



TOOLE COUNTY GROWTH POLICY 2016

DRAFT DOCUMENT

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[INSERT RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION BY THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUMMARY

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Introduction

Why Plan Now?

This Growth Policy is being prepared to address changes that have occurred since the first Growth Policy was adopted on July 28, 2005. These include changes within the county as well as changes to the state laws that govern growth policies.

This Growth Policy differs from the 2005 Growth Policy in a number of ways:

- It is reorganized
- Base information and maps describing the existing conditions have been updated and now address all the necessary components
- A vision has been added to provide an overall context for the desired future of the county
- Goals have been totally updated and now include objectives and action items
- Subdivision review criteria have been added as required by state law, and definitions changed
- An implementation section has been added that lays out more clearly how goals and objectives might be accomplished

What this Growth Policy Includes

The Growth Policy includes discussion of the following:

- **Scope:** A description of the area addressed by the Growth Policy
- **Planning Overview:** An historical summary of planning in Toole County
- **Process:** Discussion of how the Growth Policy was updated
- **Setting:** Provides a snapshot of the county's past and projected future
- **Plan for the Future:** This is the actual plan part of the Growth Policy, including goals, objectives and action strategies
- **Inventory of Existing Characteristics:** Included in Appendix B, includes a detailed description of Toole County's population, economy, land uses, housing needs, local services, public facilities, and natural resources

The basic contents of a growth policy are mandated by state law. The law also gives total discretion to local government to include additional elements. Details of the basic mandated requirements are included in Appendix B, along with a checklist of how the requirements have been met in this update.

Scope

Planning Area

This growth policy update has the same geographic scope as the 2005 Toole County Growth Policy. It covers the entire jurisdictional area of the county planning board which includes all of Toole County except for the following:

- 1) The jurisdictional area of the city-county planning board that surrounds and includes the city of Shelby, and
- 2) The area within the incorporated limits of Sunburst and Kevin.

Planning “Horizon”

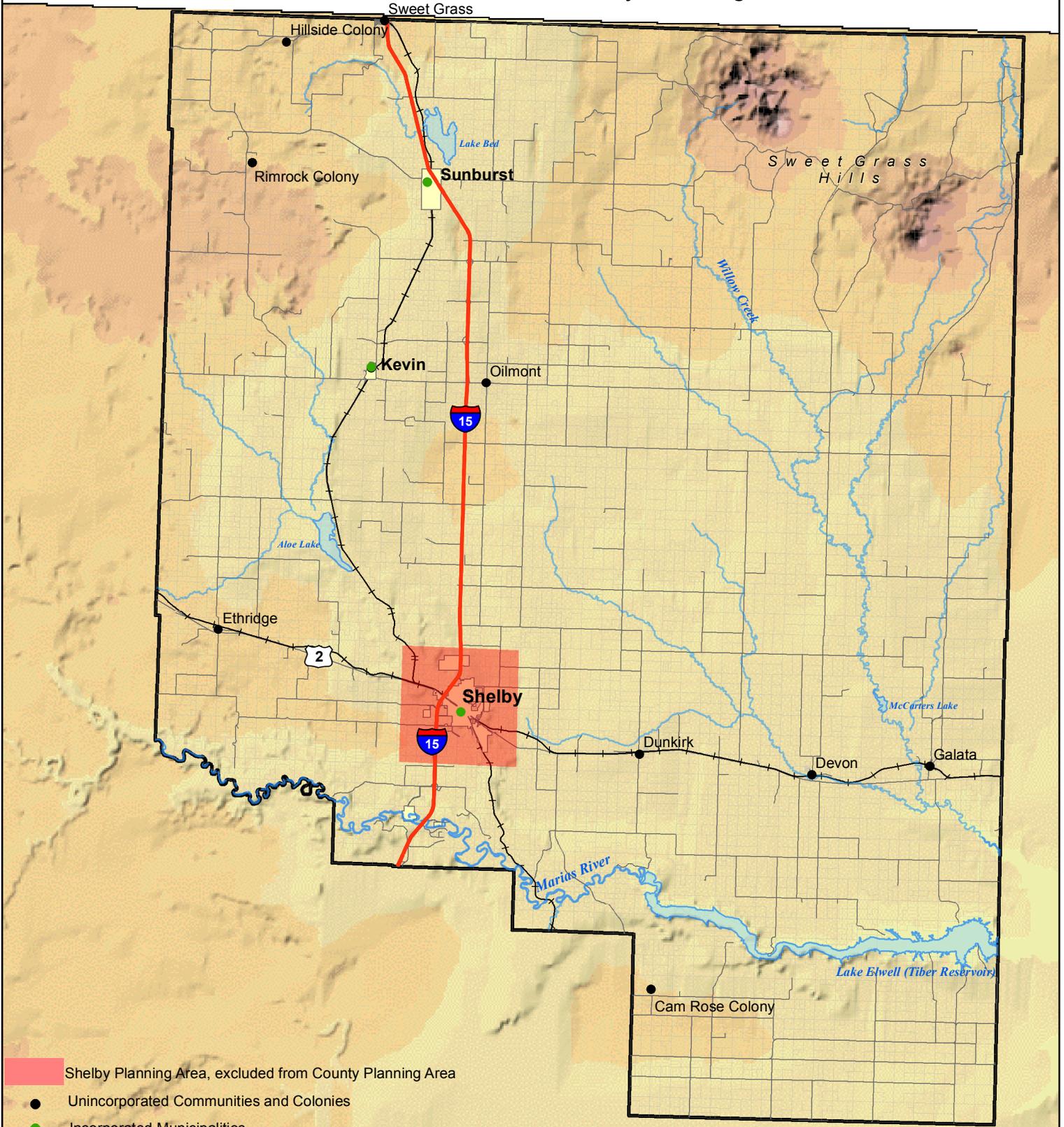
This growth policy update is intended as a long-term plan with an approximate 20 year horizon. Such a time frame poses some complexities and unknowns as it is impossible to predict accurately what will happen tomorrow, let alone what can happen over 20 years. Still, planning for the long-term is critical for big issues that require more than a year or two to address. Just as a responsible homeowner plans for major events, such as saving to replace a roof every 20-30 years, so must government look ahead to significant needs and desired futures. Because circumstances can change over time, this update also includes provisions for reviewing the plan at least once every five years, and for making changes to the plan.

Authority to Adopt the Growth Policy

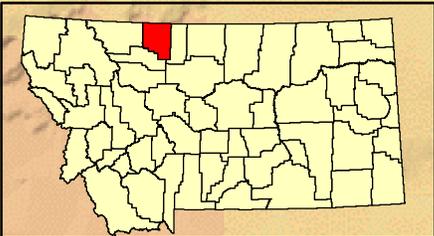
Counties are authorized to develop growth policies under Montana state statute. Title 76, Chapter 1 of the Montana code is titled “Planning Boards” and is comprised of six different parts, one of which is dedicated to the development of growth policies. As the county’s governing body, the Toole County Commissioners are authorized to adopt a growth policy per 76-1-604, MCA.

Toole County Planning Area

Jurisdictional Area of the Toole County Planning Board



- Shelby Planning Area, excluded from County Planning Area
- Unincorporated Communities and Colonies
- Incorporated Municipalities



Planning Overview

Planning in Toole County

Planning Board Formation

Toole County formed a county-wide planning board on January 3, 1975 that included all of the lands within the county, including all incorporated cities and towns within the county. The resolution cited authority in the Revised Codes of Montana (RCM) 1947, which constituted state law in Montana until 1971, when the laws were updated to the current Montana Code Annotated (MCA). The County Commissioners at the time may have been unaware that they were not legally authorized under the MCA to unilaterally include the municipalities. No document has been found to indicate the municipalities also adopted the formation of the county-wide board. Consequently, the legal jurisdiction of the county-wide planning board established in 1975 did not include the municipalities. On April 2, 1990, Toole County and City of Shelby jointly established the City-County Planning Board for the area surrounding Shelby. As a result, that area was also no longer part of the county planning board's legal jurisdiction. Kevin and Sunburst do not currently have planning boards.

Comprehensive Planning – Growth Policies

Comprehensive planning was authorized early in Montana State Law, and certainly by 1947 it had been codified in the RCM. Many counties throughout Montana began preparing their first comprehensive plans in the late 1970s, perhaps inspired by the update of state law in 1971 and more detailed provisions for such planning. In 1999, Montana revised its comprehensive planning law and revised the title to "Growth Policy." Toole County adopted a growth policy in August 2005. In February, 2012 Shelby prepared a growth policy for the city and a portion of the area outside of the city within the city-county planning board jurisdictional area. Kevin adopted a growth policy in 2011. Sunburst does not have a growth policy.

Other County Plans

Toole County has several other planning documents. These include the following:

- Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan
- County Weed Management Plan - 1984 (being updated)
- Toole County Health Department Strategic Plan 2014-2017
- Community Health Improvement Plan (being drafted)
- Capital Improvements Plan
- Regional Plans
 - Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017 (Sweetgrass Development Corporation)

- Northcentral Montana Regional Plan 2015-2035 (Vibrant Futures/Opportunity Link)

Growth Policy Process

The Toole County Commissioners initiated this update when they first applied for funding for the effort from the Montana Community Development Block Grant program in 2013. Contractors were hired in 2015 and began work with a site visit to the county and then by researching the county's various plans and documents. Phone interviews were conducted with planning board members, county staff, operators of the community water systems throughout the county, and others. Calls and email outreach were also made to each of the mayors in Kevin, Shelby, and Sunburst. In February 2016, the planning board met to review the completed draft document. Changes were made accordingly and the draft submitted for public review. The planning board held a public hearing on [insert date when completed] and submitted their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Toole County Setting

A Quick Glance: Past and Present

Toole County is located along Montana's northern border with Canada. The county is predominantly rural, with a total population of 5,600. The two major cities closest to Shelby, the county seat, are Great Falls, Montana (85 miles) and Lethbridge, Alberta (100 miles). Interstate 15, one of the five major north-south transnational routes, and US Highway 2, the nation's northernmost east-west transnational route, intersect at Shelby. The county's two other incorporated municipalities are Kevin and Sunburst, both north of Shelby.

Toole County has a long history of human habitation, located along a possible route of the first persons who trekked across the northern reaches from what is now Siberia and across North America approximately 12,000-30,000 years ago. By the mid-18th century, the Blackfoot Indians controlled a broad swath from the Rocky Mountains west across much of northcentral Montana. Following the economic incentives of trapping for the fur trade, then gold, then the promise of land, people from across the U.S. and Europe began to arrive in and develop Toole County. Toole County was established as a governmental jurisdiction in 1914.

East of the continental divide, the county's terrain generally declines in rolling slopes from west to east, broken occasionally by coulees. The Sweet Grass hills in the northeast are the defining topographic feature seen from both I-15 and Highway 2. The county's major surface water features are the Marias River, upper portions of the Tiber Reservoir and Willow Creek. Depressions that hold water in wet periods and become dry and saline in dry periods, dot the central portion of the county. The county generally lacks good supply of groundwater for drinking purposes, and consequently much of the population is served by water that is piped from sources far from the end use. Some water is piped more than 30 miles.

Average annual precipitation is six to 12 inches per year throughout most of Toole County, making it one of the driest areas in the state. About 70 percent of the annual total precipitation falls during the April to September growing season. Winters are cold, but Chinook winds sweep in warm periods. Summers are warm but with cooler evenings; on average there are no more than ten days annually with temperatures over 90 degrees. This climate results in grasses and shrubs as the major native species. Timber is predominant only in portions of the Sweet Grass Hills. The climate is well-suited to the production of dryland wheat and barley. In 2012, 423 farms and ranches in Toole County produced net income of \$60 million.

The county's existing communities, as well as others that are no longer on the map, were established with the surge of homesteaders arriving by rail. Although many of these newcomers built homes on their farmland in the late 19th and early 20th century, over the course of the next few decades many of

the homesteads were abandoned. The land continued to be farmed but many of the families had moved to nearby communities, finding it convenient to drive to the farm but live in town, close to schools and other amenities. By the 1950s, this pattern of living in town and farming out of town was experienced across much of the Great Plains and even had a name ascribed to it --- “sidewalk farming.” In 1958, two counties were the subject of a study on sidewalk farming in the U.S., and Toole County was one. Most of Toole County’s residents today live in existing communities. There are few rural residences and no major subdivisions, developed or undeveloped, except for one south of Shelby along the Marias River and another near Kevin, neither of which has more than 20 lots.

Toole County contains coal, gold, silver, oil and gas, and wind energy. Gold mining in the Sweet Grass Hills that began in 1884 was on the decline by the 1920s. In 1922, oil was discovered, and within two decades the county had several independent refineries. The county still contains 1500 oil and gas wells, but refineries built in the first half of the century were all closed by the 1960s. Since 2010, wind energy has resulted in two wind farms located in an area straddling western Toole and eastern Glacier counties. Together, these two windfarms produce more energy than all other windfarms in Montana.

What does the Future Hold?

The following identifies some of the key issues for the future, based on historical trends, current activities, and population projections.

People and Communities

The overall population of the county is projected to remain at approximate current levels over the course of the next 20 years, with some slight gains and losses along the way. The population is forecast to be 5,576 in 2035, or about 24 fewer persons than the 2015 estimate of 5,600 persons. Although total numbers in 2035 will be essentially the same as in 2015, the balance of the age structure will shift dramatically over those 20 years. The work force population comprised of persons 25 to 64 years of age is projected to decline by seven percent, but the ranks of the senior population will increase by nearly 60 percent.

For nearly 80 years, Toole County has experienced declining population in the unincorporated areas. Shelby has been the primary population growth center in the county. Sunburst has picked up some growth in the past decade with the increase in border patrol, although that has stabilized. Population in other communities is anticipated to remain steady or decline in the future. Sweetgrass, with its border location and related businesses may have growth related to increased border traffic. In sum, the population trends of the past decade are not expected to change significantly in the county in the next 10-20 years, unless there is some significant change stimulator.

Housing has been an issue in the county for many years, both in terms of supply of adequate housing and in terms of affordability for a range of income levels. The housing issue is one that is being

experienced across northern Montana. Toole County has senior living facilities, but the demand for these will rise as the senior population increases in the county.

County-wide, the top health concerns facing the county are alcohol abuse, illegal drug abuse, depression/anxiety, mental health care, and obesity. The Marias Medical Center and the Toole County Health Department are developing plans to address these and other community health issues.

The county's infrastructure needs maintenance on a regular basis, such as snow-removal on county roads and also faces long-term needs because of the age of many of the facilities. Finding resources to address these needs is becoming increasingly difficult. There are just as many miles of roads as ever, but fewer taxpayers than when the roads were created.

Services provided by local government face similar issues. Local services include public schools, libraries, transit, law enforcement, fire departments, emergency services such as ambulance and search and rescue. With the exception of Sunburst, local schools are generally seeing declining enrollments. Combined with aging infrastructure, continually changing requirements and standards, it will become increasingly difficult to provide public education with current revenues. Demand for public transit will likely increase with growing numbers of senior-aged individuals and persons needing non-emergency transport to medical services in Shelby or Great Falls. Although Toole County has been fortunate to have a strong number of volunteers serving as fire-fighters and emergency service providers, the trend nationally and across Montana is that volunteerism is declining. This is attributed in part to the aging of the volunteer workforce and the dearth of younger recruits.

Economic Vitality

Toole County has a diversified economy, especially when compared to other rural counties in Montana. Toole County's economy includes oil and gas production; the top two producing windfarms in Montana; transportation-related businesses; agriculture; a major border patrol presence and recent major upgrades in facilities; and a private correctional facility, which is the county's largest private sector employee.

Toole County and Shelby are uniquely situated to build transportation-related industries. Toole County includes two major national highway system routes, including I-15, linking Canada to Mexico. Sweetgrass is the only port of entry into Canada on a US interstate highway between the west coast and Minnesota. Two major rail lines cross Toole County north-south and east-west. Toole County is also home to and the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Rail Intermodal Terminal and the northernmost inland Port Authority serving the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The Port of Northern Montana, located in Shelby, has significant intermodal (train-semi-truck) capabilities and storage facilities. Shelby and Toole County are actively working to develop the Port of Northern Montana Multi-Modal Hub Center as the northernmost inland Port Authority serving the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The multi-modal hub will be the largest of its kind in a multi-state region and will address the lack of such a facility within Montana. Despite the relative diversity of the Toole County economy, the number of business establishments declined between 2002 and 2013 and the number of employees grew by less than 100 from 1,537 to

1,618. Despite high per capita income in Toole County compared to state and national rates, Toole County has a high proportion of persons living in poverty. In 2013, persons below poverty level accounted for 16.3 percent of Toole County's total population, compared to 15.2 percent in the state overall. The low unemployment rate and high poverty rate suggests that many households in the county are comprised of the "working poor."

The main street areas of the three incorporated municipalities and other county communities have declined over the past decades. These areas need revitalization in order to attract new businesses, residents, and promote job growth.

Toole County is looking to expand job growth with industries that add value to locally produced agricultural goods and transportation-related businesses. There is also potential for increased telecommuting and on-line businesses.

Land Use and Natural Resources

Based on the last 10 years, current conditions and anticipated future development, no major changes are anticipated at this time with potential to significantly affect existing land use patterns.

Water supply and other natural resources could be affected by potential dramatic weather events or long term weather pattern changes. Drought is the single-most important hazard identified in the county's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. The Montana Climate Office, an independent state-designated body, is working to provide targeted water and climate information relevant to how it might affect agriculture, forests and water resources. Their reports indicate Montana's temperatures are anticipated to increase over the 21st century, but changes in precipitation are not clear at the time. Significant changes in temperature or precipitation, if they do occur, could affect water supply, related riverine areas, native vegetation, wildlife, and the dryland crops that have grown so well in Toole County's climate over the past 100 years.

Other unpredictable factors that can affect land use and natural resources include shifts in energy prices and changes in technology. These factors could potentially cause oil/gas and wind development to expand quickly. The recent experience of the Bakken in eastern Montana illustrates how quickly these kinds of changes, including the indirect effects of new subdivisions and work camps, can impact the natural setting.

Plan for the Future:

1. Overview

The following chapters of the Growth Policy comprise the Plan for the Future. These chapters include:

- 1) **Overview** – the introduction to the vision for the future and guiding principles for implementing the plan
- 2) **Goals, Objectives and Action Steps** - this chapter identifies the priority issues to be addressed and then describes goals, objectives and action steps
- 3) **Future Land Use** - Text and a map that summarize visually present land use concepts of the Growth Policy
- 4) **Subdivision Review** – Growth Policy provisions for subdivision review
- 5) **Implementing the Growth Policy** - A summary of the action items, along with a schedule, and other provisions for implementation

Vision

The vision for Toole County over the next 20 years is:

By the year 2036, Toole County has a strong and diversified economy, based in agriculture, transportation, energy and with growing technology and manufacturing sectors. Businesses have grown and new businesses established including some that process local meats and grains into goods shipped throughout the country. The multi-modal transportation facilities in Shelby, Sunburst, and Sweetgrass have met growth expectations and continue to thrive. The base industries of agriculture, transportation and energy have also spurred the development of manufacturing and information service businesses in the county. The County has many new residents, with young families, who have moved to the area for jobs and quality of life. Toole County has excellent medical facilities, senior services, quality housing affordable for a range of incomes, and well-maintained infrastructure and public services. With most residents living in established communities, Toole County overall remains a rural place with wide-open vistas, with plenty of outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting, and water-based recreation on the Marias River and Tiber Reservoir.

Guiding Principles

The following principles are intended to guide how the plan is implemented. The principles reflect core values that should be applied to the goals, objectives and action steps.

1. New public infrastructure and development should be cost-effective.

Plan ahead for future needs; construct, upgrade or replace as needs warrant; and phase development where feasible to avoid “overbuilding.”

2. Locate new development close to existing services and within existing communities.

This will require consideration of service system capabilities as well as the types of development being proposed.

3. Attract and retain young adults and families to Toole County.

Stay cognizant of the need to build new life into the community and reverse the trend of younger people moving out of county. The county needs an influx of young and new to keep vibrant.

4. Participate in regional efforts can strengthen Toole County.

Toole County is a participant in Sweetgrass Development’s North Central Montana Economic Development District and Opportunity Link’s Northcentral Montana Regional Plan. Many of the same issues faced by Toole County are also being experienced by the many counties in the regional efforts. Where one county or one town may have insufficient resources to accomplish significant change, there is potential for the region to work together to make a difference.

5. Other plans adopted by Toole County should align with the Growth Policy.

The growth policy is a comprehensive plan, intended as an overarching guide to actions of the county.

Plan for the Future:

2. Goals, Objectives and Action Steps

This part of the plan organizes goals, objectives and action steps under four “Plan Elements” as follows:

- a. Economic Vitality
- b. Healthy Communities
- c. Physical Infrastructure
- d. Natural Assets

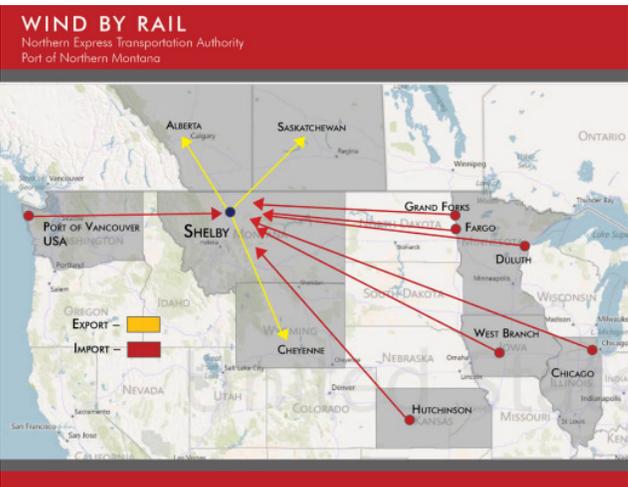
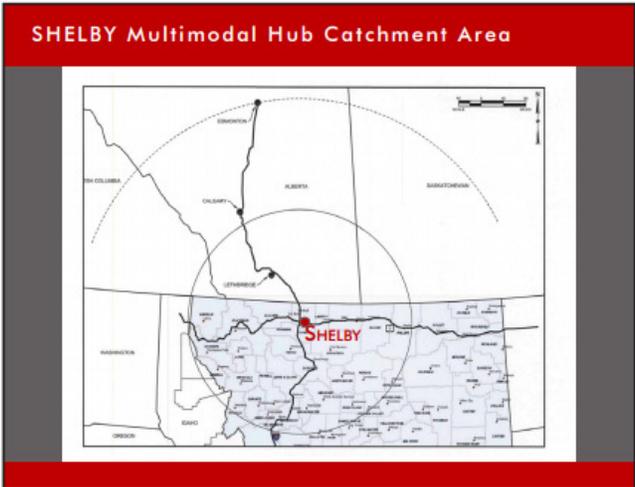
PLAN ELEMENT: ECONOMIC VITALITY

GOAL 1: ECONOMIC VITALITY

Toole County has a strong, diverse economy, with good paying jobs, and an economic vibrancy that attracts young adults to live here.

Objective 1: Expand Transportation-Related Industry

Why important: Toole County is uniquely situated as a regional transportation hub. The county is located at the crossroads of national rail and highway systems and includes the only port of entry into Canada on a US interstate highway between the west coast and Minnesota. The city of Shelby and Toole County have worked for decades to develop the Port of Northern Montana as a major regional transportation hub. In 2011 the US Department of Transportation awarded \$9,998,910 to Shelby to fund the final stage of development to complete the Port of Northern Montana in Shelby as Montana’s first inland port facility. Without such a facility, Montana does not have the ability to ship or receive containerized cargo via rail. Now nearly complete, the multimodal hub center will be capable of accepting and delivering unit trains, containerized cargo, and large industrial equipment (such as the large components important to the wind energy sector in this region). The future increase in containerized shipping has projected secondary effects such as support industries and expansion of other area trans-loading facilities such as Sunburst and Sweetgrass.



Action Steps

- 1.1** Achieve full development of the Port of Northern Montana.
 - a. Participate in Opportunity Link’s regional planning and the upcoming update of Sweetgrass Development’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for northcentral Montana. Encourage more emphasis on potential of transport-related businesses in these regional plans.
 - b. Create a marketing plan to reach out to businesses. Potential resources include the Montana Department of Commerce and Sweetgrass Development for ties to federal resources.
 - c. Expand the Northern Express Transportation Authority website to include information about site development opportunities at the Port of Northern Montana.
- 1.2** Continue to coordinate with transportation agencies regarding transportation trends, issues, and opportunities. Transportation agencies include Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Federal Railroad Administration, and Montana Department of Transportation.
- 1.3** Keep transportation corridors open. Plan for and encourage new development to locate in areas that do not conflict with transportation corridors, that do not increase demand for emergency vehicle access across railroad crossings, and that reduce demand for costly additional railroad crossings or under- or over-passes.
- 1.4** Plan for the future of county-owned property in the Targeted Economic Development (TED) District located adjacent to the Port of Northern Montana property. The TED District is focused on industrial development with access to rail. The TED District includes the county fairgrounds and other county-owned parcels. The county should consider the highest and best long-term use of these properties and implications for the tax increment financing that exists in the TED.
- 1.5** Work with the town of Sunburst and community leaders in Sweetgrass to identify opportunities for expanding the trans-modal facilities and related businesses in these communities.

Objective 2: Advance Technologies to Improve Job Growth

Why important: Broadband is critical for employment and income growth in rural areas. Broadband enables rural areas to compete nationally for service sector jobs from call centers to software development. Broadband service enables rural businesses to find markets otherwise unavailable to them, facilitates online ordering and billing, and provides training and education opportunities. It also increases opportunities for medical care for rural populations through telemedicine and easier access to information. Northcentral Montana has some of the lowest use of broadband internet of 13 economic development regions in Montana. In 2013, 0.3% of Toole County households with access to broadband had a download speed greater than 25mbps, ranking it second to last among the 11 counties in Northcentral Montana.

Action Steps	<p>2.1 Expand broadband access and utilization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Participate in regional broadband efforts spearheaded by Sweetgrass Development and Opportunity Link.b. Encourage Opportunity Link to develop the community broadband model, identified as Action Item #1 in the 2015 regional plan. Utilize the model to create an action plan for Toole County broadband. <p>2.2 Promote telework and telecommuting. Assist entrepreneurs and small businesses in understanding steps they can take to improve their business capabilities with telework. Provide links to resources on the county’s website or in coordination with the local chambers of commerce. Opportunity Link and Sweetgrass Development are local regional sources of information.</p>
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Objective 3: Expand Clean Energy Industry

Why important: Toole and Glacier Counties have a unique market niche for wind energy businesses. Both counties have tremendous wind energy potential and proximity to existing transmission lines. Although other locations in Montana have strong wind energy potential, the locations are often too distant from transmission lines to be economically viable. Of the 14 windfarms in Montana, only three produce more than 40 MW. The top two producing windfarms in Montana, Glacier and Rimrock, produce 189 MW and 210 MW, and are located in Toole and Glacier Counties. The windfarms create jobs, particularly during construction, and provide significant tax revenues to the counties.

Action Steps	<p>3.1 Assist in identifying access routes to new windfarm sites. Some of the equipment needed to build and maintain the windfarms is quite large and companies may need information on county road and bridge limitations.</p> <p>3.2 Keep high wind areas open for energy development. Plan for and encourage new development to locate in areas that do not conflict with wind energy development.</p>
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Objective 4: Stimulate Value-Added Agricultural Business

Why important: Nearly all of the county’s agricultural goods are shipped out of the county as raw product to be packaged or refined elsewhere. Local businesses that cut and package meat, or create flour or pasta from local wheat, for example, would provide new jobs. The locally-sourced products would be a benefit for local consumers and would reduce the costs of importing finished food products into Montana. The proximity to international rail and inland port would benefit businesses that export agricultural value-added products out-of-state. Adding value to local agricultural products is a regional issue, identified in the Sweetgrass Development CEDS and the Opportunity Link Northcentral Montana Plan.

Action Steps	<p>4.1 Promote and support value-added agricultural businesses. Continue to stay active in Sweetgrass Development and Opportunity Link’s efforts on this topic. Encourage these organizations to complete the action items as outlined in their regional plans.</p> <p>4.2 Identify what is needed at the county level to assist in developing value-added agricultural businesses, particularly for meat-packing, which has been identified as an opportunity for the county. Discuss with local agricultural producers, chambers of commerce, regional organizations, and Montana Dept of Commerce to identify what county might do to assist.</p>
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Objective 5: Increase Businesses, Jobs that Pay a Living Wage, and Create an Economic Climate that Attracts Young Adults

Why important: Despite a high per capita income, Toole County has a higher proportionate number of people living in poverty than the state of Montana. Combined with a low unemployment rate this indicates a large number of persons who comprise the “working poor” in Toole County. The number of businesses in the county has declined in the past decade. Main street areas in the county’s various communities need revitalization in order to attract new businesses, residents, and promote job growth. With the population forecast indicating population numbers will stagnate over the next 20 years, with declines in working age population and large increases in seniors, it is important to work to ensure more young adults move into the county.

Action Steps	<p>5.1 Stay active in regional efforts for business expansion, job growth and main street revitalization. Continue to stay active in Sweetgrass Development and Opportunity Link’s efforts to provide technical assistance to small businesses, new resident/new business recruitment programs such as “Return to Rural,” main street revitalization, and tourism business stimulation.</p> <p>5.2 Support community revitalization. Encourage Sunburst to develop a growth policy as a pro-active means to plan for the future and make it more eligible for revitalization funding. Support efforts of all three incorporated municipalities to develop action plans for main street/downtown areas. Explore interest among Sweetgrass businesses and residents for a community plan and if positive, provide assistance through the county’s Economic Development Department.</p> <p>5.3 Build on opportunities provided by the shared border with Canada. Increase cooperative efforts with Canadian officials to promote public transit from Lethbridge to Sweetgrass, which in turn has potential for job creation in Toole County.</p>
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PLAN ELEMENT: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

GOAL 2: Healthy Communities

Toole County residents are healthier than in previous decades, living in physical and social environments that foster community well-being.

Objective 1: Improve Housing Supply

Why important: Housing is an immediate need in the county. Without adequate housing both for rent and for sale, it is difficult to attract and retain residents in the county. Based on the 2012 Toole County Housing Needs Assessment, the current housing supply in Toole County is inadequate in many respects – older homes with insufficient bathrooms and bedrooms to meet today’s family needs, homes in poor or substandard condition, and lack of affordable options for a range of household incomes. For lower income persons, the ability to afford a home is affected by high energy bills.

The 2012 Toole Housing Impact Study did not examine special housing needs of seniors, although the county’s senior population will increase significantly over the next two decades. The county also has a higher than state rate of persons with disabilities who also have specialized housing needs.

Action Steps	<p>1.1 Implement the recommendations from the 2012 Toole County Housing Impact Study.</p> <p>1.2 Stay active in regional efforts for housing. The Sweetgrass Development CEDS and Northcentral Montana Regional Plan both had a number of housing related actions, including the development of a regional housing task force, rehabilitation/renovation grant information, “Youth Build” and “Habitat for Humanity” programs.</p> <p>1.3 Provide information for residents. Post links on the county’s web-page to housing assistance programs, including the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), and retrofit programs for those with disabilities. (DPHHS)</p>
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Objective 2: Facilitate Individual Health

Why important: Toole County has higher rates of obesity, cancer, stroke, diabetes, heart disease, disabilities, and suicide than the State of Montana. Toole County completed a Community Health Needs Assessment in 2012 that identified the county’s health statistics, and in 2014 the Marias Medical Center conducted a survey indicating residents’ top health concerns were alcohol/substance abuse, obesity, and cancer. Toole County is fortunate to have quality medical services in Shelby. Still, some residents find it difficult to travel to their health care providers. The Toole County Public Health Office is in the process of developing a Community Health Implementation Plan. As part of that work, they have already identified an immediate high priority need for a licensed mental health provider in the county.

Action Steps	<p>2.1 Complete the Toole County Community Health Implementation Plan that was being developed at the time of this Growth Policy.</p> <p>2.2 Identify ways to provide licensed mental health care. Work with health care agencies and regional organizations regarding potential solutions, such as a circuit rider mental health professional that could provide services in Shelby for specific days of the week or month.</p> <p>2.3 Work to increase opportunities for physical exercise for more county residents. Support “Safe Routes to School” applications. Participate in regional efforts to develop trail systems. Identify potential for senior centers to have exercise equipment and activities available for seniors and others in the community.</p> <p>2.4 Coordinate with health care providers to improve access to health care services through transit services, telemedicine, and other innovative practices. Work with regional organizations.</p>
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Objective 3: Provide Needed Public Services

Why important: A number of services basic to public health and safety are provided primarily by county government. These include the county sheriff’s department, the north and south county fire departments, County Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Search and Rescue, senior centers, and Toole County Public Health Department. Sparse population density makes service delivery expensive in rural areas. Combined with a static population count overall and a waning population in the unincorporated

areas of the county, providing services has become increasingly a challenge. Providing the services over the past few decades has been possible through collaboration, regional coordination, and mutual aid agreements. Many of these services have always relied on volunteers with equipment and training provided by the county. Toole County continues to have a strong volunteer workforce, but across the state and the nation it is becoming more and more difficult to obtain volunteers.

Toole County also provides transit and participates in the regional bus transit system. The transit system is essential for many county residents, many of whom use the bus to save money or because they do not have a car or are unable to drive. Ridership in Toole County Transit is on the increase. In 2012, Toole County Transit logged 3,593 passenger trips; in 2013 ridership had increased by 40 percent to 5,017.

Action Steps	<p>3.1 Plan for future equipment needs. Develop long-range plans for purchasing and maintaining equipment for county-provided services (including fire trucks, etc.) and incorporate into a comprehensive Capital Improvements Plan for Toole County.</p> <p>3.2 Continue to identify and use cost effective means to provide services. Examples include mutual aid agreements with DNRC on fire suppression and shared law enforcement with municipalities.</p> <p>3.3 Continue the Toole County Transit system and expand as warranted. Continue to coordinate with the regional transit system.</p> <p>3.4 Maintain and support the county’s strong volunteer workforce. Recognize volunteers at least annually with a special program. Provide information to the local papers and on the county website about volunteer opportunities and accomplishments. Research what other places are doing to encourage volunteerism.</p>
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Objective 4: Become Disaster-Resilient

Why important: Disasters can devastate communities and cost millions. In 2013, potential disasters in Toole County were identified in priority order as drought, hazardous materials transport, blowing saline dust, wildland fire, wind events, winter storms, and flooding. Toole County has a 2013 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan for preparing for and reducing effects of disasters. Toole County also has Community Wildfire Protection Plan, completed in 2010, that delineates wildland-urban interface areas, but did not indicate a need to adopt regulations requiring defensible space, access to/from structures and developments to facilitate fire suppression, or water supply for fire protection.

Action Steps	<p>4.1 Update Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Review at least once every five years and update as needed.</p> <p>4.2 Implement the Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Monitor progress annually. Apply for implementation funds available through the State DES as needed to complete projects.</p>
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Objective 5: Strengthen Community Identity and Vitality

Why important: Communities are more likely to thrive if they foster improved appearance and community character based on local history and culture. Each of the communities in Toole County, whether incorporated or unincorporated, has a unique and interesting history and character. The county has many historic sites of regional and national significance. Building on and promoting the area’s history and culture is a source of increased community pride and vitality for residents, and a boost for attracting new residents and visitors.

Action Steps	<p>5.1 Encourage community revitalization and improved community appearance. Provide assistance, where feasible, for planning and grant-writing support for main-street revitalization programs that reflect the community’s unique past and culture.</p> <p>5.2 Highlight points of interest. Promote the history and points of interest through a variety of media. “101 Cool Things to Do in Toole County” is an existing resource, with detailed descriptions of sites and activities of interest to both residents and visitors. The county website provides a link to the “101 Cool Things.” Developing a map highlighting locations would increase awareness.</p> <p>5.3 Continue to support county libraries and museums. Encourage libraries to function as community meeting spots and places for informal civic activities.</p> <p>5.4 Identify historic sites of regional and national significance. Where sites occur on public lands, work to achieve listing on the national register. Encourage listing on private lands with willing landowners.</p>
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Objective 6: Facilitate Potential of Youth and Seniors

Why important: Toole County is facing a senior population increase and a youth population decrease. Toole County already provides senior centers, but will need to prepare for future needs to reduce potential for older residents to relocate outside the area to access needed services. Toole County also has youth programs and sports activities provided by the school district, non-profit organizations, municipalities and the county. The county needs to identify how a decrease in youth population will affect the ability to provide for their needs and increase their potential as adults.

Action Steps	<p>6.1 Support youth-oriented programs and activities. Coordinate with schools and organizations to provide activities for youth to improve life-long skills and personal goals, and to reduce at-risk behaviors. Work with County Public Health Department on county’s role on this topic.</p> <p>6.2 Foster improved health, activity, and living facilities for seniors. Coordinate with health providers and regional and state organizations to identify specifically what can be done by county government.</p>
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Objective 7: Foster Coordination with Kevin, Shelby, and Sunburst

Why important: Toole County includes three incorporated municipalities – Shelby, Sunburst and Kevin. These communities are integral to many of the goals and objectives identified in this growth policy. Shelby and Toole County coordinate with a city-county planning board for a jurisdictional area that surrounds the city. Shelby and Kevin have growth policies but Sunburst does not. Neither Kevin nor Sunburst has a planning board, subdivision regulations or zoning regulations. All three municipalities and the county face similar issues and coordination is important given their limited resources.

Action Steps	<p>7.1 Continue to participate in the city-county planning area surrounding Shelby, considering recommendations from the city-county planning board on matters such as subdivision that come before them.</p> <p>7.2 Coordinate with the municipalities to help promote new development to locate in existing communities, as identified in the future land use portion of this growth policy.</p>
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	<p>7.3 As funding and staffing allow, Toole County will assist municipalities in achieving relevant goals and objectives of this growth policy. Such items include, but are not limited to, improved housing, senior services, and safe non-motorized routes to school.</p> <p>7.4 Toole County will consider the growth policies adopted by the municipalities when reviewing development proposals requiring a decision by Toole County Board of Commissioners. Toole County encourages Sunburst to develop a growth policy so that it is pro-active in its future and more competitive for state grants.</p> <p>7.5 Toole County will consider expanding the county planning jurisdictional area and planning board to include Sunburst and Kevin if so requested.</p>
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Objective 8: Provide Easy Access to County Planning Information

Why important: Toole County has an existing website, recently updated and with much information. This could be improved by including links to the county’s planning-related documents, such as the growth policy, pre-disaster mitigation plan, community wildfire protection plan, housing impact study, etc., as well as subdivision regulations and public health ordinances.

Action Steps	<p>8.1 Include county planning documents and the subdivision regulations on the county website.</p> <p>8.2 Ensure that the documents creating the county planning board jurisdictional area (map and resolution) are recorded with the clerk and recorder and easily accessible. The original 1975 resolution should be amended to correct a clerical error, whereby the municipalities of Shelby, Kevin and Sunburst were included but without formal adoption by the municipalities.</p>
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PLAN ELEMENT: PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 3: Physical Infrastructure

Toole County’s physical infrastructure is in good working condition, designed to meet current needs, with potential for expansion when needed, and with mechanisms in place to for regular operations and maintenance as well as long-term repair/replacement needs.

Objective 1: Provide a Comprehensive Approach for County Infrastructure

Why important: Toole County is directly responsible for a wide array of physical infrastructure and facilities including county roads and bridges, three county airports, two fire departments, two public libraries, Marias Medical Center, three senior centers, the Marias Museum, county court house, Marias Fairgrounds, sheriff’s department building and dispatch center. The county does not have any parks or trail systems in the county-owned or managed inventory but demand for trails in particular could increase as more residents work to become fit. Total population in the county peaked in 1960 with 7,904 residents and has been on the decline since, with a total 2010 population of 5,324. In short, there are fewer people to pay for the infrastructure necessary for basic transportation and public safety services. In addition, needs are increasing and changing for a variety of reasons including the expanding number of seniors. The county’s aging facilities have become increasingly costly to maintain, even at a level that does not keep pace with needs for major repair and replacement. The Marias Fairgrounds is in dire need of significant upgrades or complete rebuild of several main structures. The county has a skeletal capital improvements plan addresses many county facilities. It is, however, not as comprehensive as needed to effectively tackle the huge task of prioritizing competing needs over the long term.

Action Steps	<p>1.1 Prepare a Capital Improvements Plan (CIPs) for all infrastructure and equipment needs in the county. Resources include the guidelines and models for CIPs from CDBG and the Montana Community Technical Assistance Program. Include provisions for ADA accessibility in all county facilities into the CIP.</p> <p>1.2 Incorporate other county facility plans, such as the five year Shelby/Toole County airport plan, into the CIP.</p>
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- 1.3** Assess and develop a plan for long-term use of county-owned property within the Targeted Economic Development (TED) District, which is adjacent to the Port of Northern Montana multi-modal facility.
- 1.4** Develop a master plan for the Marias Fairground. Refer to the recommendations in the initial “Special Area Plan” for the Fairgrounds attached as an appendix to this growth policy.
- 1.5** Assess the need for a transportation plan to address county motorized systems (roads and bridges) and non-motorized systems (trails, paths, sidewalks). Consider how the county might become part of a regional trail system and potential benefits for citizen health and potential tourism.
- 1.6** Conduct cost-benefit analysis of proposed projects. Utilize standardized methodologies such as fiscal impact or asset management models. (Note that the Northcentral Montana Regional Plan 2015-2035 proposed to compile a clearinghouse of such models.)
- 1.7** If major facilities are proposed to be built by the county, examine how these may be built in phases to avoid over-building.

Objective 2: Ensure Drinking Water Supply

Why important: Drinking water supply in the county is very limited, with only a few places in the county with good groundwater supplies. As a result, most county residents rely on water sources that are often tens of miles distant, requiring the water to be piped to its use destination. Many of the community water systems do not have “source water protection plans” that protect the water source from contamination. None of the systems have a complete mapped inventory of water supply sources or pipeline information such as size, depth, location. Several of the systems are facing water supply or water quality issues. Toole County does not own or manage any water systems, but it is in the interest of all residents to have a clean, safe, water supply. Toole County currently participates in the North Central Montana Water Regional Water System project, which is projected to bring water from the mountains west of the county.

Action Steps	<p>2.1 Assist local communities in establishing source water protection plans for all drinking water supply sources.</p> <p>2.2 Assist in mapping water supply sources and distribution systems so that locations are easily identified and impacts to the systems minimized.</p> <p>2.3 Continue to participate in the North Central Montana Water Regional Water System project.</p> <p>2.4 Stay informed of training opportunities for operators of rural water and wastewater systems. Encourage attendance by local operators. (Note the Opportunities Link identified potential for workshops in the Northcentral Montana Regional Plan.)</p> <p>2.4 Support community water system improvements, providing assistance with grant applications where feasible.</p>
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Objective 3: New Development Pays its Proportionate Share of Infrastructure

Why important: Private development proposals can necessitate major and costly improvements to infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and water and wastewater systems. In order to avoid situations where the development creates additional and disproportionate cost burdens for existing taxpayers, the costs of needed upgrades or expansions should be identified upfront. State law authorizes local governments to require a subdivider to pay for the proportional share of infrastructure improvements directly attributable to the subdivision. The Toole County subdivision regulations do not include any information on how decisions related to extending or upgrading infrastructure would be decided.

Action Steps	<p>1.1 Before committing to major improvements in county infrastructure in response to developer requests or needs, the county should identify how costs directly attributable to the private development will be paid by the developer.</p>
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- 1.2** Include in the Toole County subdivision regulations, the provisions under which a subdivider would be required to pay the costs of extending or improving infrastructure directly attributable to the subdivision.
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PLAN ELEMENT: NATURAL ASSETS

GOAL 4: Natural Assets

Toole County’s water, lakes, rivers, wetlands, clean air, open country, and wildlife continue to provide opportunities for healthy natural systems and recreational opportunities.

Objective 1: Facilitate Water Quality and Availability

Why important: Water is a precious commodity throughout Montana and in Toole County, warranting attention to ensure good quality and supply into the future.

Action Steps	<p>1.1 Identify ways Toole County can help assure water quantity and quality. Continue to participate in regional efforts, such as the Sweetgrass Development CEDS and Opportunity Link regarding this topic, which is of regional concern.</p> <p>1.2 Help prepare for drought and precipitation patterns that could affect water supply and agricultural operations in Toole County. Provide links to the information sources such as the Montana Office of Climate Change on the county’s website.</p>
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Objective 2: Increase Awareness of Natural Systems

Why important: Unintentional impacts can result when people are not aware of the significance of a resource, where it may be located, or basic steps to avoid the impact.

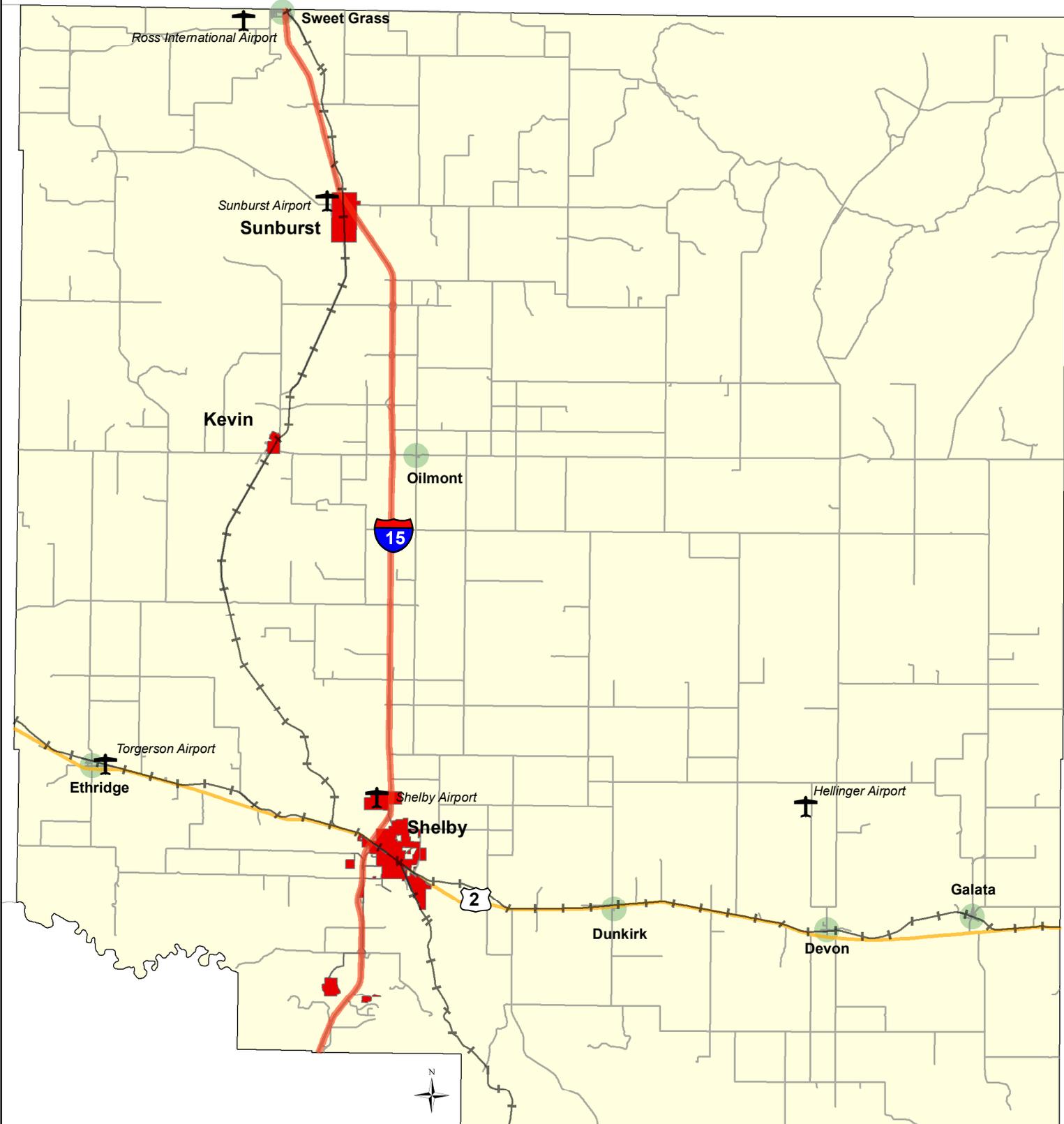
Action Steps	<p>2.1 Encourage development that does not impair natural systems.</p>
	<p>2.2 Provide information related to various resources in the county. Include links to such information on the county’s websites. Examples include relevant maps in the “Existing Conditions” appendix to this growth policy. Another example would be a link to the NRCS website “websoilsurvey” that provides information on soils and a variety of other parameters, including prime agricultural farmland.</p>

Plan for the Future:

3. Future Land Use

The future land use map is a guide for new development. The basis for this map was the similar map in the 2005 Growth Policy. The three basic categories have remained the same, but the names have changed. The descriptions have been updated to be more reflective of the goals and objectives of this growth policy.

Toole County Future Land Use Map



-  Shelby Planning Area (Excluded from County Planning)
-  Incorporated Municipality
-  Rural Community
-  Rural County



Land Use Emphasis Area	Description
Shelby Planning Area	<p>This is a separate planning jurisdiction. Future land use designations in this area are created through growth policy planning by the city-county planning board and as adopted by the city of Shelby and Toole County.</p>
Municipality	<p>The incorporated municipalities are Shelby, Sunburst and Kevin. Municipalities are the preferred location for new residential and commercial development. This land use plan does not control land uses within municipalities. Like the Shelby Planning Area, municipalities are outside the jurisdiction of this county Growth Policy</p>
Rural Community	<p>The rural communities include Sweetgrass, Oilmont, Ethridge, Dunkirk, Devon and Galata. These communities and the areas immediately surrounding them are second in preference to municipalities for location of new residential and commercial development.</p> <p>The rural communities do not have defined boundaries like incorporated municipalities. Still, many were originally laid out in a town-like grid pattern on a plat in the late 19th or early 20th century. Preferred location for new development would be within the original community layout, assuming lots and area are sufficient for the proposed use. Subdivisions or divisions exempted from subdivision review should address the ownership of the streets, which were often platted as parcels rather than as right-of-way.</p>
Rural County	<p>This area includes everything not included in other categories on this map. Major residential and commercial developments are not encouraged in this district. Preferred uses are those that do not interfere with agriculture, agricultural operations, and natural resource development, including oil, gas, and wind. Preferred uses emphasize protection of agricultural uses, open spaces, watersheds, soil and water resources, and wildlife resources.</p>

Plan for the Future:

4. Subdivision Review

This section of the growth policy addresses two subdivision review components required by state law to be addressed in a growth policy: 1) how hearings on proposed subdivisions will be conducted, and 2) the definitions and criteria for determining impacts of the subdivision.

Local governments are responsible under Montana law for reviewing divisions of land. Toole County has subdivision regulations, most recently updated in 2013.

Public Hearings

State law requires the growth policy to explain how public hearings on subdivisions will be conducted. The Montana Subdivision and Platting Act requires at least one public hearing to be held by the “governing body, its authorized agent or agency, or both” (76-3-605(1), MCA). Public hearings on proposed subdivisions in Toole County are held by the Planning Board, which then makes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners may also hold a public hearing, if they so desire, prior to their final decision.

Public hearings conducted by the Planning Board shall follow general requirements for hearings under the Planning Board Bylaws. Public hearings conducted by the Board of County Commissioners shall follow locally adopted standards, if any. If specific standards are lacking, the following shall apply.

- Board Chair opens the public hearing.
- Staff or contracted planner representing the county provides a summary of the subdivision application and staff report.
- Subdivision applicant is given an opportunity to make comments.
- Board members are given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions of the subdivision applicant and staff or contracted planner.
- Members of the public have an opportunity to make comments. Comments may be made either verbally or in writing. Written comments must be submitted by the close of the public hearing.
- If Board members feel they need more information or time to consider the project before voting, or if the public hearing has gone on more than two hours and there are still citizens who haven't had a chance to testify, the Board may opt to extend the hearing in accordance with the review time requirements outlined in state law.
- Once all public comments have been received within the allowable timeframe and once the Board has taken its vote, the Planning Board President closes the public hearing.

Impacts Analysis

All subdivisions, as defined in the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, are required to be reviewed for their potential adverse impacts on the following parameters referred to in 76-3-608(3)(a),MCA:

- 1) agriculture,
- 2) agricultural water user facilities,
- 3) local services,
- 4) natural environment,
- 5) wildlife,
- 6) wildlife habit, and
- 7) public health and safety.

The definition of these terms and the criteria for adverse impacts are left to the discretion of the local jurisdiction. The table on the following pages addresses requirements of Montana law for the growth policy to define the seven parameters above and to explain the criteria by which the impacts of the subdivisions will be evaluated. The important threshold is whether the impact is a “potentially significant adverse” impact. When a subdivision is determined to have a potentially significant adverse impact the Board of County Commissioners is authorized to require a subdivider to reduce the impact to acceptable levels. The Board of County Commissioners has the authority to weigh the criteria, recognizing that a potentially significant adverse impact on one parameter can be balanced or outweighed by a strong positive impact on another of the parameters. If mitigation is inadequate, the Board of County Commissioners has the authority to deny the subdivision.

Toole County’s existing subdivision regulations were the starting point for the definitions and criteria included in the following table. The existing regulations include definitions and criteria. In some cases they also refer to mitigation measures in the 2006 model subdivision regulations, a document prepared for state-wide use, but the wording of the measures is not included in the Toole County regulations. The following table also includes potential mitigation measures to provide some guidance as to what might be acceptable. Without such guidance, the subdivider is often left to guess as to what might be acceptable to the governing body. In the end, however, it is the subdivider’s responsibility to identify mitigation measures.

Plan Action

Upon adoption of the growth policy, the subdivision regulations will need to be amended to incorporate changes in definitions and criteria for examining impacts from proposed subdivisions. In addition it is recommended that planning board bylaws be amended to include the provisions for public hearings as identified in this chapter. It is also recommended that a checklist be developed so that proposed subdivisions can be evaluated in relation to the growth policy. The checklist should state that the county cannot impose conditions or deny a subdivision solely on compliance with the growth policy, per 76-1-605(2)(b), MCA.

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

AGRICULTURE	Definition	
	<p>Agriculture is defined as all aspects of farming or ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals or poultry; and any practices including, forestry or lumbering operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.</p>	
	Evaluation Criteria	Potential Mitigation
	<p>a. Subdivisions located on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, are considered to have a significant adverse impact on agriculture.</p>	
<p>b. Subdivisions adjacent to existing agricultural operations are considered to have a significant adverse on agriculture.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The subdivider ensures the adjoining farm landowners are aware of the subdivision and the subdivider considers those comments in the subdivision design. 2) Subdivider establishes setback buffers between development and adjoining farmland. 3) Subdivider establishes restrictive covenants pertaining to pets in subdivision. 	

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

<p>AGRICULTURAL WATER USER FACILITIES</p>	<p>Definition</p>	
	<p>Agricultural water user facilities are defined as those facilities that provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands for the production of agricultural products, or those facilities needed to drain water from agricultural land. These facilities include, but are not limited to, ditches, head gates, pipes, and other water conveying facilities.</p>	
	<p>Evaluation Criteria</p>	<p>Potential Mitigation</p>
	<p>Each of the following are considered to have a significant adverse impact on agricultural water user facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed subdivisions located on land with agricultural water user facilities or adjoining an agricultural water use facility b. Proposed subdivisions that involve the abandonment or transfer of water rights from the property being c. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that will alter access for maintenance of agricultural water user facilities d. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that will alter the movement or availability of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Subdivider provides a plan to be recorded with the plat, identifying easements, and rights and responsibilities of landowners and agricultural water facility owners/operators. Plan is submitted for review and approval to the ditch company or other entity managing the agricultural water facility. 2) Unless otherwise approved by the agricultural water facility owners or management entity, all improvements in the approved agricultural water facility plan are installed prior to final plat filing. 3) If water rights are to be severed or transferred to property other than the subdivision, the agricultural water facility owners or management entity are given the opportunity to review and approve. If approved, the subdivider documents the legal process of severance or transfer and provide notification regarding the water rights to be filed with the final plat. 4) Any alteration of access to an agricultural water user facility is identified and the information submitted to the facility owners or management entity for review and approval. 5) Any alteration of movement or availability of water in the agricultural water user facility is identified and the information submitted to facility owners or management entity for review and approval.

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

LOCAL SERVICES	Definition	
	<p>Local services are defined as any and all services that local governments are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens including but not limited to police, sheriff, fire, emergency, and public health services, as well as schools, busing, and roads.</p>	
	Evaluation Criteria	Potential Mitigation
	<p>Each of the following are considered to have a significant adverse impact on local services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A subdivision that does not pay its proportionate share of costs to extend or upgrade capital facilities related to the needs of the subdivision for public health and safety, including but not limited to public roads, sewer lines, water supply lines, and storm drains b. A subdivision that will put local services close to, at, or over their limits of service capability c. A subdivision that is unlikely to generate sufficient property taxes to cover the local services it will require 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If capital facilities are required to be upgraded or extended for the subdivision, the subdivider pays the costs directly attributable to the subdivision. Costs of constructing or extending capital facilities related to education are exempted from this provision (per 76-3-510, MCA). 2) The subdivision is established with a Rural Improvement District (RID) or with a waiver of right to protest an RID for maintenance of improvements. The RID is designated for maintenance only and is not used as a mechanism to pay for extensions or upgrades of capital facilities needed to serve the subdivision.

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

<p>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>Definition</p>	
	<p>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.</p>	
	<p>Evaluation Criteria</p>	<p>Potential Mitigation</p>
	<p>Each of the following are considered to have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements in locations with riparian areas, rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, or other natural surface waters b. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements with potential to negatively affect groundwater quality. Areas considered vulnerable include but are not limited to groundwater recharge areas, existing water supply sources (springs or wells) and land with a high water table (less than 4 feet from the surface). c. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements in locations with evidence of soils with building or site development limitations as defined by the NRCS soil survey, or are proposed in areas with pre-development slopes greater than 25 percent d. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements on land with historical, cultural, archeological, or paleontological features e. Subdivisions that alter existing drainage, create or increase drainage problems, or increase runoff off the subject parcel f. Subdivisions with potential to degrade air quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Riparian areas, wetlands, springs and a buffer distance sufficient to protect those areas and other surface water bodies (e.g., creeks, rivers, lakes) are identified on the final plat as no build areas. 2) Subdivisions on land with existing water supply sources create water source protection plans under state of Montana guidelines and requirements. Subdivisions in proximity to water supply sources follow requirements for source water supply programs, even if such a program has not yet been established for the source. 3) Subdivisions with potential to negatively affect groundwater identify and implement proven measures to eliminate or negate the impact. 4) Subdivisions with potential to increase soil erosion or ground slumping identify and implement proven measures to eliminate or negate the impact. 5) Subdivisions with potential to negatively affect historical, cultural, archeological, or paleontological features include an objective analysis by a qualified professional, and identify and implement proven measures to sufficiently mitigate the impact. 6) Subdivisions that affect drainage include with the application an objective analysis by a qualified professional, and identify and implement proven measures to eliminate or negate the impact to property, roads, etc. 7) Subdivisions that negatively affect air quality provide a plan and identify and implement measures to eliminate or negate the impacts.

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

WILDLIFE	Definition	
	<p>Living things that are not domesticated or tame. The term does not include feral animals, which are animals and any offspring that have escaped captivity and become wild (including dogs, cats, and Eurasian ferrets).</p>	
	Evaluation Criteria	Potential Mitigation
	<p>Each of the following are considered to have a significant adverse impact on wildlife:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements in locations with riparian areas, wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, or other natural surface waters b. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements in an area with rare, threatened, or endangered species, as identified by state or federal agencies c. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements on or adjacent to the following areas identified as Tier 1 Focal Areas in the 2015 Montana State Wildlife Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Rim • Sweet Grass Hills • Middle Missouri (Marias River) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Riparian areas, wetlands, springs and a buffer distance sufficient to protect those areas and other surface water bodies (e.g., creeks, rivers, lakes) are identified on the final plat as no build areas. 2) The subdivision is designed in consultation with local FWP field biologists. 3) The subdivision includes a Fish and Wildlife Impact Assessment following FWP guidelines in the April 2012 Fish and Wildlife Recommendations for Subdivision Development in Montana.
WILDLIFE HABITAT	Definition	
	<p>Wildlife habitat is defined as the place or area where wildlife naturally lives or travels through.</p>	
	Evaluation Criteria	Potential Mitigation
	<p>The criteria for wildlife habitat are the same as those for wildlife.</p>	<p>Potential mitigation measures for wildlife habitat are the same as those for wildlife.</p>

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING		
PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY	Definition	
	<p>Public health and safety is defined as the prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of well-being for the community at large. Conditions that relate to public health and safety include but are not limited to: disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding, fire or wildfire hazards, rock falls or landslides, unstable soils, steep slopes, and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high pressure gas lines; and air or vehicular traffic safety hazards.</p>	
	Evaluation Criteria	Potential Mitigation
	<p>Each of the following are considered to have a significant adverse impact on public health and safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements in an area identified as a medium to severe fire hazard area by a fire district. If the level of fire hazard has not been determined for the site then the developer shall receive a determination from either the appropriate local volunteer fire department or from the DNRC before submitting a subdivision application. b. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements on land with high pressure gas lines or high voltage lines c. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements on land or adjacent to Superfund or hazardous waste sites d. Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements on or adjacent to abandoned landfills, mines, wells, waste sites, or sewage treatment plants e. Proposed major or subsequent minor subdivisions located outside of areas where police, fire, and emergency services can respond within 5 minutes for 90% of all emergencies¹ f. Proposed subdivisions or associated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Subdivisions in medium to severe fire hazard areas meet the design standards for fire prevention and control identified in the design standards of the subdivision regulations. b. Subdivisions with high pressure gas lines or high voltage lines are designed in consultation with and approved by the utility; and the areas are identified on the face of the final plat and restrictions on use recorded with the final plat.

¹ This is verbatim from the existing subdivision regulations. Does it work in Toole County?

SUBDIVISION IMPACTS REVIEW – DEFINITIONS AND CRITERIA FOR DECISION-MAKING

<p>PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONTINUED)</p>	<p>improvements in an area identified as a high seismic hazard area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Residential subdivisions that abut I-15, US Highway 2, or railroad lines h. Subdivisions within a designated airport influence area (such as Shelby airport) or in proximity to the other airports i. Subdivisions in areas with a wind power class of 5 or 6 (refer to map in Appendix B under Natural Resources) j. Residential subdivisions on land containing oil and gas wells k. Any other adverse impacts on health or safety that may result from the proposed subdivisions or associated improvements. 	
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Plan for the Future:

5. Implementing the Growth Policy

Review and Amendment

Toole County will review the growth policy at least once every five years. Revisions will be based on the following conditions:

- Significant changes in citizen values, local economy or local landscape;
- Changes in state law regarding growth policies;
- Individual neighborhood plans developed in accordance with state law (76-1-601, MCA) require incorporation into the growth policy;
- Events, such as natural disasters, have significantly changed the premises upon which the growth policy is based;
- Evaluation of implementation measures and progress, and determination that modifications would enhance the effectiveness of the Growth Policy.

Implementation Summary

The following table provides a snapshot all of the actions needed to implement the growth policy. The following is a quick reference guide for the columns in the table.

Guide to Using the Implementation Summary Table

Priority Ranking	Identifies only the top two highest priority categories. These rankings will help identify where to focus the county's limited resources.
Timeline for Initiation	Provides a general indication of timeline for initiating actions. 3 rd quarter 2016 means the action should start soon after adoption of the growth policy. If the county finds that there are simply too many items to kick-off at one time, the county can refer to the priority column to decide which actions to initiate.
Subdivision Component	Identifies other growth policy items with significance for subdivision regulations. In some cases the action item is a specific change in the subdivision regulations. In all other cases, an X in this column indicates that the item is something to include in a checklist used to evaluate a proposed subdivision's compliance with the growth policy.
Page #	Location of a more detailed description of the action

Action	Priority Ranking (Highest or High)	Timeline for Initiation	Subdivision Component	Page #
PLAN ELEMENT: ECONOMIC VITALITY				
Objective 1: Expand Transportation-Related Industry				
1.1 Port of Northern Montana	Highest	Initiated		
1.2 Coordinate with transportation agencies		Initiated		
1.3 Transportation corridors open		3 rd qtr 2016	X	
1.4 County property in TED		3 rd qtr 2016		
1.5 Trans-modal in Sunburst and Sweetgrass		TBD		
Objective 2: Advance Technologies				
2.1 Expand broadband	High	4 th qtr 2016		
2.2 Promote telework and telecommuting		3 rd qtr 2016		
Objective 3: Expand Clean Energy Industry				
3.1 Access routes to new windfarm sites		As needed		
3.2 High wind areas open for energy development		3 rd qtr 2016	X	
Objective 4: Value-Added Agriculture				
4.1 Promote and support value-added	Highest	3 rd qtr 2016		
4.2 Identify what is needed at the county level	Highest	4 th qtr 2016		
Objective 5: Increase businesses, Jobs, and Attract Young Adults				
5.1 Participate in regional efforts	High	Initiated		
5.2. Community revitalization	High	2017		
5.3 Build on opportunities with Canada		2017		
PLAN ELEMENT: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES				
Objective 1: Improve Housing Supply				
1.1. Implement 2012 Housing Impact Study	Highest	3 rd qtr 2016		
1.2 Participate in regional efforts	Highest	3 rd qtr 2016		
1.3 Housing information for residents	Highest	4 th qtr 2016		
Objective 2: Facilitate Individual Health				
2.1 Complete Community Health Implementation Plan		4 th qtr 2016		
2.2 Licensed mental health care	High	3 rd qtr 2016		
2.3 More physical activity, safe routes to school, etc.		2017		
2.4 Improve access to health care	High	2017		
Objective 3: Public Services				

Action	Priority Ranking (Highest or High)	Timeline for Initiation	Subdivision Component	Page #
3.1 Plan for equipment needs		4 th qtr 2017		
3.2 Cost effective measures		Initiated		
3.3. Expand transit system as warranted		2017		
3.4 Support volunteer workforce	High	2017		
Objective 4: Become Disaster Resilient				
4.1 Update Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Wildfire Plans every 5 years	High			
4.2 Implement the plans	High	4 th qtr 2016		
Objective 5: Strengthen Community Identity and Vitality				
5.1. Encourage revitalization and improved appearance	High	2017		
5.2 Highlight points of interest		2017		
5.3 Support museums and libraries		Initiated		
5.4 Identify historic sites		2017		
Objective 6: Facilitate Potential of Youth and Seniors				
6.1 Youth oriented programs		2017		
6.2 Improved health, activity and living facilities for seniors		2017		
Objective 7: Foster Coordination with Kevin, Shelby, and Sunburst				
7.1 Continue participation in Shelby City-County Planning area		Initiated		
7.2 Preference for new development in municipalities		3 rd qtr 2016	X	
7.3 Assist municipalities in achieving goals of this growth policy		2017		
7.4 Municipal growth policies considered in county decision-making		3 rd qtr 2016	X	
7.5 Potential to include Sunburst and Kevin in Toole County planning board		As requested		
Objective 8: Easy Access to Planning Information				
8.1 Planning information on county website	High	4 th qtr 2016		
8.2 Correct clerical error on 1975 resolution	High	3 rd qtr 2016		
PLAN ELEMENT: PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE				
Objective 1: Comprehensive Approach for County Infrastructure				
1.1 Prepare a Capital Improvements Plan	Highest	1 st qtr 2017		
1.2 Incorporate other facility plans				
1.3 Plan for county property in the TED District		2017		

Action	Priority Ranking (Highest or High)	Timeline for Initiation	Subdivision Component	Page #
1.4 Master plan for Marias Fairground	Highest	4 th qtr 2016		
1.5 Plan for transportation including paths and trails		2017		
1.6 Conduct cost-benefit analysis of proposed projects		2017		
1.7 Build in phases to avoid “over-building”		2017		
Objective 2: Ensure Drinking Water Supply				
2.1 Source water protection plans	Highest	4 th qtr 2016		
2.2 Map water systems	Highest	2017		
2.3 Participate in North Central Montana Regional Water System project	Highest	Initiated		
2.4 Training for rural water and wastewater system operators	Highest	1 st qtr 2017		
2.5 Support community water system improvements	Highest	As requested		
Objective 3: New Development Pays Proportionate Share of Infrastructure				
1.1 Identify how developer will pay prior to county commitment to build		1 st qtr 2017		
1.2 Subdivision regulations to address extensions and upgrades to be paid by subdivider		3 rd qtr 2017	X	
PLAN ELEMENT: NATURAL ASSETS				
Objective 1: Facilitate Water Quality and Availability				
1.1. Identify ways for county to help assure water quality and availability		4 th qtr 2016		
1.2 Prepare for changes that could affect water supply		2017		
Objective 2: Increase Awareness of Natural Systems				
2.2 Encourage development that does not impair natural systems		3 rd qtr 2016	X	
2.2. Provide information		2017		
OTHER GROWTH POLICY FUTURE PLAN COMPONENTS				
a. Future Land Use Plan		3 rd qtr	X	
b. Subdivision Regulations– Updates per this Growth Policy	High	3 rd qtr 2016	X	
c. Planning Board Bylaws – Amend as needed to reflect Growth Policy provisions for subdivision public hearings		2017		
d. Checklist of Subdivision-Related Growth Policy Items		2017	X	