

Appendix B. Detailed Inventory of Existing Characteristics

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The Natural Setting

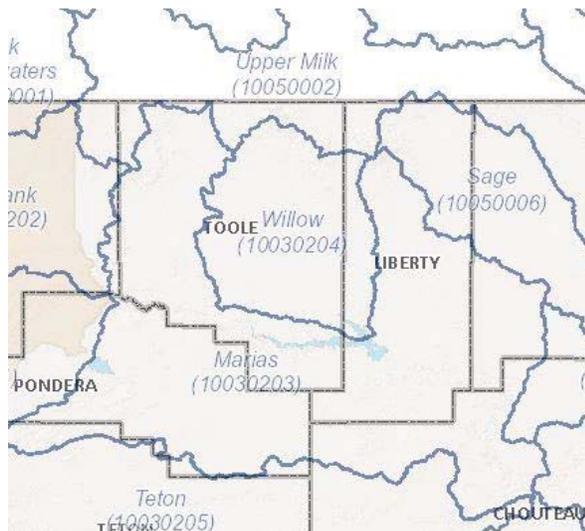
Geography and Topography

Toole County is situated on the far western reaches of the North American Great Plains and east of the Continental Divide and high mountains of Glacier National Park.

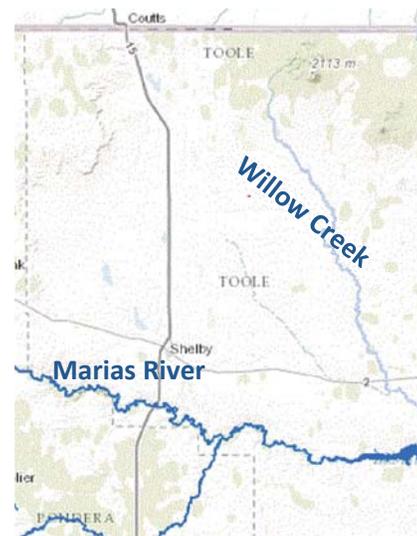
Most of the county consists of rolling to flat level terrain, characterized by drainages and shallow lake depressions. The Sweet Grass Hills are a mountainous area in the northeastern portion of the county. The area is known as an island mountain range because it is distinctly separated from any larger chain of mountain ranges. Elevations in the county range from about 2,900 feet at Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir) to 6,983 feet at West Butte in the Sweet Grass Hills.

Toole County falls into three main watershed basins – the Marias, Willow, and the Upper Milk. The Marias River is the major river in the county and a major tributary to the Missouri River in Montana. Most of Toole County falls within the Marias River watershed. The Marias runs west to east along the county's southern portion and flows into Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir) in the county's southeastern border. The Marias River carries a large volume of water during spring runoff and again in May and June when it is swollen by seasonal rains and melting snow from the high divides to the east. The Dry Fork of the Marias flows into the Marias from the south-southwest not far from the Toole-Pondera County line. Willow Creek originates in the Sweet Grass Hills and flows from north to south across nearly the entire length of the county.

The area north of the Sweet Grass Hills and a small area in northwestern Toole County are located within the Milk River drainage. Breed Creek, flows for a short distance in the northeastern corner of Toole County and is the largest tributary in the Milk River Basin in Toole County.



Watersheds in Toole County

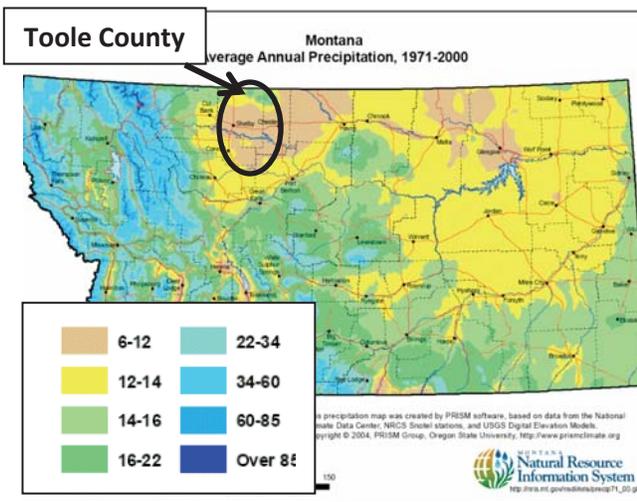


Major Waterways

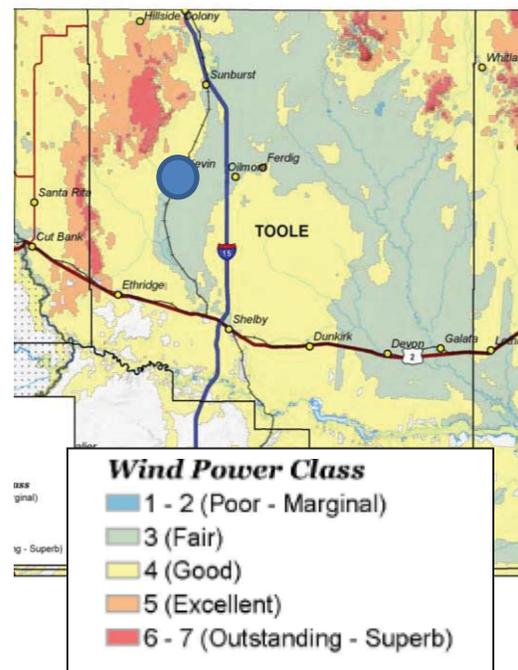
Climate

Toole County has warmer average temperatures than most of Montana west of the Continental Divide. Winters are not as cold as expected at this latitude in the central part of the continent due to warm “Chinook” winds that often follow brief periods of extreme cold. Toole County has strong and consistent winds in the western part of the county and in the Sweet Grass Hills. Summers typically have warm days and cool evenings, and on average there are not more than ten days over 90 degrees. The warmest area is along the Marias River and the coolest is the Sweet Grass Hills.

Throughout most of Toole County, average annual precipitation is six to 12 inches per year, 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. Combined with ideal growing season temperatures, long hours of summer sunshine, the seven to 10 inches of rainfall from May to September make the climate favorable for dryland farming.



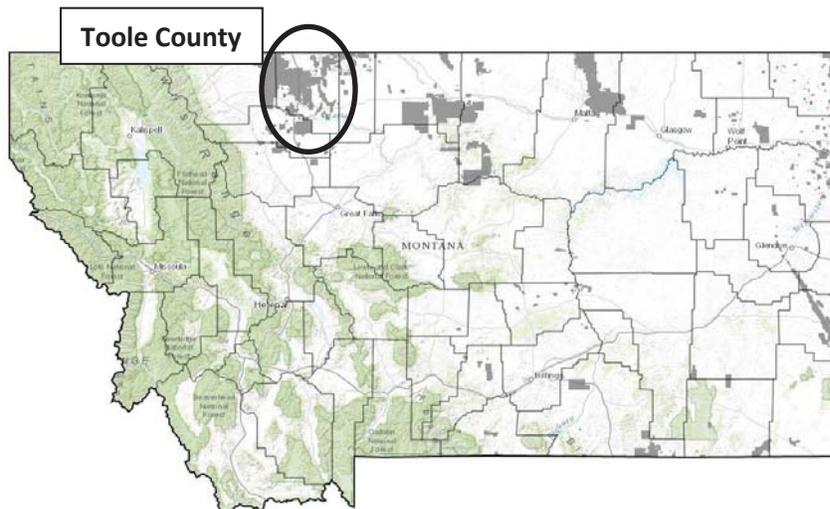
Mean Average Annual Precipitation - Montana



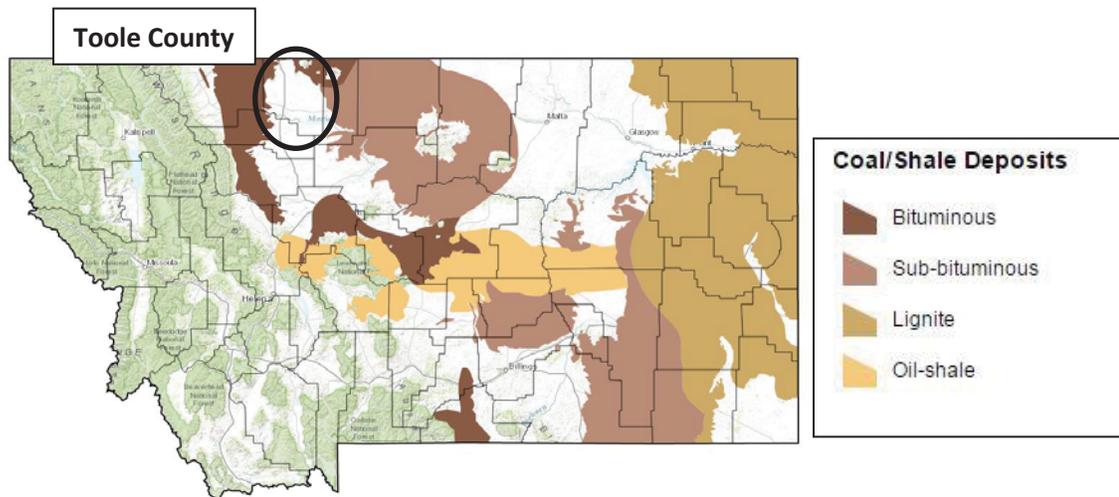
Wind Power Class for Power Generation

Geology

The oldest exposed rocks in Toole County are Madison Limestone formed 325 million years ago during the Mississippian age. Blue-gray in color, Madison Limestone is found in a small outcrop on the flanks of West Butte in the Sweet Grass Hills. Cretaceous sedimentary deposits were formed 65 to 135 million years ago and are found along bluffs and stream channels. The Tertiary Period followed the Cretaceous Period from 65 to 2 million years ago. In the early portion of Tertiary period, Toole County was geologically active and characterized by the uplift of the Sweet Grass Arch. This uplift created the Sweet Grass Hills and caused oil and gas deposits to migrate and become trapped in the Kevin Dome and Sunburst Dome. The Sweet Grass Hills also have bituminous coal deposits.



Montana Oil and Gas Fields



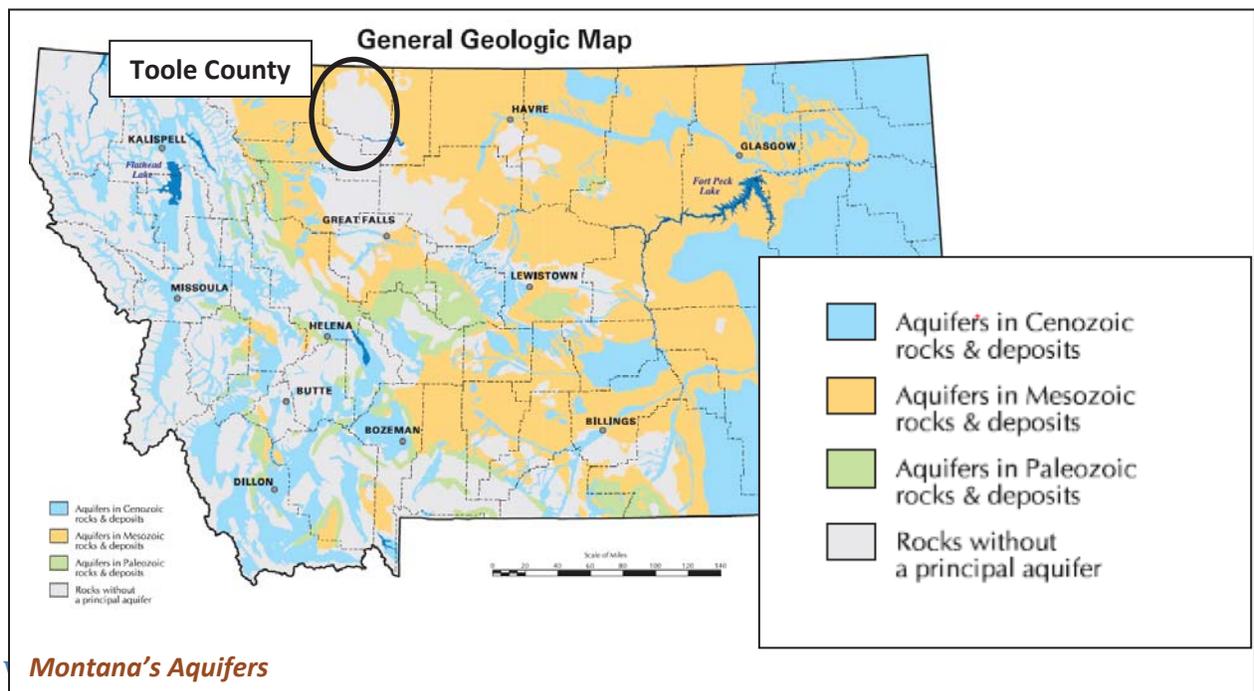
Montana Coal/Shale Deposits

The majority of all other landforms, drainage patterns, and soils development resulted from the effects of glaciers. Excluding the Sweet Grass Hills, the entire county was covered with thick glaciers 15,000 years ago. As the ice sheets melted, the glaciers left localized deposits of silt, sand, and gravel in mound-like hills (kames) and sinuous ridges of sand and gravel about a mile long, 30 feet wide and 10 feet high (eskers). Most of the current surface drainage in Toole County follows the coulees and channels created by melting glaciers. The north-south valley that extends along the western portion of the county, paralleling the interstate is believed to have been the original drainage of the Milk River. Today it is a lowland area with shallow lakes, closed depressions and wetlands. In the past 10,000 years, landforms have been altered primarily by erosion, resulting in steep coulees, dissected landscapes and badland topography.

Groundwater

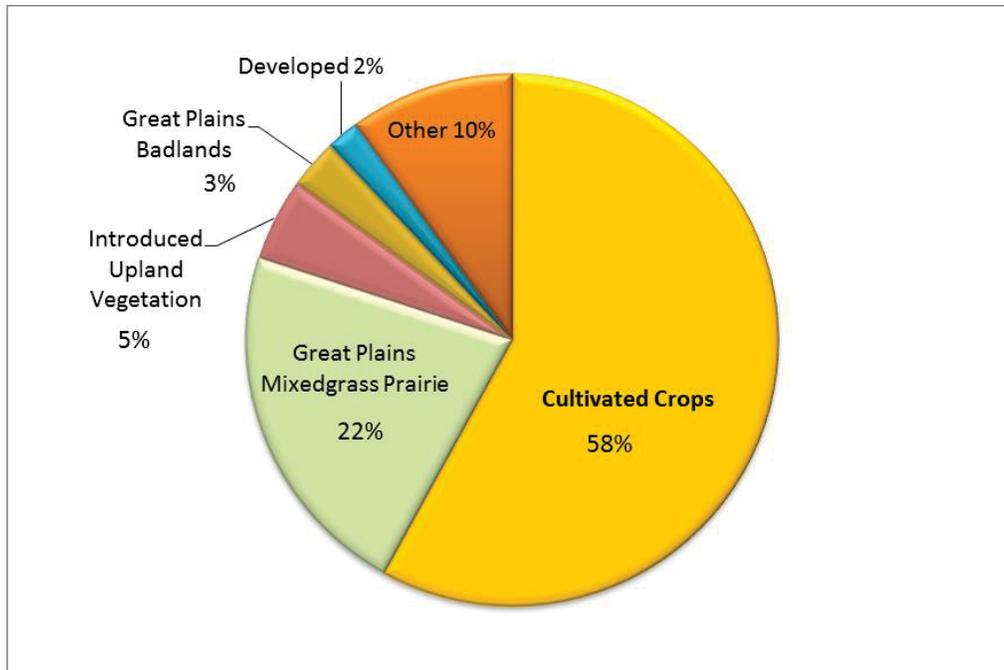
The county generally lacks good groundwater supplies. The shallowest aquifer types – Alluvium and Terrace Deposits are found along some drainages and to some extent in the Sweet Grass Hills where there is some water-bearing glacial sands and gravels on the flanks of the hills. Most groundwater in the county is found in the deeper and older aquifers, particularly the Two Medicine and Virgelle aquifers of the Eagle geologic formation.

Toole County consists of three general groundwater areas: 1) Kevin-Sunburst Dome, 2) Sweet Grass Hills, and 3) western flank of the Kevin-Sunburst Dome. The formation and subsequent erosion of the Kevin-Sunburst Dome resulted in the removal of potential shallow bedrock aquifers. The Sweet Grass Hills serve as an intake for certain aquifers and include a number of springs. The western flank of the Kevin-Sunburst Dome includes aquifers in Virgelle sandstone and Two Medicine formation.



Vegetation and Landcover

Toole County consists primarily of cultivated crops, followed by mixed grass prairie, upland vegetation, and badlands. Approximately 2% of Toole County is man-made, including roads, rail, housing, commercial, and industrial development. The remaining 10% of the county is comprised of categories with less than 1% each of the county's total area and include riparian vegetation, water bodies, other types of grassland, shrubland, wetlands, woodland, forest, and mining-resource extraction. . (Montana Natural Heritage Program)



Landcover Types in Toole County

Fish and Wildlife

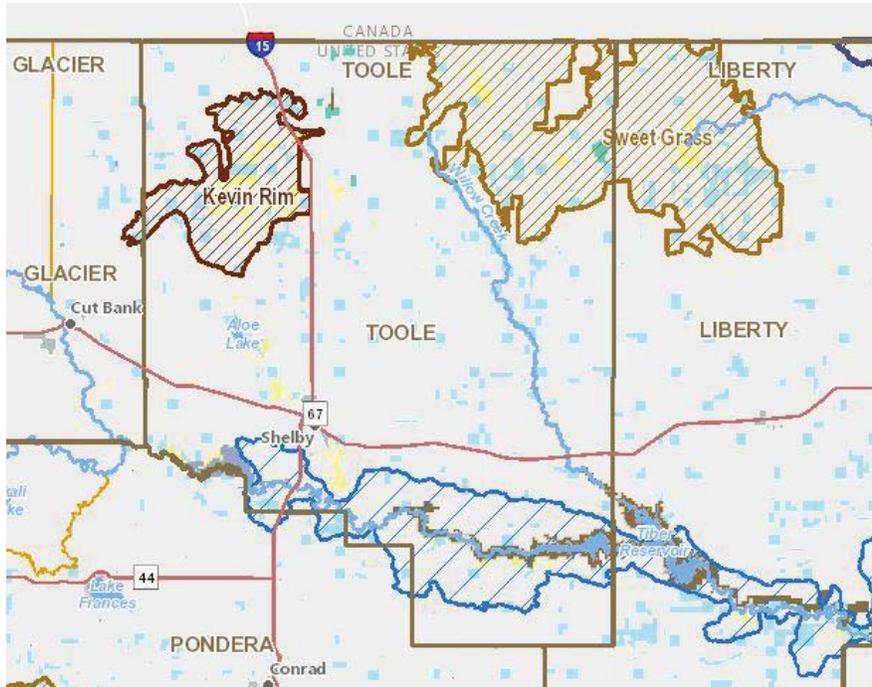
White-tailed deer and mule deer, as well as some elk, are found along major drainages and foothill habitats. Furbearers such as beaver, mink, muskrat, otter, weasel, badger, coyote, lynx, bobcat, mountain lion and wolf are all found within a 100 mile radius of Shelby.

The Marias River transitions from a coldwater fishery to a coolwater fishery as it flows eastward to Tiber Reservoir across southern Toole County. Coldwater sportfish found in the upstream reaches of the river include Rainbow Trout, Brook Trout and Burbot. Closer to Tiber Reservoir, coolwater species including Walleye, Northern Pike and Yellow Perch dominate the fishery.

Waterfowl species, including ducks, geese, and swans, migrate along two major flyway routes in this area of Montana. Pheasants, Hungarian Partridge and sharp-tailed grouse are also found in the county.

The USFWS lists the Black-Footed Ferret as an endangered species and the small songbird Sprague’s Pipit as a candidate for endangered species listing in Toole County.

The 2015 Montana State Wildlife Action Plan, prepared by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, identifies “Tier 1 Focal Areas,” which are those areas of greatest conservation need in Montana. There are three Tier 1 Focal Areas in Toole County: Kevin Rim, Sweet Grass, and Middle Missouri. Species of concern for each area are identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan.



FWP Tier 1 Focal Areas in Toole County

Kevin Rim is among the top 14 terrestrial focus areas identified in the Montana State Wildlife Action Plan. Kevin Rim Focal Area has one of the highest documented raptor nest densities in the state, has been designated as a Key Raptor Area by the BLM, and is recognized as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society.

Sweet Grass Focal Area is in the Sweet Grass Mountains which provide important summer and winter range for elk and mule deer. There are 36 Species of Greatest Conservation Need listed for this focal area. There is also a large USFWS conservation easement within this focal area.

The Middle Missouri Focal Area extends across several counties. In Toole County the Middle Missouri Focal Area is located along the Marias River.

Natural Hazards

After years of less than average moisture and high temperatures, drought is the top priority natural hazard concern in Toole County.

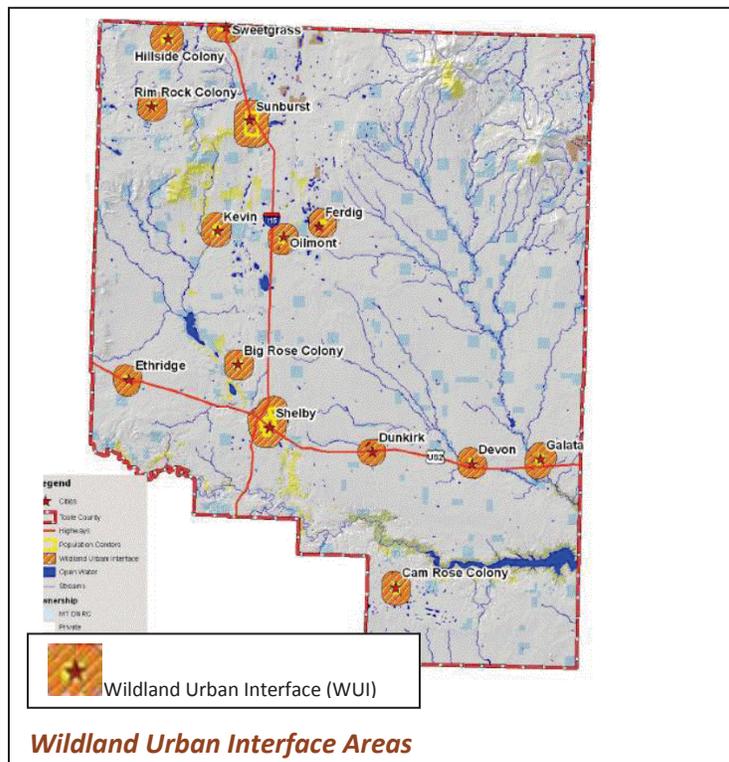
Extreme weather in the county consists of severe thunderstorms containing wind, lightning and hail, and severe winter storms with heavy snowfall, cold temperatures, ice, and strong winds. Blowing saline dust is a problem, particularly at the dry lake bed near Sunburst where dust across the Interstate can become so thick it requires traffic to be detoured.



Alkalai Lake Bed Near Sunburst

Flooding has occurred in the county from ice jams, heavy precipitation and runoff overtopping the Marias River, and flash flooding throughout the county. Toole County has been included in six federal flood disasters. The type of flooding most likely to cause damage in Toole County is flash flooding. With the exception of Shelby and Sunburst, there are no FEMA Flood Hazard maps in Toole County. Kevin, Shelby, Sunburst and Toole County are all participants in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Wildland fire potential has been identified and high hazard areas mapped in the Toole County Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2010. The plan addresses measures that can be taken to reduce wildfire potential but does not recommend any regulatory approach regarding defensible space around structures, access to/from structures to facilitate fire suppression, or fire protection water supply.



People and Communities

Toole County History

It is not known when or how exactly the first humans arrived in Toole County. There are at least two current theories regarding the first humans in North America. One theory is humans travelled from Siberia to Alaska across an ice-free and water-free area in the Bering Sea sometime between 30,000 and 12,000 years ago. From Alaska it was theorized they took several routes to the Northern Great Plains, one of which was referred to as the "Old North Trail" and which likely crossed through or near Toole County. An alternative theory suggests that humans arrived in North America more than 15,000 years ago as they emigrated from southwestern Europe.

In 1968, the oldest known human burial site in North America was discovered near Wilsall, Montana. The skeleton was approximately 12,600 years old. In 2014, DNA testing of remains indicated DNA similar to those of ancient people living in Siberia, reinforcing the theory of human emigration from Siberia to North America.

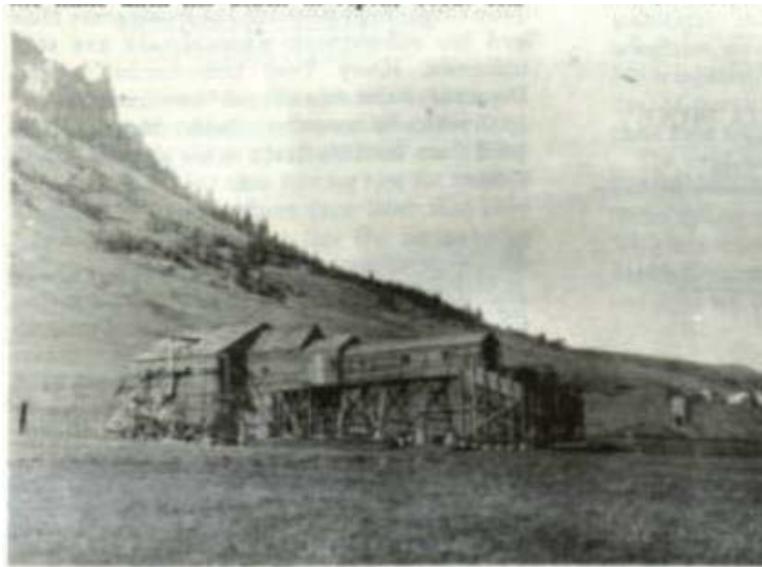
Evidence suggests that people inhabited the Toole County area as long ago as 9000 years. Less than 30 miles northeast of the town of Sweet Grass, the Writing on Stone Provincial Park in Canada includes more than 50 petroglyph sites. Inhabitants were likely nomadic, following game as their primary source of food.

Within the last 500-700 years, North Toole County was part of the Piegan Blackfeet Indian territory. The Blackfeet appear to have migrated to the Great Plains from eastern woodlands as early as 1200. By 1720, the Blackfeet began acquiring knives and pots made of iron and even a few guns through trade with the Crees, who traded with the British in Hudson's Bay. By 1735 they began acquiring horses, which combined with more rifles, greatly increased their strength on the plains, and for a century they dominated the territory. In 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition skirmished with the Blackfeet, resulting in two Indian deaths. Later, epidemics of diphtheria, measles, small pox and syphilis, introduced by white traders, devastated the Blackfeet population. In 1837, smallpox killed 6,000 Blackfeet, two-thirds of the tribe.

In 1855 the Blackfeet, with several other tribes, took part in their first American treaty. They received a reservation area that covered much of northern Montana, including what would become Toole County. Few of the promises they received as part of the treaty were ever realized. Instead, there was increasing pressure from settlers, miners, cattlemen and whiskey peddlers. The establishment of Fort Benton as the headquarters for the region's fur traders brought more people to the area on the "Whoop-Up Trail." In the 1860s escalating conflicts led to a series of raids and clashes called the "Blackfoot War." Major Eugene Baker from Fort Ellis (near modern-day Bozeman) was ordered to track down Blackfeet warriors who had killed Malcolm Clarke, an influential rancher, and his son in 1869. On

January 23, 1870, Baker ordered an attack on a peaceful band of Blackfeet camped on the Marias River in modern-day Toole County, with full knowledge that this camp did not include the warriors responsible for Clarke's murder. The attack caught the camp unaware and defenseless, and Baker and his men are reputed to have murdered 37 men, 90 women and 50 children, and left another 140 women and children abandoned to face the winter without food or shelter.

Over the next few decades, a series of treaties continued to shrink the area of the reservation. Gold was discovered in the Sweet Grass Hills in 1884. People began moving to the area and establishing what would eventually become the town of Gold Butte, despite the fact that this was officially Indian-held land. In 1887, a new agreement shrank the boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation, which had stretched across almost two-thirds of eastern Montana, to roughly its present area. The Blackfeet gave up the Sweet Grass Hills, sacred mountains for the Blackfeet, forced by desperation and hunger. By 1888, the buffalo herds that were the primary food source for Plains Indians were decimated from an estimated four million head in 1874 to near nothing. In 1884, Blackfeet hunters killed four buffalo near the Sweet Grass hills, the last time any wild buffalo were seen in northern Toole County.



West Butte Coal Mine 1918 (Photo: Echoes from the Prairies)

The 1887 agreement over the Sweet Grass Hills was pressured in part by Great Northern Railway, whose progress to complete a transcontinental rail line across the northern United States was stymied by a variety of factors including Indian ownership of the Sweet Grass Hills. With the acquisition of right of way across the area, the Great Northern continued its push across Montana and by 1893, the transcontinental line was completed. Railroads changed life throughout the state; by 1916 nearly every town in Montana was served by train. The railroads aggressively marketed Montana and it worked. Montana's population increased by from 39,000 in 1880 to 243,000 in 1900, an increase of more than 500 percent in twenty years. Toole County was part of that expansion. Formed as a county in 1914

from portions of Hill and Teton Counties, by 1920 there were 3,724 persons and by 1930 there were 6,714.



Oilmont Public School

(Photo: Carroll Van West; montanahistoriclandscape.com)

Homesteading in Toole County included dryland farming and sheep and cattle ranching. At the time that communities were growing or at their peak, many farmers lived in town rather than on the farm. Falling grain prices in the 1920s caused many farms to fail, but other farmers were able to take advantage of new technology and lower land prices. The availability of the automobile and the amenities of the communities, particularly high schools, caused many farmers to buy a home or second home in town. Those who lived in town and commuted to their fields were referred to as “sidewalk farmers” and the practice was particularly prevalent among wheat farmers in the West. In fact Toole County was the subject of a 1958 study that indicated nearly 30 percent of crop farmers in Toole County were sidewalk farmers.

The effects of World War I, the flu epidemic of 1918, and poor farming years in the late teens and early 1920s caused many homesteaders to pack up in Toole County and across Montana. Toole County was saved from the worst of the hard times in the 1920s and 1930s with the discovery of oil in the Kevin-Sunburst dome and increased demand as automobiles became affordable for more households. Many independent refineries were developed over the next decade. The refineries produced oil for American involvement in World War II, and the post-war boom created even more demand. As new and bigger refineries came on line elsewhere, Toole County refineries began closing. By the 1960s, the refineries in Toole County were shut down, but oil continues to be produced in the county and shipped elsewhere for processing.

The Cold War with the Soviets intensified in the 1950s and resulted in two major national projects that directly affected Toole County. One was the development of a nationwide network of four-lane highways so military transports could move across the country quickly and efficiently. This effort led to

the development of Interstate 15, which bisects Toole County and forms part of the interstate connection from Canada to Mexico. The other major project was the U.S. Air Force development of 200 hundred missile sites across north central Montana. Many of these were built in Toole County and remain to this day, although in 2016 the sites had been decommissioned and the property was being readied for sale.

By the end of the 1970s, the agricultural economy that had built numerous Montana's towns was beginning to slow. The many individual farms that had contributed to small towns had become larger and more mechanized. It became easier to travel longer distances to purchase goods and services. Many small towns began seeing businesses close and residents move out. Toole County experienced this as well. Many previously thriving communities, such as Devon and Oilmont, simply shrunk to the near vanishing point, and others were not thriving. Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the economy, but leaders are now working to diversify and expand local economies. The most striking effort is the combined city of Shelby/Toole County work to develop the area's major rail and Interstate connections as the largest multi-modal facility in a several state area.

The September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had repercussions nationwide, including in Toole County. Increased concerns regarding how people crossed borders into the U.S. resulted in considerable strengthening of securing along the U.S./Canadian border. As a result, the border patrol presence in Toole County is much expanded, with new facilities at the Sweet Grass port of entry and Sunburst. The efforts have resulted in a number of new jobs and influx of households to the county.

One of the most recent changes in Toole County is the development of wind farms. Located west of Kevin and spanning into Glacier County, the wind farms were constructed in the past five years and are the largest in the state of Montana.

Communities

Toole County includes three incorporated municipalities, Shelby, Sunburst and Kevin. The county also includes a number of unincorporated communities, although the number of these places has decreased over time. Once active communities like Gold Butte, the mining town in the Sweet Grass Hills, have become ghost towns or simply no longer exist.

Shelby

Shelby is the county seat of Toole County, and the largest community. In 2010 the population of Shelby was 3,376, comprising nearly two-thirds of the entire county population. The city has grown in part because of its unique location within the North American continental transportation system. The city is at the crossroads of rail lines that stretch across the United States east-west and north-south. The line to the north is the only line extending into Canada between the west coast and central North Dakota. It is also at the crossroads of US highway 2 and Interstate 15 on the CANAMEX corridor, a 1,504-mile corridor that connects Edmonton to Mexico City.

Shelby has a diversified economic base, consisting of transportation, commercial services (such as banking, motels, construction, etc.), medical services, and public sector (schools, border patrol station, etc.) The expansion of the border facility at Sweet Grass has resulted in new residents and related business in Shelby. The privately owned Cross Roads Correctional Center, built in 1999, employs approximately 175 persons.

Rail is a critical component of the city's economy. The city is a hub station for Amtrak, on the only Amtrak line in Montana. Burlington Northern/Santa Fe has corporate offices in Shelby, one of only three offices in Montana. Working in coordination with Toole County, the city annexed a large area to the east along the rail lines. This area is being developed as the northernmost Inland Port Authority in the United States with an industrial park and sites for trans-loading facilities.

Shelby is also the center of a variety of services, including health care, commercial services, historical museum, public schools, library, and recreation, including parks, ball fields, swimming pool and civic center.

Sunburst

Sunburst is the northern-most incorporated community in the county, with a population of 375 persons in 2010. The town grew with the discovery of oil in the Kevin-Sunburst Dome geological formation in 1922. A refinery was built the following year just south of Sunburst, and became the largest refinery in Montana and one of the largest in the United States. Production slowed and in 1961 the refinery closed. The population dropped from 882 in 1960 to 604 in 1970 as people began moving out of town.

Recent development in Sunburst includes the 100,000 square foot Sweet Grass Border Patrol facility, completed in 2009. The facility, designed for 50 agents, is contributing to new jobs in the area, and increased interest in Sunburst.

Sunburst has commercial businesses, including a grocery store and trans-loading facility. The public schools in Sunburst provide K-12 education for northern Toole County. The town also includes a library, part-time medical clinic, ball fields, swimming pool, and tennis courts.

Kevin

Kevin is the county's smallest incorporated community with a 2010 population of 154 persons. Like Sunburst, Kevin grew with the discovery of oil in the 1920s, but Kevin did not expand to the same extent as Sunburst. The population peak was in 1960, with 375 persons. Kevin, unlike Sunburst or Shelby, is not located on the major highway system (that ultimately became Interstate 15), a likely contributing factor to its smaller growth.

Although oil production has slowed down, there are still active wells, and there several oil companies with addresses in Kevin. Energy production in the Kevin area has been significantly increased over the last five years from another source, wind. The largest wind projects in Montana are west of Kevin and NaturEner, the company that built the facilities has an office in Kevin.

Oilmont

Oilmont is a small community approximately one mile east of the Interstate and six miles east of Kevin. It has a post office now and a few buildings, but when the oil refineries were active, the town was booming. Several additions were needed for the school, now abandoned.

Sweet Grass

Sweet Grass is a port of entry on the Canadian border. In 1890 a narrow-gauge railroad called the Turkey Track was built across the border between Great Falls and Lethbridge, and in 1900 Sweet Grass became a booming trade center as the dry land farmers arrived. In 2010, the community had a total population of 58 persons. Sweet Grass is the only port of entry into Canada on a US interstate highway between the west coast and Minnesota. Despite the small population of the Sweet Grass community, there is a considerable number of border-related businesses and offices in the community, including more than half a dozen customs brokerage firms, grain elevators, and federal government offices for border patrol, customs, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Department of Agriculture.

Galata

Galata is the eastern-most community in Toole County. The town was established in 1901 with the influx of homesteaders on the Great Northern trains. In the 1920s, Galata was a stop on the "Bootlegger Trail" which transported illegal whiskey from Canada to Great Falls. The current Galata Road was a portion of the Bootlegger Trail. Galata has diminished somewhat over the decades but retains vitality with a post office, churches, American Legion lodge hall and especially the school. The

Motel Galata, with its huge highway sign of a frontiersman with cowboy hat waving his car keys, has been described as a classic piece of Americana roadside architecture.

Devon

Devon is another community established with the railroad. It primarily consists of grain elevators and a church.

Dunkirk

Dunkirk is another town established with the railroad, but now separated from it by the highway. The town has a few residences and the Frontier Bar and Supper Club, the main commercial attraction of the town.

Ethridge

Ethridge is the westernmost community in Toole County. It was created to service steam engines on the Great Northern Railway and to that purpose, a reservoir, water tower, and section house were constructed. The townsite was laid out in 1912, but by the 1920s the business of servicing steam engines had declined, and many homesteaders had moved on. Torgerson's began in 1912 as the first store in Ethridge, operating initially as a mercantile and then servicing trucks and airplanes until the 1960s. It continues to operate today, more than 100 years later, as a farm implement dealer.

Hutterite Communities

Hutterite Colonies

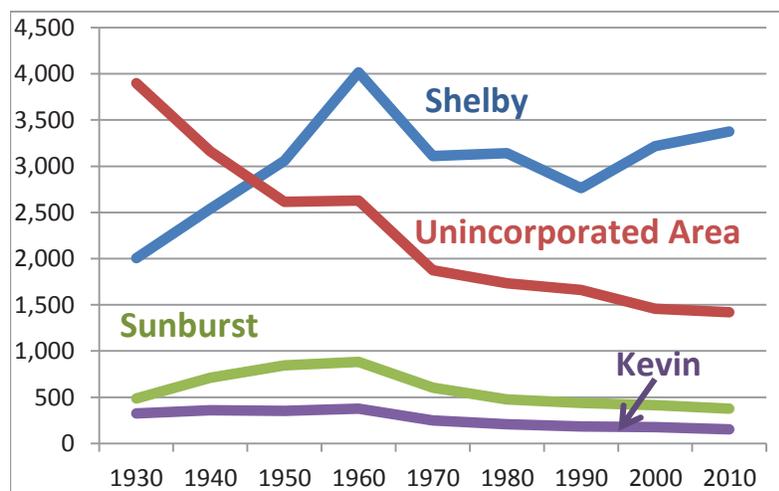
Toole County has three well-established Hutterite colonies – Cam Rose (southeast of Shelby), Rimrock (west of Sunburst), and Hillside Colony (west of Sweet Grass). Two new colonies are being developed – one is northwest of Shelby about 10 miles and the other is locating near the Sweet Grass Hills.

Hutterite colonies typically consist of less than 200 persons. The colonies often have public schools on-site. Hutterites are known for being religiously devoted, hard working and productive: 39 Hutterite colonies in Montana produce 60 percent of the state's pork, 50 percent of its eggs, and 17 percent of its milk. (Morton, 2010)

Population

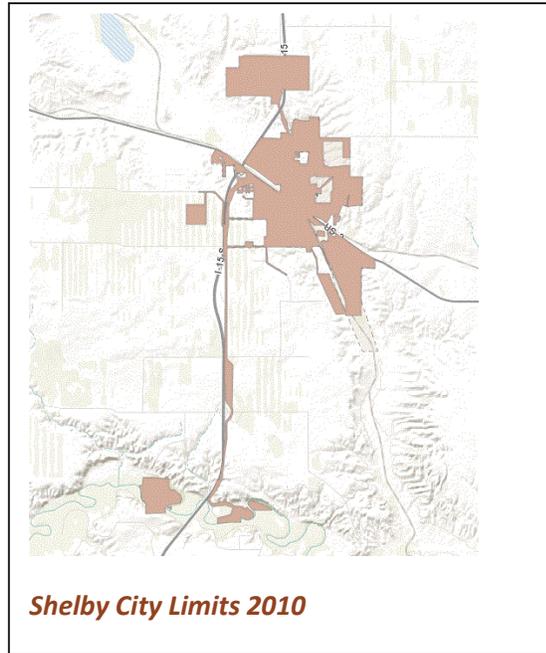
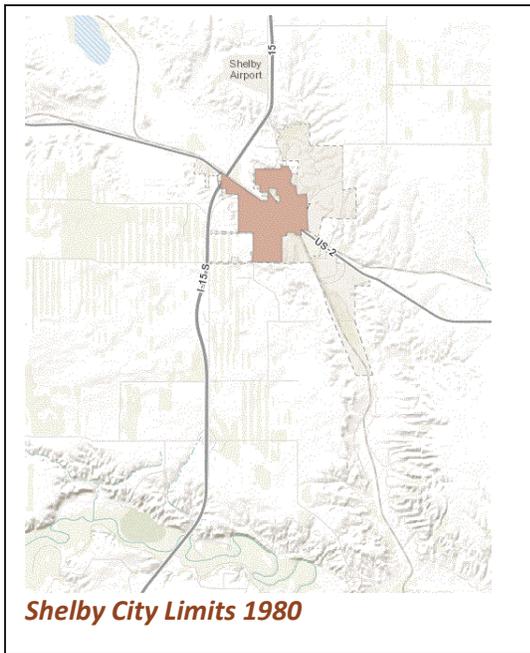
Toole County had a total population of 5,324 in 2010, according to the complete count in the decennial census. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2014 population at 5,150, based on random sampling and other methodology rather than a complete count. Total county population peaked in the mid-20th century, with a 1960 population of 7,904 persons.

The incorporated municipalities and the unincorporated areas in Toole County have uniquely different historical population trends. The Great Depression in the 1930s marked the beginning of nearly steady decline in the population of Toole County's unincorporated areas. Meanwhile the towns were growing, in part because rural residents were leaving homes on the farm and moving into the towns. There was a slight uptick in unincorporated area population in the 1950s, when oil and gas operations were peaking and the county had at least three oil refineries near Kevin, Sunburst and Shelby. The 1960s also marked the population peak in the incorporated municipalities. The refineries shut down over the next few years with resultant losses in jobs and overall population. During the next few decades a variety of factors were negatively affecting rural agricultural economies nationwide and also hitting Toole County. After 1960, total Toole County population declined for nearly 40 years to a low of 5,046 persons in 1990. Since 1990, Shelby has been the only area in the county to see significant population growth, while the other two municipalities and unincorporated areas have declined. Factors affecting population growth in Shelby include the development of the Crossroads Correctional Facility and expanded federal presence at the border with Canada. Not all of the growth can be attributed to out-of-county residents moving to Shelby or a higher birth rate. Shelby's growth is partially attributable to annexation which

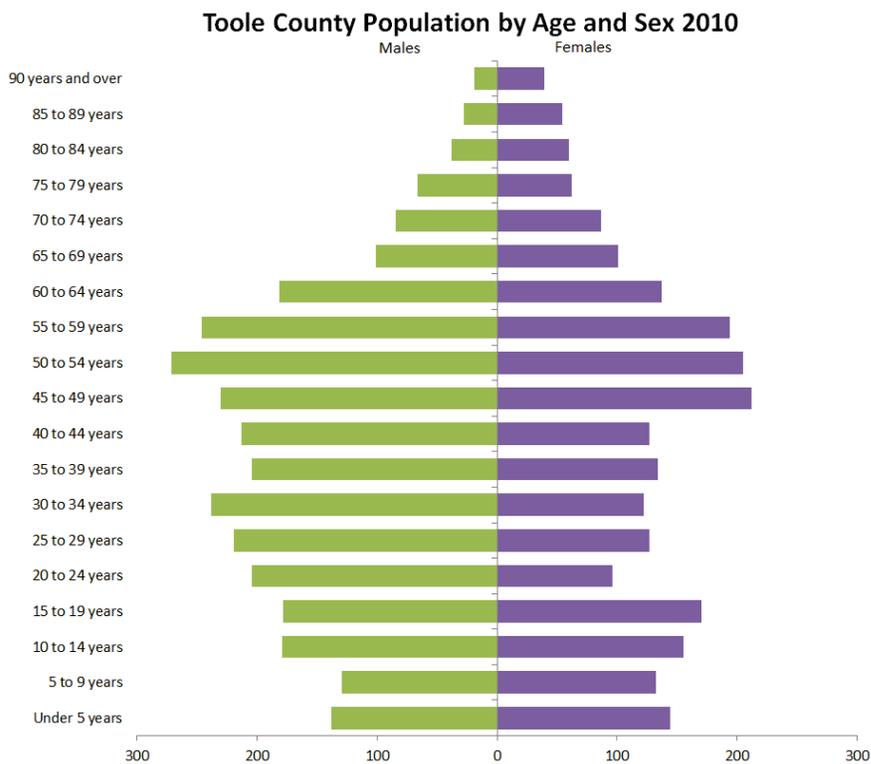


Historical Population 1930-2010

concomitantly also resulted in population decreases in unincorporated Toole County. Shelby's population also likely increased as other county residents left their farms or communities and moved to Shelby for more services.



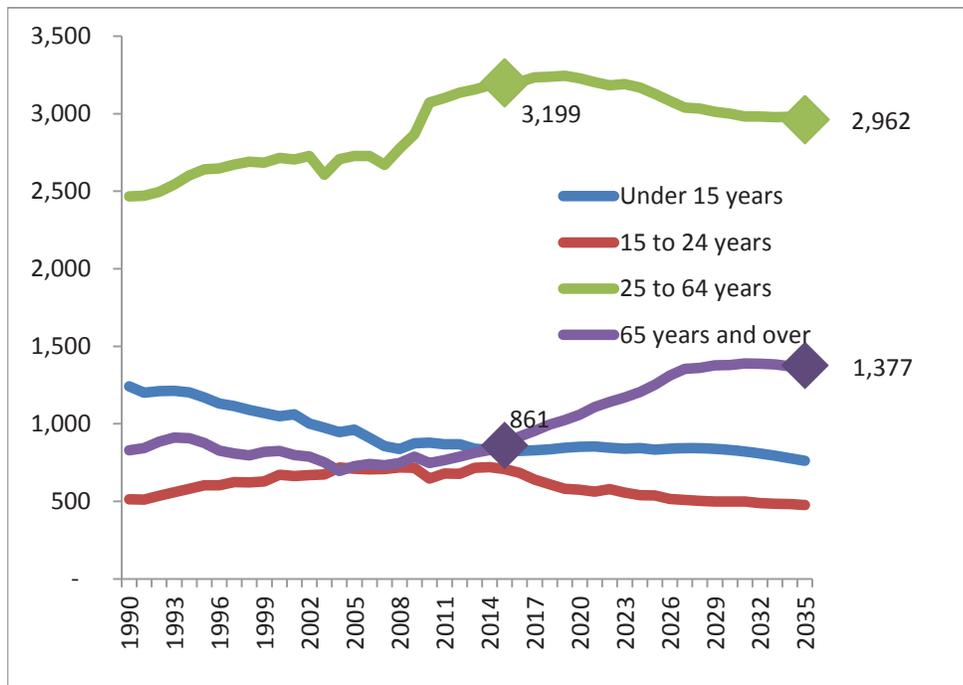
There is little ethnic diversity within Toole County, with 92% White, 4.5% American Indian, and 2.4% Latin American origin. Culturally, the Hutterites constitute the greatest diversity in the county. Living in colonies, with German as the predominant language, they work collectively in the colonies producing farm products. Montana is home to about 4,000 Hutterites. Toole County has four existing colonies and a new one proposed near the Sweet Grass Hills. Colonies typically have a population of less than 200 persons.



The age structure in Toole County suggests that young adults have been leaving the county, possibly for education or employment opportunities. The departures appear to be particularly true for women between the ages of 20-44, which in turn has likely affected birth-rates in the county over the past ten years.

Greater numbers of older persons are evident in the age structure graph. The greatest proportion of the population is in the 50-59 year age category. As persons in this age group grow older and stay in Toole County, it will have implications for local healthcare, elderly services, and housing.

Over the course of the next 20 years, total county population (including municipalities) is projected to change slightly from year to year but overall there will be almost no change. By 2035 county population is projected to be 5,576, a decrease of less than one-half percent compared to the 2015 population of 5,600. 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 aged 25 to 64 years is projected to decline by seven percent, but the ranks of the senior population will increase by nearly 60 percent. Toole County is not alone in the state in this regard, *Montana is projected to have the fifth highest percentage of residents over age 65 in the nation by 2030.*



Population Projection by Age Category

Community Health

The top five most serious health concerns in Toole County are alcohol abuse, illegal drug abuse, depression/anxiety, mental health care, and obesity, according to a survey conducted for the 2012 Toole County Community Health Needs Assessment Report. In a 2014 survey conducted in the Marias Medical Center's service area, respondents indicated three top health concerns--alcohol/substance abuse, obesity/poor nutrition, and cancer.

Mortality Rates: The 2012 report indicated that compared to the state of Montana, Toole County had significantly higher rates for a number of mortality indicators including cancer, stroke, diabetes, pneumonia, heart disease, and work-related injuries.

Persons with Disabilities: Persons with a disability constitute 13.1% of the state's civilian noninstitutionalized population, and 15.5% of Toole County's population. The 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimated 370 persons from 18 to 64 years of age in Toole County had a disability. Of those persons 65 or older 45% (318 persons) had a disability in Toole County, compared to statewide average of 36%.

Mental Health: Toole County was at or below state rates for five of 8 indicators for social/mental health in the 2012 Toole County Community Health Needs Assessment Report. The three indicators with higher than state rates were: suicide rate, domestic abuse, and general health status as fair or poor.

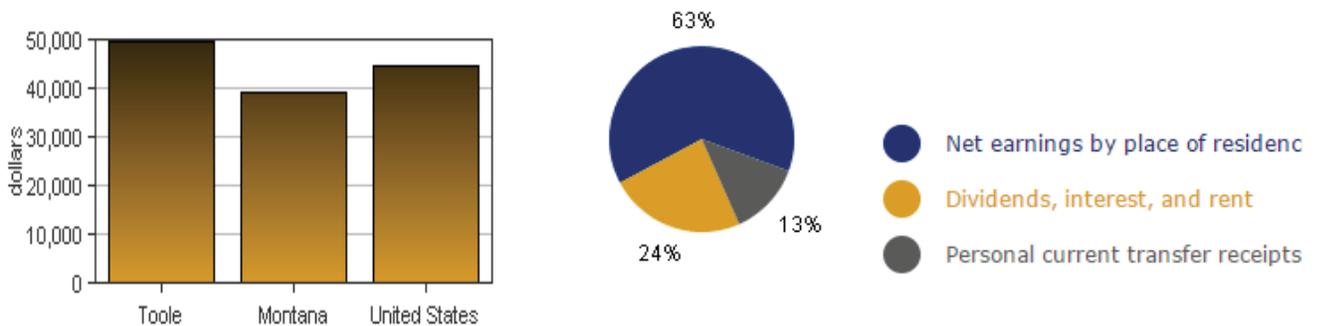
Obesity: Obesity rates in 2011 Toole County were estimated at 29%, compared to 24% for Montana, based on the 2009-2013 American Community Survey.

Child and Maternal Health: As reported in the 2012 Toole County Community Health Needs Assessment Report, births to adolescents are significantly lower in Toole County than in Montana overall. Gestational diabetes in Toole County is roughly twice that of Montana overall. Smoking during pregnancy is higher in Toole County, but pre-term births are lower than Montana overall.

Personal Income

On average, residents of Toole County have higher incomes than the State of Montana overall, however the income is not evenly spread. More than one-quarter of all Toole County residents are living in poverty.

In 2013, Toole County had a per capita personal income of \$49,818, 127 percent of the state average and 111 percent of the national average. In 2003, Toole County ranked 20th in the state for per capita income, in 2013 it ranked 5th in the state. The increase is due to higher net earnings, which in 2013 accounted for 63% of per capita income, compared to 59% in 2003.



Per Capita Income: 2013

Personal Income by Type: 2013

Although per capita income is high in Toole County compared to state and national rates, this does not mean that all persons, families, or households have high incomes. In fact, half of Toole County households have income more in line with state averages. In Toole County, median household income, the figure at which half the households are below that amount and half are above, was \$46,972 in 2013, compared to \$46,230 for the state. More than one-fourth (26.4%) of all households in Toole County have total annual income of less than \$25,000. The percentage of families with income less than \$25,000 is three percentage points higher in Toole County than for the state.

Percent of Households and Families with Annual Income of Less than \$25,000		
	Montana	Toole
Households	26.5%	26.4%
Families	16.0%	19.7%

Poverty levels are also higher in Toole County than in the state overall. 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 poverty is not explained by high unemployment as the county’s unemployment rate of 3.0 percent is well below state and federal rates. The county’s proportion of income from “transfer receipts” which basically consists of social security and other types of public assistance is 13%, compared to 19% at the state level. This indicates that many of the people in poverty may be working and earning a wage, but at wages much lower than the county’s average salary of \$58,185.

	Unemployment Rates, 2014	Average Earnings Per Job , 2013 (2014 \$)
Toole County	3.0%	\$58,185
Montana	4.7%	\$42,098
U.S.	6.2%	\$56,660

Housing

Location

Most people in Toole County live in existing communities, in fact nearly 3/4 of all housing units are located in the four communities of Shelby, Sunburst, Kevin, and Sweet Grass. The percentage of those in existing communities rises even higher when you also consider the Hutterite communities. Obtaining adequate domestic water can be a problem in the rural areas and may account for the preponderance of homes in communities with existing water supply systems.

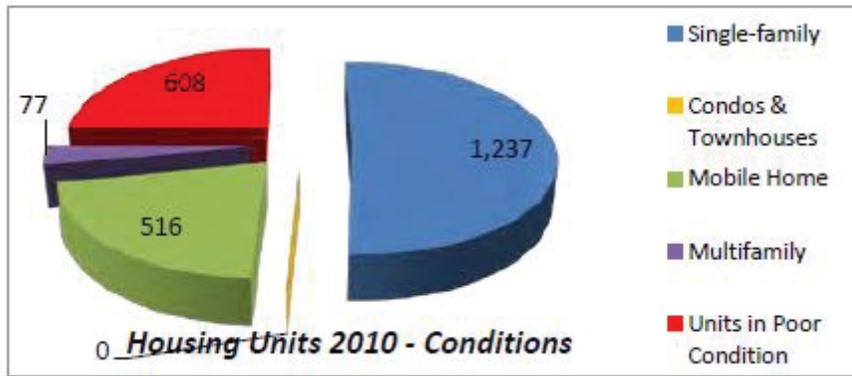
Supply

The number of housing units has been increasing, albeit slowly, but appears to be insufficient to meet demand. The 2012 *Toole County Housing Impact Study* identified a lack of quality single family homes and temporary housing such as apartments as an issue. The availability of homes for purchase during 2012 ranged from 0-3 units in Kevin, Sunburst and Sweet Grass and from 16-18 units in Shelby.

In 2010, there were 2,336 housing units in the county. Between 2000 and 2010 there was an increase of 36 housing units, a 1.6% increase over the 10 year period and roughly proportional to the 1.1% population increase over the same period. Considering that in the previous four decades population declined, while housing stock remained relatively stable, one might conclude that there should be a considerable excess of housing. In fact, the vacancy rate (for all housing units) was 13.7%, which although high compared to many areas, is somewhat misleading because it does not mean that all units are move-in ready. More than half of Toole County’s housing stock was built prior to 1960 and those homes often lack the features desired by current households (such as more than one bathroom). Nearly

one quarter of the housing stock is in poor condition; of which some are not habitable. Approximately 200 households were living in poor condition units in 2010.

Figure X.x shows types of housing units and units in poor condition. The data for this figure are from the Montana Department of Revenue and do not equal the total counted in the 2010 census.



Homeownership rates are declining in Toole County, a trend experienced by 34 other counties in Montana as well. The number of renter-occupied units increased by 17 percent between 2000 and 2010, while the number of owner occupied units decreased by about 3 percent.

Affordability

Affordable housing is an issue in Toole County despite the fact that housing is less costly than state averages. Median purchase price of a single family home in Toole County in 2010 was \$92,000, compared to Montana’s overall median price of \$175,000. In Toole County a one-bedroom rents on average for \$464, compared to \$493 statewide.

Toole County is experiencing housing cost increases greater than the statewide averages. Statewide, the median price for a single-family home decreased by 3.5% between 2008 and 2010. During that same two year period, in Toole County the median price increased from \$63,250 to \$92,000, a 46% increase, although this increase could be skewed by one very high-priced home if only a few homes sold between 2008 and 2010. The 2010 fair market rents in Toole County increased by nearly six percent for a one-bedroom apartment in Toole County, compared to a 4.3% increase statewide.

Households with median income in Toole County are able to afford a median purchase price home or to pay rent for a 2-bedroom apartment, if they can find a suitable place to buy or rent. Finding suitable affordable housing is a more serious financial issue for the one-quarter of all Toole County households with an average annual income of less than \$25,000. Households in Toole County on fixed social security incomes such as seniors or disabled workers are not generally able to afford the fair market rent for a 1-bedroom unit.

Energy costs can create additional costs affecting housing affordability. In 2014, approximately 317 households in Toole County were estimated to be below the federal poverty level and unable to pay for

all of their needed energy. The total aggregated shortfall for these households was estimated at \$349,000 per year, or approximately \$1,100 per household.

Senior Housing and Subsidized Housing

Marias Heritage Center is a 38 apartment retirement and state licensed assisted living facility. Studio, one, and two bedroom apartments are available with all apartments offering a private bathroom and shower. The director is a registered nurse and the facility is staffed around the clock. MHC offers a variety of levels of assistance, including medication management.

Only the Marias Center provides subsidized housing in Toole County and the units are limited to seniors only. There are no other subsidized housing facilities for low income individuals or disabled individuals on fixed income.

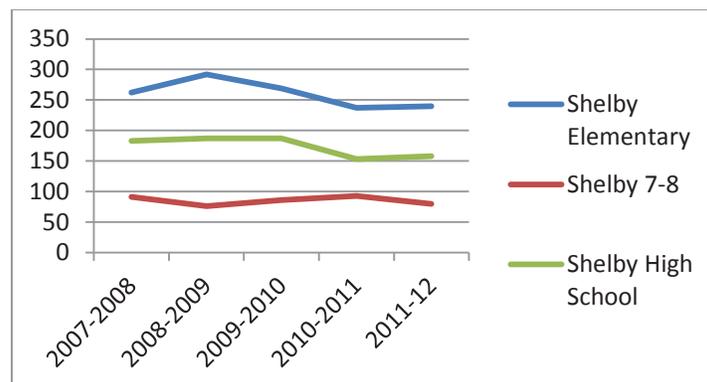
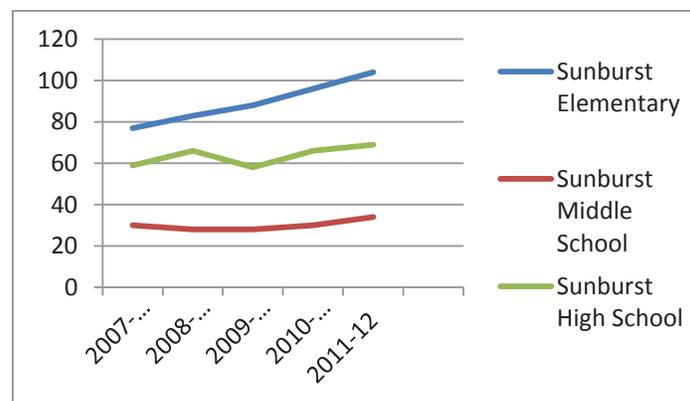
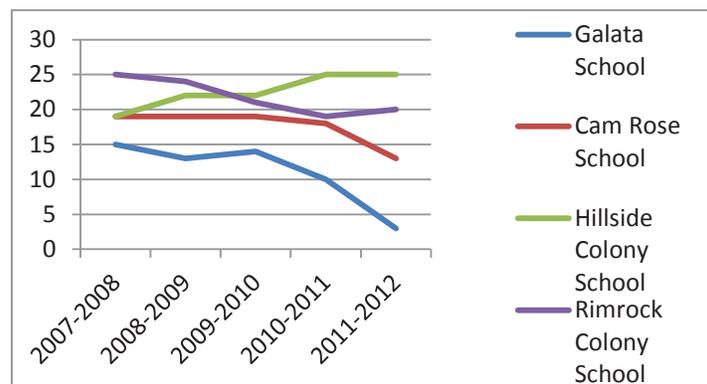
Demand

The 2012 *Toole County Housing Impact Study* concluded that more housing was needed for existing needs and for an influx of workers to fill an anticipated 316 new jobs. A number of recommendations were included for addressing affordability of homes. The study did not address in detail the unique housing needs for Toole County's population with disabilities and for the growing number of seniors, but this is also a clear need for the future.

Public Education, Local Services, and Amenities

Public Education

Public schools with K-12 facilities are located in Shelby and Sunburst. Elementary schools are also located in Galata and the three Hutterite Colonies. Student population trends vary at each location, but in the five-year period between 2007 and 2012, only Sunburst and Hillside Colony schools had increases.



Public Safety and Emergency Services

Law Enforcement

The Toole County Department of Public Safety, a consolidated city-county department, provides law enforcement for the municipalities and unincorporated areas of Toole County. The department is located in the County Safety Facility, built in 1977, which includes dispatch for all emergencies in the county, and a county jail with seven cells, a holding cell, and a classroom. In 2012, the most recent year for which statewide data including Toole County were available, Toole County had the highest ratio of sworn officers per 1,000 residents among law enforcement agencies in similar-sized jurisdictions (5,000-9,999 persons) in Montana. Toole County had 13 sworn officers at that time, or 2.46 officers per 1,000 residents, and the average among the 14 jurisdictions was 1.63 officers per 1,000 residents.

US Border Patrol

The US Border Patrol has stations in Shelby, Sunburst and also operates the Sweet Grass/Coutts Canadian-US border facility in conjunction with Canada. The 100,000 square foot building at the border, was built in 2003, and is the largest shared facility on the US northern border. There are six lanes going north into Canada and five lanes coming south, and the port has the highest volume traffic in Montana, with over 300,000 passenger vehicles and 122,000 commercial trucks crossing the border in 2010.



North Toole County Fire Department
(Photo: Toole County Website)

Emergency Services

All emergencies, including fire, police, and ambulance, are dispatched from the Toole County Safety Facility, which has its own electrical generation in the event of power failure.

Fire Departments

There are two county fire departments and a municipal fire department in Shelby. The North Toole County Fire Department, established in 1956 serves 900 square miles, including the communities of Sunburst, Sweet Grass, Kevin and Oilmont. The firehall is located in Sunburst. The South Toole County Fire Department, established in 1954, operates in conjunction with the Shelby Fire Department. The

South Toole County Fire Department serves a 1300 square mile area including the communities of Ethridge, Shelby, Dunkirk, Devon, Galata and Ledger (Pondera County). Both fire departments respond to fires, vehicle accidents and hazardous material incidents.

Ambulance

Toole County Ambulance was formed in 1970. Located in Shelby, the ambulance serves the entire county and makes approximately 350 to 360 runs per year.

Search and Rescue

Toole County Search and Rescue has been operating since 1966, and is currently under the direction of the Toole County Sheriff's office.

Health Care

Health care in Toole County include a 21-bed hospital, 53-bed nursing facility, a health center with five physicians and a dentist, assisted living facility, and a county health department that provides a variety of health services and screenings. All of these services are located in Shelby.

The Marias Medical Center, located in Shelby, provides primary, long-term, assisted living and care services. Marias Medical Center is a 21 bed critical access hospital with nursery, maternity rooms, and Intensive Care Unit. It includes a 53-bed nursing facility that provides rehabilitation and restorative care. Other services include radiology, digital imaging, surgery and acute care, and physical, occupational and speech therapy services.

Marias Healthcare Services Inc. provides primary care, obstetrics, geriatrics, pediatric, preventive, dentistry and full scope of medicine for patients. Staffed by five physicians, a dentist, and multiple nursing and support staff, MHSI offers a sliding fee schedule for low income families and accepts all patients regardless of ability to pay. The clinic is a private non-profit corporation owned by the citizens of Toole County. The operations are overseen by a volunteer board of community members.

The Toole County Health Department offers a variety of programs, including services for pregnant women, newborns and children, immunizations, tobacco cessation and support, cancer screenings, public health emergency planning, communicable disease surveillance and follow up, and education on a variety of health topics.

Gateway Community Services based in Great Falls, serves a 6-county region, with a satellite office in Toole County. Their mission is to provide all members of the community with pertinent information to assist in making healthy choices regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and is a critical care access center providing treatment for alcohol and drug abuse.

Although a variety of health care services are available at the Medical Center, Marias Health Care Services and Toole County Health, the county does not currently have licensed mental health professionals available in the community.

Senior Services

Toole County has three senior centers located in Kevin, Sunburst and Shelby. The Shelby Center provides respite care services for senior care-givers, and also provides meals on-site and on wheels five days per week. Kevin and Sunburst provide meals on-site five days/week.

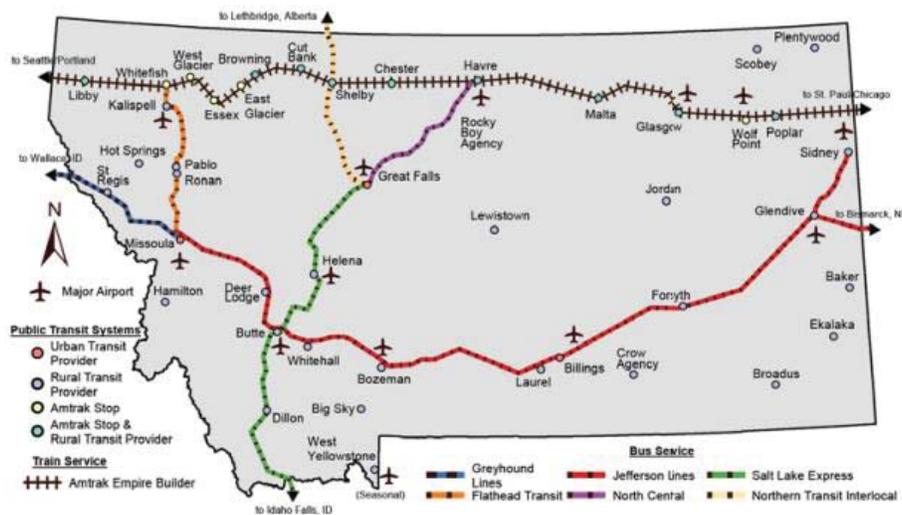
Youth Services

Youth Dynamics , based in Billings, Montana and with a satellite office in Shelby, provides family-focused behavioral health treatment. The organization primarily serves youth with Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) diagnoses.

Shelby has a number of youth-oriented programs, primarily based around sports, but also including after school and summer programs for ages 5-18. Kevin and Sunburst also have sports programs for youth.

Public Transportation Services

Many Montana Counties have no intercity passenger service. Toole County is one of a handful of places in Montana served with both bus and passenger rail. Amtrak trains stop at the passenger depot in Shelby. Northern Transit Interlocal provides bus service from the Canadian border to Great Falls and from Shelby to Kalispell. Wheelchair access is available on all routes. The service is provided free-of-charge. Ridership 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.



Culture and Recreation

Museums and Libraries

The Marias Museum of History and Art is the county museum located in Shelby. Toole County has two county libraries, one in Shelby and one in Sunburst.

Parks and Recreation

Toole County does not own or manage any parks, other than lands associated with the county fairgrounds. Shelby and Sunburst each have city parks, trail systems, and a swimming pool. Shelby has a recreation center with racquetball courts, basketball court, weight room and exercise classes.

Toole County has two archery clubs, the Blazing Arrows youth group associated with 4-H and the Marias Valley Archers for adults. There are three archery ranges, two of which are indoors (at the county fairgrounds and at the Civic Center).

There are a variety of dispersed recreational activity opportunities in the county including water sports, camping and fishing on the Marias River and Tiber Reservoir. Hunting is another major activity for residents and visitors.

Infrastructure

Transportation Systems

Highways

Toole County includes two major national highway system routes, several state highways, and 1,187 miles of county roads. Sweet Grass is the only port of entry into Canada on a US interstate highway between the west coast and Minnesota. I-15 is a transcontinental highway linking Canada to Mexico. A number of state highways cross the county, although only a few segments are paved—highway 417 from Shelby to highway 366 (Ledger Road), highway 366 to highway 225, and portions of highway 343 and 552. County roads are predominantly gravel roads.

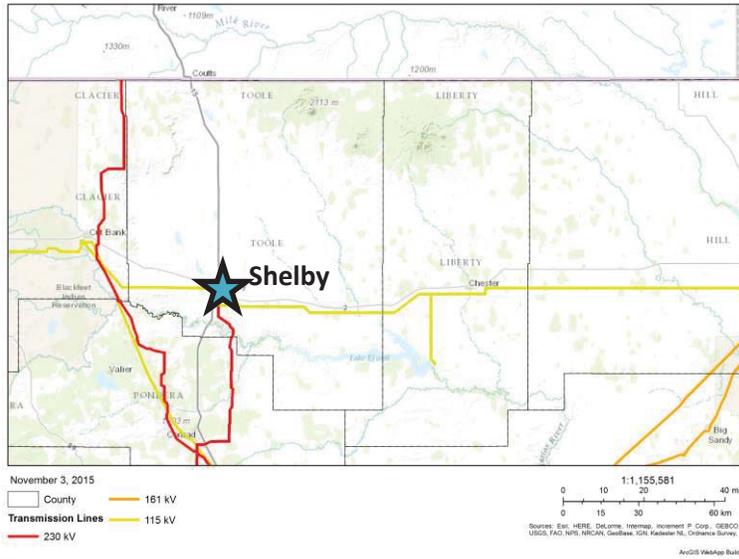


Rail

Two major rail lines cross Toole County north-south and east-west. Toole County is also home to 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.



Toole County Transmission Lines



Telecommunications

Northern Telephone Cooperative and 3 Rivers Communication provide telephone, internet, and other communication services in Toole County. Most households in the county do not however have access to broadband with a download speed greater than 25 megabits per second (mbps). Of 11 counties in the northcentral Montana region, Toole County ranked 10th.

County Broadband Rankings (households with DL speed >25mbps)			
Rank within state (out of 56)	Rank within region	County	Percent of households with access to broadband with a download speed greater than 25mbps
3	1	Phillips	52.6%
4	2	Chouteau	48.5%
5	3	Blaine	29.7%
6	4	Teton	22.6%
7	5	Hill	22.2%
12	6	Judith Basin	10.9%
16	7	Cascade	4.7%
18	8	Pondera	1.3%
21	9	Liberty	0.6%
23	10	Toole	0.3%
29	11	Glacier	0.00%

Source: National Broadband Map (current as of: 6/30/2013)

Graph: Courtesy of Opportunity Link

Water Systems

Residents of Toole County obtain most of their water from community systems, some of which pipe water dozens of miles across the county. Groundwater is not easily accessible and often not of sufficient quality for human consumption, which limits the number of domestic wells across the county. In Toole County 190 wells provide water for individual domestic use, supplying approximately 10 percent of the county's total households. Another 39 wells provide public water supplies. A few public water supplies are sourced with springs, primarily located in the Sweet Grass Hills. Only one public water system is sourced with surface water; Devon obtains water from Lake Elwell. Most of the public systems were installed decades ago. Some are facing issues of increased costs associated with treatment. Due to the limited number and extent of systems, as well as their sources, water supply can be an issue across the county. The North Central Montana Regional Water System Project (NCRM Water) resulted from the negotiated settlement of the Rocky Boy's Reservation Water Rights. The NCRM will serve the Rocky Boy's Reservation and numerous off-reservation systems. Toole County, Shelby, Sunburst, Kevin, Sweet Grass county Water District, Oilmont County Water District, Devon Water Inc., and Galata County Water District are all participants in the NCRM Water project, although none are yet receiving water from the system. It is seen as a means to address water quantity issues in the county.

Toole County has 11 community water systems:

- Camrose Colony
- Devon Water Inc.
- Ethridge County Water District
- Galata County Water District
- Hillside Colony Inc.
- Kevin Town
- Oilmont County Water District
- Rimrock Colony
- Shelby City
- Sunburst Town
- Sweet Grass Water Users Association

Camrose Colony

The Camrose Colony water system serves 95 persons with water purchased from the Tiber County Water District.

Devon Water Inc.

Devon Water is an incorporated association, separate from the county. The original system was installed in 1972. Water from Lake Elwell is purchased from the Bureau of Reclamation up to 70 acre feet per year. The water is pumped into a settling pond and then treated with direct filtration before being distributed to 25 connections and approximately 75 persons. The treatment system needs to be

upgraded to meet EPA standards. Devon Water, Inc. is working to obtain water from Shelby, which is already treated to standards, as a more cost-effective alternative than upgrading the current system. The distribution system includes approximately 40 miles of pipe ranging from 4" diameter mainline to 1.5-2" connection lines. The distribution system has 2 or 3 minor repairs each year.

Ethridge County Water District

The Ethridge County Water District was formed in 2003. Prior to that, rural area residents hauled water. The District laid about 50 miles of pipe, with 4" diameter pipe the largest supply line size. The system is gravity flow with water purchased from Shelby. The District serves about 70 people via 30 connections. A 6-member board of directors provides overall management.

Galata

The Galata County Water District has been providing water since the mid-1970s. Water is from wells in the Sweet Grass Hills. At one time the District had three wells, but is now operating on one well and currently drilling another. The current well produces three million gallons per year and the water naturally meets EPA standards and requires no treatment. Galata County Water District provides water to approximately 75 connections and 200 persons throughout eastern Toole County and western Liberty County, as far west as Interstate 15, east to Lothair, and south to the banks of the Marias River. Water is distributed in 6" diameter mainline PVC pipe that extends for over 200 miles. The system meets current users, but cannot handle additional new requests with existing infrastructure. Pipe sizes would need to be increased to handle additional demand.

Hillside Colony Inc.

The Hillside Colony provides water for approximately 100 residents, a school and for industrial/agricultural purposes. The water source is wells.

Kevin Town

The Kevin water system serves 275 residents on 93 connections. There are also four commercial use connections. The water source consists of three springs and nine wells, all of which are under the influence of surface water. Some of the wells are no longer in use due to low productivity or poor quality. Seasonal demand during the growing season is challenging and sometime impossible to meet. Water quality issues include iron and sulfate that at times exceed contaminant levels. The water supply infrastructure is in poor condition due to the age of the system.

Oilmont County Water District

The Oilmont County Water District was formed in the late 1970s. It currently serves approximately 300 people on 84 connections. Connections serve between one to four households. The water source is three springs in the Sweet Grass Hills, which generally meets quality standards without any treatment or chlorination. The district manages more than 100 miles of two-inch pipe, which delivers water to cisterns. The entire system is gravity flow. There has been no major repair to the piping system. The demand for the water in the area exceeds the capacity of the springs and the size of the pipe.

Rimrock Colony

Rimrock Colony water supply serves 124 residents, a school, and industrial/agricultural purposes. The water source is three wells.

Shelby City

Shelby's water system serves 3,970 persons. The water source is 13 wells, of which two are inactive. The active wells are located just north of the Marias River. The source water is relatively shallow and the city, concerned about contamination, has completed a wellhead protection system.

Sunburst Town

The Sunburst water supply system serves 434 residents. Although the town has seven wells, only two are active. Water quality is an issue and becoming increasingly expensive to treat and manage. The town is looking to participate in North Central Montana Regional Water as a more cost efficient method to address water quality challenges.

Sweet Grass Water Users Association

The Sweet Grass County Water and Sewer District provides water and sewer to approximately 100 persons within the community of Sweet Grass and also provides a water fill station for rural users. From 1962 to 1997, the community operated water and sewer systems via a Rural Improvement District established through the county. In 1998, the community terminated the RID and established the county water and sewer district, which functions with a 6-member Board of Directors. The distribution lines were installed in 1962 and to date there has been no major problem or significant repair/replacement. A water tank was installed in 2011 which now has enough pressure to put out a fire. The Association purchases water from the town of Milk River in Alberta Canada, approximately 15 miles north.

Sewer Systems

All three incorporated municipalities and the community of Sweet Grass have sewage systems permitted by the Montana DEQ in compliance with the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. (MPDES). Outside of these communities, Toole County residents rely on individual septic systems.

Solid Waste

There are two licensed solid waste facilities in Toole County – the Shelby City Landfill and North Toole County Landfarm.

Toole County Facilities

Airport

Toole County owns and operates three airports in Shelby, Sunburst and Sweet Grass. The Shelby airport had over \$3 million dollars of improvements in the past five years, including construction of a hangar, reconstruction of taxiway and overlay on the runways.

Ambulance

Toole County has an ambulance barn built in the 1970s. The county is responsible for maintaining the building, upgrading as needed, and for equipment upgrades as well.

Cemeteries

The county operates and maintains cemeteries in the county. Facilities include fencing and equipment, equipment shop, and sprinkler systems.

Courthouse

The court house was built in 1934. Upgrades are needed to keep the building operating and compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.



Toole County Courthouse
(Photo: Toole County website)

Northern Express Transportation Authority (NETA)

NETA is a separate legal entity created by joint resolution of Toole County and City of Shelby in 1987 to manage the development of a multi-modal transportation hub in land annexed by Shelby to the southeast of downtown. 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. The County has financial assets invested in the NETA.

Fairgrounds

The Toole County Fairgrounds are located on approximately 150 acres to the northeast of downtown Shelby. Updates are needed to the fairgrounds to address inadequate bathroom facilities, a number of older buildings, sewer and water.

Fire Department

Toole County operates the South Fire District facility in conjunction with the city of Shelby and the North Fire District in conjunction with the town of Sunburst.

Marias Medical Center

Toole County owns the Marias Medical Center building and land. Energy upgrades and equipment were identified in the 2012 Capital Improvements Plan.

County Libraries

Toole County owns the two public libraries – one in Shelby and one in Sunburst. The Shelby library needs a new addition and upgrades for ADA compliance.

Museum

Toole County owns and manages the Marias Museum in Shelby. It is in need of updates for ADA compliance and also needs a restroom.

Road Department

Toole County is responsible for 1,187 miles of road -- plowing, grading, maintaining roads, signs and weeds. In 2012, the county identified the need for a new road department building on a new site at a cost of approximately \$350,000.

Senior Centers

There are three senior centers owned by the county in Shelby, Sunburst and Kevin. The Shelby Senior Center needed a roof replacement in 2012, estimated at \$135,000.

Sheriff's Department

The Dispatch Center #911 needed an E911 remodel in 2012, estimated at \$250,000-\$300,000.

Economy and Local Government

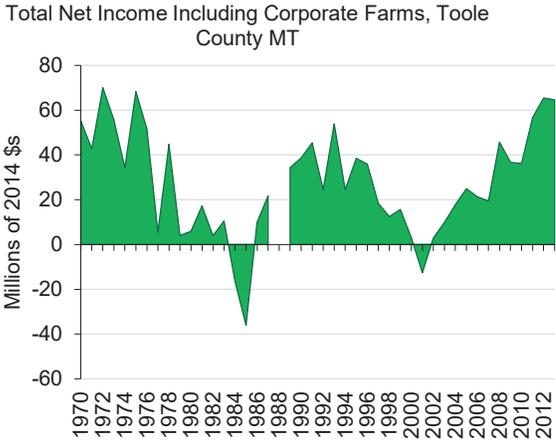
Economy

The basic private sector drivers of the Toole County economy are agriculture, oil/gas, energy, transportation, and public safety and corrections. Government sector employment accounts for 21.3 percent of total employment in Toole County, compared to 14.8 percent for Montana and 13.2 percent for the nation. The large border patrol presence in Toole County is a major contributor to the county’s government employees.

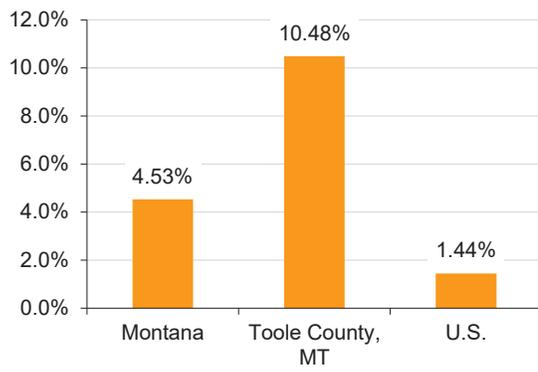
Since 2002, the county has seen an increase in employment and a decrease in the number of business establishments. In 2002, there were 216 business establishments with 1,537 employees. In 2013 there were 194 establishments with a total of 1,618 employees.

Agriculture

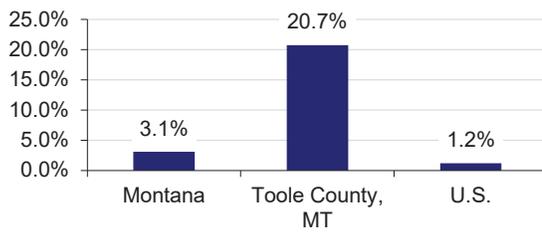
In 2012, 423 farms and ranches in Toole County, with an average size of about four square miles (2,668 acres), produced a total net income of over \$60 million. Wheat and barley are the primary crops. In 2012, Toole County accounted for the 7th highest production value in Montana for “grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas.” Toole County also produces other crops and livestock. The county ranks in the top 10 Montana counties for layers, hogs and pigs. Agriculture accounts for a much higher percentage of employment and earnings in Toole County compared to Montana.



Agriculture, Percent of Total Employment, 2013

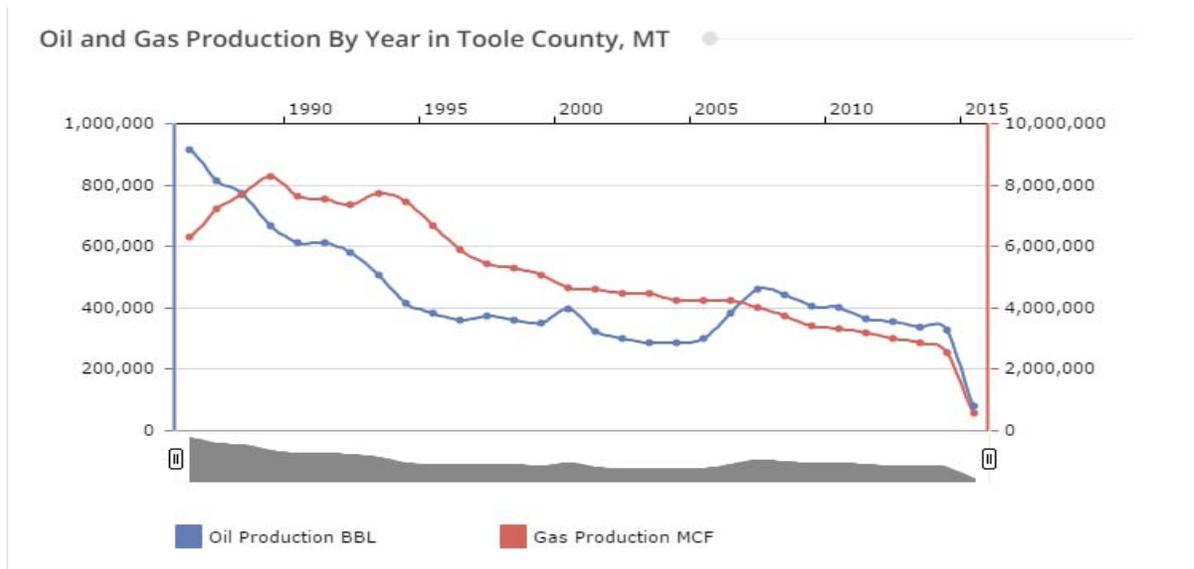


Farm Earnings as a Percent of Total Earnings, 2013

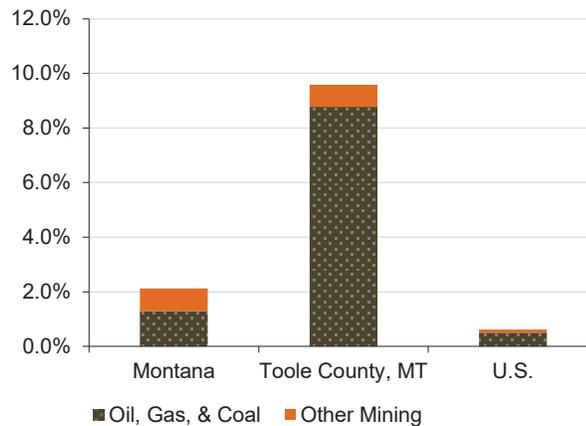


Oil and Gas

Oil and gas production in Toole County began with the discovery of the Kevin-Sunburst Field in 1922. Production continued to increase and in 1967, 1.5 million barrels of oil were pumped from Toole County, at a value of about \$3.5 million at the time. Oil and gas production have slowed since then although the county still has 1,550 wells that produced 23,473 barrels of oil and 177,376 mcf of gas in March 2015. Although the Bakken oil and gas formation in eastern Montana currently produces monthly amounts of around 1.3 million barrels of oil, interest continues in Toole County, with oil found at cost-efficient depths of 1,500-1,800 feet. In the two year period 2013-2014, 47 permits were issued in Toole County. Oil and gas activities employ a significantly greater percentage of persons in Toole County than in the rest of the state.



Mining, Percent of Total Private Employment, 2013



Wind Energy

There are 14 windfarms in Montana, only three of which produce more than 40 MW. The top two producing windfarms are both in Toole County – Rim Rock, completed in 2012, produces 189 MW and Glacier Wind Farm I and II, completed in 2009 and producing 210 MW.

Transportation

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad has a regional office in Shelby and is participating in the Port of Northern Montana Multi-Modal Hub Center, which will provide for more efficient connections between roads and rail. Once complete, the Multimodal Hub Center will be a fully functional inland port capable of accepting and delivering unit trains, containerized cargo, and large industrial equipment and materials and will be instrumental in supporting regional economic growth. The facility will include rail spurs, access roads, street upgrades, utilities, wastewater and stormwater facilities, laydown area, and a bulk material facility. The construction of these facilities has already involved millions of dollars and provided many jobs. Sweet Grass and Kevin also have multi-modal facilities.

Customs and Border Protection

The Sweet Grass Border Patrol Station opened a, state-of-the-art facility in the town of Sunburst in July 2009. The 100,000-square-foot building is designed for fifty agents cost approximately \$33 million, providing construction employment and related opportunities on both sides of the border. This facility has contributed to increased employment in the northern part of the county.

Private Correctional Facility

The top private employer in Toole County, employing 165 people, is the Crossroads Correctional Facility, located in Shelby. Opened in September 1999, Crossroads is the first private adult correctional center in the state of Montana. Operated by Corrections Corporation of America, the facility has 564 beds under contract to the State of Montana and 96 beds contracted to the U.S. Marshall Service.

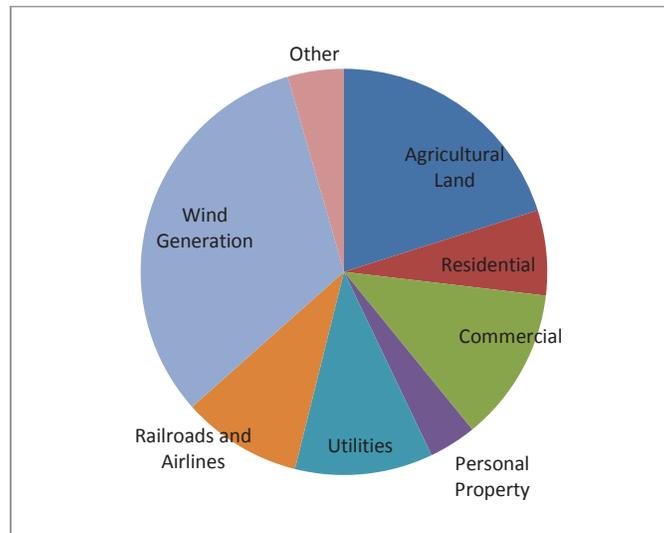
Carbon Sequestration

Another project with potential economic impact in Toole County is an eight-year \$85 million research project on the potential for the Kevin Dome geologic formation to provide storage of CO₂ gas that would otherwise be emitted into the atmosphere. The Big Sky Carbon Sequestration Partnership began work and testing in 2011 near Shelby, Kevin and Sunburst, all Toole County communities. The project site is located at Kevin Dome, a geologic feature that extends 700 square miles underground and has trapped naturally occurring carbon dioxide (CO₂) for millions of years.

Local Government Revenue

Property taxes are among the most important types of local government revenue. Property taxes accounted for 43.5 percent of total general revenues in Toole County in 2013. Property taxes are based on the taxable value of property, which is a value significantly less than the assessed value. The state of Montana has different rates for different types of property. These rates are applied to the assessed value (more in line with the market value) to create the taxable value. The mills (tax rates) are applied to the taxable value to result in the amount of property taxes.

Property Tax Classification	2014 Taxes
Agricultural Land	\$ 4,292,173
Residential	1,445,309
Commercial	2,619,894
Other Land and Improvements	246,669
Rural electric and Telephone Co-op	548,778
Personal Property	805,862
Utilities	2,344,312
Railroads	2,038,954
Wind Generation	6,854,726

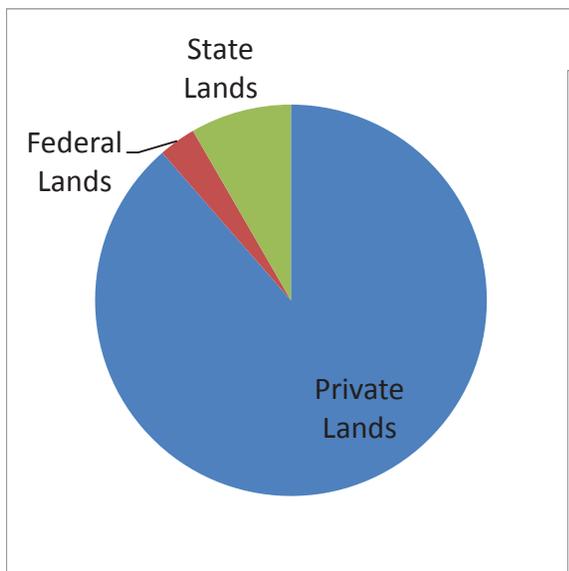


The property base, as determined by the taxable value is important because the size of the cumulative taxable value determines the amount of tax dollars that can be generated by a mill levy. In 2014, Toole County ranked 21st of 56 Montana counties for total taxable value. The county ranked 24th in total mills levied in 2013.

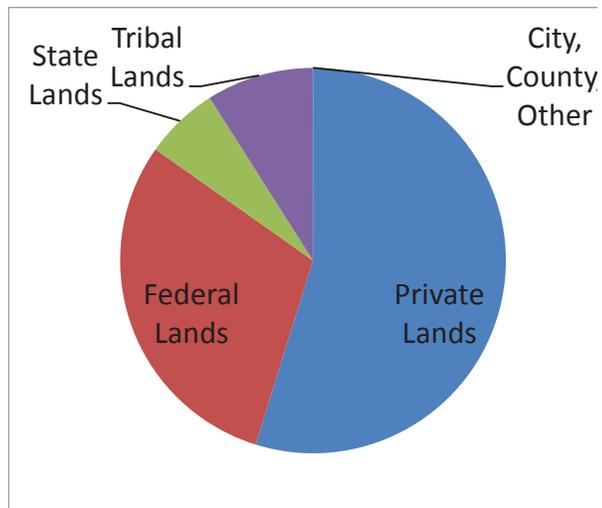
Land Use and Planning

Land Ownership

Toole County consists of 1,236,020 acres of which 88.6 percent is under private ownership. Federal lands account for approximately 38,000 acres, primarily scattered BLM parcels with some Bureau of Reclamation lands around the Tiber Reservoir. State lands include 103,000 acres of state trust lands and 6,100 acres of other lands including The Marias River State Park and Wildlife Management Area. Toole County has far less federal and state land than the state overall.



Toole County: Land Ownership



State of Montana: Land Ownership

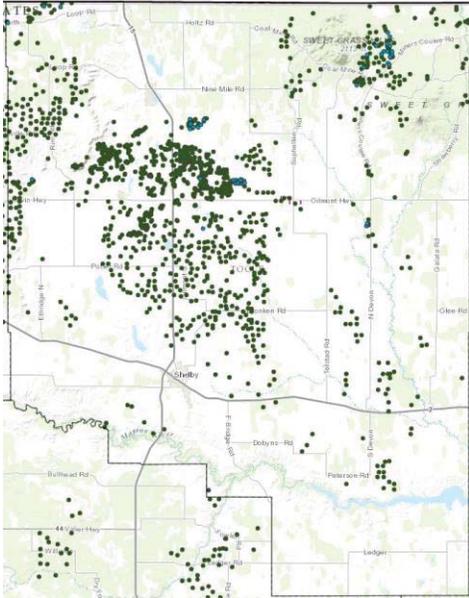
Land Use

Agriculture

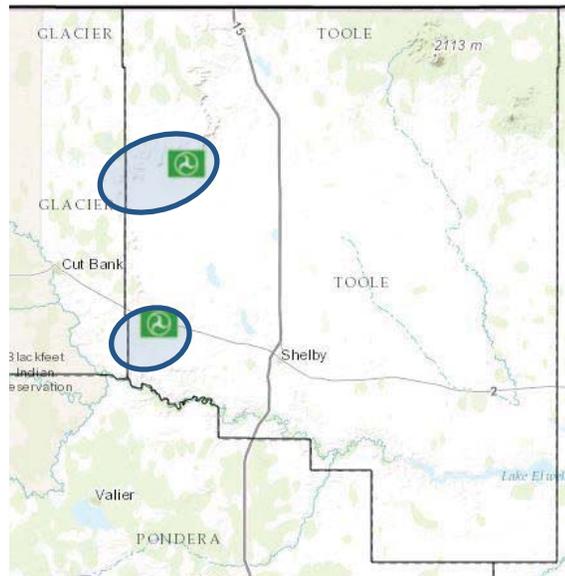
The predominant land use in the county is agriculture, accounting for 1,128,523 acres in 2012 and 91% of the entire county land area. Approximately two-thirds of all agricultural land was in crops, and the other third was grazing. The size of the average farm/ranch in Toole County was 2,668 acres.

Oil and Gas Operations

Toole County has more than 1500 wells, with the densest concentrations in the central portion of the county, clustered around the Kevin-Sunburst geologic formation, in the Sweet Grass Hills and along the county's western border.



Toole County Oil and Gas Wells



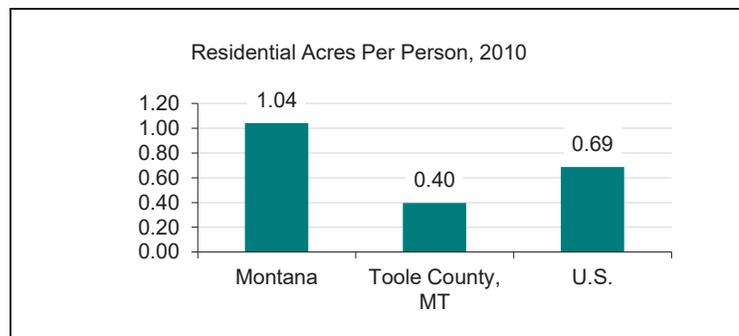
Wind Farms in Toole-Glacier Counties

Windfarms

Toole County has the most productive windfarms in the state. The windfarms are in the western portion of the county.

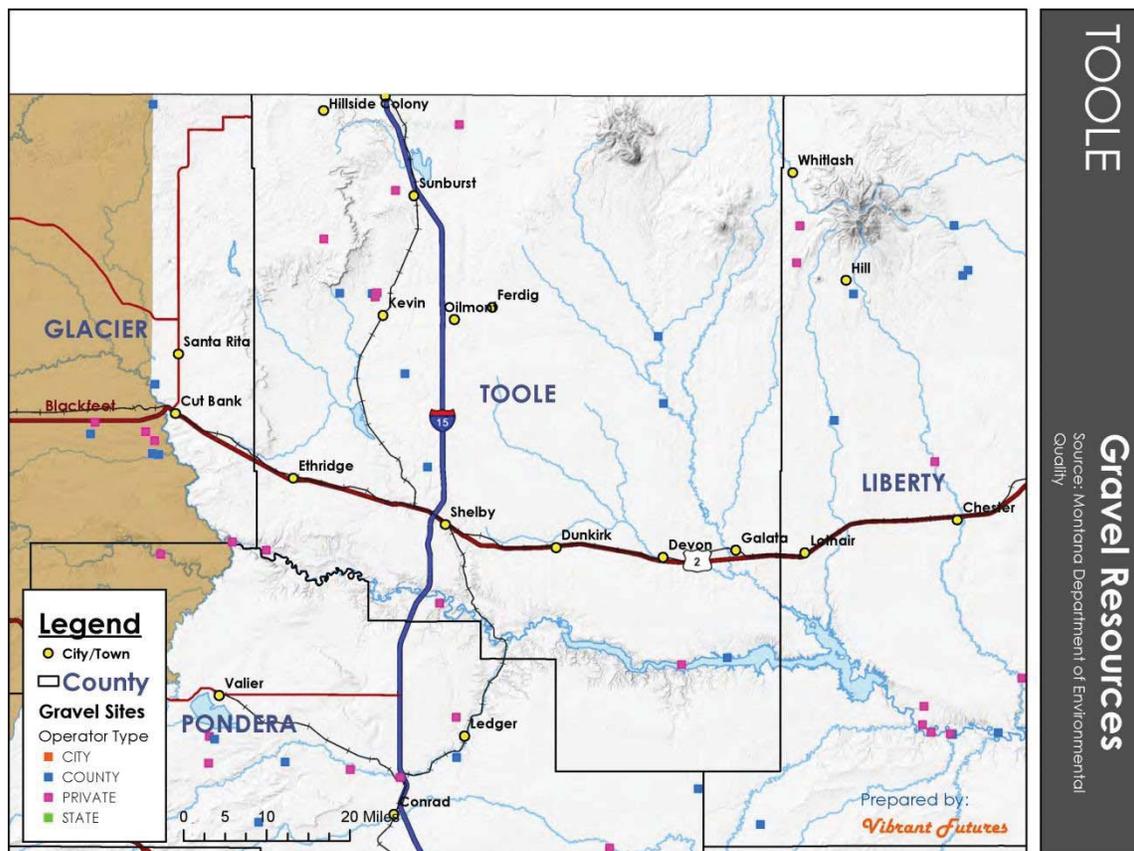
Residential and Commercial Development

Overall the county has a low rate of land use for residential purposes, compared to the state and nation. Residential development outside of the existing communities is at extremely low densities. In fact, there appear to be only two typical residential subdivisions in the county. McNamer Subdivision, about three miles northwest of Kevin, includes 12 lots, each with 2.5 acres and none of which have been developed. Marias Valley Acres, located near the Marias Valley Golf and Country Club south of Shelby, has more than a dozen lots ranging in size from five to 20 acres, many of which are developed. Other residences are scattered throughout the county, likely associated with farm and ranch operations. Commercial operations are also typically located in proximity to existing communities.



Other Land Uses

- **Transportation** Toole County has thousands of miles of roads, highways, rail lines, oil, gas, and water pipelines and transmission lines.
- **Missile Silos** The federal government has numerous missile sites in Toole County, although by January 2016, all had been decommissioned and the property was being readied for sale, with first preference to adjoining landowners.
- **Cobb Storage** Northwestern Energy stores gas in a natural underground storage area, known as Cobb Storage, that spans across portions of Toole and Glacier Counties. One of the largest storage fields of three in Montana, Cobb Storage can hold up to a couple of billion cubic feet of gas.
- **Gravel Operations** Gravel is essential for roads and construction. The county has several gravel sites.



Local Planning

Planning Boards and Staff

Toole County has two separate planning boards, a city-county planning board for an area surrounding Shelby and the county planning board for all other unincorporated areas of the county. The incorporated municipalities of Sunburst and Kevin do not have separate planning boards. Of the three municipalities and Toole County, only Shelby lists a planning department with staff on their website. The county contracts for planning and subdivision-related services.



City-County Planning Jurisdiction

Growth Policies

This growth policy pertains to the jurisdictional area of the county planning board, which includes only the unincorporated areas of the county outside of the city-county planning area around Shelby and outside of the city limits of Sunburst and Kevin. The City of Shelby has a growth policy dated 2012, which does not appear to address entire city-county planning area. Kevin adopted a growth policy 2011. Sunburst does not have a growth policy.

Other Land Use Planning Documents

Toole County and all three incorporated municipalities have adopted a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. Shelby and Toole County have worked jointly to plan for the Port of Northern Montana facilities in Shelby. Toole County has a capital improvements plan, however, it is not very detailed. Shelby and Kevin both have capital improvements plans, but Sunburst does not. Toole County participates in regional planning with the Opportunities Link and Community Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) efforts.

Land Use Regulations

Toole County has adopted regulations for subdivisions and buildings for lease or rent, both of which are required by state law. With the exception of the Shelby Airport Affected Area (located in the city-county planning jurisdictional area and therefore not part of this growth policy), there is no zoning in the unincorporated areas of the county. The county does have locally adopted weed management regulations, sanitation regulations, floodplain regulations, and local building codes for commercial structures. The city of Shelby has regulations in city code for subdivision, zoning, flood control, building, and fire. Sunburst and Kevin do not have subdivision or zoning regulations.

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