

City of Libby Growth Policy



Photo courtesy of Bill Caldwell, 2010

A revision to the 1972 Comprehensive Plan

Adopted November 1, 2010

Acknowledgements

City Planning Board Members

Peggy Williams, Chair

Bill Bischoff

Amber Brandt

Barb Desch

Alan Kahnt

Bruce Moog

Karen Repine

Technical and Support Staff

Kristin Smith, Planning Director

Greg Larson, Consultant

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Introduction

A Growth Policy is:

- A community's **vision** for how it sees its **future**
- A community's **vision** for **how** and **where it wants to grow**
- **An official statement of public policy** to guide growth and change

A Growth Policy is not:

- **A set of regulations**
- **Stagnant – rather, it is a dynamic document that changes with the community**

A Growth Policy addresses the following community aspects:

- Land use**
- Population**
- Housing**
- Economic conditions**
- Local services**
- Natural resources**

...and any other topics proposed by the Planning Board. It also includes an inventory of existing characteristics or facilities; projected trends; goals, policies and implementation strategies to achieve goals; intergovernmental coordination strategies.

The term “**growth policy**” was introduced into Montana law in the late 1990s. In state law, the terms, “growth policy”, “master plan” and “comprehensive plan” are interchangeable.

A growth policy is a broad body of public policy, primarily on community growth and development issues. While it is not a regulatory document in and of itself, once adopted it forms the basis for use in regulations or programs to implement the growth policy. For example, a growth policy does not *zone* property, rather, it provides a starting point for a community to adopt or amend zoning regulations. Land may be zoned and regulations written *and* enacted based upon recommendations contained in a growth policy. The growth policy is explained in the Montana Code, annotated in Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6.

The Libby Growth Policy is an official public document adopted by the City of Libby as a guide for future growth in the City. The primary purpose of developing the Libby Growth Policy is to help the public and elected officials define objectives, set their priorities, and seek solutions to long term issues. The growth policy is not a law or regulation, but rather the adopted policy when making land use decisions for the community. The City

Council must be guided by and give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the growth policy. In addition, new development proposals should be evaluated in terms of their compliance with the goals and objectives of the Growth Policy. The plan is intended to be the guide to physical development in the community. A secondary function of the Growth Policy is as a reference source containing demographic, economic and quality of life information about the City, and the availability and timing of certain infrastructure improvements.

The Growth Policy provides a sense of direction, a broad overview of where a community is (existing conditions) and where it is going (future desires). It may be thought of as a way of assuring that a community's health safety and general welfare are protected by striving for a better, healthier, efficient and aesthetically pleasing environment in which to live. The Growth Policy provides a consistent framework for legislative and administrative action, always steering the City toward the desired future.

In short, over the 20 year planning horizon of the Growth Policy, its contents will be referred to again and again as the City Council, Planning Board, various city departments and the public make comments and decisions on laws, rules, and regulations and programs. Always, the underlying motivation will be to see to it that the City of Libby in 20 years is as close as we can make it to the city of the future described in the Policy's vision statement.

"It should be emphasized that this Comprehensive Plan (Growth Policy) cannot serve its intended purpose – as a guide for community growth – without the support of citizens of the area. Implementation of the Plan (Policy) will require the adoption of zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and community wide programs of renewal, code enforcement and beautification. All of these things cannot function without the support of an enthusiastic and enlightened citizenry." (City of Libby Comprehensive Plan – 1972)

The same holds true today!

Vision Statement

This vision statement was developed to define the kind of place citizens want Libby to be 20 years in the future. In considering this vision statement, it is important to understand its perspective, context and role in the Growth Policy. The vision statement expresses citizen's aspirations for the future of Libby. It is written in the perspective of someone, who in 2030 and later, is observing the character of Libby and reflecting on the past 20 or more years of progress – progress guided by the action plan in the Growth Policy.

The Vision Statement expresses values and motivations – what is intended to be achieved by 2030 and later. The action plan sets out in detail how we intend to achieve the vision.

Vision Statement – Libby 2030

“The City of Libby reflects planned growth consistent with the social and cultural values of its citizens. Libby is a safe, healthy, friendly and attractive community that fosters a sense of belonging and pride. Libby is committed to advancing commerce, tourism and recreation, and to supporting high quality and continuing education. Libby provides a diverse economic base, efficient public services and a variety of housing options. New development and redevelopment is encouraged in areas where public services can be provided and the historic and cultural heritage of the city can be preserved and enhanced. The integrity of natural and scenic resources are maintained and enhanced to protect and maintain Libby's high quality of life. Libby promotes citizen involvement, open responsive government and recognizes the value of partnerships with citizens and other governments in Northwest Montana.”



Photo courtesy of Brent Shrum

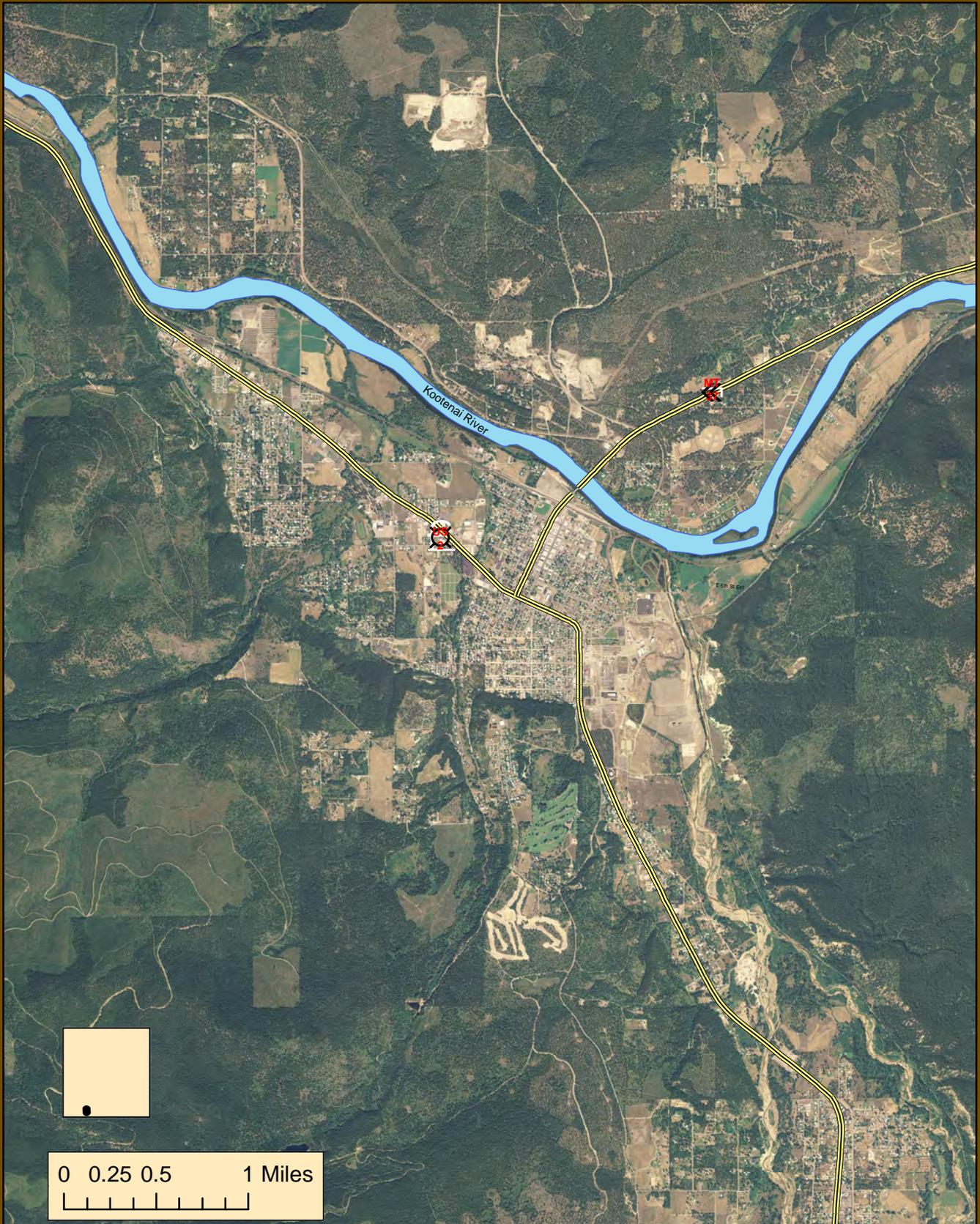
Planning Area Boundaries

The City has a logical interest in guiding the land use and development patterns both within and immediately outside City limits to ensure efficient provision of services and cost-effective capital improvements. The Planning Area Boundary (PAB) includes the City limits and unincorporated land within 1 mile outside of the City limits. Portions of the PAB may become annexed to the City during the 20-year planning horizon.

The PAB includes lands where urban services are already provided or can be readily provided over the planning horizon. Many of the County residents in the planning area currently have access to City services and resources such as the local street network, water and sewer service, and facilities such as public parks and emergency services. Although these residents are not physically located within the City, they create a demand for City services. It is important for the City to plan for growth in surrounding areas to better understand demands on its resources, and to adequately provide services to people, if and when they become City residents.

Administration

Administration of the growth policy and its implementation is the responsibility of the City of Libby in cooperation with Lincoln County. The City of Libby has a charter form of government with a Mayor and a six member council who set policy and regulation, ordinances and resolutions and establish an annual budget. The City has a City Administrator as well as support staff that oversees the day-to-day operations of the City which include a water and wastewater utility, streets, parks, cemetery, and police department. The City currently has 25 full-time and 8 part-time employees.



LIBBY AREA

Created by: Deb Blystone GIS Tech
Lincoln County Planning
418 Mineral Ave
Libby, MT. 59923
April 14, 2009
Libby City Plus Buffer area: 1 mile
Rotation: 4.5 degrees
Coordinate system;
NAD 1983 Montana State Plane FIPS 2500



Brief History of Libby

Set in the northwest corner of Montana, 35 miles east of Idaho and 70 miles south of Canada, is the town of Libby. The town lies in a picturesque valley carved by the Kootenai River and framed by the Cabinet Mountains to the south. Approximately 12,000 people live within a ten-mile radius of Libby, the County Seat. Known as the City of Eagles, the community's assets include clean water, beautiful scenery, and recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, hunting, boating and skiing. In fact, it is the only place in the Northern Rockies where one can travel less than 2 hours to 4 different ski areas with more than 2,000 feet of vertical descent!

Most of Libby's incorporated area is located south of the Kootenai River. U.S. Highway 2 bisects the community running east to west and Highway 37 crosses the Kootenai River, following it north to Eureka. The BNSF has a rail line that follows the Kootenai River through Libby. The city of Libby is the largest urbanized area and most densely developed city in Lincoln County.

Like many western towns, Libby developed around the railroad after discovery of gold in the Cabinet Mountains. In August 1867, miners working Libby Creek discovered gold. The mining camp, located south of present-day Libby became known as Libbysville. In October 1889 a lode containing silver and lead was discovered. It was named Snowshoe and would be a major producing mine for the Libby area by the late 1890s. On May 3, 1892 the first train on the Great Northern Railroad arrived in Libby. That year saw other firsts as well: the first school house, a small wooden building, in the same block as Libby Hotel and the first newspaper, the *Libby Miner*, was published. The first church was the old log Methodist Church built in 1897. The first homes were built in the early 1890s with dirt floors and dirt roofs. Telephone service came to Libby around 1913.

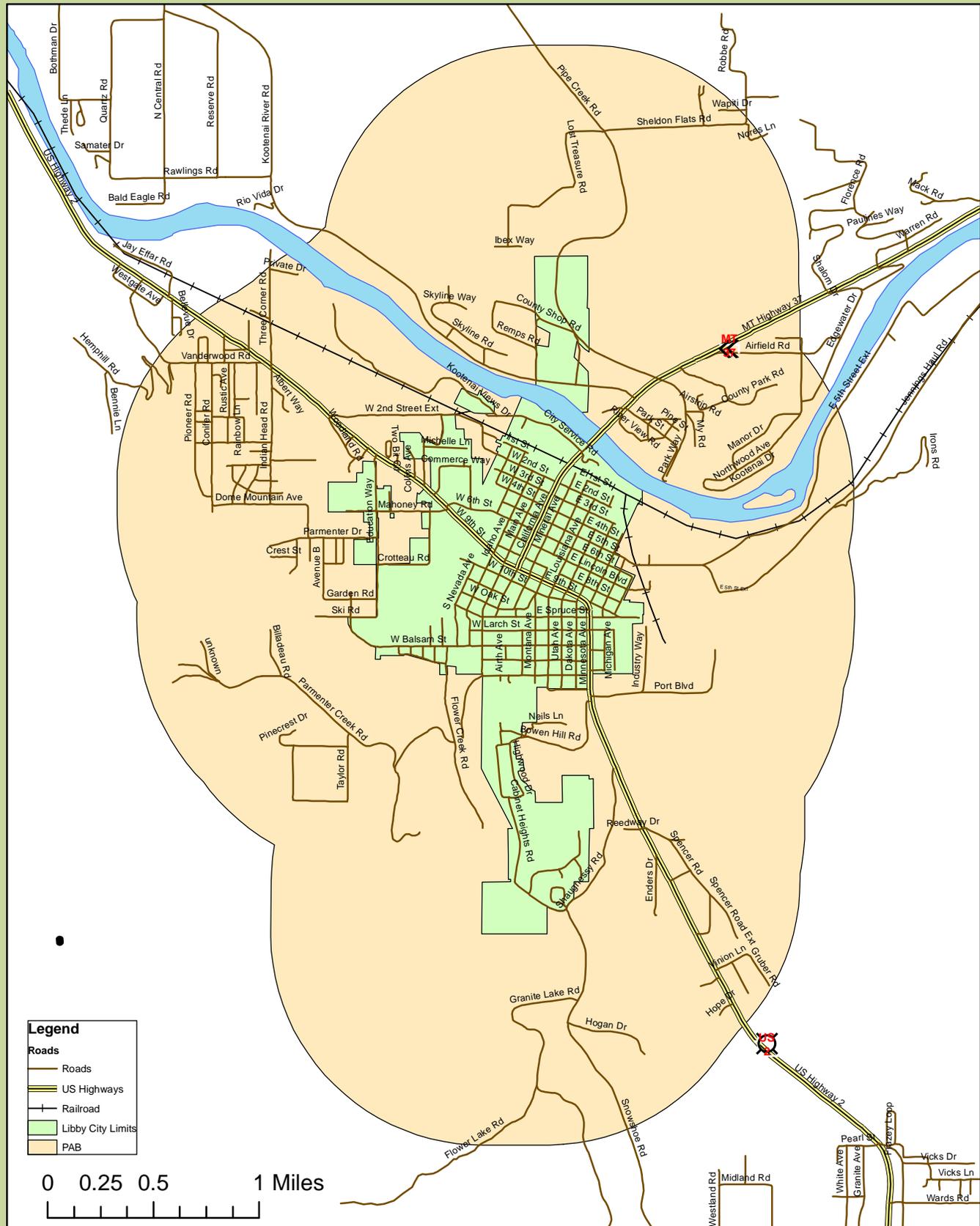
The town grew quickly in the early 1900s and logging quickly became an important part of the community's culture, due to its setting. Libby Townsite Company brought in the first sawmill and cut timber to build Libby in its present location. In the spring 1906 construction began of the Dawson Lumber Company sawmill at the site of the former Stimson Sawmill (Kootenai Business Park) bringing workers and their families to the town in greater numbers. Unfortunately, that same year a disastrous fire swept through downtown, destroying many of the original buildings. The Dawson mill was the first successful sawmill to operate in the Libby vicinity and several lumber companies owned the mill at Libby over the next 100 years. Railroad logging began in the area in 1907 with the construction of a logging railroad along Libby Creek. Julius (J.) Neils and Weyerhaeuser interests acquired timberlands in the area at about the same time.

For more than a century Libby has been tied to the timber industry and reminders of its importance are evident throughout the community – the local High School's mascot is the Libby Logger.

The Libby Dam, approximately 17 miles north of town, was constructed from 1966 to 1972 employing 2000 workers during peak construction periods. The 422-foot tall dam holds back 90 miles of water in Lake Kooconusa. Its generators can provide enough electricity for the daily needs of 500,000 average homes. In 1975, the Libby Dam was dedicated by President Gerald Ford after two decades of planning and construction.

In the early 1900s vermiculite deposits were first located by prospectors on Rainy Creek northeast of Libby. In 1919, E.N. Alley bought the Rainy Creek claims and started the Zonolite Company. The W. R. Grace Company bought the mine and operated it from 1963 until its closure in 1990. While in operation, the vermiculite mine in Libby may have produced 80% of the world's supply of vermiculite and was a significant employer of many Libby townspeople. In late 1999, the mine was blamed for asbestos-related deaths and illnesses among Libby residents and former employees due to exposure to asbestos-tainted vermiculite.

Like many other western towns, Libby has experienced cycles of boom and bust. However, nestled in its beautiful and scenic mountainous setting, surrounded by vast public lands and recreation opportunities, Libby continues to be a desirable place to live, work, and retire. Libby has a number of assets that make it a livable community. Libby's history and heritage, location along the Kootenai River, City parks and open space areas, cultural amenities such as a performing arts center, excellent schools, and wonderful recreational opportunities are all aspects that community members extol. Improving community safety, diversifying the economy, enhancing the image of Libby, protecting natural resources and maintaining attractive locations to live, work and recreate are all key to Libby's prosperity.



Libby Planning Area Boundary

Created by: Deb Blystone GIS Tech
 Lincoln County Planning
 418 Mineral Ave
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 Libby City Plus Buffer area: 1 mile
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Population

The population of Libby has grown approximately 9.5% since 2000 to an estimated 2,880¹ in 2009 making it the state's 26th largest city, though this number does not reflect the recent annexation of the Cabinet Heights area, which added approximately 370 residents to the City. Lincoln County is the 10th most populous county in Montana with an estimated 18,717 residents as of July 1, 2009². It is adjacent to counties that experienced very rapid growth during the previous decade. Though there is currently a severe recession, steady population growth is expected over the next 10 to 20 years.

Since the 1950s, Libby has experienced relatively substantial fluctuations in its population. The largest increase (44 percent) occurred between 1960 and 1970 due to construction of Libby Dam, after which the population declined. Since 1990, the population slowly recovered from 2,532 people in 1990 to 2,626 people in 2000.

According to the 2000 census the City of Libby had a total of 1,132 occupied households. In 2007, the City annexed an area known as Cabinet Heights, which lies south of the City. This area has 161 existing homes and is predominantly of a suburban land use pattern. The City estimates for population projection purposes an average of 2.3 persons per household thus bringing the census in the City limits to approximately 2,973 persons.

Libby has seen a high number of persons leaving between the ages of 25 to 34. This age bracket declined over 33 percent between 1990 and 2000 due to job losses. Lincoln County has experienced an increase in the number of older residents due to the popularity of second homes in rural mountain communities. From 1990 to 2000, people between the ages of 55 to 64 increased by 55 percent and people 65 or older increased 33.5 percent. These growth rates exceeded state growth rates over the same period, which were 25 percent for ages 55 to 64, and 14 percent for ages 64 and older. The current population of Libby is 46.5% male and 53.5% female. In 2007, the median age of the population in the area was 48.1 compared to the US median age which was 36.7. The median age is projected to reach 50.6 by 2012 (Decision Data Resources). The distribution of population by age reflects an aging population which presents a host of planning problems throughout Montana and the United States

The population of Lincoln County is approximately 96 % white, 1.4% American Indian, and 2% Hispanic with .05% all other. Approximately 38% of the population is under 40 years old.³

Due to the dramatic changes in the economy over the last couple of years it is difficult to make population projections. However, if the trend of approximately 1% population increase per year continues, the population in Libby could be expected to increase by

¹ Montana Census & Economic Information Center

² Ibid

³ MT Department of Labor & Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program

approximately 576 people by 2030. Much of the projected population growth is attributed to expected increases in retirees and other older, more affluent newcomers.

Economy

The United States and Montana experienced a prolonged period of economic expansion during the 1990's which continued through the end of 2007 when the national economy took a sharp decline. Montana began feeling the brunt of "The Great Recession" the following year and into late 2010. Libby, like many smaller communities in western Montana started feeling the contraction years earlier with the shuttering of mills and mines – the large employers in the area

Historically, the major economy of Lincoln County has been centered on mining activity and the forest industry. Lincoln County has consistently been a top timber producer, and Libby had been at the heart of that activity with an abundance of public and private forests.

Average annual wages in Lincoln County have consistently lagged behind the State of Montana and the United States (Montana Department of Labor and Industry). In 2007, the top-paying sectors of the economy included mining (\$46,840), government (\$39,494), and forestry (\$37,312).⁴ However, Annual Average Wages have not recovered from the loss of manufacturing jobs in the 1990's and early 2000's when mills closed and higher salary and benefit jobs were lost.

In 2006, per capita personal income in Lincoln County was \$23,935, which was approximately 22 percent lower than the state's at \$30,970. However, it marks a 20% increase over the per capita income of \$19,832 in 2003. Lincoln County's average wage of \$28,177 in 2007 was lower than the statewide average of \$32,223.⁵

In 2000, Owens & Hurst Lumber, Plum Creek Lumber, and Stimson Lumber Company were the three largest lumber and wood product employers and lumber and wood products comprised 42.1 percent of all manufacturing establishments and 89.7 percent of all manufacturing employment Lincoln County.⁶ As of 2007, the latest data available, the lumber and wood products industry comprised 33 percent of all manufacturing establishments, and approximately 60 percent of manufacturing employment – a decline of 22% and 33%, respectively. The strength of the lumber and wood products industry has historically been tied to the strength of the national housing and construction market, as well as the local availability of timber. Between 1993 and 2009, six lumber mills in Lincoln County have closed, leaving only Chapel Cedar located in Troy, with approximately 25 employees, with continuing operations in Lincoln County.

⁴ MT Department of Labor & Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

On December 31, 2003 Stimson Lumber Company donated their former 400 acre mill site to the Lincoln County Port Authority. This was later developed into the Kootenai Business Park and is presently a great opportunity to develop light manufacturing and industrial jobs that pay a “living wage” for area residents. Efforts to recruit businesses and develop infrastructure are ongoing. While not yet inside the City limits, the Park is expected to connect to City water and sewer services.

In 2007, the top three employment sectors in Lincoln County were government enterprises, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade industries, respectively. The government enterprises sector, with 23 percent of total employment, was the largest single employer in Lincoln County. The health care and social assistance sector was the next largest with 15.8 percent of total employment followed retail trade sector with 13.5 percent of total employment. Overall, the services sector (including trade, general services, utilities, and transportation) accounts for close 57% of all employment. Contributing to the services sector is a recreation industry that provides visitors numerous angling, camping, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing, and other recreation opportunities.

As of July 2010, the unemployment rate in Lincoln County was estimated to be 15% - the highest in the State and more than double the rate in 2007 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual Average Labor Force – Lincoln County

Year	Civilian Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2007	7,859	7,336	523	6.7%
2006	7,725	7,228	497	6.4%
2005	7,693	7,105	588	7.6%
2004	7,628	6,936	692	9.1%
2003	7,626	6,766	860	11.3%
2002	7,539	6,853	686	9.1%
2001	7,721	7,060	661	8.6%
2000	7,890	7,231	659	8.4%

Source: Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program (LAUS)

Libby’s economy has been bolstered significantly by the cleanup of asbestos in area properties, businesses, and homes since the City was named a Superfund site by the EPA in 2002. The direct economic impact on Lincoln County as a result of the EPA cleanup efforts is estimated to be around \$9,000,000 a year (this is money that stays and circulates within the community each year). The Agency has spent approximately \$165,000,000 on the project since its inception. In 2008, EPA settled with WR Grace for \$250,000,000 of which \$11,000,000 was set aside in an Operation and Maintenance (O&M) fund for the preservation of the remedy after EPA completes its work. Of the settlement funds, \$239,000,000 has been put into a special account to pay for future cleanup efforts in Libby. On June 17, 2009 the EPA declared a public health emergency for Libby – the first of its kind. Such a declaration prompted availability of funding for healthcare treatment of residents affected with asbestos-related diseases or symptoms.

The City of Libby, the Economic Development Council and the EPA are actively working towards a day when the EPA is not the economic engine of the town, and instead a robust and diverse economy takes its place. A good portion of that diversity can be reflected in a strong downtown core. In recent years, the City, in partnership with a downtown revitalization organization, implemented a streetscape enhancement project on the main entrance to downtown, Mineral Avenue. This effort installed streetlights, planted trees and created an invitation to explore Libby. The streetscape built upon a metal arch with a large eagle made right in Libby – one of several eagles scattered throughout the community. Such effort shows a sense of community pride and an invitation for visitors and residents to participate in the local economy. In addition, Libby became a Tree City in 1994 and has been working to install boulevard shade trees along the city streets where appropriate. This effort is overseen by a Tree Board.

For the three-year period between 2007 and 2009 the City issued 51 commercial building permits for a total valuation of \$7,501,798.

Currently, the top private employers in the Libby area are as follows⁷:

- St. John's Lutheran Hospital (100-249 employees)
- Rosauer's Food & Drug (100-249 employees)
- Genesis, Inc. (100-249)
- Plum Creek (50-99 employees)
- Achievements (50-99)
- Harlow's School Bus Service (50-99)
- Town Pump (50-99)
- Libby Care Center (50 – 99 employees)
- A Full Life Agency (50 to 99 employees)
- Environmental Restoration (50 – 99 employees)
- Venture Inn (20-49)
- McDonald's (30-49)

In addition, Mines's Management, Inc. (MMI), an Idaho corporation, has submitted plans for a copper and silver mine south of Libby. Known as the Montanore Project, the underground mine would be in Sanders County, and the mill and other facilities would be in Lincoln County. According to the plan submitted to the US Forest Service, construction will start in Year 1 with the hiring of approximately 135 employees. Construction employment will peak at 155 employees during Year 2. Total employment (construction and operations) is expected to peak at 505 employees during Year 3 of construction. Following completion of construction total employment should level off to 450 workers. This could have a significant impact on Lincoln County and the City of Libby in terms of providing services and the availability of housing. As a result, MMI with the cooperation with the City of Libby and Lincoln County has prepared an Impact Plan in accordance with the Hard Rock Mining Impact Act to mitigate, or offset, the impacts to local services created by the project. The Plan was approved by the state's

⁷ MT Dept of Labor & Industry, QCEW

Department of Commerce in July 2008. The mine is still in the permitting stages and a Record of Decision pursuant to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) is expected within a year. The City of Libby has sent letters of support for the Revett Mine in Troy and Montanore Mine in Libby requesting expedient permitting to employ the readily available workforce.

Projections and Summary

The in-migration of retired persons to the area (expected to accelerate as the Baby Boom generation begins to retire), combined with in-migration of persons whose employment allows them to live where they choose, is expected to be the most important factor underlying social and economic developments in the region over the next 20 years. Economic growth in Libby is likely to come from the finance, education, government and service sectors of the economy

Libby will need to find a sufficient supply of quality workers to meet future employment opportunities as they arise in all commercial and retail areas. The availability of broadband in the area offers an opportunity for local businesses to more effectively compete in the regional economy. Long term employment opportunities offered through mining should attract many residents who are now under-employed, or former residents who left here to find work elsewhere that would like to return, as well as others wanting to live, work and recreate in this beautiful area. Employment opportunities will bring with them economic, social and environmental impacts. It is the purpose of this growth policy to take a proactive role in future development.

Housing

Libby values and considers the protection and enhancement of its existing residential neighborhoods a high priority. Some of the established housing stock has been poorly maintained over time and needs renovation and maintenance.

About 90% of Libby's housing stock consists of single-family homes, and multi-family units make up almost 10% of the inventory. At the time of the 2000 Census, 87 out of 1281 single-family homes were occupied by renters (6.7%). About one in every 20 homes is a manufactured home, or just over 5% of the housing stock. The number of housing units of all types in the City has increased in the 10-year period between 1990 and 2000; single-family homes have shown the smallest increase and manufactured homes the largest. The number of single-family homes increased by 12% between 1990 and 2000.

Libby's population has increased by approximately 13% since 1990. The number of households and housing units has increased at a slightly higher rate. This trend mirrors demographic, economic, and cultural shifts, such as smaller households (often created by divorce, death of a spouse, loss of employment or other family situations), which pushes demand for more housing units. The average household size in 1990 was 2.4 residents per household. In 2000 the average household size was 2.2. Declining

household sizes reflect a national demographic trend. In particular, as the “baby boomer” generation ages, given the vast numbers of boomers who are now approaching their golden years, it creates a bigger gap between young and old. Many of the baby boomers wish to “age in place,” meaning that they are often relocating to a less expensive housing market for retirement, but intend to remain independent through housing and communities that are oriented towards the needs of an older but active population. This also creates a greater demand for more, but smaller, housing units. The larger homes suited to young, growing families are no longer appropriate for retirees seeking to maximize their free time and minimize home and grounds maintenance.

Neighborhood Quality

The Montana Department of Commerce - Housing Division conducts a periodic "Housing Condition Study" to collect information in support of the Montana Consolidated Plan for housing. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the current stock of housing in Montana and better understand what type of housing structures are available to rent and purchase. The data was compiled from the database of buildings in Montana that is maintained by the Montana Department of Revenue (see Table 1). The appraiser gives single family homes a rating that describes the condition of the dwelling. The following is a summary for Libby:

Table 1 Housing Conditions

Rating	Libby
Unsound	10
Poor	48
Fair	206
Average	1,568
Good	2
Excellent	2
TOTAL	1,834

However, for the three-year period between 2007 and 2009 the City issued 99 residential building permits for a total valuation of \$2,481,993.

Neighborhood concerns include the following:

- Adequate maintenance for a high proportion of single family housing units used for rental housing
- Housing maintenance in neighborhoods where stock averages 50 years or older
- Property maintenance in neighborhoods dominated by rental properties
- Lack of neighborhood organization and civic engagement. Although Libby’s neighborhoods have distinct identities in the minds of most people, there is little evidence of neighborhood organization and cohesion.
- High household mobility, particularly between low- and moderate-income areas, where higher proportions of residents may move frequently in order to stay “one

step ahead of the bills.” The impact of frequent moves upon school performance (and the future workforce) is well documented. High mobility erodes neighborhood cohesion and therefore efforts to improve blighted areas.

- Protection from commercial encroachment is of concern, as areas become targeted for redevelopment and infill. The preservation of neighborhood character has a high priority in Libby.

New neighborhoods should mirror the character of the older neighborhoods with provisions for open space and recreation, while offering a range of housing choices.

Current Housing Supply

Housing supply is typically measured in the number of months it would take to sell all the homes currently available for sale, if no new listings were added. A 4- to 6-month supply is considered normal or desirable. There are multiple homes on nearly every street in Libby that have been listed for more than a year. This would appear to suggest an ample supply of housing. As of the 2000 census, the vacancy rate for rental units in Libby was 6%.

This Growth Policy has been developed using an annual growth rate of 1.0% applied over its 20-year horizon. The 2009 population of Libby is estimated at 2,880 people. By 2030, it is projected to grow to 3,456. Projected growth in population and households will require approximately 261 more housing units within Libby. Development on quarter-acre lots would require 124 acres within the Libby PAB, not including additional land needed for associated infrastructure, difficult-to-develop sites, and additional land for housing units to allow for a healthy vacancy rate “cushion,” typically about 5% of supply.

The need for new housing units can be met by using three basic strategies:

- annexing vacant land from the PAB into the city as it becomes “ripe” for development;
- encouraging redevelopment and infill of vacant lots within existing residential neighborhoods; and
- increasing density in some land use districts.

Use of the three strategies listed above will ensure a more efficient use of land as it becomes more of a diminishing resource, but each strategy must not lose focus on the importance of new housing that fits within the context of community character. There are many new housing products and options available that may fit within the local context, as described below.

Significant strategies for new housing growth include the following:

- Upper story residential in the downtown with pedestrian access to essential services and facilities. Housing in the downtown core could provide alternatives such as live/work housing, units for smaller households, or housing for those desiring nearby services and transit.

- Increasing density in existing residential areas offers another strategy to increase the housing stock. One tool to accomplish this would involve code revisions to allow dividing relatively large lots into smaller residential parcels. Another approach involves redevelopment of an area, typically resulting in higher residential density, and often, but not always, within a mixed-use development.

Housing Affordability

As with many areas across the state, personal income growth has trailed housing price growth in Libby and Lincoln County, and there had been an unprecedented increase in housing prices for owner-occupied housing over the past few years. The estimated median household income in Lincoln County in 2008 was \$33,383⁸. The median advertised home price in Libby for a 3-bedroom home in 2010 is \$142,789⁹. This represents a gap of at least 30% in affordability for owner-occupied houses. However, rental housing prices suggest that the average renter must earn \$8.56 per hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment or house at fair market rent, which was advertised as \$457 in 2006¹⁰. Since the economic recession began in 2008 housing prices appear to have stabilized and perhaps dropped.

A look at Lincoln County Per Capita Income in comparison to Montana and the nation is provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Lincoln County Per Capita Income in comparison to Montana & Nation¹¹

Year	U.S.	Montana	Montana as % of National Average	Lincoln County	Lincoln County as % of National Average
1980	\$10,114	\$9,058	90%	\$7,341	73%
1990	\$19,477	\$15,448	79%	\$13,023	67%
2000	\$29,845	\$22,929	77%	\$17,783	60%
2008	\$40,166	\$34,622	86%	\$27,191	68%

Total personal income represents all sources of income, including salaries, wages, retirement and pension distributions, rental income, and other sources of income (see Table 3).

Table 3: Lincoln County Income by Source - 1980 to 2008¹²

Source of Income	1980	1990	2008
Net Earnings (Wages)	70.3%	64.0%	49.0%
Dividends, Interest & Rent	14.4%	16.4%	20.0%
Transfer Payments (Social Security, Pensions, Disability, etc.)	15.3%	19.6%	30.9%

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

⁹ MT Dept of Commerce Economic and Demographic Analysis of Montana – Volume III, Housing Profile, February 2007.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, Table CA1-3 – Per Capita Personal Income

¹² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, Table CA04 – County income and employment summary

There is a need in Libby and Lincoln County for an organization whose primary responsibility would be to work toward providing affordable housing for low to moderate income people. Since there has not been a more local lead agency, affordable housing units are not only hard to find but no one is working specifically and directly at this time to increase the number of them. There is also a need for rental housing that accommodates both large and very small households and which is affordable for the average annual income levels of the citizens of Libby.

Land Use

In order to preserve and improve the quality of life in Libby, there is a higher expectation about the quality of new development and redevelopment occurring in Libby. With more scrutiny of building design and site layout, there is a need for better definition of design expectations for all projects, and to understand and relate to the surrounding natural and built environment.

Land use statistics for Libby and the surrounding area provide an indication of the community character. Nearly 85% of the County’s total land is held by the U.S. Forest Service. Libby has the largest percentage of land in commercial and industrial development of any town in Lincoln County.

Table 4: Land Use Statistics for Libby¹³

Land Use	Libby
Total Area (Sq. Miles)	1.9
Population Density (per Sq. Mile)	1702
Housing Density (per Sq. Mile)	680
% of Area = Residential	34.3%
% of Area = Commercial	13.5%
% of Area = Industrial	13.6%
% of Area = Forest	25.7%
% of Area = Crop/Pasture/Range	6.2%

Within the City of Libby there is highway commercial along U.S. Highway 2. The central business district is bordered by Main Ave on the west, Mineral Avenue on the East, Highway 2 on the south and the railroad tracks on the north. Residential areas are located off of the main streets and are generally characterized by small lot single family residential. The majority of homes (73%) were constructed prior to 1970. Development within the city limits of Libby is subject to city zoning regulations.

Outside of the city limits there are a number of suburban residential areas. These areas are characterized by larger lots and newer homes than the incorporated areas. These residential pockets are west of town and north of town along the Kootenai River.

¹³ (1) U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population, 2000; and (2) Montana Natural Resource Information System (Land Use percentages calculated for city)

There are highway commercial uses along U.S. Highway 2 west of town. This is comprised of auto oriented uses, mini-warehouses, retail, lodging, and institutional uses. The uses are generally setback from the highway and have limited landscaping. In addition, the Kootenai Business Park, an industrial park, is located on the southeast end of town.

The auto-oriented uses on Highway 2 are an extension of the highway commercial in the city limits. There is some potential for in-fill development in this area. Businesses compatible with the auto-oriented mix currently in this stretch would be appropriate. Billboards have not proliferated in this area, but since it is outside the city limits, there is no zoning to control the types of uses or signs that are allowed.

North of Libby on Highway 37 there is a mix of service oriented uses, Forest Service property, and parkland along the highway. The developed area extends a few miles north and is generally low intensity.

As visitors approach Libby from the southeast, they travel through an area that does not present an aesthetically inviting image of the community, with several properties showing signs of deferred maintenance. The City of Libby is interested in working with Lincoln County on solutions to improve the appearance of this area.

EPA Superfund Sites in Planning Area

Libby is presently in the process of working to improve its environmental health in cooperation with state and federal agencies as well as private companies.

Libby Groundwater Site

The Libby Ground Water Site resulted from the treatment of poles and timbers with wood preservatives during the late 40's, 50's and 60's by J. Neils Lumber Company and St. Regis Paper Company. The treating plant was shut down in 1969 and dismantled. The primary wood preservatives that were used at the site were creosote and pentachlorophenol with a mineral oil carrier. As a result of wood treating chemicals being discovered in the groundwater, the Libby Ground Water Site was placed on EPA's "Superfund" list in 1983. International Paper Company is the current owner and responsible party for the site as a result of their purchase of Champion International in June of 2000.

Remediation continues under International Paper's ownership and all activities with it have been conducted under the oversight of EPA and MT DEQ. On-going remedial activities include soil treatment by land farming and groundwater treatment via ex-situ and in-situ processes, as well as institutional controls. The City of Libby entered into a settlement agreement with International Paper (IP) for the loss of groundwater use and IP's mitigation fund contributes approximately \$200,000 annually for water system enhancements.

Libby Asbestos Site

The Zonolite Division of the W.R. Grace Company operated a mine and mill nine miles northeast of Libby. It was once the largest vermiculite mining operation in the world and a major employer in the area. The product had been mined commercially at the Libby deposit since 1923. The Libby deposit contained an inadvertent by-product, Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA), which caused liability problems for the company. W.R. Grace closed the plant and began reclamation in 1991. In response to local concerns and news articles about asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sent an Emergency Response Team to Libby, Montana in late November 1999. In October 2002 Libby was added to EPA's [National Priorities List](#) for clean-up, triggering intensive research and on-site investigations. EPA had established a program to inspect all properties in Libby and less than half of the properties inspected were determined to need remediation. As of June 1, 2010, approximately 90% of those properties have been remediated. In an effort to establish a baseline risk for LA, Libby provides ample opportunities for research institutes and universities to work with the EPA collecting and analyzing data to support the assessment.

The City of Libby recognizes the impacts that asbestos has had on individual members of its community and their families and looks to a safer, cleaner environment for Libby's existing and future residents.

Natural Resources

Libby is viewed by its residents as a City having a very high quality of life. Libby's built environment directly and indirectly affects its natural environment. Land use plans and major land use decisions need to be thoughtfully developed with the fullest possible understanding of the natural environment and potential impacts. While growth inevitably affects the city's natural environment, implementing policies that allow for planned development while minimizing the level of negative impacts will be pursued in future planning and decision-making.

Important natural resource and environmental factors in the PAB include hydrology, floodplains, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat areas, air quality issues, steep slopes, soil limitations, wildfire hazard areas, geologically hazardous areas, agricultural lands and containment and improvement of past contamination sites.

Most of Libby's wetlands are located along the Kootenai River, Libby, Flower, Granite and Parmenter Creeks. Approximately 8% of the City is within the 100-year floodplain. Maintaining Libby's aquifer recharge areas are critical to present and future water supply needs. There is potential to develop and enhance wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat areas in the city and immediately adjacent to the city in the Kootenai Business Park. In the fringes and the more rural portions of the PAB, there is habitat for hawks, ravens, grouse, turkeys, mule and white tailed deer, and an occasional moose or elk. A variety of bird life and small mammals have adapted to the more urbanized areas of the

City. Several fish species found in the Kootenai River Drainage System are listed as threatened or endangered including the Bull Trout and Kootenai White Sturgeon.



Photo courtesy of Brent Shrum

Wildland Fire

In recent years the city, county, state and federal governments have recognized the potential hazardous effects of a fire in Libby and the adjacent Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The Lincoln County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) focuses on the WUI and in particular in areas with denser populations such as around Libby.

Libby is surrounded by forests, making the risks very high for a wildland fire very high. There have been significant fuel reduction projects in the immediate vicinity of Libby in recent years on private, industrial forest, state, county and federal lands. Plum Creek Timber Company has completed harvest over most of their lands in the vicinity of Libby.

Libby is in the process of becoming a Firewise community. Such an effort works to reduce risks for everyone by getting the community involved in personal stewardship of fire prevention. The nearby Em Kayan village has been a successful Firewise neighborhood for a number of years. There have been several efforts both inside and outside the PAB to reduce fuel risk through the assistance of a cost-share program from the Northwest Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) agency. In addition, countless fire risk assessments have been provided to area residents as part of the educational efforts. However, the effects of a major wildland fire event in the vicinity of Libby could be devastating. These risks were ever present with the Parmenter Creek fire in 2008. Some immediate values at risk in the city of Libby could include:

Homes and Infrastructure – The primary concern during a wildfire event is for the safety of the community’s residents. Other concerns include the threat to homes,

structures, fences, power lines, communication sites or other infrastructure, such as major transportation routes. In the city of Libby the primary danger would be embers that might land on or adjacent to structures. Libby is fortunate in having an excellent fire department which under normal conditions could handle any fire within the city. Treating fuel hazards in the immediate area around structures to reduce fire intensity can drastically improve the chances of their survival. These measures however, do little to protect other values at risk, some of which may be equally or more important from a neighborhood or community standpoint.

Public Health – There is a great concern in Libby over the prolonged heavy smoke from a wildfire that would create a serious health problem for residents at risk for respiratory problems. In addition, an intense wildfire in the Flower Creek Municipal Watershed could possibly overwhelm the capacity of the City's water system to handle additional sedimentation. Libby does not have a backup water supply and would be faced with a potential crisis to supply the basic human needs for potable water and sanitation.

Financial – Major wildfires can have a tremendous financial impact in any community. Local businesses frequently suffer major losses, particularly when wildfires occur during the peak tourist season. Picturesque views of the forested landscapes are an important reason people live in and visit Libby. A wildfire will impact the aesthetics of the area which can further impact property values and economic activity.

With a continuing effort by all land management agencies, Lincoln County and the City of Libby, this community should be able to position itself to handle a large wildfire within the next few years. It is important to recognize that fuel treatments are only effective for 15-20 years because of in growth, so mitigating a wildfire hazard will be a continuing endeavor.

Geologically Hazardous Areas

These areas include areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events. Within Libby, the areas with the most unstable soils and a history of landslides (active and ancient) are primarily located in the upland areas of Libby and within the planning area south of the city limits.

Agricultural Land

Agricultural lands in the planning area consist primarily of pastureland/rangeland and meadows. Weed infestations are continually expanding in Lincoln County. Agriculture jobs account for less than 4% of employment in the County so future growth impacts to agricultural land will be minimal.

Air Quality

The area in and surrounding Libby is designated by the EPA as a non-attainment area for national air quality standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter (PM). Non-attainment designations require that actions be taken to address sources of pollution and bring the designated area into compliance with federal standards. Because of this designation,

Lincoln County has an air pollution control ordinance which enacts more stringent regulations on air emissions within the designated non-attainment area in order to achieve mandatory compliance with the air quality standards. Activities regulated under the ordinance include the use of solid fuel burning devices (primarily wood stoves); outdoor burning; and materials applications limitations and dust control requirements for roadways, commercial yards/lots and parking lots. After a study determined that 82% of PM_{2.5} levels originated from wood smoke, a woodstove change-out program was implemented in 2005 with funding from EPA and HPBA (Hearth, Patio & BBQ Association). During the program, over 1200 woodstoves were changed to cleaner burning, EPA certified woodstoves or other low emission heating appliances. The woodstove change-out and air quality control programs resulted in a 40% decrease in daily PM_{2.5} levels from 2005 to 2009 and Libby's re-designation to attainment for the PM_{2.5} 24 hour standard. Libby is currently meeting the PM_{2.5} annual standard and PM₁₀ standards.¹⁴

EPA completed an ambient air study throughout the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site footprint and the risk model indicates that inhalation of Libby Amphibole in outdoor air in the Libby area is unlikely to be a source of significant cancer risk to area residents or workers.

Future impacts on Libby's air quality will be an important consideration for new development in the PAB.

Sand and Gravel Resources

Sand and gravel are requisite components of all road construction. While the Libby PAB population has largely remained steady, the demand for and value of gravel resources is anticipated to rise. Distance from the source of sand and gravel extraction to its place of use contributes greatly to its cost of transportation. As with many materials, fuel use, labor costs and increased opportunities for accidents can be directly associated with increased distances from a gravel source to its end-use location. Gravel resources are also important to adjacent landowners, often for reasons quite different from those of the public at large or gravel operators. Light, noise, dust, traffic, smell and the use of petrochemicals and other chemicals used in concrete and asphalt plants located at gravel pits can adversely impact residential and some commercial land uses.

Lincoln County generally has very poor naturally occurring gravel. Most gravel operations are crushing operations where material is either mined on site or hauled into the pit for crushing. The City of Libby currently owns and operates a gravel pit just north of the Kootenai River. There are three other private operations inside the PAB (see Sand and Gravel Map). Due to the difficulty in transporting gravel, the cost in crushing and the scarcity of the resource, the City of Libby should favor preservation of the existing operations when considering new development.

¹⁴ PM₁₀ (particles with diameter of 10 microns or less) and PM_{2.5} (particles with diameter of 2.5 microns or less, also called fine particulates)

Public Facilities and Local Services

The City of Libby owns and manages a number of public facilities, including local roads, parks, water and sewer lines, police and fire facilities, administrative buildings and maintenance facilities. In addition to facilities owned and managed by Libby, there are a number of publicly owned facilities managed by other entities, which provide for some of Libby's public facility needs. These include but are not limited to schools, library, museums, and solid waste.

The provision of capital facilities contributes to the quality of life of Libby's residents. Parks, utilities, fire stations and other community and regional facilities are a physical reflection of the community's values. The implementation of a well thought-out plan for public facilities, utilities and services will help Libby realize its vision. Implementation of the City's land use plan is contingent on the development of needed infrastructure in a timely and orderly fashion. In order to accommodate future growth, regular assessment and maintenance of the City's capital facilities is required. Any necessary improvements to those facilities to maintain the level of service when accommodating additional users will be identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program along with anticipated funding sources.

Current budget funds include the following:

- arterial street fund;
- water fund (rate supported);
- sewer fund (rate supported);

The following is a summary of existing facilities, utilities and services in the greater Libby area, some of which are directly owned and operated by the City.

Transportation

It is essential to the current business base and future commercial development to be able to provide affordable transportation costs and delivery options. This is applicable to both incoming raw materials and outgoing finished product. Oftentimes, local businesses are not able to be financially competitive due to the additional expense of freight, unless they significantly reduce profit margins. In addition, there is an increasing need for public transportation, especially among the underserved and special needs populations, but the rural nature of the region makes this extremely difficult.

The Libby general aviation airport is south of town approximately 8 miles and is managed by an Airport Board. The airport elevation is 2,601 feet and is rated as B-II (large by State Aviation Standards. It has a 5,000-foot long, 75-foot wide asphalt runway with a connecting paved taxiway which is 200 foot x 35 foot. The paved apron is 10,000 square yards with hangars and 15 tie downs. Facilities at the airport include a lighted beacon, segmented circle and wind cone, MIRL, and PAPI on both ends. Services include jet fuel sales, major repairs, phone on field, charter flights, flight instruction and courtesy car.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail line provides commercial and industrial transportation and the Libby Train Depot is a daily stop for Amtrak passenger rail service on the Empire Builder providing a scenic ride to Glacier National Park and points east and west.

Libby has a typical street network. Many of the City's streets are of substantial width to allow for snow plowing. The City maintains a snow plowing ordinance which requires residents to have their vehicles off the streets at certain times. Wide streets are auto-friendly and can encourage speeds that might not be conducive to bicyclists. Striped bike lanes in some locations would provide added safety and encourage alternate modes of transportation. There is very poor intersection lighting and what lights exist tends to be multi-directional as opposed to downward-directional.

The only public transportation is an on-demand shuttle operated by Lincoln County Transit Services.

Solid Waste Disposal

The County's landfill is located approximately 3 miles from Libby. It is of sufficient size to accommodate the needs of Lincoln County for approximately 50 years. In addition, it contains a cell specifically for containment of asbestos contaminated soil and materials.

Kootenai Disposal is an independently-owned refuse hauler for the Libby area and provides recycling opportunities at their facility approximately 1.5 miles south of town on Highway 2. They have implemented successful e-waste recycling events in recent years in cooperation with the Lincoln County Environmental Health Department are exploring opportunities to place recycling facilities inside the City.

Power/Electricity

Libby is served by Flathead Electric Cooperative. They have adequate capacity to supply anticipated growth as well as the proposed Montanore Mine. The City is also exploring the feasibility of adding a small hydro-power system to its water source, much like its neighbor, Troy, has done.

Commercial facilities and residents use a variety of fuels for their heating needs. There is no natural gas available in south Lincoln County, so electricity, propane, wood and fuel oil are used throughout the area for heating.

Telecommunications

There is cell phone coverage in south Lincoln County with both Verizon and Alltel providing service. Frontier, the local telephone provider, now offers DSL internet services to its customers, provided they are not more than 18,000 feet from a relay point. Windjammer is the only available cable network offers broadband service to their cable subscribers. Both of these services are higher in costs than they would be in markets where there is competition.

Fiber optic cable was installed along Highway 2 between Troy and Libby in 2009 making commercially available high-speed lines available throughout the community.

There are also several local radio stations serving Libby:

- KLCB, owned by Lincoln County Broadcasters, Inc., established December 1950.
- KTNY, owned by Lincoln County Broadcasters, Inc., established April 1986.
- KJRZ-LP, owned by the Libby Area Chamber of Commerce, established 2005.
- KVRZ, owned by the Troy Fine Arts Council, established 2009.

In addition, the University of Montana holds a construction permit for a National Public Radio station (NPR) to be on the air by the end of 2010 or early 2011; and the Libby Video Club has operated free of charge television translators serving Libby since the 1950's. Currently this facility re-broadcasts over-the-air signals of KPAX, Missoula, KCFW, Kalispell, KUSM, Montana PBS, Bozeman, and KXLY, Spokane.

Civic Buildings

The City of Libby maintains and/or utilizes a number of other capital facilities and buildings order to perform the necessary administrative functions of the City. The City is responsible for the maintenance and operation of 7 buildings and facilities. Table 5 provides a list of major buildings and facilities owned by the City and their location.



Photo courtesy of Duane Williams

Table 5. Major City Buildings

Facility	Address
Libby City Hall	952 East Spruce
City Shop	230 W. Cedar Street
Waste Water Treatment Plant	755 City Service Road
Water Operations	231 West Cedar Street
Water Treatment Plant	Gilcrease Lane
Libby Police Department	603 Mineral Avenue
Libby Fire Department	6 th Street
Libby Cemetery	Mahoney Rd. & Treasure Ave.

As of this writing, there are no identified general citywide improvements. However, there are some concerns that the capacity of the City Cemetery will need to be evaluated in the near future and a plan to accommodate additional burial sites should be sought

Parks and Open Space

Parks and recreation facilities serving the residents of Libby include City and County facilities. The City of Libby maintains over 50 acres of park and open space land that offer active and passive recreational opportunities to residents and preserve natural areas of the community.

The basic building blocks of the parks and recreation program are the neighborhood and community parks. These include Fireman's Park, Riverfront Park and Pioneer Park, which is actually owned and maintained by the County. Other components include regional parks; special use facilities such as the Memorial Center, fitness complex, and senior citizen center; golf course; bikeway; and pedestrian paths throughout the community. There are also several tennis courts in Libby, the newest of which are near City Hall and plans for a skatepark in the same location. There are also plans for a splash deck and updated playground equipment in Fireman's Park..

Evaluating park usage is critical to maintaining and upgrading park equipment and infrastructure, such as trails.

Emergency Services

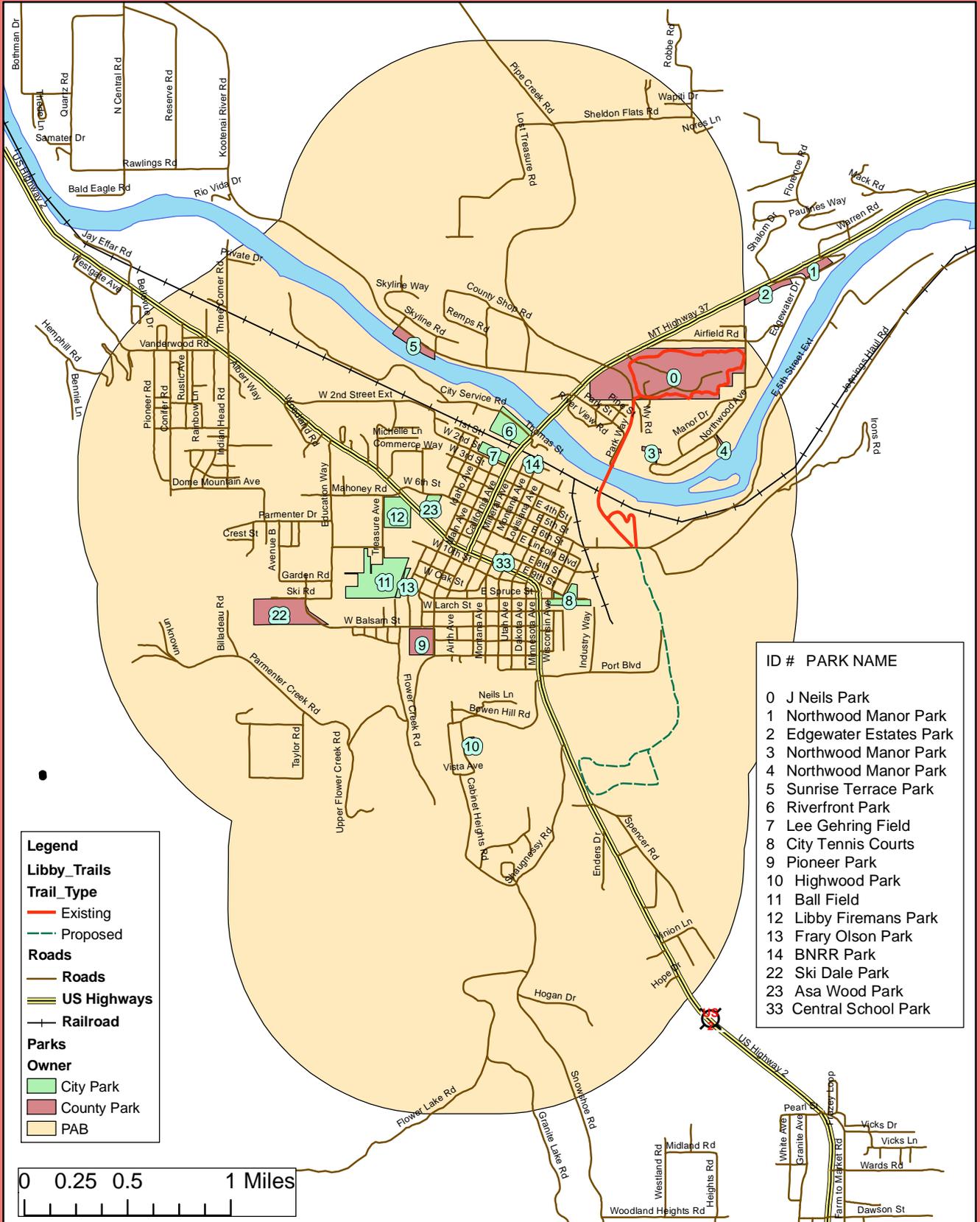
The Libby Volunteer Ambulance (LVA) has provided ambulance service to the area since 1971. They have one paid staff and 22 active volunteers. Their service area extends between 20 miles south of Libby to approximately 35 miles north to 10 miles west. The LVA is one of very few ambulance services in state that performs its own extrication – something typically done by fire departments. They have 5 ambulances and receive between 700-900 calls per year. The LVA is equipped with Advanced Life Support services and their volunteers range from basic EMTs to EMTs with endorsements, paramedics and RNs. In 2007 they moved into a new building near hospital.

Fire Protection

The Libby Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1911 and was originally strictly a City department. The Lincoln County Rural Fire District #1 was formed in 1911 and became a dual fire department with the city. The City of Libby Fire Dept. and Lincoln Co. Rural Fire District #1 provides fire protection, public education, fire prevention and code management to the citizens of Libby and in the surrounding rural area.

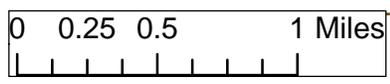
The city and rural fire departments operate from a station located on Sixth Street between Mineral Avenue and Montana Avenue. The city department operates with 1 Class A engine, 1 ladder truck, 1 hose truck – Class A engine combination. This emergency service is provided with 30 volunteers.

There are also two rural fire department substations at 180 River Run Lane (6 miles north on Hwy. 37) and 5330 Hwy 2 South (approximately 5 miles South of Libby) The rural department (all three stations) have 6 water tenders, 1-4x4 wildland engine, command center, 1500 GPM trash pump, and 3 class A engines.



ID #	PARK NAME
0	J Neils Park
1	Northwood Manor Park
2	Edgewater Estates Park
3	Northwood Manor Park
4	Northwood Manor Park
5	Sunrise Terrace Park
6	Riverfront Park
7	Lee Gehring Field
8	City Tennis Courts
9	Pioneer Park
10	Highwood Park
11	Ball Field
12	Libby Firemans Park
13	Fray Olson Park
14	BNRR Park
22	Ski Dale Park
23	Asa Wood Park
33	Central School Park

- Legend**
- Libby_Trails**
 - Trail_Type**
 - Existing
 - Proposed
 - Roads**
 - Roads
 - US Highways
 - Railroad
 - Parks**
 - Owner**
 - City Park
 - County Park
 - PAB



Parks & Open Spaces

Created by: Deb Blystone GIS Tech
 Lincoln County Planning
 418 Mineral Ave
 Libby, MT. 59923
 April 14, 2009
 Libby City Bndry + 1 mile Buffer
 Coordinate system;
 NAD 1983 Montana State Plane FIPS 2500
 Rotated 4.5 degrees



Table 6: Libby Fire Dept & Lincoln County Rural Dept #1 Statistics (2009)

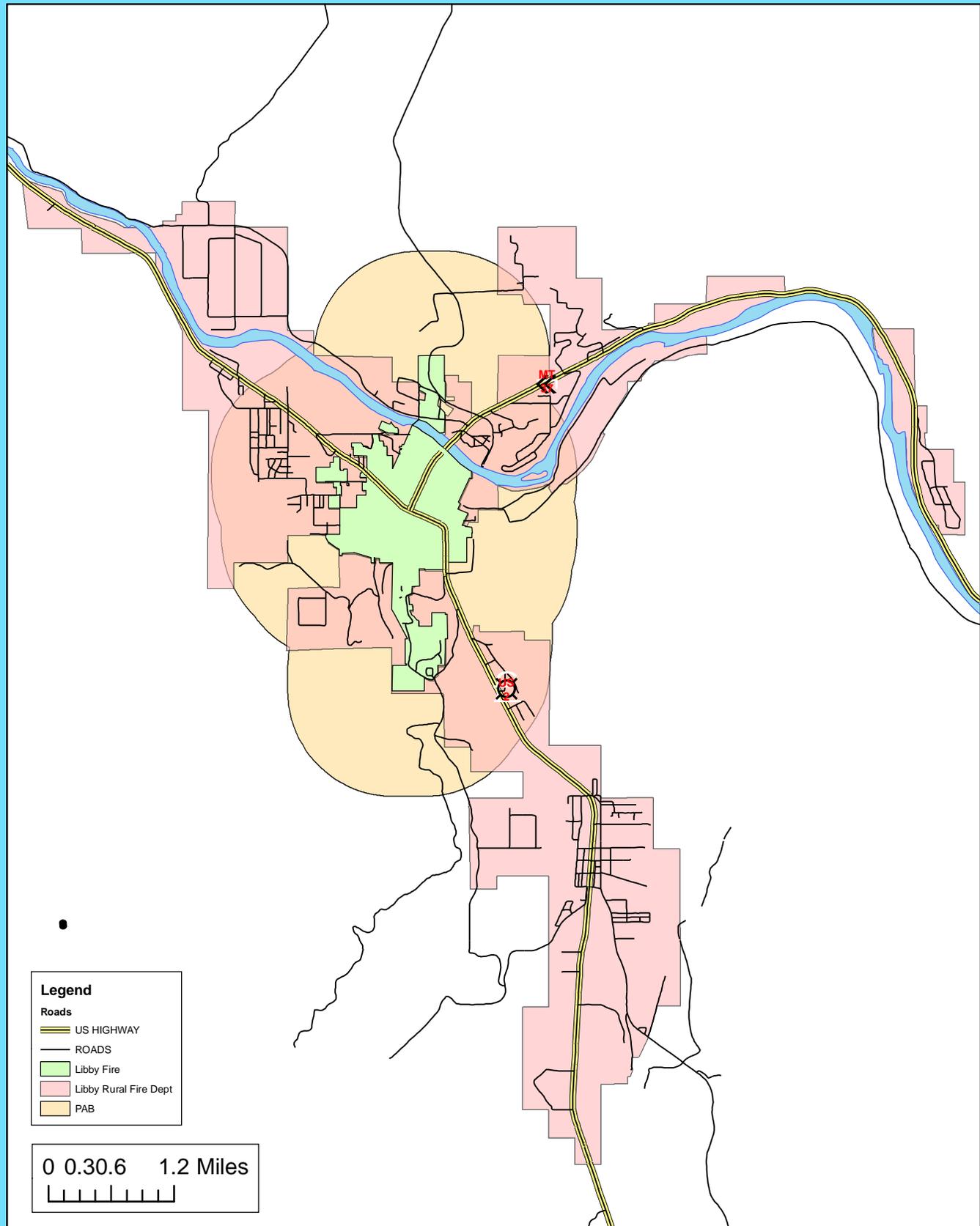
Type of Fire	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Vehicle	8	7	11	7	7
Structure	17	8	10	13	14
Chimney	4	16	15	13	8
Grass/Timber	20	25	38	17	12
Mutual Aid Ambulance	15	8	20	14	12
False Alarm	15	14	32	20	17
Powerline	4	14	46	13	8
Miscellaneous	24	23	22	23	18
Fuel Spill	3	2	2	2	6
Liquified Petroleum Gas	2	1	7	8	5
Electrical	2	7	4	3	6
Total Calls	114	125	207	133	113

Within the City limits, fire protection services are managed and maintained by the Libby Fire Department. They consist of one fire station that houses support apparatus including engine companies, an aid company, and a number of other specialty vehicle and equipment. The Department also has a mutual aid agreement in effect with all Lincoln County fire agencies in order to provide overlapping emergency response.

Police

Police facilities consist of headquarters at 603 Mineral Avenue, which is currently staffed with 6 full-time commissioned officers and 2 part-time officers. This staffing level results in one commissioned officer per approximately 500 Libby residents, comparable to national averages.

Between 1990 and 2005, the Police Department experienced average call volumes proportionate to the city population growth rate during that same time period. However, since that time, there has been an increase in activity. Potential causes for the increase in calls include reduced economic activity and employment in the community and the subsequent increase in crime rate, increase in drug and alcohol related incidents, increased calls for mental health issues, and capacity issues at the County jail. However, in recent years the Police Department has instituted more proactive community policing efforts. The experience level, training and supervision of the officers over the last five years has produced a professional Police Officer who is more capable in identifying and acting upon crimes as they occur (fewer crimes are going undetected and unreported). To offset the increase in activity, the Police Department obtained two federal grants, adding another full time and part time officer to the Department's staff. The Libby Police Department plans to maintain a high level of proactive, professional Police services for the City of Libby into the future helping to make it a safe, viable community.



Libby & Libby Rural Fire Districts

Created by: Deb Blystone GIS Tech
 Lincoln County Planning
 418 Mineral Ave
 Libby, MT. 59923
 April 14, 2009
 Libby City Plus Buffer area: 1 mile
 Rotation: 4.5 degrees
 Coordinate system;
 NAD 1983 Montana State Plane FIPS 2500



Potential longer-term capital improvements under preliminary consideration include a combined public safety building housing the Police and Fire Departments to address lack of parking and lack of ancillary police facilities and lack of Fire Department space.

Education

Elementary/Secondary

The Libby School District No. 4 serves most school age Libby residents. The Libby School District includes one elementary school, one middle school and one high school, along with administration, maintenance and operations facilities. All of these facilities are located within the Libby city limits. The District initiated a facilities planning process in late 2009 to identify opportunities and constraints and create a vision for how the school district might look in the future. As a result of this process, the school board voted in October 2010 to consolidate the District into two schools.

The Libby School District has approximately 1,234 students as of June 2010. Maximum capacity of the existing school facilities is estimated to serve a population of 2,300 students. However, over the past 10 years, there has been a decline in enrollment of students due to declines in birth rates and an unstable job market. This trend is projected out to the 2019-2020 school year according to the recent study commissioned by the school district for their facility planning efforts.

With reduced enrollment, there are some challenges to Libby schools. These include:

- Attracting, hiring and retaining qualified teachers
- Aging facilities and all the limitations and cost associated with such structures
- Consistent, reliable funding sources

Post-Secondary

The voters of Flathead County agreed to create a community college district in 1967 and the Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) was established. In 1983, the voters of Lincoln County agreed to create a community college extension center of FVCC to serve the residents of Lincoln County. The branch campus is located at 225 Commerce Way in Libby. The college offers associate degrees, certificate programs, continuing education and adult basic education (GED preparation). The college has a number of on-line courses.

In addition to the FVCC campus Montana VisionNet has distance learning classrooms at the high school in Libby.

Library

Lincoln County Public Libraries (LCPL) were originally founded as the Lincoln County Free Library in 1920 by the Board of Commissioners. The Libby Library was dedicated in 1964 and is located adjacent the Lincoln County Courthouse, one of three locations in the County. Funding for the libraries is provided primarily through county tax revenue.

The LCPL collection size ranks in the top ten of public libraries in the state. In addition, LCPL ranks among the top libraries in Montana in circulation and percentage of patrons with active library cards. All of this is accomplished despite per capita spending levels at more than five percent lower than the state average.

With three locations and many statewide cooperative efforts, the Lincoln County Public Libraries are able to offer a wide variety of services, programs, and materials.

In addition to the Library, the Libby Heritage Museum provides a rich source of information in the interest of preserving the historical culture of the Lincoln County area. The museum is located on U.S. Highway 2 approximately one quarter mile southeast of the city limits.

Healthcare and Human Services

The healthcare needs of Libby are provided by a number of different organizations that work closely together:

- St. John's Lutheran Hospital is a private, not-for-profit, non-denominational community hospital and healthcare system providing a broad range of services. The facility is considered a Critical Access Hospital due to the remoteness of the area. It has 25 acute care beds including three intensive/cardiac beds. St. John's can also use all their bed as "swing beds" for longer stays that do not require higher levels of care. Outpatient services include respiratory therapy, rehabilitation services (physical, occupational, speech therapy, cardiac rehabilitation and sleep study lab), and Home Health/Hospice. The hospital is in the planning process for construction of a new more modern facility to provide more services, though the number of beds will be the same. They hope to break ground in the spring of 2011.
- Physicians and midlevel providers from several clinics and private practitioners including the Lincoln County Community Health Center (CHC) and the Libby Clinic provide medical care for the south Lincoln County area.
- Because of the unique needs of those exposed to asbestos, the Center for Asbestos Related Disease (CARD) provides special pulmonary evaluation and care. The CARD provides long-term clinical follow-up of patients with asbestos exposure and disease, special health guidance and evaluation, long term psychosocial support, and a continual resource of education. The CARD actively works with multiple agencies and universities in pursuit of meaningful research.
- A variety of private practitioners provide podiatric, dental, chiropractic, and alternative medicine services.
- Kalispell Regional Medical Center, located 90 miles southeast of Libby, provides an Advanced Life Support and Emergency Rescue Team helicopter service for medical and trauma situations.

There are nursing homes in Libby but there are a number of nursing home residents that are inappropriate for this level of care and would be better served by a multi-tiered level of care in the form of congregate living or an assisted living facility

Utility Infrastructure

The City of Libby provides water and sewer service inside the City limits. It has extended sewer service to the Cabinet Heights area, annexing this neighborhood at the southern end of town. In addition, the Woodway Park neighborhood west of town is served by City water, though it is not in the city limits.

Water System

Supply & Storage

Libby's water supply is surface water from Flower Creek which originates in the Cabinet Mountains. The City maintains a series of dams, inspected on a regular basis, and reservoirs to regulate the water prior to entering the water system. The water treatment plant and 500,000 gallon storage tank are located near the golf course. This is adequate capacity for the current population and anticipated growth. Water quality monitoring indicates that the system meets or exceeds standards.

Distribution System

Due to the age of the system, there are problems with leakage and water pressure. There are several areas that are underserved due to undersized pipes, creating a potential problem for fire protection. The city uses water meters, though there are some problems with malfunctioning meters. There was recently a new water main installed for the area of town historically known as Johnston Acres between Cedar and Spruce Streets and Main and Washington Avenues.

Usage

There are approximately 1900 customers on the system. Almost all customers are within the city limits. There is a monthly base charge of \$26.00 in the city and \$32.53 outside the city plus a usage charged based on metered water use.

Upgrades

Due to age, some meters and water lines require repairs. These are done on an as needed basis. Discussions have occurred regarding a new line to serve potential development on the north side of town. The river is a constraint to extending water service north of the city.

Sewer System

Treatment Plant

The treatment plant operates by natural biological reduction. The plant is an extend aeration with an oxidation ditch, two final clarifiers, digester, and sand beds for drying. The plant also has a plate filter press for drying. Effluent is discharged into the Kootenai River. The capacity of the treatment plant is approximately 500,000 gallons a day or a population of 3,500. The current population is 3,100 people.

Collection System

There is a lift station at Montana Avenue that is the collection point for the east side of town. There have been some infiltration problems on the lines but these are fixed as

needed. Most lines were built between the 1940's and 1970's. The city recently annexed 6 blocks and extended lines to this area.

Usage

There are approximately 1900 customers on the system. All users are within the city limits. There is a monthly base charge of \$23.28 plus usage charges based on metered water use. Some residential properties within Libby and its planning area continue to use residential on-site disposal systems, which should be phased out as development proceeds and sewers become available.

Capital Improvements Planning

The City may consider other potential funding sources in the future where appropriate to the type of facility and community needs. A range of options is available, some requiring voter approval. Additional capital financing sources include, but are not limited to the following:

- special purpose districts;
- obligations such as bonds and lease-purchase arrangements;
- grants from federal or state agencies;
- land dedication or fees-in-lieu of dedication for open space, parks, and/or conservation;
- local option sales tax
- mitigation fees.

As future growth occurs, Libby will likely want and need to establish a level of service that will help determine and forecast future capital, infrastructure, and service needs as growth occurs. Level of Service (LOS) is the adopted standard used to measure the adequacy of services being provided. The adequacy of services, or LOS, relate to the types of services rendered. It can range from a precise measurement, such as the amount of time it takes for a fire truck to reach the scene of a fire, to as imprecise a measurement as a community's perception of how much and what type of open space is needed. LOS measures for each facility type provides a clue as to what, how much and when new capital facilities are, or may be needed.

LOS standards are established through a process that includes such factors as a community's population and its economic and fiscal resources. Population growth drives the types, amounts, and locations of services, and economics determine the amount of funding available to meet those service needs.

When an LOS standard has been established, the performance of a capital facility/service can be measured. A capital facility operating at or above the established LOS indicates no need for improvements or new facilities. A facility operating below established LOS is an indication that there may be a need for improvements, or new facilities, or evaluation of the LOS. However, if funding is not available to bring the service back to the established level, then the LOS is reexamined to determine if it is adequate, or the land use plan and growth targets may be adjusted.

Development Mitigation

Local governments can condition the approval of development applications on mitigation (including a mitigation payment or fee) for the cost of specific adverse impacts caused by the proposed development. Mitigation can be required for impacts on any type of public facility. The amount of the mitigation payment must be directly related to the specific adverse environmental impacts attributable to the type and size of the proposed development. The following are typical steps in developing a study of mitigation fees:

- Identify the level of service benchmark to be used for quantifying the impact of development on the built environment.
- Forecast future development.
- Estimate future impacts on the built environment by applying the level of service benchmark to the forecast of future development.
- Compare the capacity of existing infrastructure to the estimates of future impacts to determine whether current infrastructure is sufficient to serve new development, or if mitigation is needed to accommodate future development.
- Identify infrastructure projects that will mitigate impacts of future development.
- Use the cost of infrastructure mitigation projects and the forecasts of future development to calculate the mitigation fee per unit of future development.

Annexation

The City of Libby will establish an annexation policy to address how it might consider future annexation of property into the city limits. Such a policy should include provisions that acknowledge adequate delivery of services to the area being annexed as well as a provision stating that the City will not oppose the preservation of existing irrigation wells that have no cross connection to municipal water systems and are free of coliform bacteria.

Goals and Action Plan

Some of the goals and action items in this section can be accomplished in the near term, while others will take more time to implement. It is the intent of the City in its efforts to attain these goals to balance personal property rights with the long-term health and welfare of our community.

Economy

Policy Statement

The City supports economic and community development efforts to build and maintain a strong, diverse economy through new and expanded business opportunities.

Goals

1. Create new higher wage level jobs
2. Strengthen relationship with downtown merchants and the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Committee
3. Improve the condition of the Kootenai Business Park to be “shovel ready”
4. Improve the image of Libby as an appealing, healthy community
5. Improve business climate for downtown merchants throughout the year and especially during cultural events.

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Direct partnership, when appropriate, with the Kootenai River Development Council;
- b) Promotion of Libby as an attractive, business-friendly atmosphere in printed material and on the City’s website;
- c) Updating the City’s website to include:
 - i. An activity calendar;
 - ii. A place for direct feedback;
 - iii. Addition of positive images of the community;
 - iv. City documents
 - v. Promotional video about the City
- d) Establishing a quarterly or semi-annual meeting with the City’s business community;
- e) Continue with streetscape improvements in a manner that is affordable to business owners;
- f) Promote local cultural events downtown by:
 - i. Inviting local business to stay open during events;

- ii. Ensure adequate sanitary facilities are distributed throughout the event
- iii. Asking event organizations to disperse their attractions throughout downtown
- g) Request Lincoln County to enforce its decay ordinance
- h) Enforce City's ordinances related to property maintenance (weeds, junk vehicles, etc.)

Housing

Policy Statement

Support development of a variety of housing opportunities to meet the different needs of the community through the efficient use of space, orderly growth consistent with high quality of life, fiscal responsibility and consideration for the natural environment.

Goals

1. Increase the availability of affordable housing.
2. Maintain the aesthetic of the traditional neighborhoods of central Libby.
3. Balance development with respect for natural features, the built environment and existing neighborhoods.

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Review performance standards in existing zoning code to determine their efficacy at meeting the goals and needs of Libby.
- b) Review Lincoln County Subdivision Regulations and determine if the provisions in them are applicable to the City of Libby, or if more specific requirements are needed.
- c) Contact absentee landlords requesting their cooperation in improving Libby's image by maintaining their properties.
- d) Developing a long range plan for housing to meet projected needs

Transportation

Policy Statement

Support a diverse transportation system that allows the safe and efficient movement of people as well as goods and services; and promote the health and well-being of Libby's residents.

Goals

1. Improve non-motorized transportation system.
2. Improve awareness of railroad access as an opportunity for both tourism and commerce.
3. Improve condition of City streets.

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Development of a bike path plan, which may address such items as striped bike lanes on certain streets; safe routes for school children and other bike path connection opportunities;
- b) Development of a sidewalk improvement plan and a schedule prioritizing replacement
- c) Require new development in the City to install sidewalks, adequate parking, storm water control and downward-directional street lighting where appropriate, at time of construction.

Cultural and Recreational Resources

Policy Statement

Support the many cultural and recreation activities in Libby that serve to bring the community together, celebrate history, and provide opportunities to recreate.

Goals

1. Strengthen relationship and communication with Libby Park Board
2. Improve awareness of area opportunities
3. Preserve significant historical structures

These goals can be accomplished by:

- a) GPS-ing all trails in Libby PAB
- b) Updating the City's website to be a portal for "All Things Libby"
- c) Pursuing opportunities for historic preservation

Land Use

Policy Statement

The City supports future development that reflects an efficient mix of land uses while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding natural and built environment.

Goals

1. Facilitate redevelopment and encourage development of blighted, vacant or underdeveloped land, including Superfund sites.
2. Encourage neighborhood planning efforts.
3. Improve the appearance of Libby's streetscape

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Review performance standards in existing zoning code to determine their efficacy at meeting the goals and needs of Libby.

- b) Review Lincoln County Subdivision Regulations and determine if the provisions in them are applicable to the City of Libby, or if more specific requirements are needed.
- c) Develop landscaping and tree planting ordinance for new development.

Natural Resources

Policy Statement

The City seeks to have a healthy community with clean air, clean water and sustainable use of its natural resources while respecting the constraints of such resources in the PAB.

Goals

1. Preserve and protect the City's water supply.
2. Maintain active involvement in the City-County Health Board
3. Preserve the environmental functions of surface and ground water resources wherever feasible.
4. Improve air quality.
5. Reduce risks of catastrophic fires to the PAB.
6. Reduce conflicts with wildlife.
7. Preserve existing gravel operations

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Supporting active forest management in the Libby municipal watershed of Flower Creek.
- b) Requiring appropriate mitigation for land use activities that may adversely impact: surface and groundwater; local fisheries and wildlife habitat; and air quality.
- c) Review the floodplain ordinance and work with the Lincoln County Floodplain Administrator on desired changes.
- d) Adopt regulations addressing development activities that may adversely impact slope stability or increase erosion potential.
- e) Limit development activities in sensitive areas, to be defined through regulation.
- f) Adopt Best Management Practices policy for addressing storm water runoff, to include bio-engineering options.
- g) Enforce the well-drilling ordinance for the area affected by the Libby Groundwater Superfund site pursuant to the agreement with International Paper.

- h) Ensure, through ordinance, prompt restoration of land after grading and vegetation removal. Such ordinance may include phased clearing and grading; replanting requirements; and other appropriate re-vegetation and engineering techniques.
- i) Continue to obtain technical information on air quality as a basis for an air quality improvement program.
- j) Work with the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks on promoting “Living With Wildlife” principles.
- k) Carefully consider development activity located next to gravel operations to limit potential conflicts.

Public Facilities and Local Services

Policy Statement

The City seeks to provide safe and efficient services and facilities for existing and future residents and supports regional cooperation of infrastructure enhancement efforts to for economic development.

Goals

1. Maintain and improve the City’s infrastructure and facilities
2. Minimize future maintenance costs
3. Maintain a fully staffed police department in existing downtown location
4. Maintain and improve City parks
5. Maintain mutual aid agreements for fire protection with other cities and counties in the region and respond accordingly to requests.
6. Improve recycling opportunities

These goals can be accomplished through the following actions:

- a) Develop a Capital Improvements Plan with identified funding mechanisms to ensure that facilities and services are available to meet future needs and review on regular basis.
- b) Work with Lincoln County and the Park District on developing funding mechanisms for park maintenance.
- c) Develop a water use informational program promoting water conservation efforts
- d) Develop a maintenance schedule for the water system
- e) Establish a program of continuous improvements to the water system.
- f) Identify and apply for funding for historic preservation and upgrades to City Police building.
- g) Work with Kootenai Disposal and the Environmental Health Department on developing a recycling program for the City.

- h) Ensure all new development can adequately be served by existing facilities or require proportionate upgrades.
- i) As streetlights need replacing, replace with downward directional lights.
- j) Develop a process to evaluate the impacts of development on existing parks, schools, transportation and other facilities.

Revision and Cooperation Process

As demographic and economic trends are constantly changing, it is imperative to review the Growth Policy periodically. Ideas that worked in the past may not work for Libby's present or future needs. The Growth Policy is to be reviewed and revised if necessary upon the instance that any of the following conditions are met:

1. Growth policy review will occur at a maximum five-year interval under current conditions.
2. Population growth exceeds a rate of 2.5% per year.
3. A large-scale development proposal is approved within the town or adjacent rural area.
4. Sewer treatment capacity is exceeded by current flows or water service area is exceeded by new development proposals.
5. Any major impacts to the natural environment or city infrastructure occur.
6. The City experiences a major change in government form or service.
7. The City is petitioned to review the growth policy by no less than 5% of the current population.

Upon occurrence of one of the previous events, the Planning Board will initiate the revision process utilizing either the Lincoln County Planning Department through their Interlocal Agreement for Planning Services; through a private consultant; or through a task force process. The following can be used as a general guide

1. Assess current information in the Growth Policy and update data as necessary and as available;
2. Solicit input from a broad group of stakeholders, including but not limited to:
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Service Clubs
 - Home Builders Industry
 - Sportsman's associations
 - Realtors
 - City of Libby
 - Lincoln County
 - Libby Public Schools
 - Economic Development Organizations
 - Flathead Valley Community College
3. Conduct focus group meetings to discuss the current statistics, demographic, and economic conditions and trends in Libby; and evaluate the progress and status of one or more growth plan elements looking at such items as accomplishments to date, revision needs, and priority changes.

4. The focus groups can present findings in an open house forum soliciting input from general public and then present recommendations to the Planning Board.
5. The Planning Board will conduct public hearings to amend the Growth Policy and make recommendations to the City Council for consideration and action.

Cooperation Strategy – City of Libby and Lincoln County

The City of Libby and Lincoln County have entered into an Interlocal Agreement for the provision of planning services in an effort to share resources for finding solutions to common and shared growth problems. Through cooperation, each government can advance the goals of the Growth Policy by addressing large-scale issues in a collaborative and effective manner.

In relation to the Growth Policy and any subsequent revisions and updates, the City of Libby and Lincoln County will cooperate and coordinate as follows:

- Both governments will invite the other to serve as a member of their task force during the revision process.
- Each government will offer their respective governing board and staff the opportunity to review and comment on Growth Policy revisions
- Opportunities for review and comment shall be of at least 30 days duration.
- Each government and staff will provide an opportunity to the other government and staff to review and comment on their respective implementation tools for their Growth Policy. Such tools shall include subdivision and zoning regulations and may include other tools identified as having a material effect on land uses.
- The city and county will maintain an open communication concerning growth policy issues of mutual interest.
- The City Planning Board and the County Planning Board will participate in a periodic joint planning meeting to review items of mutual interest a minimum of once per year or at the request of either government.
- The City will work with the County on identified items of common interest, including open space protection, water quality and supply, and other items. Joint funding will be pursued as allowed by state law.
- The City will work with the County to coordinate land use policies within the planning area.

Subdivision Review Criteria

Subdivisions are strongly connected to the comprehensive planning process and may significantly advance or detract from the attainment of publicly identified goals. Because of this strong influence, all subdivisions (and subdivision regulations) must be reviewed to ensure their compliance with the Growth Policy.

Subdivisions must be reviewed in relation to their impacts on seven criteria established by state law (see Title 76, Chapter 3 of the Montana Code Annotated). These criteria are hereby defined as follows:

Agriculture – Pursuant to definitions in 15-1-101; 41-2-103 and 87-8-701 of the MCA:

"Agriculture" means:

- (a) all aspects of farming, including the cultivation and tillage of the soil;
- (b) dairying; and the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities, including commodities defined as agricultural commodities in the federal Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(g));
- (c) the raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry;
- (d) any practices, including forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with farming operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation market;
- (e) the production of food, feed, and fiber commodities, livestock and poultry, bees, biological control insects, fruits and vegetables, and sod, ornamental, nursery, and horticultural crops that are raised, grown, or produced for commercial purposes; and
- (f) the raising of domestic animals and wildlife in domestication or a captive environment.
- (g) "Agricultural and food product" includes a horticultural, viticultural, dairy, livestock, poultry, bee, other farm or garden product, fish or fishery product, and other foods.

Agricultural Water User Facilities: Those facilities which provide water for agricultural land as defined in 15-7-202, MCA, or which provide water for the production of agricultural products as defined in 15-1-101, MCA including, but not limited to ditches, pipes, and head gates.

Local Services: Local services are defined as any and all services that local governments, public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.

Natural Environment: The natural environment is defined as the physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, sound, light and objects of historic and aesthetic significance.

Wildlife: Those animals that are not domesticated or tamed.

Wildlife Habitat: Place or type of site where wildlife naturally lives and grows.

Public Health and Safety: A condition of optimal well-being, free from danger, risk, or injury for a community at large, or for all people, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.

Evaluation / Effect

Subdivisions will be evaluated for their material effect on these seven criteria. The evaluation of the effect of the proposed subdivision on these seven criteria determines if there are significant unmitigated adverse impacts. Unmitigated adverse impacts are potential grounds for denial of a proposed subdivision. Below are examples of items considered in evaluating the impact of a proposed subdivision on the seven criteria. These examples do not reflect all potential items, but they do include a preponderance of the items under consideration. Depending on the proposed subdivision, some of these items included may not apply. In addition, some proposals may require evaluation of other topics not included in these examples to weigh the subdivision's effect on these criteria. It is the subdivider's responsibility to document proposed mitigation of any adverse impacts on these seven criteria. However, it is also possible for the local government to gather and review data for a larger area and therefore removes the need for a private party to do so.

Impact on agriculture: An impact on agriculture would be defined as an impact on an existing, on-going agricultural operation on an adjacent or neighboring property that may suffer some hindrance or other interference in the agricultural operation as a result of approval of a proposed subdivision.

Impact on agricultural water user facilities: This impact would be defined as the interference of conveyance of irrigation water and/or of ground water supplies relied upon by an existing, on-going agricultural operation on adjacent or neighboring property as a result of approval of a proposed subdivision.

Impact on local services: This is defined as an impact on the capacity and/or level of service of any local services such as utilities, streets, schools, parks, and bike and pedestrian facilities.

Impact on the natural environment: This shall be defined as impacts to air and water quality, including erosion, sedimentation, loss of native vegetation, and soil contamination.

Impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat: These impacts are defined as loss of documented critical habitat.

Impacts on public health and safety: This set of impacts can involve traffic generated by a proposed development, smoke, dust, noise, odors, and/or impacts on fire and police protection.

A fundamental component of the subdivision review process is the opportunity for members of the public and interested groups to offer comments on the proposal. This opportunity, is formally provided by the public hearing process where persons for, against, or merely seeking information about the proposal may speak to appointed or elected officials who must approve or deny the project.

The required public hearing on a subdivision proposal may be held before either the Libby Planning Board or City Council. The individual body to hold the public hearing is set by ordinance. In the event that the Planning Board does not hold the public hearing, they will hold a public meeting to review the project and offer a recommendation to the local government regarding the proposed subdivision's compliance with the Libby Growth Policy.