should generally be situated towards the highway. New access and approaches must comply with all applicable state and federal design standards.

City West Growth Area

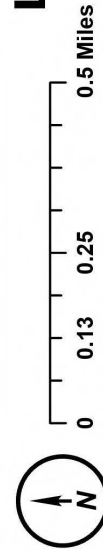




Land Ownership Map

White Sulphur Springs

Meagher County, Montana



- Meagher County
- State of Montana
- US Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private Ownership
- City of White Sulphur Springs
- School District #8

Future growth generally follows areas where public infrastructure exists and has sufficient capacity to support new development. There exists a large gap in water and sewer west of 3rd Avenue SW, which may be cost prohibitive to development.

The west growth area has an abundance of vacant land; therefore, this area is intended to target light industrial land uses. Most parcels are not adjacent to residential neighborhoods, limiting nuisances related to incompatible adjacent land uses.

The west growth area geographically corresponds to former rail yards and industrial activities which accommodated heavy equipment and material movement and storage. This is a preferred area for light industrial uses as it is known the highway corridor areas near a city’s gateway—typically prime for commercial uses—are absorbed by industrial. As such, light industrial should be targeted for the west growth area.

Outside of the City

Planning Area Surrounding the City

As mentioned earlier in the plan, there is sufficient room for the City to grow within its existing municipal limits. Nonetheless, if it becomes necessary to consider growth adjacent to and outside of the City limits, the City and County will need to work closely together to plan for and guide future growth such as subdivisions near or adjacent to the City limits. This includes cooperation between the jurisdictions on annexation, infrastructure needs and land use regulations.

South Growth Area



The South Growth Area is located along the US Highway 89 corridor as it enters/leaves the City of White Sulphur Springs at the southern municipal boundary. Uses in this designated growth area are envisioned to be similar to the highway commercial uses discussed for the growth area within the city. This area will likely become a target for new commercial development in the next few decades. Municipal services are located adjacent to the municipal boundary on the north end of the South Growth Area.

Residential acreages and uses exist nearby, particularly to the south, however commercial or industrial uses are specifically envisioned for this growth area.

Northeast Growth Area

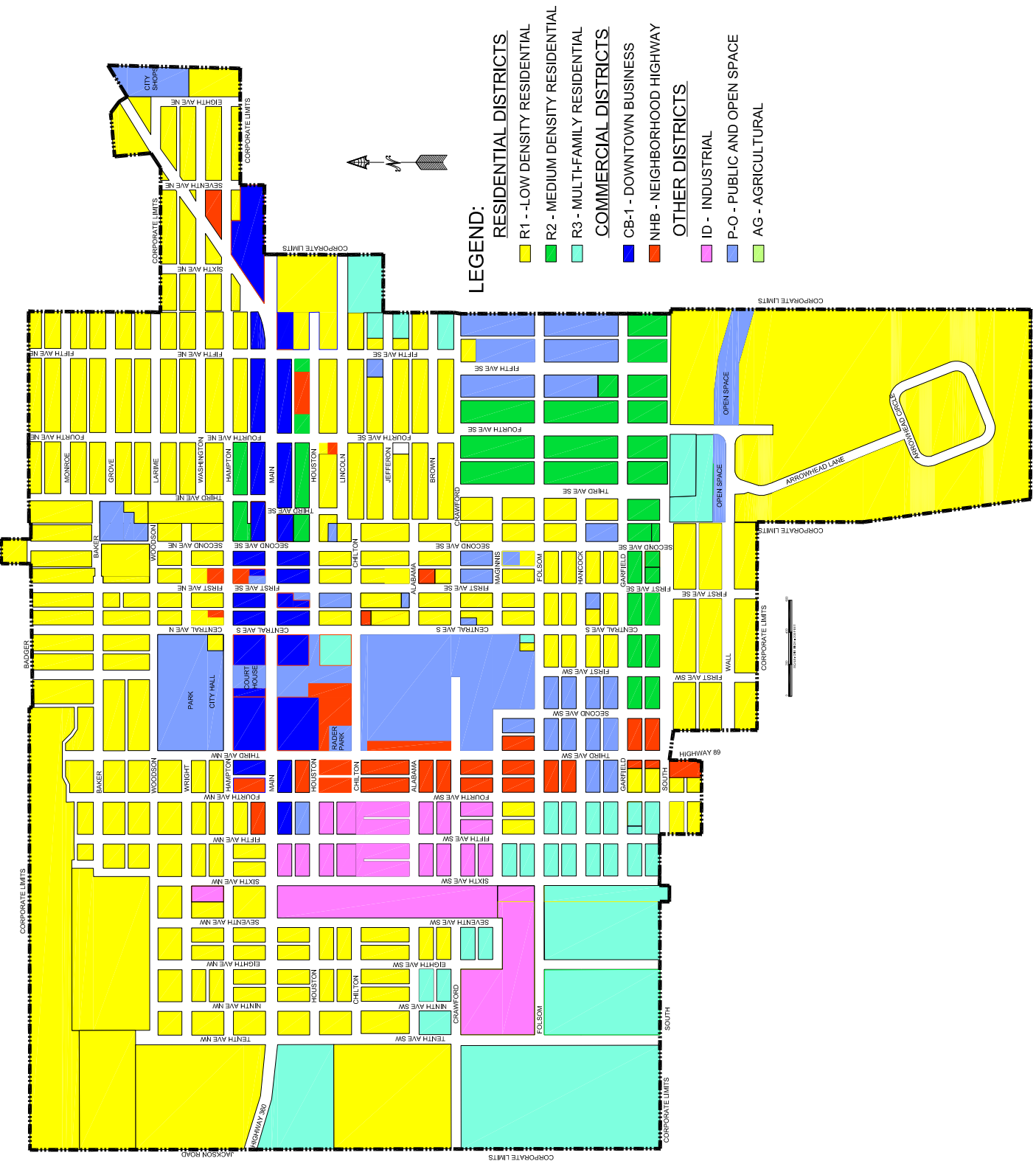
The Northeast Growth Area is located outside the municipal boundary to the northeast corner of White Sulphur Springs. In general, public infrastructure is not as available along the northern boundary due to high groundwater and floodplain and other physical barriers; however, fewer obstructions exist near the Northeast Growth Area. This location generally presents the most likely opportunity for new residential development outside of the city. Limited highway commercial uses are envisioned for this targeted new growth area.

City Floodplain Regulation and Management

The northwest corner of the City contains a regulatory floodplain identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which is created by the North Fork of the Smith River. The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), which shows the floodplain within the City is considered an “Approximate Zone A” map, meaning it does not provide base flood elevations (BFE) and is not based upon detailed surveying and engineering. The current FIRM was likely created using aerial photography of a historic flood event or some other means.

The City has floodplain regulations governing uses and construction in the regulatory floodplain, but they do not comply with the most up to date state and federal requirements. The City should consider using the State of Montana’s Model Floodplain Regulations as the basis of a future update to the regulations. In addition, if the City considers developing and adopting a zoning code for the City, regulation of land uses and buildings

CITY OF WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, MONTANA
ZONE MAP
 DECEMBER 28, 2020



in the floodplain should be considered for inclusion in any future code.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-City

There are numerous City facilities, including City Hall that do not meet the standards required by the ADA to provide safe and efficient access to City services for residents with disabilities. The City, in cooperation with the County, will consider completing an ADA assessment of all of its facilities to identify and prioritize projects to improve ADA compliance

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS: CITY AND COUNTY

The plan has discussed where the City and the County are “today”, and each community is “going.” The question for each is how do they get to where they want to be? The Implementation Plan is the answer to the last question. After gathering the advice and guidance of City and County residents and using it to carry over or create goals and objectives, the Implementation Plan delivers place-specific projects which will execute this plan.

City Opportunity Site Map

The framework for implementation in the City begins with an Opportunity Site Map and ends with implementation tables. For the County implementing this plan begins with implementation tables.

The City’s Opportunity Site Map provides an evaluation of specific sites in the City, which translate to projects or development opportunities.

The opportunities are categorized into six fields:

1. Community
2. Parks
3. Downtown Development
4. Economic Development
5. Public Buildings
6. Streets

City Opportunity Project List

Community

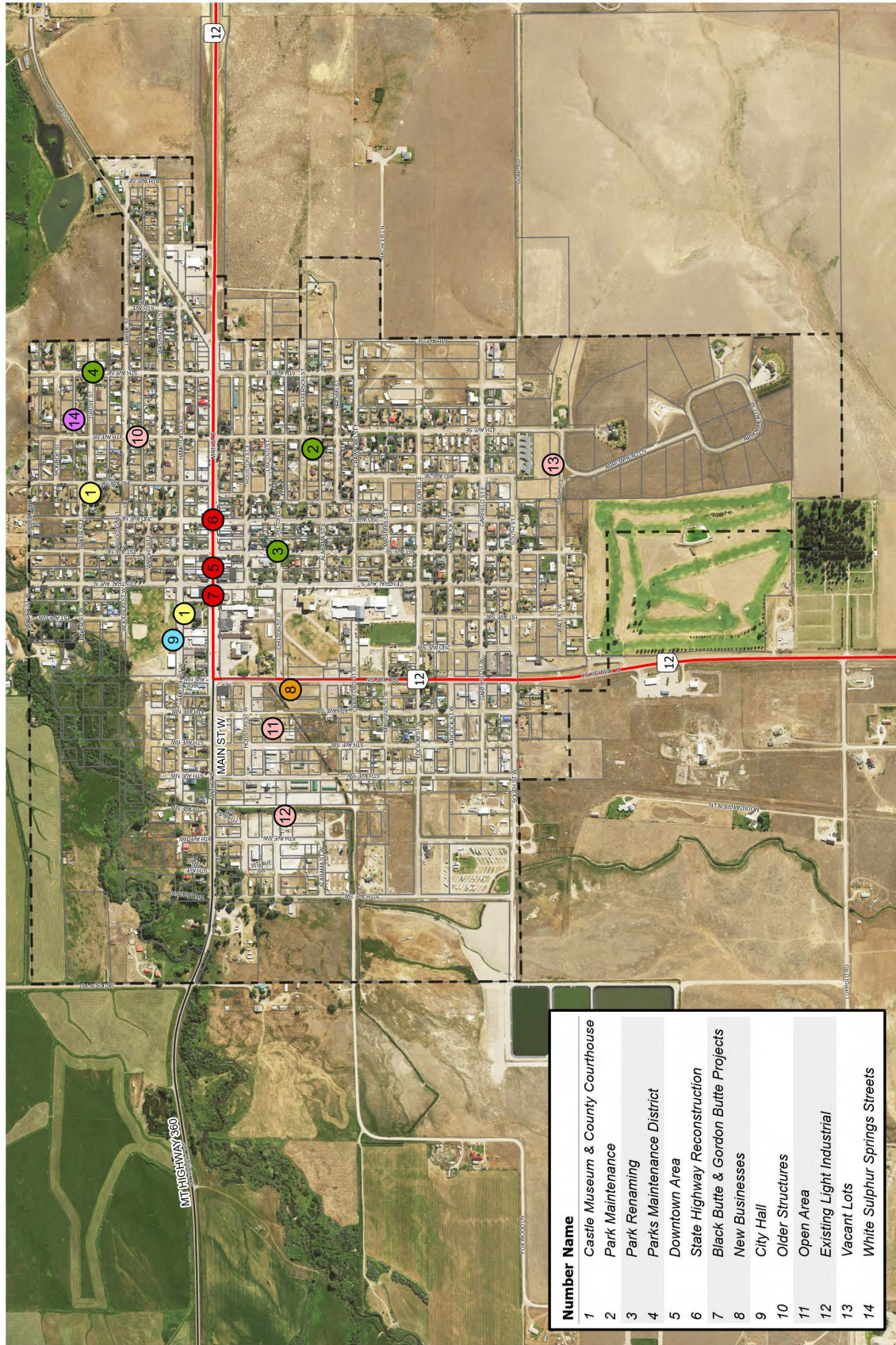
1. The protection and restoration of historic structures is important to residents. The Castle Museum provides visitors with an opportunity to look into the history of White Sulphur Springs. In addition, the County Courthouse was built in 1953 by architect Edwin G. Osgood, who designed a number of county courthouses in the state. A dedicated website and directional signage from Main Street could increase opportunities for visitation to such places.

Parks

2. Several of the community’s parks have been maintained over the years. Some of the parks in the community will require maintenance in order to be utilized by the public in the future. The City has a Parks Advisory Committee to provide the City Council with advice and guidance.
3. One model of park maintenance is naming parks for local service organizations to adopt (like Rotary Park, for example). This model has been successfully used in other Montana communities such as Red Lodge for many years.
4. Another alternative is to adopt a parks maintenance district to provide revenue for park investment.

Downtown Development

5. The Downtown Area continues to see increased activity and reinvestment. Several new businesses have opened in the last several years. Older structures will continue to need reinvestment for the Downtown Area to thrive. Tools like a Business Improvement District (BID) may further enhance private investment in the Downtown area.
6. The state highway reconstruction through the Highway Commercial Corridor and Downtown Area provides new opportunities for private investment. The improved sidewalks and



Number	Name
1	Castle Museum & County Courthouse
2	Park Maintenance
3	Park Renaming
4	Parks Maintenance District
5	Downtown Area
6	State Highway Reconstruction
7	Black Butte & Gordon Butte Projects
8	New Businesses
9	City Hall
10	Older Structures
11	Open Area
12	Existing Light Industrial
13	Vacant Lots
14	White Sulphur Springs Streets

Opportunity Sites

White Sulphur Springs

Meagher County, Montana

● Public Buildings
● Parks
● Downtown Development
● Economic Development
● New Growth Opportunity Sites
● Streets

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles

N
 ↑
 N

roads have substantially improved the overall appearance and function of the downtown area.

Economic Development

7. The Black Butte Copper Mine and the Gordon Butte Project have the potential to significantly impact the community.
8. Investment in existing businesses and the creation of new ones in the City show investment in the community from a new generation. Examples include the well known Red Ants Pants and the associated summer music festival, and the Twin Sisters Trading Post that provide goods to locals and visitors to the Town.

Public Buildings

9. City Hall sits one street off of Main Street.

New Growth Opportunity Sites

10. Older structures exist in several areas throughout the community.
11. Open area with vacant parcels to the west of Highway 89.
12. Existing Light Industrial on the West side of town leads to opportunities for new light industries to be located in this area.
13. Vacant lots are available on the edge of the community but lack city sewer. The City may want to consider either an improvement district to fund the expansion of water/sewer or could enter into development agreements with individual lot purchasers to help facilitate funding without requiring any one purchaser to fund the entire cost.

Streets

14. White Sulphur Springs' streets are in poor condition in some locations throughout the city. The issue is exacerbated in some locations where underlying water and/or sewer lines are also deteriorated and need replacing.

City Implementation Table

This Implementation Plan sets forth the measures and actions the City plans to carry out the goals, objectives and policies specified in this growth policy plan. These statements, taken together, establish a community framework for fostering economic growth, providing public facilities and services, managing land use and development, and facilitating safe, affordable housing. Importantly, any and all implementation actions will require commitment by White Sulphur Springs residents and the City Council to follow through on the guidance provided in this Plan.



Action	Responsibility	Target Timetable
Economic Development - City		
1. Encourage the retention/expansion of existing businesses as well as the establishment of new businesses and increased employment opportunities..	City Council, County Commission, Chamber of Commerce, MBAC	Within 2 Years
2. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to enhance promotion of the City and County as a live/work destination and to promote the travel and recreation industry..	City Council, County Commission	Within 3 Years
3. Work with Montana Department of Commerce and Main Street Programs.	City Council, Economic Development Council, MBAC	Within 2 Years
Land Use - City		
1. Update the Subdivision Regulations based upon identification of new issues and statutory changes.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Ongoing
2. Continue the process to create an Interim Land Use (Zoning) Ordinance for the review and recommendation of the City/County Planning Board.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Within 1 Years
3. Develop a coordinated process to guide and review subdivisions near or adjacent to the City's municipal boundary.	City/County Planning Board, County Sanitarian, Chamber of Commerce, Realtors	2 Years
4. Update the City floodplain regulations using the Model Floodplain Regulations from the State of Montana.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	2-3 Years
Public Facilities and Services - City		
1. Continue development of a 5-6 year capital improvements plan (CIP) which identifies the City's needs regarding public facilities, sets priorities among those needs, identifies the expected costs for planning, engineering, construction, and on-going maintenance and replacement after construction; and identifies likely funding sources. A key component of the CIP will be a combined street repair / water-sewer line replacement plan.	Consultant, City Council, City Planning Board, County Commission, County Planning Board	Within 1 Year
2. Establish a coordinated joint program with the County for sharing personnel and road/street maintenance equipment on road/street improvement projects.	City Council, County Commission	Within 2 Years
3. Meet at least every 2 years with: Mountain View Medical Center, the County, Library, Senior Citizens and County Historical Association to discuss provision of City services to the facilities, supporting their programs, and where appropriate, sponsoring grant/loan applications.	City Council, MVMC, Library, MCCSC, MCHA	Ongoing

Action	Responsibility	Target Timetable
Public Facilities and Services - City (Continued)		
4. Organize interagency meetings to include at least the City, Meagher County, White Sulphur Springs Public Schools, MT Department of Transportation and MT Business Assistance Connection to discuss opportunities to improve efficiencies in providing public facilities and services through cost sharing, cooperation, and coordination.	City Council, County Commission, WSSPS, MDT, MBAC	Ongoing
5. Research the potential to develop a stable secondary electrical power source for City and County residents.	City Council, County Commission, WSSPS, MBAC	Within 5 years
6. Develop an ADA facility assessment in conjunction with the County.	City Council, County Commission,	Within 2 years
Housing - City		
1. Coordinate with area realtors, Meagher County Senior Citizens, and MBAC to assess housing needs for all residents and investigate state, federal, and private housing programs available for Montana cities.	County Commission, City Council, City/County Planning Board, MCCSC, MBAC, HRDC, MDOC, private sector	Within 1 Year
2. Review the results of the pending City housing study to determine the next steps to address housing needs.	County Commission, City Council, City/County Planning Board, MCCSC, HRDC, MDOC, private sector	Within 1 Year
Public Communications and Information - City		
1. Publish notices and articles in local newspapers and newsletters, post notices on the City and other appropriate websites, and hold open public meetings to inform citizens of City actions and planning.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Ongoing
2. Give notice of, and hold, open public meetings, and allow public comment at all regular or special meetings of the City Council or any of its boards or committees to hear and consider citizens' ideas and opinions on proposed City actions.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Ongoing
3. Evaluate available meeting spaces located within the City to identify locations with adequate physical areas for in-person meetings when physical distancing is required.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Within 1 year
4. Evaluate available communication technologies to facilitate public participation when in-person meetings are not feasible or safe.	City Council, City/County Planning Board	Within 1 year

County Implementation Table

This Implementation Plan sets forth the measures and actions the County plans to carry out the goals, objectives and policies specified in this Growth Policy Plan. These statements, taken together, establish a community framework for fostering economic growth, providing public facilities and services, managing land use and development, and facilitating safe, affordable

housing. Importantly, any and all implementation actions will require commitment by Meagher County residents and the County Commission to follow through on the guidance provided in this Plan.

Action	Responsibility	Target Timetable
Economic Development - County		
1. Encourage the retention/expansion of existing businesses as well as the establishment of new businesses and increased employment opportunities.	City Council, County Commission, Chamber of Commerce, MBAC	Within 2 Years
2. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to enhance promotion of the City and County as a live/work destination and to promote the travel and recreation industry.	City Council, County Commission	Within 3 Years
3. Market and as necessary improve broadband internet capacity for existing residents, potential new residents, and businesses.	Chamber of Commerce, Montana Business Assistance Connection (MBAC), Triangle Communications	Within 2 Years
Land Use - County		
1. Update the Subdivision Regulations.	City/County Planning Board, County Commission	Within 1 Year
2. Develop and adopt Buildings-for-Lease-or-Rent regulations per statutory requirements.	City/County Planning Board, County Commission, City Council	Within 2 Years
3. Develop a coordinated process to guide and review subdivisions near or adjacent to the City's municipal boundary.	City/County Planning Board, County Sanitarian, Chamber of Commerce, Realtors	Within 2 years
4. Examine the need for detailed floodplain mapping in the County.	City/County Planning Board, County Commission, MT DNRC, FEMA	Within 5 Years

Action	Responsibility	Target Timetable
Public Facilities and Services - County		
1. Develop a Comprehensive 5-Year County Capital Improvements Plan.	City/County Planning Board, County Commission	Within 2 Years
2. Establish a coordinated program to effectively allocate the Hard Rock Mining Impact funds from the Black Butte Mine project for infrastructure needs in the City and County.	County Commission, City Council	Within 2.5 Years
3. Coordinate infrastructure and facility maintenance and replacement with the City.	County Commission, City Council	Within 2 Years
4. Develop a County-City Park and Recreation Plan for the development and maintenance of existing and future facilities.	City/County Planning Board, County Commission, City Council	2-4 Years
5. Support the Senior Center as needed.	Meagher County Senior Association, County Commission, City Council	Ongoing
6. Support the operation and maintenance of the County's museums.	Meagher County Historical Association, County Commission, City Council	Ongoing
7. Research the potential to develop a stable secondary electrical power source for City and County residents.	City Council, County Commission, WSSPS, MBAC, NWE	Within 5 years
8. Develop an ADA facility assessment in conjunction with the City.	City Council, County Commission	Within 2 years
Housing - County		
1. Coordinate with area realtors, Meagher County Senior Citizens, and MBAC, assess housing needs for all residents and investigate state, federal, and private housing programs available for Montana cities.	County Commission, City Council, City/County Planning Board, MCCSC, MBAC, private sector	Within 1 Year
2. Review the results of the pending City\County housing study to determine the next steps in addressing housing needs.	County Commission, City Council, City/County Planning Board, MCCSC, private sector	Within 1 Year

COORDINATION BETWEEN THE CITY AND COUNTY

It is the intent of the City and the County to coordinate on issues of mutual interest and to cooperate on issues using federal, state, county, and city laws and regulations for guidance.

City Coordination with the County

The City proposes the following specific coordination approaches with Meagher County:

- Develop a review and regulatory system which makes it easier and less costly to develop new homes and businesses within the City and/or during annexation.
- Support maintenance and improvement of any County infrastructure systems (e.g.: through letters of support for grants submitted by the County for improvements, etc.), recognizing sound infrastructure is necessary for existing and new development.
- Support coordination of new annexations into the City as market demand or other factors create a need for annexation when the City has outgrown its existing boundaries.
- Create an inter-local agreement regarding coordination of various services, such as fire protection, law enforcement, weed control, and emergency services.

County Coordination with the City

The County proposes the following specific coordination approaches with the City of White Sulphur Springs:

- Work closely with the City to coordinate issues such as new subdivisions near or adjacent to the City.
- Leverage and coordinate resources with the City of White Sulphur Springs in providing infrastructure such as water, sewer, and streets.
- Consider joint City/County planning strategies such as:
 - Coordinated annexation and subdivision regulations-review
 - Capital improvements planning

- Housing plans
- Others
- Consider leveraging resources with the City for:
 - Staff
 - Services
 - Other

REVIEW AND REVISION OF GROWTH POLICY

The City/County Planning Board will review the growth policy annually and issue a status report to the City Council and County Commission. The status report will include:

- Status of completing goals, objectives, and specific action strategies outlined in the growth policy,
- Assessment of work and projects to be completed in the following year.
- Needed revisions to the Growth Policy.

Conditions for Revising the Growth Policy

The Growth Policy provides a plan for the future based on existing conditions and projected trends. It cannot cover all potential future scenarios and thus needs to be flexible to deal with new issues as they arise. Under the following conditions, the City/County Planning Board will review the growth policy and determine if changes are needed:

- Implementation of significant projects or changes outside of the authority of the City or the County with potential to significantly affect implementation of the stated goals, policies, and strategies in this growth policy.
- Projects or changes with the potential to significantly alter the health, safety, and welfare of citizens which were inadequately addressed in the growth policy.
- Changes in state law regarding growth policies.
- Court cases and/or litigation which sets legal precedent in Montana for growth policies
- Individual neighborhood plans developed in accordance with state law (76-1-601) are to be included as amendments to the current growth policy.

- City/County Planning Board evaluation of implementation measures and progress, and determination which modifications would enhance the effectiveness of the growth policy.

Process for Revising the Growth Policy

If the City/County Planning Board determines a revision to the growth policy is necessary, the Board will provide written notice to the City Council and County Commission prior to commencing work on the revision.

The City/County Planning Board will follow the process outlined in state law for adopting a growth policy (76-1-602 through 76-1-603) for any subsequent revisions. Once revisions are drafted, the Planning Board will conduct a public hearing on proposed revisions and then by resolution make its recommendation to the City Council and the County Commission. The City Council and County Commissions will then separately make their decision to adopt, revise, or reject the changes as outlined in state law (76-1-604).

REVIEW OF SUBDIVISIONS: CITY AND COUNTY

Defining Evaluation Criteria for Subdivisions

Requirements for a growth policy under 76-1-601 include:

- “(h) a statement explaining how the governing bodies will: (i) Define the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a); and
- (ii) Evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a);”

State law requires a statement describing how the governing body will define criteria and evaluate and review subdivisions within the City and the County. With the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act (MSPA), subdivision regulations have been mandated by state law since 1975. Subdivision plans are reviewed and approved through the City/County Planning Board and/or the State Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

The MSPA applies to any division of land into parcels less than 160 acres and provides six criteria for subdivision review (76-3-608, MCA) and regulations describing divisions of land exempt from subdivision review. It is recommended the City and the County use these guidelines.

Therefore, subdivisions in both City and the County will be evaluated for their material effect on those six criteria, which include:

- (1) the impact on agriculture, (2) agricultural water user facilities, (3) local services, (4) the natural environment, (5) wildlife, wildlife habitat and (6) public health and safety.

Significant unmitigated adverse impacts to the City and the County could be grounds for the denial of proposed subdivisions.

The Sanitation in Subdivisions Act applies to any division of land less than 20 acres. The DEQ and local sanitarian review the plans for sewage disposal, water supply and stormwater runoff. Divisions of land with an existing septic system installed prior to April 29, 1993 may be exempted from sanitation review.

Public Hearing Procedures

Subdivision plans are reviewed and recommended for approval or denial by the City/County Planning Board through the state mandated review and public hearing process. The general steps for the public hearing, which is conducted by the Planning Board in the City and County, are as follows:

1. Introduce public hearing
2. Explain subdivision review procedure and decision criteria
3. Planning staff report
4. Applicant presentation
5. Public testimony
6. Close public hearing

The City/County Planning Board Chair, who presides over the meeting, is responsible for setting the guidelines or methods for public comment. The Chair will review general guidelines prior to public comment,

reminding the public of the criteria upon which the final decision must be made. Because each meeting is somewhat different, a standardized set of guidelines may not work in every case.

Defining Subdivision Review Criteria

The following are standards that the City and County will use to evaluate proposed subdivisions under the review criteria set out in 76-3-608(3)(a) MCA.

Effect on Agriculture

Determine:

- The number of acres of land which will be removed from livestock, crop, timber, or irrigated production.
- Whether the subdivision would have an adverse impact on agricultural operations, such as interfering with movement of livestock, maintaining fences, harvesting, or planting crops, or results in the proliferation of weeds or harassing livestock by pets or human activity.

Effect on Agricultural Water Users

Determine whether the proposed subdivision would interfere with any irrigation system or other agricultural water facilities, including irrigation ditches, headgates, sprinkler systems, or would impact water rights or access for maintenance purposes.

Effect on Local Services

Determine:

- The projected increase in population, school-age children, and daily vehicles.
- The additional costs to provide water, sewer, streets, law enforcement, fire protection, and ambulance services.
- Whether the extension of public streets or roads is needed, and if so, who will bear the costs.
- Property tax revenues currently generated by the land, and projected tax revenues after the subdivision is fully developed. Describe whether the subdivision would connect to a central water and/or sewer system.

Determine:

- What will be the cost of connecting to the central system(s); who will pay those costs.
- What will be the increased costs for maintenance and operation, and who will pay the costs?

Proposed subdivisions, which will use on-site water supply or sewage disposal, must have approval from Meagher County and the Department of Environmental Quality for the sanitation facilities.

Effect on Public Health and Safety

Determine:

- Whether the subdivision would be subject to potential natural hazards such as flooding, soils unsuitable for building, wildfire, excessive slopes, or high seismic risk.
- Whether the subdivision would be subject to potential man-made hazards such as high voltage power lines, high pressure gas lines.
- The measures the subdivider has proposed to minimize or overcome the above hazards, where applicable.

Effect on the Natural Environment

Determine:

- Whether the subdivision will increase stormwater run-off, interfere with natural drainage ways, cause or increase erosion, or alter stream banks.
- In the City, the City Public Works Department will determine whether the stormwater management and grading and drainage plans minimize run-off and adverse impacts.
- The extent of cutting and filling and proposed measures to prevent the proliferation of weed growth within the subdivision and on areas disturbed by construction.
- Subdivisions are considered to have an adverse effect on the natural environment where proposed on land with historical, cultural archaeological, or paleontological features; soils with building limitations or slopes greater than 25 percent; water tables within 4 feet of the ground surface;

and adjacent to riparian areas, wetlands, lakes or streams or other natural water features.

Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Determine:

- Whether the subdivision will be located in an area of significant wildlife habitat, or in any critical wildlife areas, riparian areas, wetlands, streams, lakes, other natural water features.
- Whether the expected effects of pets and human activity generated by the subdivision will significantly affect wildlife.

