



130 6TH STREET WEST
ROOM A
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

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AGENDA

**REGULAR MEETING
COLUMBIA FALLS CITY-COUNTY
PLANNING BOARD AND ZONING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2019 - BEGINNING AT 6:30 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL**

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes of the March 12, 2019 Planning Board

C. VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

D. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ACTION: None

E. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Review of Survey Results

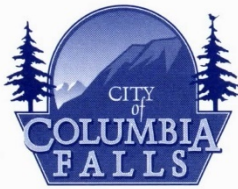
2. Growth Policy Update Continued - Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11

The Columbia Falls Planning Board will hold its fifth workshop on the update of the Columbia Falls Growth Policy of which the Public is invited. The Columbia Falls Growth Policy requires a review of the document at least once every five years to determine if the goals and policies are still relevant or require updating. The Columbia Falls Growth Policy was last updated in 2013.

This fifth workshop will focus on Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Public Services and Facilities, and Local Government Coordination, respectively and will provide the Public the opportunity to speak on these Growth Policy chapters. The Columbia Falls Growth Policy provides guidance, goals and policies to direct and manage the City's growth over the next five to fifteen years.

F. ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting – June 10, 2019



130 6TH STREET WEST
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Minutes

REGULAR MEETING COLUMBIA FALLS CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD AND ZONING COMMISSION

Tuesday, March 12, 2019 - Beginning at 6:30 PM

CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Vukonich called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Vukonich, Shepard, Hughes, Kavanagh, Singer, and Duffy. ABSENT: Stene and Nelson.

Also present were City Manager Susan Nicosia and Public Works Clerk Alex Vissotzky.

Chairman Vukonich led the Board, staff, and public in the pledge of allegiance.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Shepard to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2019, second by Kavanagh. The motion carried with all present voting in favor of the motion.

C. VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda) NONE.

D. OLD BUSINESS:

Growth Policy Chapters 6 and 7 Review

City Manager Nicosia briefed the Board on Growth Policy Chapter 6: Agriculture, Timber, and Rural Preserves. Columbia Falls is uniquely placed between agriculture, timberland, and the Flathead River. Conserving these lands and promoting good, concise development is important because of their link to the community's welfare, culture, and image. Because of the geography of Columbia Falls, much of the surrounding area is in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Language about wildfire and defensible space will be added as an issue. A discussion on zoning, agriculture development, and subdivisions followed. "Open basin water rights restrict large tract development" and including language about statutory exempt wells is recommended as an issue.

The Board discussed Growth Policy Chapter 7: Urban Design, and Historic and Cultural Facilities, after Nicosia briefed them. New goals are that future developments compliment and enhance the Nucleus Ave core development area and that a pedestrian friendly downtown is encouraged. Recommendations were made to prepare a walking historic guide and to add landscaping standards that are consistent and appropriate.

The public survey will be finalized soon.

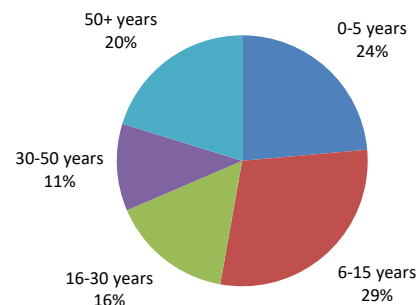
E. ADJOURNMENT – Adjourned at 8:00 PM, motion by Duffy with a second by Singer.

Next Meeting – May 14, 2019 (NO APRIL MEETING)

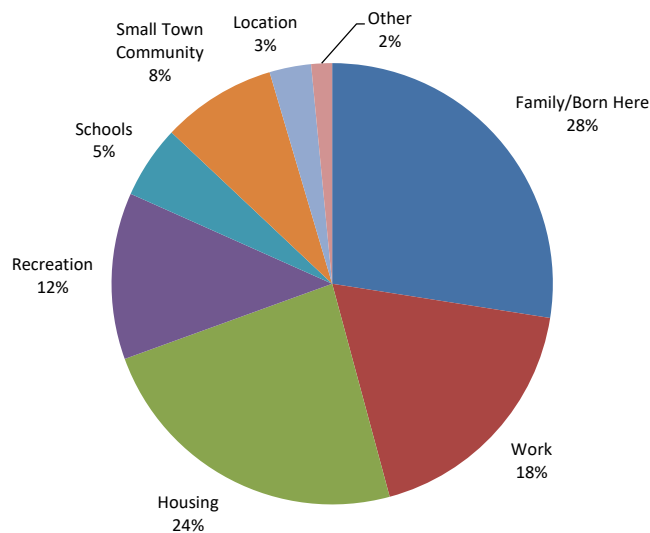
Chairman

Attest: Public Works Clerk

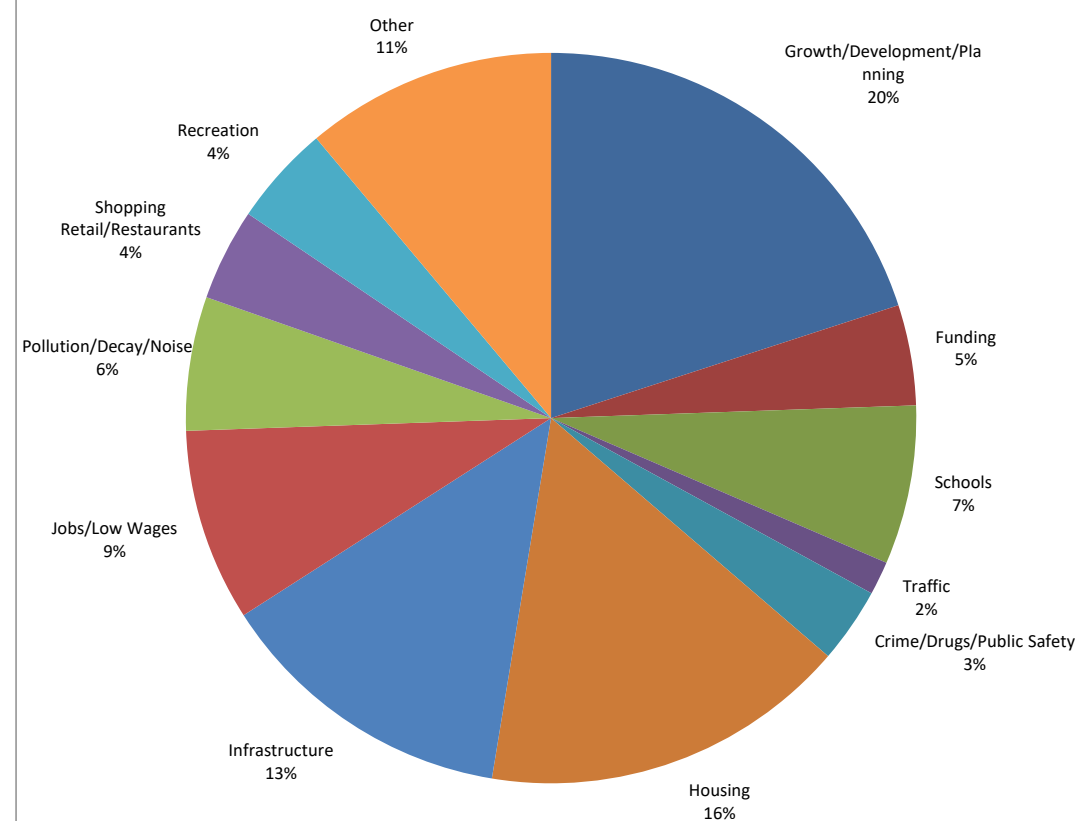
1) How long have you lived in Columbia Falls?



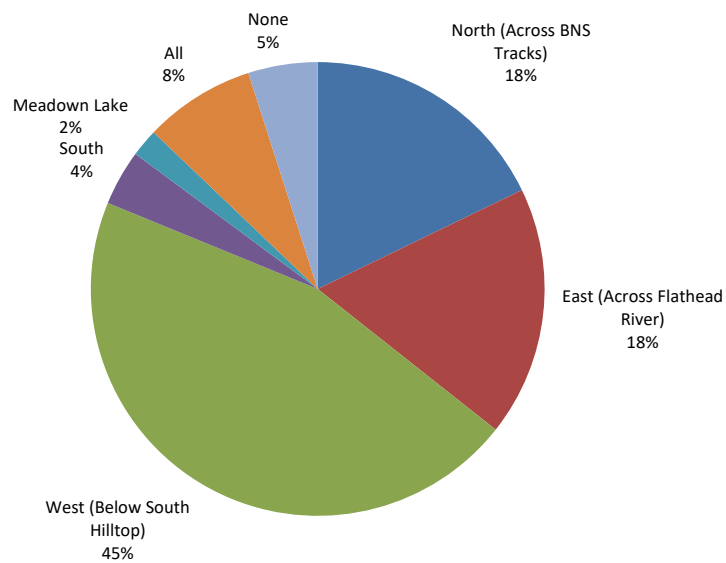
2) What brought you to Columbia Falls? (Work, affordable housing, good schools, recreation opportunities, etc.)



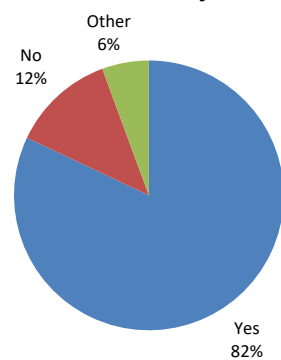
3) What are the three most important issues facing Columbia Falls?



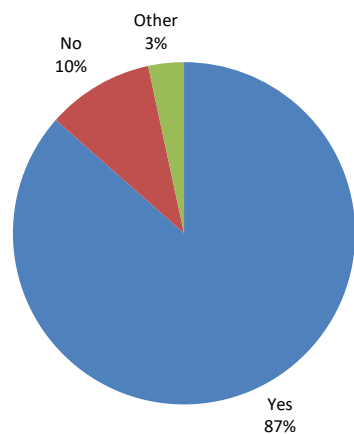
4) As Columbia Falls continues to grow in the future, where do you see the City limits expanding, to the north across the BNSF tracks, to the East across the Flathead River, or to the west below South Hilltop Road?



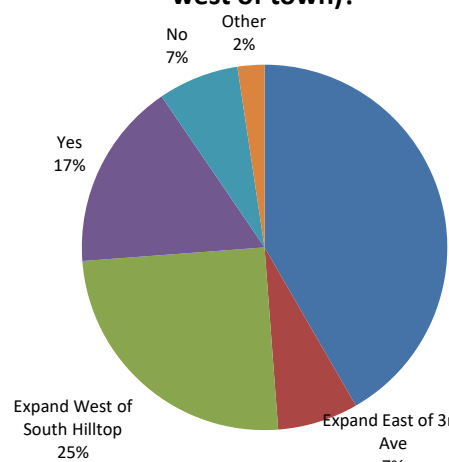
5) Do you support the goal of continuing support of manufacturing in Columbia Falls, either light industrial or clean heavy industrial use?



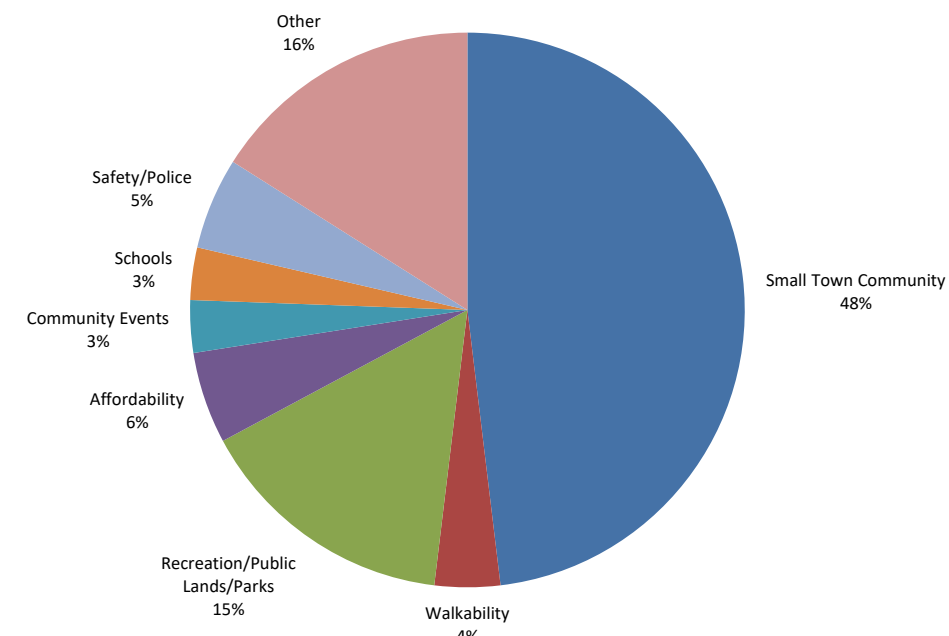
6) In the last decade, tourist related business has started to locate in Columbia Falls, these businesses include, guide services, glacier park concessionaires, hotel, hostels, etc. Do you support the continued development of these businesses?



7) Should the City continue to focus on infill development for commercial uses or expand the commercial districts east of Third Avenue East (Oh's' Auto Body) or West of South Hilltop Road (Last stoplight west of town)?



8) What do you value about Columbia Falls that you want preserved as the community grows?



8. TRANSPORTATION

A transportation system moves people and goods. More than that, it provides a framework for a community to grow and prosper. Efficient movement, access to commerce and dependability are hallmarks for a community. At the same time, incorporating special design features that protect special places and anticipate the positive and negative impacts of transportation features make truly livable communities.

Issues:

1. Columbia Falls is well connected to the outside world via US Highway 2, the BNSF Railroad and Glacier National Park International Airport.
2. While connectedness with the outside community is good, Columbia Falls faces several natural and man-made barriers to free movement:
 - a. US Highway 2 bisects the community east-west restricting movement north-south both in terms of free pedestrian movement and north-south vehicle movement. Additionally, Nucleus Ave., State Secondary 486 also bisects the community and restricts pedestrian and vehicle movement east-west.
 - b. The BNSF Railroad line bisects the community east-west along the northern portion of the community with only two vehicle crossings within the city and only 4 within the entire planning jurisdiction.
 - c. A spur line of the BNSF Railroad extends south towards Kalispell from the mainline bisecting the westerly half of the community only allowing crossings at US 2 (9th Street), Talbot, the Truck Route, and 12th Avenue within the city.
 - ~~d. The Flathead River forms a natural barrier along the entire south side of Columbia Falls with only one bridge (US 2) crossing the river today. The Red Bridge is closed and is not on a county replacement list to date. There are no other crossings south for 15 miles to Kalispell.~~
3. In a year 2000 community survey, 43 % of the respondents said streets and 63 % of the respondents said sidewalk and pedestrian trails in the community were not adequate. Since that time, the City has built over 3 miles of bike path/pedestrian trails in the City: 4th Ave West from Highway 2 to Talbot Road, Veteran's Drive from Talbot Road to Highway 2, and 3rd Ave East from Highway 2 to 9th Ave 5th Street East. Additionally, with the subdivision growth of the over the past decade, over 40 blocks of sidewalks were added throughout the City. In the 2014 community survey, 81% of all respondents said that sidewalks/pedestrian walkways were very important and 22% of the respondents indicated that the sidewalks/paths were amongst the best improvements in the community.

4. ~~The county will not accept dedication of any roads within new rural subdivisions. Roads are built to county standards, then owned and maintained by the property owners.~~
5. Excepting development which abuts US 2, existing rural development which rings Columbia Falls is serviced by rural standard roads typified by a narrow travel surface which may or may not be paved, open ditches for drainage, no sidewalks and at times inadequate R/W. As the rural population grows and as Columbia Falls grows into these areas, there is a significant unmet cost in upgrading these streets to an urban standard.
6. The urban area still lacks pedestrian and bicycle access (sidewalks & trails). While the City has made strides in constructing sidewalks and trails along Talbot, Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, River trail from Fourth to South Nucleus and Veterans Drive, the City will continue completing paths and sidewalks that will ~~loop~~ connect the parks, schools, and business community to provide safe and adequate access throughout the City.
7. A significant amount of traffic, including truck traffic and seasonal tourist traffic, pass through the City on Hwy 2/9th St contributing to traffic congestion along Hwy 2; particularly at the Truck Route and Nucleus Ave.
8. Pedestrian safety issues are prevalent due to the lack of sidewalks and/or pedestrian/bikepaths through the neighborhoods.

Policies:

1. Use a complete street approach to planning and development of improvements in the public right-of-way and in the review of subdivisions and development projects.

24. Streets and highways are to be grouped together and defined according to the type and level of service they are intended to provide. Characteristics include the volume of traffic they carry, the speed of traffic and their destination and service area. ~~Within the planning jurisdiction streets are defined below and are visually represented on the Growth Policy Map.~~ Street definitions will be defined in the upcoming Columbia Falls Transportation Plan and updated Public Works Standards.

- ~~a. Arterial: A major road or highway with moderate to fast speeds and high traffic volumes. Arterials provide access to the regional transportation network. They move traffic across the county, between cities and communities and/or from one major part of the Planning Jurisdiction to another. Throughout the Planning Jurisdiction individual private accesses onto arterials serving adjacent parcels should be discouraged. Traffic volumes would typically exceed 5,000 vehicles per day.~~
- ~~b. Collectors: A secondary or intermediate street with moderate speeds and low to moderate volumes. Such streets would collect local traffic from neighborhoods and carry it to adjacent neighborhoods or transfer the traffic to the arterial system. Such streets would typically serve a neighborhood or area of 100 or more dwellings and carry 1000 to 5000 vehicles per day.~~

~~e. Local: Minor streets intended to serve individual sites, buildings or lots. Local streets feed into collectors or provide destination access off of collectors.~~

32. Coordinate and support the design standards for streets in public works standards, subdivision regulations and other city ~~documents~~. code and policies.

43. Sidewalks are necessary on both sides of all ~~local, collector and arterial neighborhood and business district~~ streets. Sidewalks should be detached from the travel surface and be a minimum of 5 feet wide.

~~4. In certain situations, such as along collector or arterial streets or where a designated for a multi-use trail. Trails should have an all-weather (asphalt or concrete) surface with a minimum travel width of 8 feet and preferably 10 feet.~~

5. Where density and location dictate, all subdivisions within one mile of the City of Columbia Falls (residential, and, if applicable, commercial and industrial) should require that streets are built to an urban standard. This includes paved streets, curb and gutter, sidewalks on both sides, a landscape boulevard and street lighting.

6. Cul-de-sacs are discouraged as they prohibit the connection of neighborhoods, tend to focus traffic versus disperse it and are more difficult to maintain in winter conditions.

7. Utility pedestals should be located outside the boulevard and sidewalks area.

8. Within both residential developments and highway oriented commercial developments, street trees should be incorporated into the street design to improve community and neighborhood aesthetics, to buffer neighborhoods from traffic, to buffer the pedestrian from traffic, and to provide for shaded streets.

9. Alleys should be encouraged especially in townhouse developments to provide improved lot access for vehicles, convenient utility location, convenient solid waste collection, enhanced guest parking, and room for snow plowing. In addition, improved residential design can be accomplished by reducing the proliferation of garage doors along the street fronts.

Recommendations:

- ~~1. Continue to work with Flathead County and interested third parties to refurbish Red Bridge for pedestrian access.~~
1. Complete the Columbia Falls Area Transportation Plan, including a comprehensive pedestrian/bike plan.
2. Promote paving of the North Fork Road, with bicycle facilities to Camas Creek, giving Glacier National Park an improved westerly entrance and further establishing Columbia Falls and Nucleus Avenue as the west entrance ~~way~~ to Glacier National Park.
3. ~~Implement the~~ Develop the Columbia Falls bike and pedestrian trails map.

4. Use developer installed improvements where facilities abut or intercept proposed subdivisions or individual projects.
5. Use local funds and alternative funding sources leveraged with federal transportation funds to construct pedestrian facilities-transportation upgrades.
6. Upgrade pedestrian facilities when upgrading sections of street.
- ~~7. Actively solicit private funds and help from local organizations to implement the trails systems throughout the community.~~
- ~~8. Encourage jointly funded projects between the city and county.~~

9. PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks, recreational areas and open space are important components of a community and contribute greatly to the physical, mental and emotional health of the population. The residents of the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction have access to a vast area of some of the most scenic open space in the nation including Glacier National Park, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas and national forest lands. At the same time the Columbia Falls area is urbanizing and there is an increasing need to provide for the recreational needs of the residents of the area in close proximity to where they live.

Issues:

1. The ~~most recent~~ 2014 Columbia Falls community surveys most often reported the need for increased bike and pedestrian paths, improved public rest room facilities, a community recreation center, a skateboard park, ice skating rinks and picnic areas. The following findings were reported.
 - a. 63% voiced support for more and better bike and pedestrian paths.
 - b. 55% supported improved public restrooms at public parks.
 - c. 48% indicated preschool recreational facilities were inadequate.
 - d. 43% indicated elementary recreational facilities were inadequate.
 - e. 58% indicated high school recreational facilities were inadequate.
 - f. 64% indicated young adult recreational facilities were inadequate.
 - g. 62% indicated middle aged adults and senior citizens recreational facilities were inadequate.
2. While need for additional park facilities was ranked high, only 21% supported increasing taxes to fund new parks.
3. Except for the addition of River's Edge Park in 2007, consisting of 27.75 acres, all of the parks within the planning jurisdiction are 6 acres or less in size qualifying them as neighborhood parks. Except for River's Edge Park, there are no community or regional parks in the City.
4. The Columbia Falls Junior High was built on Talbot/Veteran's Drive in 2000 and includes extensive outdoor recreation including basketball courts, volleyball courts and in 2011, a new outdoor running track. The City has updated Horine Park to include additional play features as the neighborhood has grown. Several Talbot area subdivisions have included private, homeowner association parks within their approved plat.
5. Columbia Falls is a Tree City USA member beginning in 2007. The City plants as many trees as possible with local and forestry grant funding, usually averaging 5 – 10 new trees each year. ~~Due to a special federal grant, the City has planted over 240 trees since the program began in 2007.~~

Goals:

1. Continue the bike and pedestrian network that connects the schools,

- parcs and major commercial areas with the residential neighborhoods.
2. Actively pursue federal and state government or private foundation funding to address the bike and pedestrian network funding needs.
 2. Well planned neighborhood parks strategically located to address the needs of new and growing neighborhoods.
 3. ~~Explore opportunities to create an enclosed pool facility in Columbia Falls.~~
 3. Complete park maintenance and updates as needed to ensure every park is safe and usable.

STANDARDS

TOT LOT	May be privately owned and maintained, or owned and maintained by the City ¼ — 1 acre in size, serving the immediate needs of a specific development designed for intensive use by children.
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	A recreational area serving those living within walking or short driving distance. It usually serves an area with a radius of ¼ to ½ mile, encompassing a maximum of 2,000 people and having a minimum size of one to five acres. Pedestrian access to the surrounding area is important.
COMMUNITY PARK	A recreational area serving the City of Columbia Falls (1/2 — 1 ½ mile radius). Minimum size should be 15 acres serving a maximum population of 4,000 — 6,000 people.
DISTRICT PARK	A recreational area serving the needs of the entire Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction.
REGIONAL PARK	A recreational area serving the entire county and the surrounding areas.

Policies:

1. Provide a balanced system of parks and open spaces throughout the community.
2. Provide public access to all dedicated public parks.
3. Maximize parkland dedication and monies via the subdivision process.
4. Designate key future neighborhood parkland sites in those areas proposed for future residential development.
5. Accept cash-in-lieu of land dedication as part of the subdivision process unless proposed land dedication is necessary for the future development of parks, trails and recreation facilities.
6. Continue to earmark cash in lieu of parkland funds to develop and expand parks and trail systems for use in close proximity to where funds originated.
7. Provide public access to Flathead River as a priority. Give special consideration to dedication of public access to waterfront areas, public parks or passive recreation areas, and public-access waterfront trails in new

subdivisions adjacent to Flathead River and to other streams in order to provide suitable parkland for future users and prevent public waters from being landlocked by new lot development.

8. Continue the integrated system of bike and pedestrian trails and greenways connecting neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools, water bodies, recreational amenities, and rural trails. Trails should be designed as linear parks that provide for walking, bicycling, exercise, and where appropriate cross-country skiing.
9. As subdivisions and multi-family projects are developed adjacent to proposed trail sites, require these projects to assist in developing their share or portion of such trails.
10. All new parks shall be designed to meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and existing parks should be upgraded ~~to meet ADA standards as needed.~~improve ADA access at park facilities.
11. Protect and utilize natural areas through the conservation of environmentally sensitive or scenic areas.
12. Promote coordination between the city, school district, county, state, U.S. Forest Service, Montana Veterans Administration and private organizations regarding park and recreation activities and planning to avoid duplication of efforts and to promote synergistic efforts.
13. Whenever possible, city or county parks should adjoin or be planned in conjunction with the school district. Sharing could include the use of school lands and facilities after school hours by the public. In return, maintenance agreements could be negotiated with city and county departments.
14. Develop parks to provide active and passive recreational environments for families, groups, individuals and the disabled of all ages.
15. All multi-family developments (apartment, condominium or townhouse) having twelve or more dwellings for permanent non-elderly residents should incorporate privately owned and maintained playgrounds or tot lots if the development is not readily served by a neighborhood park.
16. Citizen involvement is encouraged at every level of park selection, design and development.
17. Utilize the Bonneville Power Administration's transmission easements to facilitate the creation of paths.
18. Promote the development of a Dog Park within ~~the Columbia Falls Park System.~~

Recommendations:

1. Continue to develop neighborhood parks in the Hilltop Homes/Talbot neighborhood as needed.

2. Continue to require proposed subdivisions to provide adequate recreational facilities, including tot lots, neighborhood parks and paths and sidewalks based on the size and configuration of the subdivision.
3. Investigate establishing a dog park within the Columbia Falls Park system.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Public services such as police and fire protection are generally tax supported and maintained by the city or county government. Sewer and water facilities and solid waste **pickup are typically supported by user fees. Such public investment** plays a role in the development process of the entire community. In many cases the rate and location of developments may depend, to a certain extent, on the location, design, construction and timing of public facilities and services.

Within the Planning Jurisdiction, two factors limit efficient provision of public facilities and services. First, in the rural areas, the geographical area is vast, and the lack of density makes the provision of services uneconomical. Secondly, throughout the Planning Jurisdiction, topography and natural and man-made features can be barriers to efficient service.

A. POLICE PROTECTION

Issues:

1. Within the city limits the Columbia Falls Police Department has primary responsibility; outside the city limits the Flathead County Sheriff's Department has primary responsibility.
2. The Columbia Falls Police Department has a Chief, & 9 full-time officers, one office assistant, and maintains one holding cell where persons can be temporarily detained until transferred to the Flathead County Detention Center. ~~They maintain an officer to population ratio of 1 officer to 500 residents which is an accepted state standard.~~ The Police Department facility has undergone a complete remodel in 2012 of offices and squad room to provide updated facilities as well as electrical and communication services to serve the digital age of records and communications. Safety was also improved by separating the booking areas from the general public interactions. In addition to the updated police department, Columbia Falls is part of the new consolidated 911 Center located in Kalispell which combined the 911 facilities of the three City Police Departments and the

County Sheriff Office. The 911 Center handles all emergency, including police, fire and ambulance and after-hours administrative calls for service.

3. Pursuant to an interlocal agreement between Columbia Falls and the County law enforcement departments, either department will provide temporary, backup or “first on the scene” assistance upon request.
4. The Sheriff anticipates slow emergency response times and minimal routine patrolling in outlying areas, due to understaffing and dispersed population growth. Response time in the rural portion of the Planning Jurisdiction is limited because of the vastness of the area and the limited size and patrol capabilities of the County Sheriff’s Department. As population increases in the rural area, crime may increase at least proportionately and the issue of adequate rural police protection will become even more critical.
5. Illegal drug use in the community increases crime and violence and pose a threat to residents and the public at large.

Goal:

1. Maintain a responsive, well trained and maintained police protection and crime prevention program throughout the Planning Jurisdiction meeting the needs of seasonal and year-round residents.
2. Ensure that neighborhoods are safe.
3. Build on established relationships between law enforcement agencies to enhance the effectiveness of the Drug Task Force and eliminate the ability of manufactures and users of illegal drugs to exist or operate in the community.
4. Continue to improve community policing to ensure public safety and prevent increases in crime.

Policies:

1. The city needs to maintain ~~an officer to population ratio of one officer to 500 residents~~ an adequate level of staffing to provide the necessary level of public safety.
2. Neighborhood Watch Programs and public reporting are encouraged throughout the city and developments in rural areas.
3. The Columbia Falls Police Department and Flathead County Sheriff’s Office should review ~~all~~ applicable commercial site plans and residential, commercial, and industrial subdivisions for police access, public safety, and crime prevention.

4. Officers and staff conduct themselves with honesty, integrity, professional competence, compassion and respect for the public.
5. Apply unbiased enforcement of the laws.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinate between law enforcement agencies to provide the needed level of service in the community.
2. Ensure that the law enforcement agencies have adequate staffing and resources.
3. Continue to pursue grant and alternate funding sources to provide needed funds for staffing and equipment.

B. FIRE PROTECTION:

Issues:

1. The Columbia Falls Volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection to the City and a majority of the planning jurisdiction north and west of the Flathead River. There is a main fire station in the city and a ~~satellite~~ rural station on US Highway 2 one-half mile south of the Highway 40 intersection.
2. The city has a full time fire chief and a ~~27-26~~ member all-volunteer fire department with a maximum enrollment of 30 members. When the city reaches a population of 5,000 it will be required to ~~have~~ begin staffing a paid fire department ~~staff~~ unless the City Council, by resolution, declares the city a 3rd Class City for fire protection. ~~This threshold will be reached possibly by the year 2015 and for sure by 2020 if the trends in population growth continue.~~
3. The portion of the planning jurisdiction east and south of the Flathead River is served by the Badrock Volunteer Fire Department with a new station on Highway 206. The Columbia Falls Fire Department has a mutual aid agreement with all neighboring Fire Department.
4. Recognize that Railroad and Highway 2 traffic increases the risk of emergencies involving hazardous materials. Columbia Falls has access to the trained hazmat team out of Kalispell for response to hazardous materials response.
6. The I.S.O. rating within the city is a 5 and a 5 outside of the city limits.

7. The most recent Columbia Falls area opinion poll indicated a 97% satisfaction rating with the City Fire Department.
8. It is becoming increasing difficult to have adequate volunteer response to calls during the daytime, working hours. The City Council, with the Volunteer Fire Department, has begun the process of determining how to provide the needed level of staffing for an appropriate response to every call.

Goal:

1. Provide a fire protection program serving the needs of the entire Planning Jurisdiction emphasizing prevention, access, response time and well-trained and equipped personnel.
2. Maintain the City's current ISO Rating of 5.
3. Maintain mutual aid agreements with the surrounding fire districts and responding agencies, including Three Rivers Ambulance.
4. Assist the community in reducing and preventing emergencies through public education, fire code and safety enforcement, and by adopting and enforcing current fire, building and electrical codes.

Policies:

1. In the rural portions of the planning jurisdiction, apply and enforce the Fire Protection Guidelines for Wildland Residential Interface Development adopted by Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, including defensible space, road access, water supply, building materials, and building density and spacing.
2. All extensions of the Columbia Falls City water system should maintain fire flow capacities and hydrant locations to comply with the Uniform Fire Code.
3. All new rural developments of five lots or more (or additions to existing developments which total five lots or more) should provide hydrants or a system of recharging fire tankers acceptable to the local fire district. Where these are not feasible or acceptable, a cash payment equivalent to the cost of a tanker recharge facility should be paid to the District to assist the District in acquiring tanker and response equipment.
4. Loop roads are encouraged over cul-de-sacs in order to provide secondary access, particularly in areas at high risk from wildfire.
5. All new construction, occupancy remodeling and/or change of documented use shall be required to comply with adopted building and electrical codes.

6. The fire department will attempt to provide the safest working environment available for fire department personnel and assisting agencies.
7. The Columbia Falls Fire Department will protect our community with the highest level of professionalism.
8. Provide adequate training and resources to the fire department personnel.
9. Ensure that the fire department has adequate staffing and resources.
10. Continue to pursue grant and alternate funding sources to provide needed funds for staffing and equipment.

Recommendations:

1. The City of Columbia Falls will be required to begin ~~maintain~~ a staffing a part paid fire department with the advent of the city becoming a Class II city (a population of 5,000 recorded at a decennial census). This ~~could~~ will occur in ~~2015~~ 2020 at the current growth rate and annexation activity. It is recommended that the City Council approve a resolution to stay a 3rd Class City for fire protection as provided for in MCA 7-1-4112.
2. The City Council and Volunteer Fire Department must complete a long range plan on the staffing and equipment needs to ensure that the community receives an adequate and timely response to every call for service. This long range plan must include the transition to a part-paid department.

C. WATER SERVICES

Issues:

1. The City abandoned the Cedar Creek open reservoir north of Columbia Falls in 1995 and now exclusively uses ground water.
2. The City maintains a 2 million gallon storage tank at Cedar Creek constructed in 1995 and now has the storage capacity to serve a city of **8,200** people.
3. The City maintains two deep wells that are capable of pumping 2.52 million gallons per day which are operating at a theoretical capacity based on average daily demand of ~~27~~ 51%.

4. The City's aging water infrastructure resulted in a 45% water loss for the year 2017. various distribution mains in Columbia Falls are more than 60 years old, as are some of the service line connections increasing the need for repair and replacements.

54. A wellhead protection program has been implemented in the immediate area of the storage tank and city wells.

65. The City implemented a back flow prevention program to maintain its high water quality.

76. Because of its high water quality, the City does not have to treat or chlorinate its water supply.

8. The City's supply capacity currently falls short of the requirements of DEQ-1 Circular 3.1.1.a for maximum day demand. The recent study recommended that the City drill a third well to meet the requirement.

Goal:

1. Continue to provide safe, potable, palatable water supply for the present and future residents and business owners of the community of Columbia Falls.

2. Continue to provide adequate pressure and flow to provide adequate fire suppression services within the city and for developing properties outside the city limits.

3. Continue to identify and prioritize locations with mains and service connections that are at risk of failure.

4. Maintain and update water rights as needed for place of use and new well capacity.

Policies:

1. The city should only extend new water service to properties inside the city or properties outside the city that are willing to annex to the city now or in the future via the processes that are allowed through the Montana Code Annotated.

2. Dead end lines should be avoided.

3. Water mains should be looped wherever feasible to insure maximum flows and uninterrupted service.

4. Water main extensions should be sized to accommodate not only present but future anticipated needs of the area.

5. Maintain Uniform Fire Code fire flow capacity in all new developments or subdivisions within the city.
6. Water systems used by developments on the fringe of the city should be designed to be compatible with the city's system such that at a future time they could be incorporated into the city should the city grow and/or annexation is requested or required in the future.
7. Private wells within the city should be avoided
8. The city wellhead protection program should be maintained and administered for the long term protection of the city's water supply.
9. The City completed a Facility Study of water and wastewater systems in ~~2006~~ 2018 in order to identify constraints and capacity issues within these systems and plan for upgrades in the future.
10. Continue the "green space" program that promotes lawn irrigation by adjusting sewer rates to winter averages during the summer months.

Recommendation:

1. Maintain and update the Columbia Falls Water and Wastewater Plan and incorporate the plan's recommendations into the city's capital improvements plan as needed.
2. Construct a new well within the City and plan for additional storage in the next 10 years.
3. Continue an aggressive leak detection program, identify and repair leaks and complete both a short-term and long-term plan to reduce leaks to an acceptable percentage. (could say here that the city should reduce water loss to 25%).
4. Update the Extension of Services Plan every five years, at a minimum.

D. SEWER

Issues:

1. The city operates an extended aeration wastewater treatment plant. The treatment plant was upgraded in 2011 and included a new pretreatment facility, bioreactor, UV disinfection and non-potable water supply system.

2. The city treatment plant can process .625 million gallons per day (mgd), it presently operates at .401 mgd. and has a theoretical capacity of 7,500 residents or the ability to accommodate present growth rates out to the year 2020 without any expansion or modification.
3. The City is operating under a discharge permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued in August 2017. The permit includes limits for BOD, TSS, pH, E.coli, nitrogen and phosphorous. These limits drive the capacity of the Wastewater Treatment Plant.
3. ~~In 2012~~ There ~~were~~ are still approximately ~~60~~ 47 properties served by individual septic systems within the city, ~~some by recent annexation,~~ some by historical use. ~~They are slowly connecting to the system at approximately 5 per year.~~
4. The city serves the Meadow Lake Resort Development lying one mile north of the city by private contract. The development and its ~~227~~ current users ~~do not pay a hookup fee but they do~~ pay 125% of the current monthly treatment rate plus they have granted waivers of annexation to the city.
5. The remainder of the areas outside the City of Columbia Falls have no access to public sewer treatment and use the individual septic tank and drain field as the primary sewage disposal system. This has caused a situation where the city is bordered on several sides by private septic systems inhibiting the orderly spread of municipal sewer.

Goals:

1. Provide effective sewage treatment and disposal which does not compromise the environment.
2. Eliminate individual on-site sewage systems within the City.
3. Work closely with MT DEQ to ensure that permitting limits are reasonable and attainable by the city.
4. Pursue a long-term plan for biosolids disposal.

Policies:

1. Direct growth to areas served by municipal sewer, in order to protect water quality and avoid reliance on septic systems, which face severe site limitations in the vast majority of the planning jurisdiction.
2. Avoid development in areas of high groundwater until public sewer is available.
3. Require adequate treatment of industrial waste and avoid storing or locating industrial waste in areas of high groundwater or on soils with geological limitations without taking adequate precautions to avoid groundwater pollution.
4. Sewer should only be extended outside the city limits with the condition of immediate annexation or via the processes outlined in the Montana Code Annotated.
5. If areas or developments outside the city are to be served by city sewer lines, lines should be sized to fit the service area (not just the development) as totally developed. Fees shall be based on both the impact to the collection system, impact on the treatment facility and a fair capital replacement cost.
6. New developments close or adjacent to the City of Columbia Falls which propose septic systems, should submit a contingency plan for hooking into the municipal sewer system.
7. Encourage extensions of sewer mains to areas currently served by on-site septic systems along the Flathead River.

Recommendation:

1. Maintain and update the Columbia Falls Water and Wastewater Plan and incorporate the plan's recommendations into the city's capital improvements plan as needed.
2. Implement the 2018 Preliminary Engineering Report and complete the short-term and long-term improvements.
3. Update the Extension of Services Plan every five years, at a minimum.

E. SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Issues:

1. The City of Columbia Falls does not provide solid waste collection.

2. A private firm, Evergreen Disposal provides contract service to all residents and businesses in the city and the rural planning jurisdiction.
3. Flathead County administers the County Landfill Site 6 miles south of Whitefish on US 93. Based on current and projected solid waste flows, Flathead County estimates that it is has capacity to operate the landfill through 2055¹.
4. Flathead County administers a “green box” site (solid waste collection site) on the northwest side of Columbia Falls near the corner of Best Way and Meadow Lake Drive. Residents of Flathead County can deposit their waste at no charge here for collection.

Goal:

1. A solid waste reduction, collection and disposal system that is dependable, cost efficient, easily accessible and environmentally sound.
2. Encourage effective recycling within the community to reduce land-filling waste.

Policies:

1. All subdivisions and moderate-sized to large developments should be reviewed for suitable access by refuse collection vehicles and for suitable location of refuse pickup sites.
2. All new subdivisions should be required to show that services of a licensed refuse hauler are available.
4. Hazardous commercial waste shall be handled by the generator in compliance with state and federal regulations.
5. Land-filling should only take place within licensed facilities. Dumping of solid waste elsewhere by any private or public party is prohibited.

Recommendations:

1. As the city grows, the city should re-evaluate, from time to time, the suitability of the private hauler services provided to the residents. ~~and the advisability of creating its own solid waste collection program.~~
2. Encourage more recycling within the City and the County.

¹ Strategic Report for Flathead County Landfill, 2009

11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

Administration and implementation of the growth policy document is the responsibility of the City of Columbia Falls. Columbia Falls has a council/manager form of government with a six member council and the mayor who votes on all matters. A full-time city manager administers the day to day business of the City. Flathead County administers and implements the Flathead County Growth Policy which covers the areas outside of the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction. Flathead County has a commissioner form of government with three full time county commissioners who employ an administrative assistant to assist in the day to day operation of the county.

Issues:

1. Cooperative planning between the City and County has been ongoing for 40 years.
2. Cooperation between the city and county is critical to reinforcing an orderly development pattern in the growth policy boundary, coordinating public facilities and services, and addressing the numerous issues that cross over city-county boundaries.
3. Often there is limited public involvement in the planning and development review process.

Goals:

Foster city-county cooperation, particularly in managing growth and coordinating provision of public facilities and services. Promoting cooperation between Columbia Falls, utility service providers and Flathead businesses.

1. The Interlocal Agreement signed between the City and the County should be maintained to lay out the framework for the following areas:
 - Urban and rural development standards.
 - Subdivision plat review processes.
 - Annexation policies including transfer of county roads to the city.
 - Extension of municipal services including sewer and water.
 - Public safety and emergency services and facilities.
2. Coordination of geographic information systems, building codes and health department resources.
3. That the city and county identify ways to share equipment and other resources to increase the efficiency of local government operations.

4. That the City meet periodically with the County, school district, public utility and service providers to share and coordinate long-term plans for capital expenditures, future development plans and utility extensions.
5. Ways should be sought to provide avenues for greater public participation in the development review process.

Policies:

1. Use this document as a guide for development and growth within the growth policy boundary.
2. Zoning regulations should conform to the provisions of this document.
3. Coordinate development codes in the city and outlying areas to promote the orderly expansion of the city.
4. The Growth Policy will be reviewed every five years and be revised if necessary. Amendments outside these comprehensive updates should be viewed cautiously and be based primarily on unanticipated changes.
5. Comprehensive updates of the Growth Policy should be considered when there is a major change in circumstances such as a significant increase or decrease in population, changes in economic or environmental conditions or significant changes in public infrastructure and services.
6. Written plans stating how the public will be informed regarding development projects can ensure the integrity of the public review process.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain a cooperative relationship between the elected officials, government agencies, service and utility providers that results in consistent development standards, efficient use of public infrastructure and resources, and quality development.