



Growth Policy - Working Draft

JEFFERSON COUNTY



February 2025

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Montana

Growth Policy – February 2025

Draft

Table of Contents

Contents

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
- CHAPTER SUMMARY..... 3
- INTRODUCTION 4
 - What is a Growth Policy? 4
 - Planning Area 4
 - Previous Planning Related Projects 4
 - Growth Policy Adoption 5
 - Conditions and Timing for Review and Revision..... 5
 - Interjurisdictional Coordination & Cooperation..... 5
 - Chapter Summary 6
- IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY 7
 - Introduction 7
 - Goals, Objectives & Actions 7
 - Economy 7
 - Infrastructure and Public Facilities 8
 - Local Services 9
 - Land Use 11
 - Housing 13
- CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS..... 15
 - Features..... 15
 - Overview 15
 - Geography 16
 - Climate 16
 - Land Cover Types 16
 - Demographics..... 17
 - Land Ownership 17
 - Population 19
 - Economy 21
 - Employment 21
 - Personal Income 21
 - Property Taxes 23
 - Housing 24
 - Characteristics 24

Potential for Redevelopment & Repurposing	25
Local Services & Public Facilities	26
Introduction	26
Facilities	28
Airport	28
Bridges	28
Fairgrounds-Recreation Park.....	29
Law Enforcement	29
Libraries	30
Museums.....	31
Parks, Trails, and Other Recreation.....	31
Roads.....	32
Solid Waste	34
Overview.....	34
Equipment	34
Infrastructure.....	34
Other Community Services	34
Introduction	34
Facilities & Services	35
Assisted Living Centers	35
Community Support Services	35
Emergency Medical and Ambulance Services.....	35
Fire Services	36
Public Transportation.....	37
Public Water Facilities	38
Basin.....	38
Clancy.....	38
Other Communities	38
Public Wastewater Facilities	38
Basin.....	39
Clancy.....	39
Montana City.....	39
Schools	39
Senior Centers	40
Utilities	41
Land Use.....	42

Introduction	42
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).....	44
Fish & Wildlife Habitat	47
Conservation Easements	47
Sand and Gravel Resources	50
Zoning	52
Introduction	52
North Jefferson County Zoning District	52
Milligan Canyon/Boulder Valley Agricultural Zoning District	53
Sunlight Zoning District.....	53
ADMINISTRATION & REGULATIONS.....	55
Introduction	55
County Addressing and Road Naming	55
Sanitation Regulations & Permitting	56
Floodplain Regulations & Permitting.....	56
Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations (BLR)	57
Zoning Regulations	57
Subdivision Regulations	57
Statutory Requirements:.....	58
Local Definitions Associated with 76-3-608, MCA Review Criteria.....	58
Evaluation of Subdivisions Based Upon 76-3-608, MCA Review Criteria	59
Prerequisites to Approval	59
Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agriculture	60
Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agricultural Water User Facilities	60
Evaluation Criteria for Effects Upon Local Services	61
Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Historic or Natural Environment	62
Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Public Health and Safety	63
Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat	64
Community Impact Report.....	65
Public Hearing Procedure for Subdivisions.....	65
PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS	67

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Location Map	15
Figure 2 - Average Daily Temperatures for Boulder, 1880-2016	16

Figure 3 - Land Cover Types Present	17
Figure 4 - Comparison of Land Ownership Types	17
Figure 5 - Land Ownership Map	19
Figure 6 - Population Age Comparison by Gender, 2022	20
Figure 7 - Job Sectors, 2022	21
Figure 8 - Components of Personal Income, 1970-2022	22
Figure 9 - Median Household Income, 2022	22
Figure 10 - Comparison of Residential Structure Ages, 2019	24
Figure 11 - Total Revenues Generated, 2022	27
Figure 12 - Government Expenditures, 2022	27
Figure 13 - Incident Calls for Service, 2019 - 2023	30
Figure 14 - Transportation System Map	33
Figure 15 - Fire Stations	37
Figure 16 - School Enrollment Numbers, 2023 - 2024	40
Figure 17 - Land Use Map	43
Figure 18 - Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Statistics	44
Figure 19 - Wildland Urban Interface Map (WUI)	45
Figure 20 - Wildfire Risk Map	46
Figure 21 - Conservation Easement Map	49
Figure 22 - Gravel Pits Map	51
Figure 23 - Zoning Map	54

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why does Jefferson County need a Growth Policy? The Growth Policy provides the vision and the framework for how Jefferson County's officials and citizens would like to see the County grow and develop and provides direction for how tax monies and other funds the County receives should be spent. It is a proactive approach to helping County officials and citizens plan what future needs might be and where new development should occur before growth happens. Growth Policy updates allow you the opportunity to submit input on how and where growth would be most appropriate, thus allowing you to influence the look and feel of your community and ultimately the County.

Is growth and development an issue for Jefferson County? While many parts of Jefferson County have remained relatively unchanged for decades, other areas have experienced rapid growth and development, which has significantly changed the landscape. Small unincorporated population centers, such as Montana City and Clancy, have seen their populations explode exponentially as development has occurred seemingly overnight. Similar changes have also occurred on the northern side of the county line in Lewis and Clark County as the City of Helena has rapidly expanded toward Jefferson County. Other areas of Jefferson County have also experienced growth and development on a smaller scale than what has occurred at the northern end over the past decade.

Residential and commercial developments now dot the landscape throughout Jefferson County where there once were open rangelands. As subdivision lots have become limited and people have developed a greater desire to move to more remote areas, housing and other development have been built on old mining claims, which has created its own challenges. As growth and development has increased and expanded further from population centers, Jefferson County's expenditures, particularly those associated with public facilities (*i.e. roads*) and providing public services (*i.e. road maintenance, fire protection, schools, etc.*) have been stretched thin or priorities have had to shift to accommodate for these rapid changes and the need to redistribute funds.

Not only has the Jefferson County's population changed, so has its major industries. The economy, which was once dominated by mining, logging, and agriculture, has shifted focus as these industries have declined and pasture lands, ranches, and farms have been sold. Currently more than half of Jefferson County's working age residents commute to neighboring counties to work. Based on these and other factors, it has become increasingly apparent that Jefferson County's economy could benefit from a broader array of industries.

Two of the Jefferson County's greatest assets are its landscape and natural resources. They have contributed significantly to helping shape the County's culture, history, and heritage, and have helped support the area's economy. Natural resources attracted the first visitors, miners, and settlers to the region. Today these assets continue to entice new people to settle or visit here. Many of them are captivated by the vast recreational opportunities that abound and the rural lifestyle that is found here. Jefferson County's officials and residents recognize that natural resources and the environment will likely continue to have a significant influence on the way the County grows and prospers into the next decade.

New and long-established residents are encouraged to take on an active role designing and shaping the County by participating in community discussions regarding Jefferson County's future. Each group provides a unique perspective that can help Jefferson County grow and prosper responsibly while retaining the characteristics and features that are valued most. Long-established residents are encouraged to share their knowledge of the area's history and to voice their concerns regarding what they would like to see preserved, protected, and promoted with regards to the rural lifestyle and sense of community that they have come to enjoy. New residents are encouraged to share ideas that complement and enhance the community's current values. Views and values expressed in the Growth Policy have been gleaned from the public survey data collected for this project.

As Jefferson County changes and evolves, the County Commissioners face increasingly difficult decisions regarding how they should lead the County and responsibly distribute the limited resources and funds. They are tasked with weighing the views and needs of county residents and equating those items to actions that help to best meet the public's needs and that ultimately help to maintain and enhance the rural character and sense of community that citizens here appreciate and desire to have.

The Growth Policy reflects the views and values of Jefferson County's residents. It was created with input from Jefferson County's citizens and officials including the Commissioners, Planning Board, and Planning Department. This Growth Policy is designed to serve as a record of the current and past conditions found here and be a guiding document for future growth and needs for the next five years. The Growth Policy is a living document, which requires that it be periodically reviewed and that it be updated as conditions in Jefferson County change.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This growth policy contains five sections which help provide the basis for achieving the goals developed by the County Planning Board. These sections include:

- Introduction: This section describes the adoption of the growth policy and the criteria for the growth policy's review and revision. Also described is the jurisdictional area that the growth policy covers and how interjurisdictional coordination will occur.
- Implementation: This section provides a succinct list of the County's goals, objectives, and actions to achieve them all collated from public outreach and work sessions.
- Characteristics & Conditions: This section provides the supplemental information used to come up with the goals, objectives, and actions.
- Administration & Regulations: This section designates the Staff and regulations that are used to assure responsible and safe land use and development occurs in Jefferson County. Review requirements and criteria for subdivisions also are addressed.
- Public Outreach Efforts: This section describes the process used to gather input and guidance from County residents on the opportunities and issues of importance to them.

INTRODUCTION

What is a Growth Policy?

A growth policy is a guiding document adopted by a city, town or county that outlines the community's vision for its future. Similar to what other states call comprehensive plans, a growth policy is used by local governments to guide decision-making about the community's land use and development. A growth policy is not a regulatory document and does not require regulations to be adopted and utilized. But regulations such as zoning and subdivision must be consistent with and supported by the growth policy, for the purposes of consistency and clarity.

Ultimately a growth policy is a community's plan for the future. It allows a community to identify its strengths and weaknesses and outline achievable steps for improvement. The Board of County Commissioners and Planning Board can then implement those steps through thoughtful consideration and reference to the growth policy when making decisions or taking regulatory actions. A growth policy can also prepare a community for competitive grant funding opportunities, as it demonstrates a commitment to an intentional and planned future.

Planning Area

Jefferson County's jurisdictional planning area includes all land within the boundaries of the Jefferson County line, excluding the incorporated limits of the City of Boulder and the Town of Whitehall.

Previous Planning Related Projects

Previous planning projects conducted or adopted by Jefferson County include:

- Update of Subdivision Regulations - in progress January 2025
- Community Health Improvement Plan - 2024
- Community Health Assessment (*CHA*) - 2024
- Tri-County Regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan (*CWPP*) - 2020
- Capital Improvements Plan & Fire Service Needs Assessment - 2020
- County-wide Fire Protection Assessment - 2022
- Recreation Park Plan - 2019
- Housing Needs Assessment - 2018
- Update to Pre-disaster Mitigation Plan, 2017
- Update of North Jefferson County Zoning Regulations - 2013
- Growth Policy - 2009
- Sunlight Zoning Regulations - 2009
- Corrected Milligan Canyon-Boulder Valley Zoning Regulations - 2004

- Right to Farm Policy, Resolution 31-2002 - 2002

Growth Policy Adoption

The Planning Board held a public hearing on [REDACTED] 2025, to gather resident input on the Growth Policy document and recommend adoption to the County Commission. The Commission held a public hearing on [REDACTED] to consider the Planning Board's recommendation. The Commission voted on [REDACTED] to formally adopt the Planning Board's recommendation.

Conditions and Timing for Review and Revision

This document is a comprehensive update of the County's 2009 Growth Policy and is meant to look five years into the future. This document will be reviewed every five years from the date of its adoption. The Planning Board will be responsible for reviewing the Growth Policy and making recommendations to the County Commission regarding needed revisions or changes. Future reviews will include an evaluation of every section. It is anticipated that a full update of the Growth Policy will be necessary within ten years of its original adoption.

The Growth Policy may also be revised when a situation or issue has been identified by the Planning Board, County Commission and County residents that necessitate changes. It is also possible that Legislative changes to statutes may require amendments or changes. Finally, amendments to the Growth Policy may also be necessary when litigation elsewhere in Montana sets a legal precedent that is contrary to the stated goals, objectives, or implementation strategies identified in the Growth Policy.

Interjurisdictional Coordination & Cooperation

Montana State law requires that the growth policy must provide direction on how the governing body plans to coordinate with other levels of government. In Jefferson County, this pertains to local governments including the City of Boulder and Town of Whitehall and federal and state agencies including the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

Many of the recommendations and action steps noted within the Growth Policy will require a level of coordination between different entities to be accomplished. Jefferson County does not have formalized agreements set up for the intergovernmental coordination, yet lines of communication between the County and other levels of government are open, with the entities working together on local and regional issues. Currently Jefferson County's Board of County Commissioners meets several times a year with staff and

elected officials from other local, state, and federal jurisdictions for updates and to coordinate activities. This practice is expected to continue in the future. The establishment of intergovernmental agreements could be explored if they become necessary.

Chapter Summary

This growth policy contains five sections which help provide the basis for achieving the goals developed by the County Planning Board. These sections include:

- Introduction: This section describes the adoption of the growth policy and the criteria for the growth policy's review and revision. Also described is the jurisdictional area that the growth policy covers and how interjurisdictional coordination will occur.
- Implementation: This section provides a succinct list of the County's goals, objectives, and actions to achieve them all collated from public outreach and work sessions.
- Characteristics & Conditions: This section provides the supplemental information used to come up with the goals, objectives, and actions.
- Administration & Regulations: This section designates the Staff and regulations that are used to assure responsible and safe land use and development occurs in Jefferson County. Review requirements and criteria for subdivisions also are addressed.
- Public Outreach Efforts: This section describes the process used to gather advice and guidance from County residents on the opportunities and issues of importance to them.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Introduction

The following are the goals, objectives, and actions that County residents would like to achieve to address the opportunities and challenges identified in this plan. The goals and objectives in this section are listed by topic and are followed by the actions identified to achieve them. Actions meant to implement the Growth Policy include, but are not limited to, considering how to update the North County Zoning Regulations and County Subdivision Regulations; ensuring coordination and cooperation between the County, the City of Boulder, and the Town of Whitehall; and the upgrade of County infrastructure such as roads and bridges and day to day County services or other community services that are important to residences.

Goals, Objectives & Actions

Economy

County residents need economic opportunities and stability to prosper in a constantly changing global and regional economies. The County should work to strengthen and diversify its economy.

Economic Goals	Economic Objectives
E-1: Work with partners such as Jefferson Local Development Corporation (JLDC) and Headwater Resource Conservation and Development (Headwaters RC&D) and others to improve economic development throughout the County.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage the development of a highly skilled and trained regional workforce. b. Facilitate the provision of infrastructure (roads, bridges, utilities) and local services (healthcare, emergency service, education) necessary to encourage economic development. c. Continue to request that the legislature and the state’s Congressional delegation support the sustainable and responsible development of natural resources in the County. d. As applicable, sponsor or assist with the development of applications for funding from the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) or the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant Economic Development (CDBG-ED) Program for infrastructure needed to support business expansion. e. As applicable, sponsor or assist with the development of applications for funding from programs such as USDA Rural Development’s Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program or Montana’s Big Sky Trust Fund (BSTF) Program to finance equipment purchases or workforce training assistance. f. Facilitate an assessment of realistic business opportunities in the County.
E-2: Encourage responsible economic development in the County.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Economic development that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates jobs that pay a “livable wage.” • Increases tax revenues in the County with a net tax benefit. • Have acceptable aesthetic, environmental, infrastructure and service impacts.

Economic Goals	Economic Objectives
E-3. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties and buildings.	a. Examine the use of programs such as Brownfields to facilitate the potential redevelopment of vacant lots, contaminated properties, and/or abandoned buildings. Brownfields projects address contaminated properties and buildings.
E-4. Maintain the economic viability of the County's agricultural economy.	a. Encourage the use of conservation easements to protect agricultural lands. b. Support landowner-initiated zoning. c. Support the work of the Jefferson County Conservation District. d. Support the work of MSU Extension and regional federal grants for agriculture.

Economic Actions by Objective			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
E-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and promote opportunities that help create a highly skilled and trained regional work force. 	County, JLDC, Headwaters, RC&D	Ongoing
E-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and ensure the CIP is used by the Commission for budgeting for infrastructure projects. 	County	Fiscal year 2025 - 2026
E-1.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local legislature representatives and the state's Congressional delegation periodically to express the current needs of Jefferson County's residents and reiterate the need sustainable and responsible development of natural resources. 	County	Ongoing
E-1.d-e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep informed about programs that help support businesses including workforce training assistance, business infrastructure, and expansion and sponsor or assist with associated applications. 	County, JLDC, and Headwaters RC&D	Ongoing
E-1.f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment of realistic business opportunities in the County. 	County, JLDC, and Headwaters RC&D	2026
E-2.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine all potential TEDDs or TIF Districts to ensure that there are tangible and direct benefits to County residents. 	County	Ongoing
E-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of Brownfields properties and prioritize those that have legitimate redevelopment potential. 	County, Headwaters RC&D and Montana DEQ	Ongoing
E-4.a-d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue supporting programs that help maintain the economic viability of Jefferson County's agricultural economy. 	County	Ongoing

Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Well maintained infrastructure is necessary to ensure the health and safety of County residents and to help promote economic growth. Infrastructure managed by the

County can range from roads and bridges to buildings and equipment such as graders, loaders, trucks, and computers.

Infrastructure Actions by Objective			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
IPF-1.a-b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County CIP and ensure the CIP is used by the Commission for budgeting for infrastructure projects. 	County	Fiscal year 2025-2026
IPF-1.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply for appropriate funding sources for County infrastructure. 	County and Great West Engineering	Ongoing
IPF-2.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County CIP to include the needs of water and sewer districts. 	County	Fiscal year 2025-2026
IPF-2.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and apply for appropriate funding sources for water and sewer districts. 	County, Headwaters RC&D and Great West Engineering	Ongoing
IPF-3.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County CIP to include the needs of fire protection and emergency medical services. 	County Commission and Jefferson Valley Rural Ambulance District	Fiscal year 2025-2026
IPF-3.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Rural Improvement District (RID) for county-wide fire protection water supplies. 	County	2027

Infrastructure Goals	Infrastructure Objectives
IPF-1: Provide County residents with safe and cost-effective infrastructure i.e., bridges, roads, and buildings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the County Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is updated on a regular basis to identify needed projects, prioritize projects, and determine the costs of needed projects. Ensure that the County uses the CIP for its annual budgeting purposes. Identify funding sources such grants and loans to supplement the County's general funds to maintain and upgrade County infrastructure.
IPF-2: Ensure the County's unincorporated communities have adequate facilities and services including law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, water-sewer, schools, and community/youth centers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the infrastructure and equipment needs and priorities of unincorporated communities. Support unincorporated communities (Basin, Clancy etc.) with the upgrade and maintenance of water and sewer districts through state and federal grant and loan funding.
IPF-3: Ensure law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services in the County have adequate facilities, and equipment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Include law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services facilities and equipment in the updated Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). Consider funding mechanisms to provide County-wide fire protection water supplies.

Local Services

Quality of life for County residents depends upon many things, particularly the provision of services such as law enforcement, fire protection, libraries, parks and recreation, healthcare, education, emergency medical services, senior services, solid waste disposal and utilities such as electricity and Broadband.

Local Services Goals	Local Services Objectives
LS-1: Ensure that residents of the County have adequate services such as fire protection, emergency medical, social, recreation, etc.	a. Improve incentives to ensure that community services in the County have adequate staff and/or volunteers i.e., training, equipment, facilities, compensation etc.
LS-2: County owned parklands should be a benefit to the community.	a. Understand the location and characteristics of the parkland the County owns. b. Ensure parklands are safe, maintained, and accessible to the public. c. Encourage the connection of parklands and public lands when developers, community organizations, adjacent local governments and Jefferson County are planning for new parklands and trails.
LS-3: Maintain and improve public transportation services for County residents.	a. Support transportation services such as Whitehall Transportation. b. Encourage the coordination and expansion of transportation services (Whitehall Transportation) within Jefferson County and the surrounding areas.
LS-4: Ensure that effective and readily available emergency medical services are provided to County residents.	a. Clearly understand the current situation with the provision of emergency medical services in the County including limitations, challenges, and opportunities and to identify any potential solutions.
LS-5: Adequate and affordable utilities are available throughout all of Jefferson County.	a. Encourage the expansion of utilities throughout Jefferson County to provide adequate services to all users wanting to connect. b. Provide all County residents with the most modern telecommunications infrastructure possible, including Broadband internet service and fiber optic access. c. Provide locations for the installation of utilities like county road rights-of-ways and public utility easements.
LS-6. Support the operation and growth of the County's public libraries.	a. Understand the characteristics regarding library usage.

Local Services Actions by Objective			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
LS-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment/evaluation of the organizations and groups providing community services in Jefferson County to determine how best to support their needs for staffing and volunteer recruitment and retainment. 	County and other partners	2025
LS-2.a-b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a parkland inventory, assessment, and management plan(s). 	County	2025
LS-2.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with developers, community organizations like Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT), adjacent local governments, BLM, and USFS for regional planning of parks and trails to provide connective and expanded benefit to the public. 	County, BLM, USFS, adjacent local governments, Prickly Pear Land Trust and other partners	Ongoing
LS-3.a-b.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment/evaluation of the public transportation system to understand current needs in the County. 	County, Rocky Mountain Development Council and Whitehall Transportation Service	Ongoing
LS-4.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an assessment/evaluation of the emergency medical services to identify options for improving the services in the County. 	County, EMS providers, fire protection authorities	2025 - 2026
LS-5.a-b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support projects that expand utility service options available within Jefferson County. 	County and JLDC	Ongoing
LS-6.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an assessment/evaluation of the services provided by the public libraries to determine the needs of the library users. 	County and North Jefferson County Library Board, Friends of the Library groups	2025

Land Use

The County needs additional housing and increased business opportunities. To achieve this the County’s land use regulations must be predictable and fair. New development should occur in areas with limited natural hazards such as wildfire and flooding and where it is efficient for the County to provide services and comply with state statute.

Land Use Goals	Land Use Objectives
LU-1: Ensure the County Subdivision Regulations comply with state statute.	a. Update the County Subdivision Regulations.
LU-2: Ensure that all County Zoning Regulations comply with state statute.	a. Review and if necessary, update County Zoning Regulations.
LU-3: Discourage new development in areas with hazards such as flooding, wildfire, slope, and limited groundwater.	a. New subdivisions will not be approved within flood prone areas or in areas outside of established fire protection authorities having jurisdiction. b. New subdivisions will be discouraged in areas of high to severe wildfire hazard unless mitigation steps are taken to reduce the risks including fuels management and provide safe road access.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Discourage development on highly productive agricultural lands such as those with prime and unique soils or are irrigated.
<p>LU-4: Discourage new residential development in areas with limited public services unless limitations are adequately mitigated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update the County Subdivision Regulations to better address service issues for rural subdivisions. b. New subdivision roads will be maintained by property owners within each subdivision through effective mechanisms such as Rural Improvement Districts (RID). c. Subdivisions should be located within established fire protection authorities having jurisdiction.
<p>LU-5: Reduce the risk of wildfire in the County and minimize losses to residents and property owners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the commercial harvest of timber on public and private lands. b. Encourage the USFS, BLM and MT DNRC to undertake forest management activities on lands managed by each agency. c. Ensure the Design and Improvement Standards in the County Subdivision Regulations address the hazard of wildfire. d. Educate homeowners in areas of the wildland urban interface about Fire Wise practices.
<p>LU-6: Identify land for new residential and commercial development that is safe and efficient to provide public services to.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Understand the natural hazards, subdivision and residential construction activity, conservation easements, highly productive agricultural lands and infrastructure and services such as roads, bridges, electrical and broadband service, and emergency service providers etc. that impact the development of land in the County.
<p>LU-7: Ensure that addressing, and road naming in the County are accurate and to help with integration into the state and nationwide NG911 system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review the County's current addressing and road naming policy.

Land Use Actions by Objective			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
LU-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the County Subdivision Regulations on a bi-annual basis as needed. 	County	After each legislative session
LU-2.a-b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update County Zoning Regulations as needed 	County	After each legislative session
LU-3.a-c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County Subdivision Regulations to reflect these requirements. 	County	2025
LU-4.a-c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County Subdivision Regulations to reflect these requirements. 	County	2025
LU-5.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage projects involving the commercial harvesting of timber on private and public lands. 	County	Ongoing
LU-5.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working with USFS, BLM, and MT DNRC to determine locations where forest management work should be completed to help reduce fire risk. 	County, Tri-County FireSafe Working Group, fire protection authorities having jurisdiction	Ongoing
LU-5.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County Subdivision Regulations to reflect this requirement. 	County	2025
LU-5.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group to provide wildfire assessments and practical wildfire mitigation education. 	County, Tri-County FireSafe Working Group, fire protection authorities having jurisdiction	Ongoing
LU-6.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a GIS mapping inventory and assessment to identify those lands in the County containing the least constraints and challenges for residential and commercial development. 	County	2025 - 2026
LU-7.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the addressing and road naming policy for the County. Incorporate the updated policy into the County Subdivision Regulations. 	County	2026

Housing

Safe and structurally sound housing is essential for the well-being of all County residents. The County will work to identify ways to provide housing options for all *residents*.

Housing Goals	Housing Objectives
H-1: Identify ways to provide housing options for all County residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Obtain an up to date understanding of the housing market and housing needs in the County. b. Identify barriers to the development of workforce and affordable housing. c. Coordinate any future housing efforts of the County and City of Boulder and Town of Whitehall in promoting housing options. d. Identify funding sources available to developers for the construction of higher density housing options such as workforce and senior housing. e. Support grant and loan applications such as CDBG Housing Stabilization funds for the rehabilitation of existing low to moderate income housing units. f. Maintain relationships with housing assistance experts such as NeighborWorks Montana.

Housing Actions by Objective			
Objective	Action	Responsibility	Schedule
H-1.a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an updated housing needs assessment and action plan for Jefferson County. 	County, Rocky Mountain Development Council, Headwaters RC&D and other partners.	Fiscal year 2026 - 2027
H-1.b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a housing advisory committee for all three jurisdictions. 	County, City of Boulder, Town of Whitehall	2026
H-1.c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and document funding sources for housing. 	County, Rocky Mountain Development Council, Headwaters RC&D and other partners.	Ongoing
H-1.d-f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written support to housing grant applications as needed. 	County	Ongoing

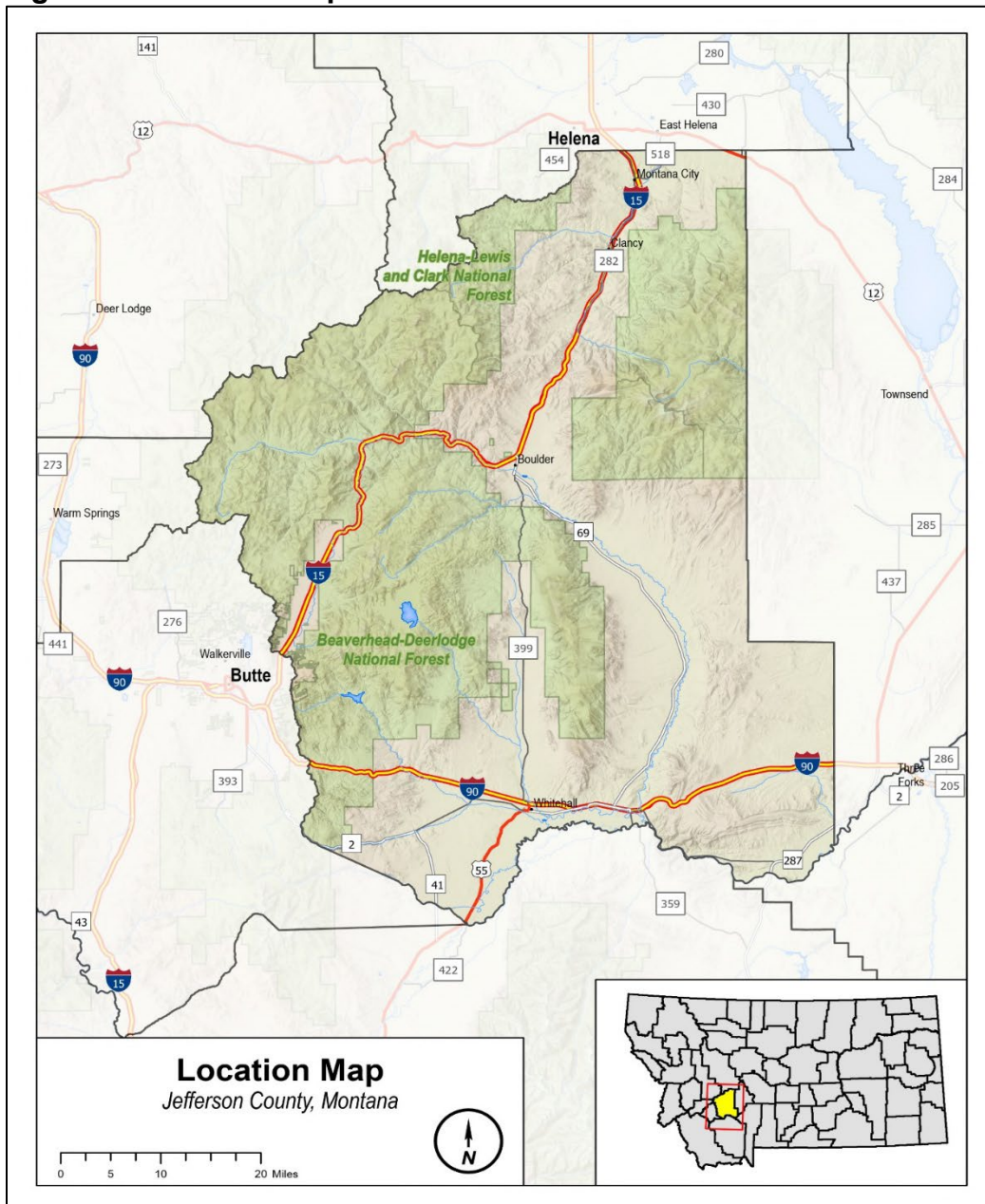
CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS

Features

Overview

Jefferson County is in southwestern Montana within the Rocky Mountains. In 2022, the County had an estimated population of 12,826 people. The county contains the two municipalities of Boulder and Whitehall and many unincorporated communities including Basin, Cardwell, Clancy, Elkhorn, Elk Park, Jefferson City and Montana City. Figure 1 contains a map of Jefferson County and its communities.

Figure 1 - Location Map



Geography

Like the surrounding counties, the topography of Jefferson County is a mix of river and stream valleys, forested mountains, and hilly grasslands. Elevations in the County vary from 4,130 feet at the junction of the Jefferson County, Broadwater County and Lewis and Clark County lines up to 9,414 feet at Crow Peak in the Elkhorn Mountains. The Boulder and Jefferson rivers are the largest waterways located in the County; they flow into the Missouri River.

Climate

The climate of the County is considered continental with cold and dry winters, cool and moist springs and falls, and hot and dry summers. For example, the average daily high and low temperatures for January and July for the City of Boulder from 1880 to 2016 are in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Average Daily Temperatures for Boulder, 1880-2016

Average Daily Temperatures for Boulder	
January	High: 33.4 degrees F
	Low: 9.6 degrees F
July	High: 82.7 degrees F
	Low: 47.9 degrees F

Source: Western Regional Climate Center, 2024

Like most of Montana, Jefferson County’s climate can be one of extremes but is mild and dry. The average annual precipitation in the City of Boulder was 10.97 inches between 1880 and 2016, with most of the precipitation falling between May 1st - September 30th with May and June being the wettest months of the year. The variable temperatures and precipitation levels can result in a limited growing season for agricultural crops and residential gardens. Variable temperatures and precipitation levels can impact agricultural and farming operations and recreational opportunities particularly during drought conditions. Temperatures and precipitation can also have an impact on the forests and rangelands, which can lead to changes in the fire danger.

Land Cover Types

Most of the land in Jefferson County is covered by vegetation. The predominant vegetation types are forest, grassland and shrubland as demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Land Cover Types Present

Cover Type	Acres	Percentage of Total Vegetation
Forest	532,156	50.1%
Grassland	287,597	27.1%
Shrubland	169,524	16.0%
Mixed Cropland	44,207	4.2%
Other Types (water, urban areas etc.)	28,541	2.6%

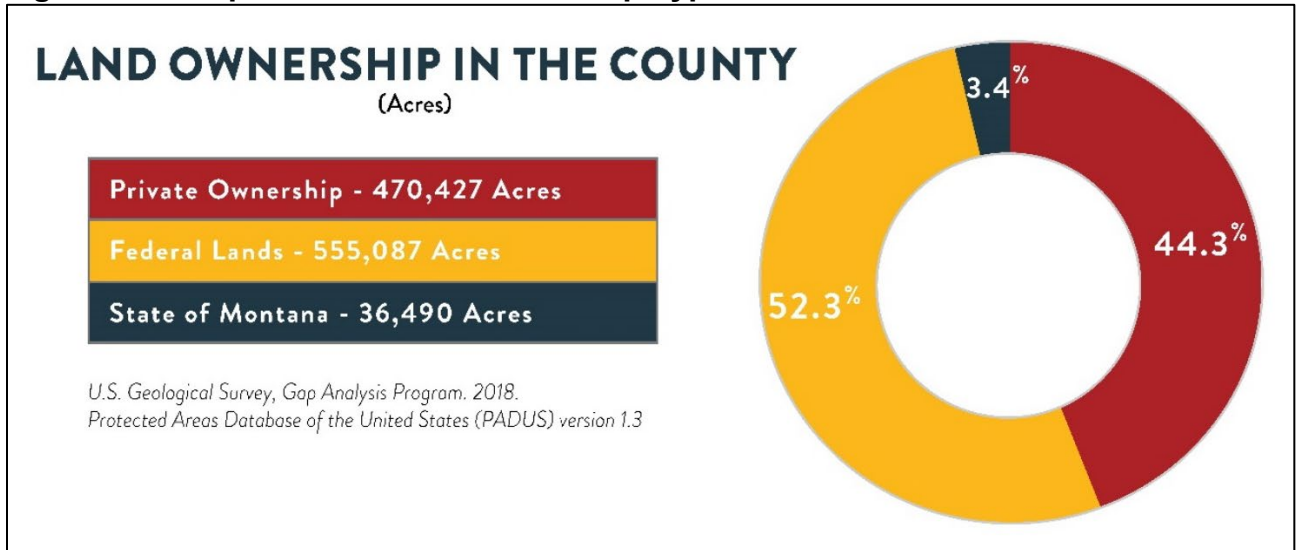
Source: NASA MODIS Land Cover Types, 2006

Demographics

Land Ownership

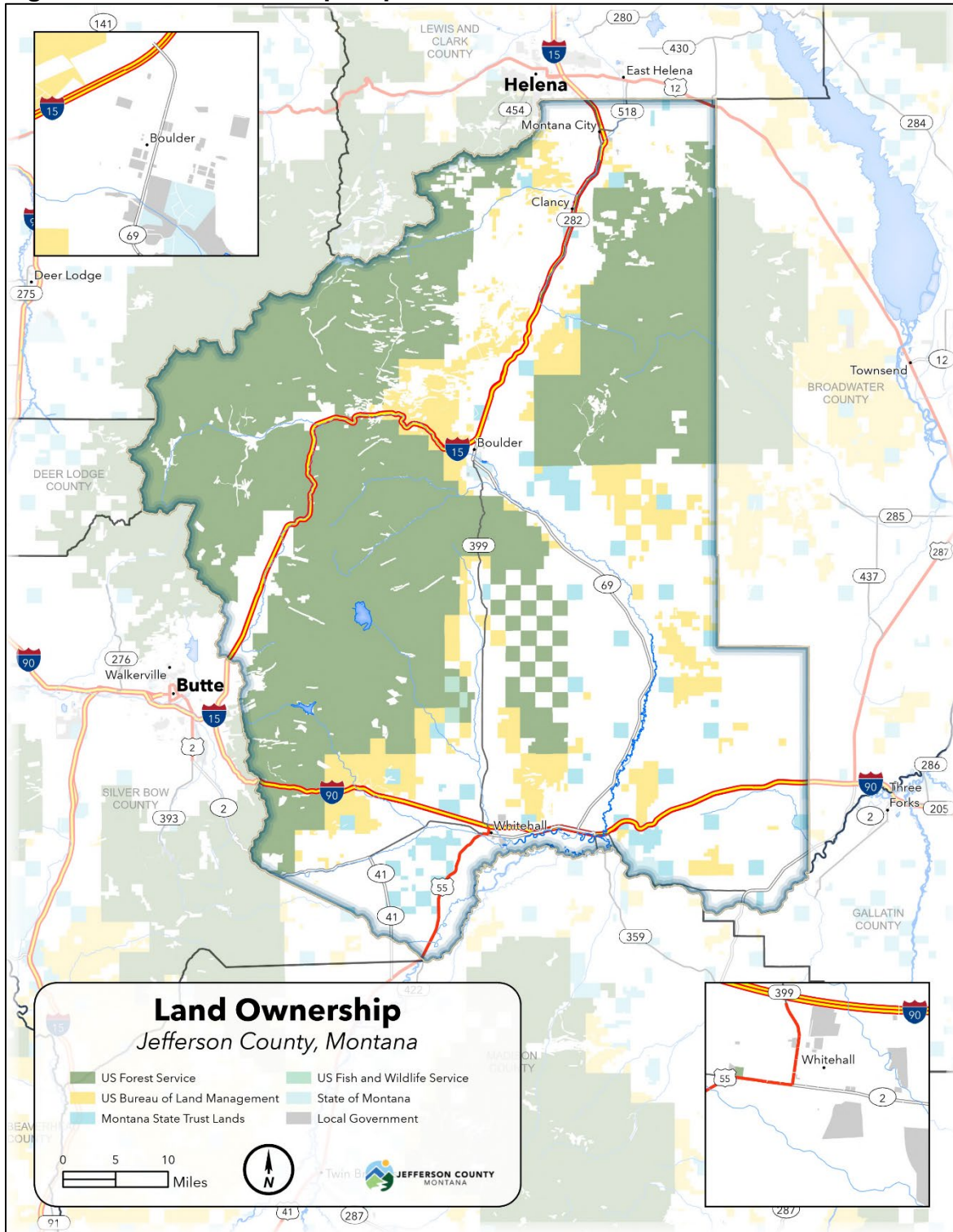
Jefferson County encompasses 1,062,004 acres of land. Of that acreage, 470,427 acres are privately owned, and 591,577-acres are publicly owned. Ownership of public lands is held by three main entities: the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the State of Montana per Figure 4. Figure 5 contains a map showing land ownership throughout the county. Private lands located within Jefferson County are used for several purposes including residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, mining, and forestry. Private lands consisting of smaller residential properties are currently scattered throughout the county, with greater concentrations of residential development occurring near Boulder, Whitehall, Montana City, Basin, Jefferson City, and Clancy. Commercial properties tend to be located near the interstate or highway corridors particularly around Boulder, Whitehall, Clancy, and Montana City.

Figure 4 - Comparison of Land Ownership Types



The large amount of public land in the County has significant impacts, particularly from an economic and land management standpoint. Public lands do not directly contribute to the property tax revenues of the County as do privately owned lands. In addition, much of the public lands are managed under rules and regulations created outside of Jefferson County in either Helena, Montana or Washington, D.C. The state legislature and United States Congress do not necessarily have the same priorities for land management as County residents.

Figure 5 - Land Ownership Map



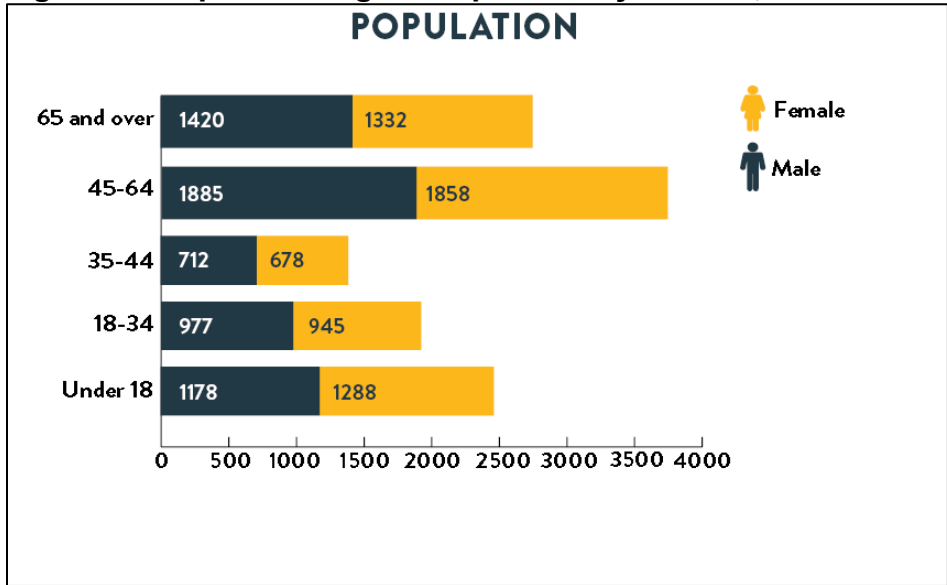
Population

Since 2010, the County has experienced a gradual increase in population. According to Census data compiled by Headwaters Economics, in 2010 the County's population

was estimated at 11,166 people, and by 2022, it was estimated to have increased by almost ten percent to 12,826 people. In 2022, the Census indicated that the median age of County residents was 47.0 years of age. This was an increase of 3.1% from 2010, when the median age was estimated at 45.6 years.

Jefferson County has seen a dramatic increase in the number of people age 65 and over. That age group grew from approximately 1,441 people in 2010 to 2,752 in 2022. Census data also shows that the County has seen a significant decrease in the number of people in the 45 to 64 age group: dropping from approximately 4,264 people to 3,743. The County also saw significant growth in the age group 18-34 going from an estimated 1,467 people in 2010 to almost 2,000 in 2022. The dramatic increase in people in the age group 65 and over explains the increase in the County’s median age over the last ten plus years. Figure 6 shows a comparison of each age group by gender in 2022.

Figure 6 - Population Age Comparison by Gender, 2022



Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

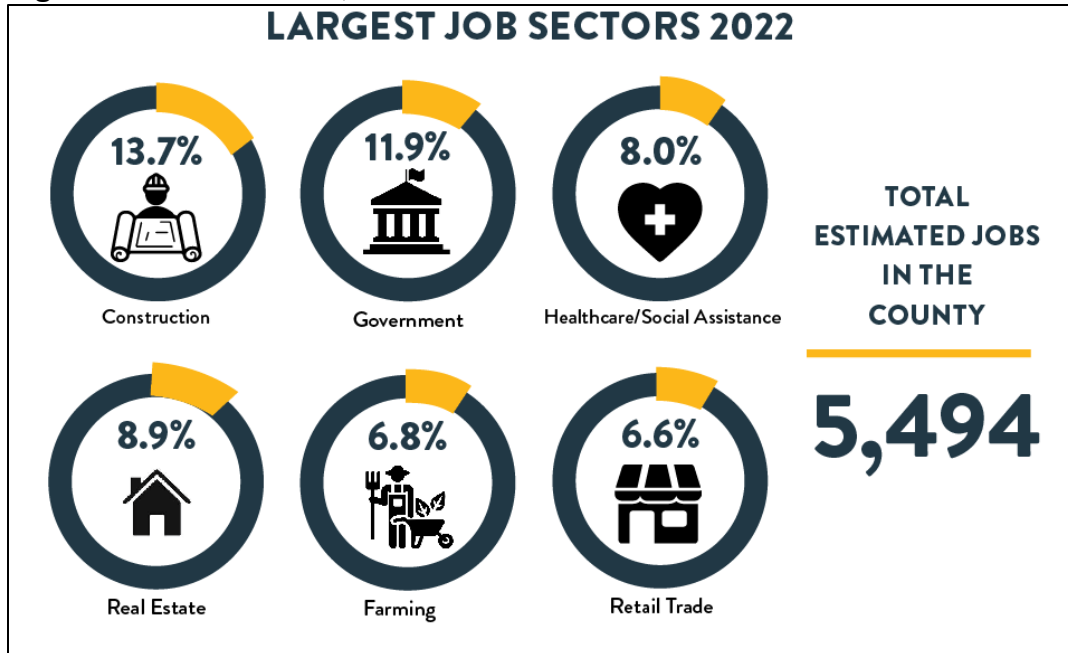
The County should monitor the demographics of residents over the next five years to help ensure adequate services are available for all age groups. Particular attention should be paid to the senior population since they may need more services and supporting facilities. As migration patterns and levels change, local needs may change so periodic assessment should occur.

Economy

Employment

Estimates from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis shows that from 2010 to 2022, jobs numbers in Jefferson County increased from an estimated 4,658 jobs to 5,494. According to Figure 7, the County exhibits a diverse economy in terms of the present job sectors, but opportunities for expansion should always be explored.

Figure 7 - Job Sectors, 2022



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

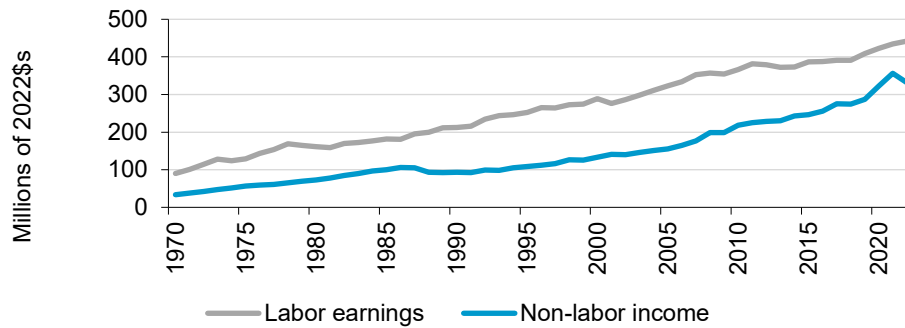
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 56% of Jefferson County's residents work outside of Jefferson County, likely in larger neighboring communities including Helena, Bozeman, and Butte and smaller communities such as Three Forks, East Helena, Deer Lodge, and Anaconda. Telecommuting opportunities expanded following COVID, which has allowed some residents to live in Jefferson County while working anywhere in the world. Telecommuting has helped to increase job opportunities that previously were not possible.

Personal Income

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

Figure 8 depicts an increase in the personal incomes of Jefferson County residents from 1970 to 2022. The total of the personal incomes increased from approximately \$123 million to approximately \$770 million. Between 1970 and 2022, personal income accounted for 57.1 percent of labor earnings and non-labor income accounted for 42.9 percent. Non-labor income includes income dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments (i.e., government retirement and disability insurance benefits, medical payments).

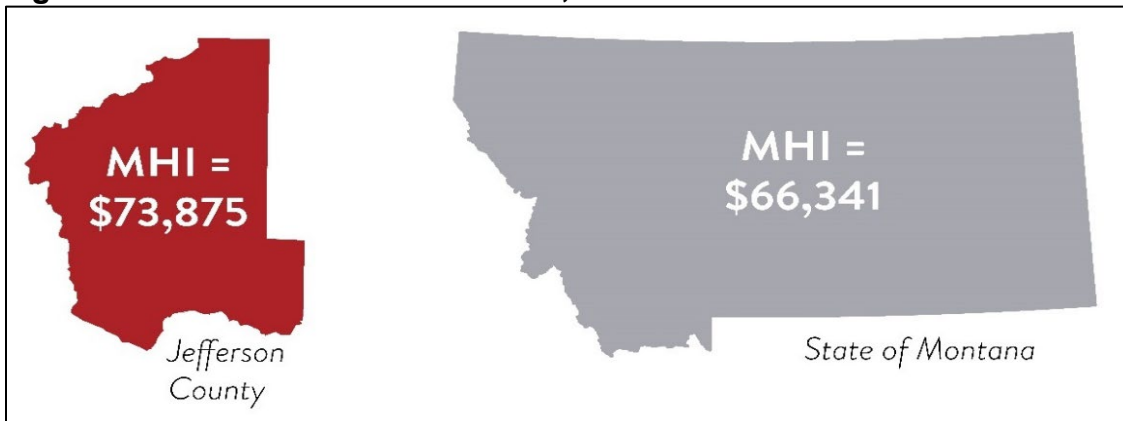
Figure 8 - Components of Personal Income, 1970-2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor. 2023. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

Census data indicates that Jefferson County’s median household income (MHI) for 2022 was greater than Montana’s MHI as noted in Figure 9.

Figure 9 - Median Household Income, 2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor. 2023. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

Property Taxes

The Montana Department of Revenue's data indicates, the market value of real property in the County has increased steadily, while the taxable value remained stable. In 2014, the market value of all real property in Jefferson County was over \$830 million. By 2023 the market value had dramatically increased to over \$2.7 billion or approximately a 236 percent increase. During the same period, taxable values in the County only increased from approximately \$28 million to over \$45 million.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a funding mechanism under state law that would allow the County to set aside revenues for “blighted properties” within the County. TIF funding could be used for improvements such as installing or upgrading infrastructure within the district. Expenditures of TIF revenues are restricted to certain uses and may not be spent outside the district. After improvements are completed, the district sunsets and the incremental amount can be used as revenue for funding throughout the county.

Jefferson County created two Tax Increment Financing Industrial Districts (TIFIDs) in 2010 aimed to attract businesses that could increase economic growth, create jobs, and enhance the local tax base. The North Jefferson County TIFID is located on Montana State Highway 582 adjacent to the Jefferson County and Lewis and Clark County line approximately one mile south of East Helena. Infrastructure including high-speed internet, natural gas lines, power lines, and a road network were installed to support the district’s businesses. This TIFID is almost fully developed with a mixture of industrial uses. This TIFID is set to sunset at the end of 2024. When the district sunsets, the tax increment will be returned. The Sunlight TIFID is located approximately 4.5 miles east of Whitehall and is part of the Golden Sunlight Mine. The Jefferson Local Development Corporation leases land located within the Sunlight Business Park Ph. 1 from Golden Sunlight Mine and there is the potential to lease additional ground to add phases to the business park. Graveled roads have been installed within Ph. 1, but the roads still need to be paved. gas lines, power lines, and high-speed internet have been extended to the business park. There is a community well and community wastewater system that serve Ph. 1. A water treatment system will need to be installed once there are 25 full time employees working within the business park.

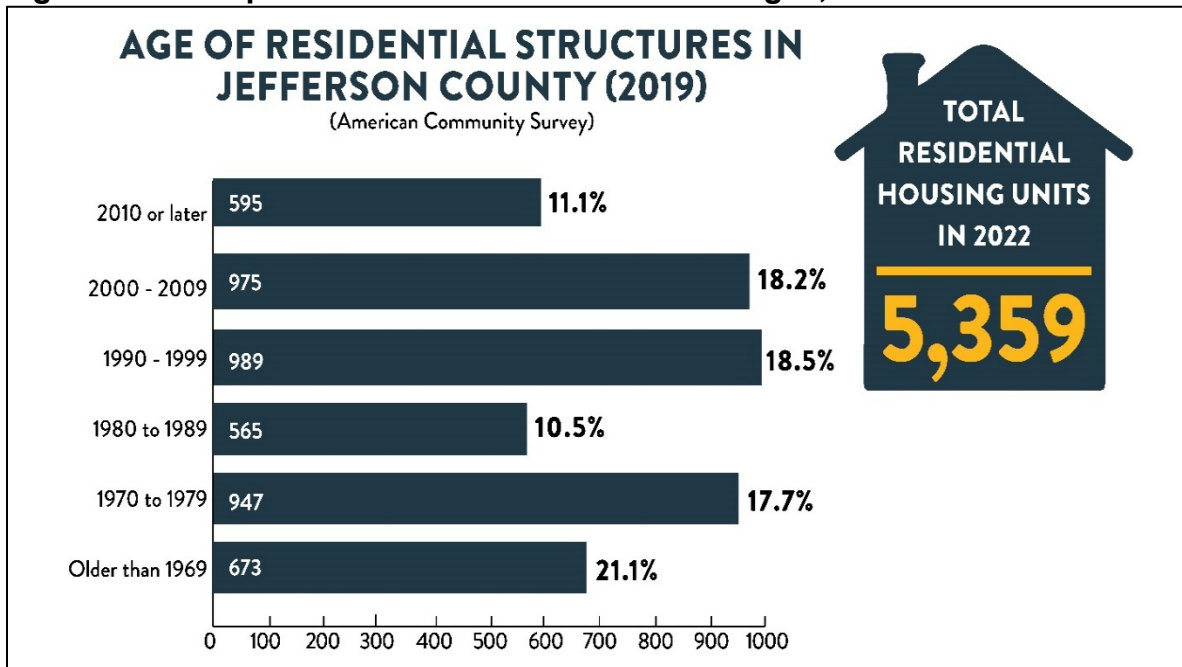
While the Tax Increment Financing Districts do set aside tax moneys to be used only in the district to assist with such areas as infrastructure improvement, they are also beneficial. They provide a means to bring infrastructure into deficient areas, which allows properties to be developed for commercial or industrial purposes, thus helping to expand the local economy.

Housing

Characteristics

Data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey included in Figure 10 estimated that there were 5,359 residential housing units in Jefferson County in 2022. Of that total number, an estimated 47.8 percent of the residential housing units were built after 1990.

Figure 10 - Comparison of Residential Structure Ages, 2019



Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

Generally, the older a home is the more maintenance and upkeep it requires. Older homes are also often less energy efficient, and the increased cost to heat or cool them can add to the overall cost of housing. Increased costs for maintenance and utilities can be a significant economic burden for those owning or living in older homes.

According to the 2020 Decennial Census, there were 481 vacant housing units in Jefferson County. These may be either guest houses, second homes, or recreation cabins. The vacancy of these structures can affect their long-term condition, as vacancy may be is generally related to a lack of maintenance and upkeep.

According to Census Data, in 2022, the median home value in Jefferson County was \$354,700. The house purchase affordability index (HPAI) for Jefferson County was 4.80. At the same time, the median housing process in Montana was \$233,100 and the HPAI index for the State 3.94. A higher index indicates house values are the less

affordable relative to household income. The HPAI is derived from the ratio of house values to median household income.

According to the American Communities approximately 16.9% of County residents rent their homes and median gross rent in the County between 2018 and 2022 was reported at \$869 per month. The remaining residents own their homes.

There is a need for additional housing options in Jefferson County to help provide additional housing stock to meet current housing needs and those in the immediate future.

The County participated in the Tri-County Housing Needs Assessment in 2018. Due to changes in the market and population growth in the state, the County should consider working with the City of Boulder, Town of Whitehall, other unincorporated local communities, and the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to complete a new housing assessment that better reflects the realities of today's housing market throughout Jefferson County.

Potential for Redevelopment & Repurposing

Jefferson County has many underutilized, old buildings, including commercial or industrial or residential, properties that have the potential to be redeveloped and repurposed for housing or commercial space. Some of these properties and buildings have environmental constraints that make them less desirable for redevelopment. These can include soil or groundwater pollution or building materials such as asbestos. There are mechanisms that can help to “cleanup” and redevelop such properties and buildings in the Brownfields Program.

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the Brownfields Program provides assessment, planning, and cleanup assistance for community properties such as former gas stations, vacant historic buildings, and former commercial/industrial sites to help encourage their redevelopment. The first step in using the program to clean up a property is to undertake a targeted brownfields assessment. This is an environmental assessment of a site. Such an assessment may consist of a phase I site assessment; a phase II site assessment; and/or development of cleanup plans, including cost estimates. A phase I assessment typically does not involve soil or groundwater sampling or building materials sampling, while a phase II assessment does. To be eligible for such an assessment a site must meet the following qualifications:

- be a clear benefit to the community,
- applicant must not have contributed to the contamination, and
- must meet the definition of a brownfields site.

Jefferson County is currently working with Headwaters RC&D and MDEQ on two Brownfields projects. The first project is the Clancy Old Red Schoolhouse (CORSH). The assessment has been finished for the CORSH building and the cleanup will begin soon. The cleanup will abate lead-based paint and asbestos in areas that are currently closed off from public use and allow the CORSH to expand the capacity to host community events. The second project is Cottage 5, which is an old institutional building located in Boulder. The assessment phase for Cottage 5 has been completed and cleanup will begin in the next year. The county is currently considering restoring this building to be used as a medical facility housing Jefferson County's Health Department and other health related businesses. Three other potential Brownfields projects are also being explored in Boulder (Hot Springs), Jefferson City (Ting's Bar), and Clancy (General Store/Clancy Gas Station).

Local Services & Public Facilities

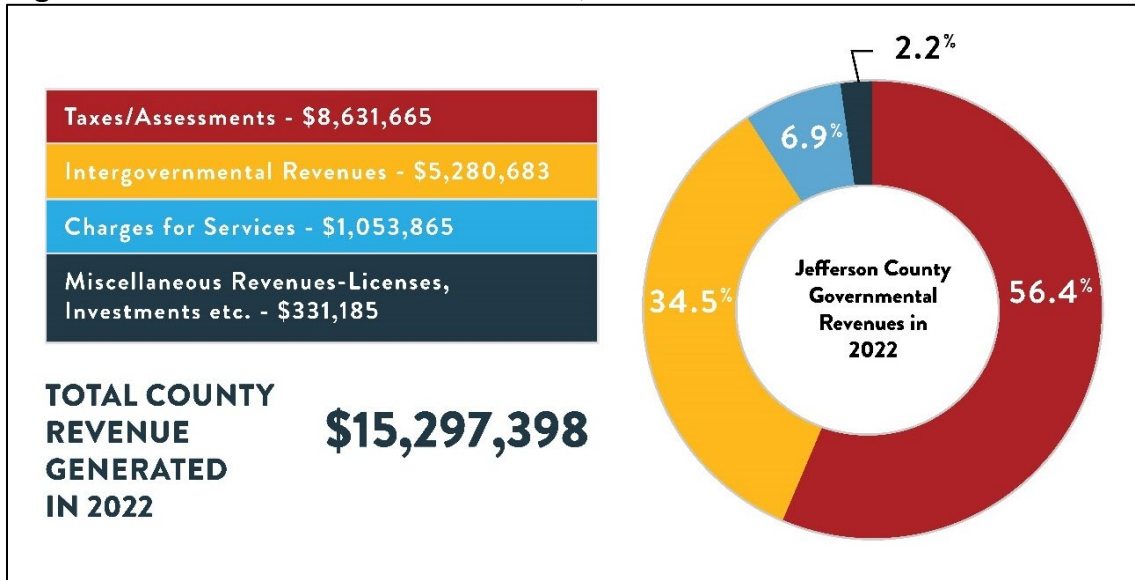
Introduction

Providing services and maintaining reliable infrastructure is one of the primary functions of local government. Services provided by the County include, but are not limited to, roads, law enforcement, environmental health, public health, planning, libraries, and solid waste. Infrastructure that the County is responsible for maintaining includes buildings, roads, bridges, parks, and solid waste facilities. Major equipment includes patrol vehicles, loaders, and trucks. Minor equipment includes computers and other office equipment. Providing these services, infrastructure and equipment requires the County to collect sufficient revenue through taxes, fees, and other means to cover its costs.

Based upon data from the Local Government Services Bureau of the State of Montana and the County, in 2022 the County generated almost \$15.3 million in governmental revenues, represented in Figure 11. The two largest sources of revenue in that year were from taxes and assessments, which were over \$8.6 million and State and Federal intergovernmental payments which were over \$5.2 million.

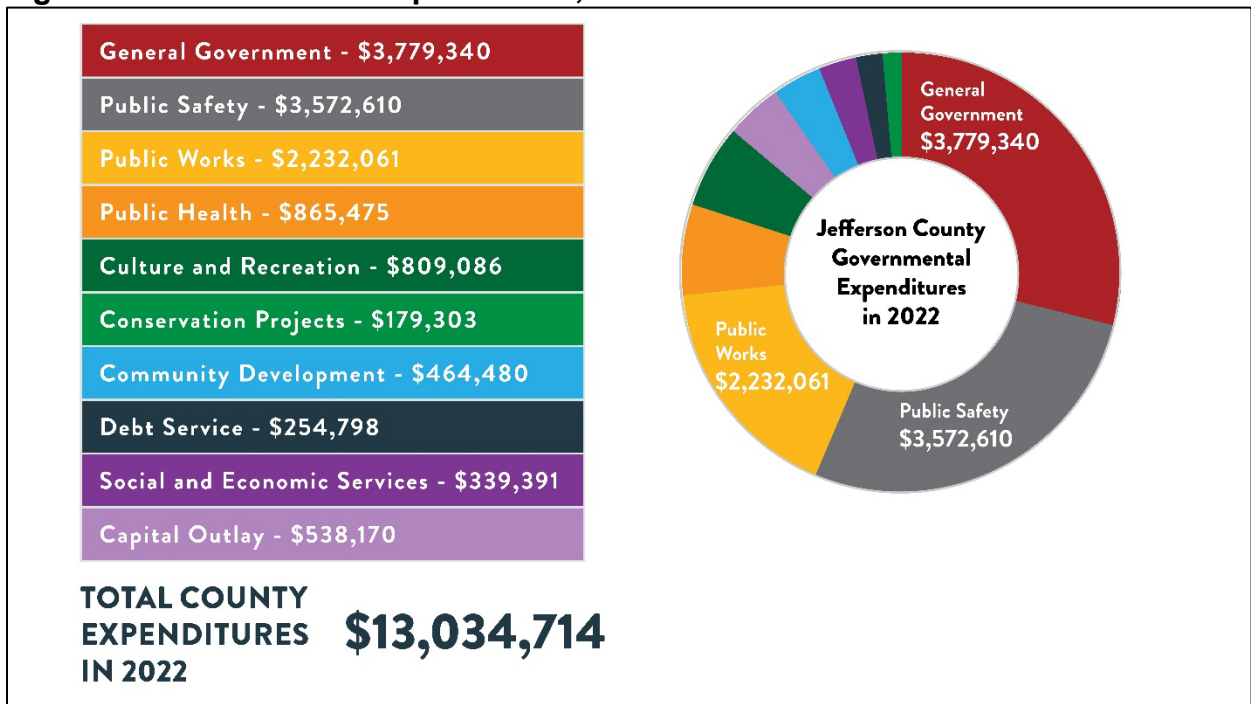
The Local Government Services Bureau reported that the County had expenditures of over \$13 million in 2022. The County's greatest expenditures were associated with General Government Services, Public Safety and Public Works as depicted in Figure 12.

Figure 11 - Total Revenues Generated, 2022



Source: Financial Statements-Jefferson County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2022.

Figure 12 - Government Expenditures, 2022



Source: Source: Financial Statements-Jefferson County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2022

Great West has worked in the area for decades leading to a strong understanding of local geographic issues, desired growth trajectory, and concerns.

Jefferson County adopted a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) in 2020 to guide the operation and maintenance of the County's infrastructure and equipment. The CIP is a 5-year plan and should be updated in the next year or two. The CIP serves as the County's strategy for the maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure and equipment. The CIP typically includes the identification of projects, evaluation and prioritization of projects, and the development of cost estimates and funding approaches. The CIP helps the County be positioned to:

- Improve its infrastructure through construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance.
- Maximize the useful life of capital investments by scheduling major renovation, rehabilitation, or replacement at the appropriate time in the lifecycle of the facility or equipment.
- Identify and examine current and future infrastructure needs and establish priorities among projects so that available resources are used to the community's best advantage; and
- Improve financial planning by balancing needs and resources and identifying funding options; and develop an implementation schedule for prioritized projects.

Facilities

Airport

Boulder is served by a small airport located approximately two miles south of the city limits. The facility is jointly owned and maintained by the City of Boulder and Jefferson County. An appointed volunteer board oversees the facility. Infrastructure includes a fencing, a natural air strip and a private plane hangar. The facility requires minimal maintenance that is typically completed by the City of Boulder or Jefferson County staff. Use of the facility is limited since only light single engine planes and helicopters can be accommodated.

Bridges

The Jefferson County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for maintaining 40 bridges including 11 minor bridges (<20' span) and 29 major bridges (>20' span). Additionally, the County maintains numerous stream crossings consisting of large diameter culverts.

The County first initiated a Bridge Inventory and Bridge Evaluation program in 2005 with funding assistance through a Treasure State Endowment Program/Montana Coal Endowment Program (TSEP/MCEP) planning grant. The information from the

2005 inventory was summarized and compiled into a capital improvements plan for bridges, titled 2006 Jefferson County, Montana Bridge Evaluation and Capital Improvement Plan. The Bridge Inventory and Evaluation Plan provided the County with a quantitative way of making decisions regarding the allocation of financial resources and assists with scheduling bridge repairs and replacement of these major capital projects. The County has submitted and received construction grant applications in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2018 to finance major bridge projects. Since 2005, the TSEP/MCEP program has partially funded the replacement of thirteen bridges, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has participated in two bridge replacements and The Montana Department of Resources and Conservation Renewable Resource Grants and Loans program (DNRC-RRGL) participated in one bridge replacement. Jefferson County continues to demonstrate serious efforts to seek out, analyze, and secure the firm commitment of all known sources of alternative funding for bridge improvements.

Fairgrounds-Recreation Park

The Jefferson County Recreation Park was established almost 40 years ago using the property and buildings on the historic ranch/farm operated by the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind and Montana State Training School. Today the Park contains many of the original buildings and newer facilities including an arena, carousel, facilities for touring bicyclists (Bike Barn), and community gathering building with kitchen facilities (Volunteer Hall). The Park provides a wide range of recreational opportunities, including the annual fair, carousel, rodeos, youth activities including 4-H and the rental of buildings for events such as weddings and reunions. A master plan was developed for the park in 2019. The plan contains detailed information on needed improvements and projects for the park. Periodically the plan should be revisited and updated as projects are completed or as needs at the facility change.

Law Enforcement

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office serves and protects persons and property throughout Jefferson County. Their responsibilities include enforcement of federal and state laws, maintaining the peace and order of the county, protecting personal safety and property, assisting citizens in urgent situations, and providing public safety education and information. The Sheriff's Office provides 24-hour, 365-day a year service. Facilities in Boulder include a jail, administrative offices, and a dispatch center. Satellite offices in Montana City and Whitehall are used by Sheriff deputies serving those communities. The Sheriff's Office provides contracted law enforcement services in the City of Boulder and Town of Whitehall since neither government entity has a police department. Since Jefferson County is a rural

county, the Sheriff's Office also provides back-up to state, federal, or other law enforcement agencies if the need arises.

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office calls for service continue to increase as the County's population grows. The average calls for service for a five-year period between 2019 and 2023 was 11,755. A breakdown of incident calls for service is included in Figure 13. Staffing levels, competitive compensation, and aging facilities create substantial challenges in meeting the growing needs of county residents. Upgrading equipment and technology will also be critical for maintaining public safety, improving response times, and ensuring officer safety.

Figure 13 - Incident Calls for Service, 2019 - 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	5 Year Average
EMS Advanced Life Support	199	211	210	234	234	218
EMS Basic Life Support	323	415	450	520	622	466
Motor Vehicle Accident & Non-Injury Accidents	625	553	618	684	656	627
Wildfire	131	186	240	101	26	137
Structure Fire	45	55	51	36	20	41
Other Fire	133	151	155	231	261	186
Total Calls for Service	10,967	11,255	11,533	13,065	11,954	11,755

Source: Jefferson County's Disaster and Emergency Services Office, 2024

Libraries

The libraries are split into the North Jefferson County Library District which includes Clancy and Montana City libraries and the Jefferson County Library System, which includes the Boulder and Whitehall Libraries. The libraries offer many services including story hour, summer reading programs, monthly programs (i.e. TinkerLabs by ExplorationWorks and adult programming), public computers with internet access, local newspapers, access to online databases and downloadable e-books, and participation with other lending libraries to borrow library materials not available locally.

Being able to provide additional services and programs at all the libraries and throughout the county would be beneficial. As library services expand, additional staff and space will likely be needed to accommodate the increased usage. Having a van/SUV for a mobile facility would allow services to be provided in outlying areas, assisted living and senior living facilities, and daycare facilities.

Usage at all the libraries continues to increase each year. For instance, the Whitehall Library recently noted serving close to close to 6,000 people in one month. In the last fiscal year, the Clancy and Montana City libraries circulated 41,868 items and helped 70,755 people. Those two libraries also saw a 10.4% increase in checkouts of materials from their children’s collection and a 39.1% increase in the use of their digital collections. The libraries continue to see significant usage by homeschool families.

Museums

The Jefferson County Museum is housed in the historic “Old Red School House” in Clancy. The schoolhouse was built in 1898 and has housed the museum since 2000. The Museum’s collections include many unique and rare historical items, artifacts, documents, maps, and photos that represent Jefferson County’s history related to mining, railroads, and ranching. The museum has regularly refreshed displays and travelling exhibits. The facility is also used as a gathering place to hear guest speakers and to participate in crafts and classes that are sponsored by the Museum.

The museum is managed by a county appointed volunteer board that is assisted by county employees.

The Museum Board’s goals include:

- Improving signage and curb appeal. The Museum lacks proper signage to direct tourists and visitors to the location, and the building’s curb appeal needs improvement.
- Creating additional storage for artifacts and photographs.
- Upgrade Infrastructure: Meet with a contractor to discuss renovations or expansions to the building’s basement.

Parks, Trails, and Other Recreation

Jefferson County currently has two parks located in North Jefferson County. Saddle Mountain Park and Rattlesnake Butte Park both have minimal improvements. Jefferson County’s Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission (PTRC) is actively working with the County Commissioners to explore other parks and recreation opportunities throughout the county. The PTRC plans to complete an inventory of all County owned lands to determine if the county has any lands that could be developed for parks or other recreational purposes. Once the inventory is completed, Jefferson County’s Planning Board would like the County to begin considering options for increasing maintenance on all County owned parklands and providing some level of improvement. In addition, when new

subdivisions are being created throughout the county, developers should be encouraged to add facilities that help make the park more usable to the community it is intended to serve. Currently the County does not have significant resources or staff to maintain or improve parks or recreational areas. Partnerships with park users or area landowners could be an immediate option to explore to address maintenance. In addition, the County should consider hiring contractors to assist with larger projects such as wildlands fuels mitigation and weed management which should be completed periodically to reduce potential impacts to adjacent property owners.

Roads

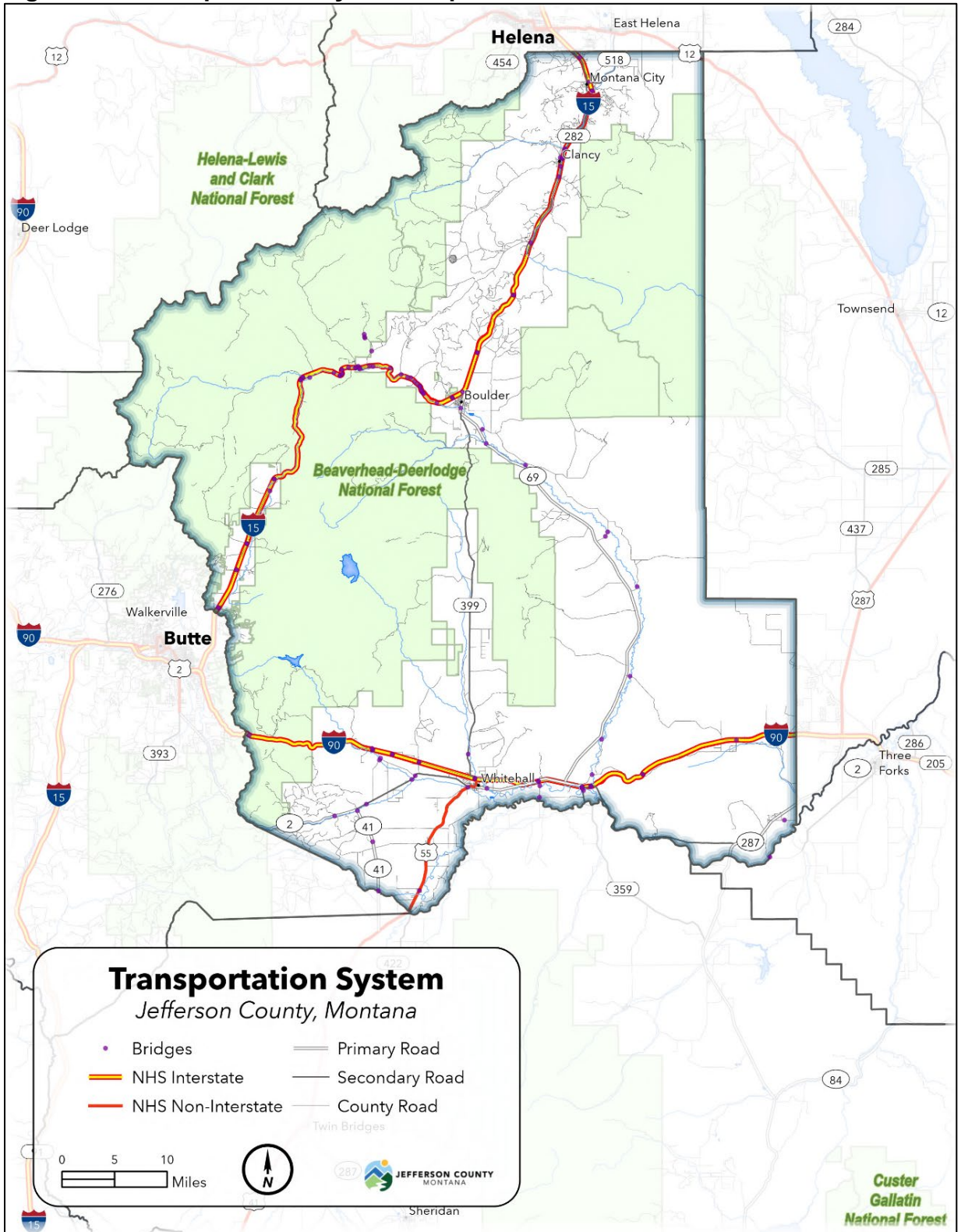
Figure Interstate 15 (I-15) and Interstate 90 (I-90) pass through Jefferson County. State highways located within Jefferson County including Highways 2, 41, 55, 69, 518, 282, 287, 399, and 454. These roadways are significant since they serve as transportation corridors to move people and goods in and out of Jefferson County and they provide access to nearby population centers including Helena, Butte, and Bozeman.

The Jefferson County Road and Bridge Department is responsible for the maintenance of approximately 775 miles of roads. These roads are a mixture of gravel, recycled asphalt millings, asphalt, chip seal, and non-maintained roads. The Road Department consists of three road districts: Montana City, Boulder, and Whitehall. The design of all new public streets and roads are required to comply with the Jefferson County Road Standards as adopted by the resolution of the Jefferson County Commission.

Figure 14 includes a map of the transportation system. It should be noted that private roads and subdivision roads are also included on the map; however, maintenance of those roads typically falls back on the road users.

Maintaining or rebuilding roads can be a substantial cost for Jefferson County and those costs will likely only rise in the future. The Road Department is exploring options for maintenance that may reduce those costs if viable solutions be found.

Figure 14 - Transportation System Map



Solid Waste

Overview

Jefferson County runs a solid waste program for safely transporting and disposing of solid wastes generated by residents and businesses in the County. The system is financed by a solid waste assessment fee which is included on the property tax bills. Households pay one unit while businesses and institutions pay multiple units based on the volume of waste they generate. The solid waste infrastructure includes roll-off collection sites at Montana City, Clancy, Jefferson City, Boulder, Basin, and Whitehall. The County uses roll-off container trucks to haul full containers of solid waste to the Tri-County Disposal Landfill located in northern Jefferson County just south of East Helena.

Equipment

The highest priority for the County is new roll-off container trucks. The two trucks have very high mileage and are experiencing frequent breakdowns which sometimes impedes the County's ability to haul waste in a timely manner. More significantly, the frequent repairs are costly, impacting the system's maintenance budget. The solid waste system is also in need of a new snowplow for maintaining sites.

Infrastructure

Implementation of a permit system by the County has helped reduce out-of-County waste volumes. The County constructed a new container site at Montana City in 2020 and it is in very good condition. The Boulder site was constructed in the early 1990's and is also in good condition. The Whitehall site was also constructed in the early 1990's and is in good condition. However, significant growth in the southern part of the County has resulted in higher waste volumes and eventually the County will likely need to expand this site. The Jefferson City site is inadequate to handle the significant growth in this portion of the County. The Clancy site is in relatively good condition; however, it is accessed by a very steep access road which is difficult to maintain. The County is considering building a new site which would service both Clancy and Jefferson City. Finally, the solid waste system has also requested an addition on to the County's Road shop building located in Boulder to store equipment.

Other Community Services

Introduction

Many services are provided to residents of Jefferson County through other government entities, nonprofit organizations, and private companies. These services include fire protection, schools, emergency medical and ambulance services, public transportation, utilities, community support services, assisted living centers, and

senior centers. While Jefferson County may support these services through funding, staffing, or other in-kind contributions, the County generally does not have management responsibilities related to the services.

Facilities & Services

Assisted Living Centers

Jefferson County currently has five assisted living and one skilled care facility. Many of Jefferson County's assisted living facilities struggle with outdated facilities, inadequate resources, and the need for comprehensive medical and personal care. The smaller population base and lower revenue potential make it challenging to sustain high-quality care facilities and attract qualified staff. Rural areas like Jefferson County frequently encounter difficulties in maintaining and expanding assisted living services due to limited funding, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and logistical barriers. Isolation and loneliness of the residents can also be a challenge in rural facilities.

Community Support Services

As the Jefferson County population ages, the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia is rising, creating a need for enhanced support systems. Families and caregivers, often overwhelmed by the emotional, physical, and financial demands of providing care, are facing increasing stress. Caring for someone with dementia requires specialized knowledge, patience, and time, and without adequate resources, caregivers risk burnout, affecting both their health and the quality of care provided to their loved ones. Jefferson County is seeing a rising need to work together to create support networks, including respite care, education, counseling, and accessible healthcare services.

Emergency Medical and Ambulance Services

Jefferson County has no hospital or urgent care facilities; the nearest facilities are in Helena, Butte, Bozeman, and Sheridan.

Ambulance services are provided to County residents by various entities including

- Jefferson Valley EMS operates within the boundaries for the Whitehall High School District and includes a portion of Madison County and the Town of Whitehall. The voters within that area voted to create the Jefferson Valley Rural Ambulance District and have a fee assessed to help cover the service.
- Boulder Ambulance Service has a roster of 11 volunteers, that provides emergency medical services to a service area of more than 350 square miles. Boulder Ambulance operates across a vast territory, and often responds to calls in the backcountry. In 2023 the Boulder Ambulance Service responded to more than 120 service requests. This service is

funded as a line item under the City of Boulder's annual budget included on property tax bills and through the collection of bills for services rendered.

- Montana City Fire District provides non-transport emergency medical service response within the Montana City Fire District.
- St. Peters Health Group located in Helena covers Jefferson County from the northern county line to Jefferson City and they also assist in Boulder when necessary. The A-1 Ambulance Service located in Butte covers Jefferson County in Elk Park and areas further north.

The provision of timely and efficient emergency medical services to residents in some areas of the County can be unpredictable and uncertain. Contributing factors include the decision by existing authorities having jurisdiction to not provide EMS service and the staffing limitations of other service providers. The possibility of providing EMS via existing authorities having jurisdiction or establishing new ambulance districts in the portions of the County lacking adequate EMS services should be explored.

Emergency services was noted as an area needing to be studied in Jefferson County's Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan when both documents were initially completed in 2020 & 2021. The need was noted again when both documents were updated in 2024. Understanding the current situation with the provision of emergency medical services in the County, including the challenges to providing more effective and efficient service and to identify potential solutions is necessary for Jefferson County to try and address the emergency service needs of its growing population.

Fire Services

Figure 15 includes a list of the ten fire districts or service areas and the number of fire stations located there that can be used to provide volunteer fire protection services. In addition to operating within their own fire district boundaries or service areas, departments may request mutual aid assistance from other fire departments, which can be particularly valuable when there are large incidents since having additional equipment or manpower can be necessary and beneficial. Mutual aid assistance typically only occurs if sufficient equipment and staff are still available to ensure coverage in the mutual aid provider's district during the incident.

Figure 15 - Fire Stations

Fire Districts & Fire Service Areas	Number of Stations
Basin Rural Fire District	1
Boulder Fire Department	1
Bull Mountain Rural Fire District	3
Clancy Fire Service Area	2
Elk Park Rural Fire District	1
Jefferson City Rural Fire District	1
Jefferson Valley Rural Fire District	1
Montana City Rural Fire District	2
Whitehall Fire Department	1
Willow Creek Rural Fire District	2

Source: Jefferson County's Disaster and Emergency Services Office, 2024

Jefferson County completed a Fire Service Needs Assessment in 2020. The assessment was meant to complement the County's Capital Improvements Plan by identifying the needs of each fire department. The assessment inventoried the existing resources each department had compared to the resources they should have per the recommendations provided by existing standards, regulations, and nationally recognized guidance documents. The comparison was meant to help the departments obtain the resources necessary to operate in a safe and effective manner. The assessment showed the significant need for more firefighting water supply systems to be available in all fire districts and fire service areas. The establishment of Rural Improvement Districts and Rural Maintenance Districts may be options to help fund the installation and maintenance of firefighting water supply infrastructure and locations and easements for new sites.

Public Transportation

Jefferson County currently only has one public transportation option. Whitehall Public Transportation is a program operating under Liberty Place Inc, as a 501c nonprofit corporation. This service provides residents and senior citizens in Whitehall and Boulder with a transportation option. Their focus is on providing transportation options for those needing a ride to medical and therapy appointments. They also provide trips for other basic life necessities such as nutrition, shopping, recreation/social, education and employment, including vocational rehabilitation. Rides are provided to businesses within Whitehall and Boulder. Trips are regularly scheduled from Whitehall to Butte, and rides can also be arranged to other locations in Montana. Whitehall Public Transportation is supported by funding received from private and public grants and donations.

Public Water Facilities

Jefferson County does not currently own or operate any public water systems. Several of the County's communities do have public water systems that need periodical upgrades and other communities may need to explore installation of systems as population growth occurs.

Basin

Water for the community of Basin is provided by a public water system (PWS) that is supplied by 3 wells. Well #1 North is located along Basin Creek and Wells #2 and #3 are located along the Boulder River. The system is owned and operated by the Basin Water and Sewer District. District is seeking funding to upgrade the public water system.

Clancy

The community is currently served by individual onsite private wells. These private wells are located near private septic systems which has created a public health and safety issue. A water and sewer district was created in 2015. The district does not have an existing public water supply system but is exploring the potential of installing one.

A 2012 Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) shows the individual septic systems are aging and failing at an increasing rate. The Jefferson County Health Department has been dealing with these issues related to safe drinking water for many years Well testing was recently performed and revealed elevated levels of Nitrates and Uranium. This situation has brought the need for a public water supply system to the forefront. The local citizens are becoming more aware of their water quality issues and the potential health and safety hazards they face. Jefferson County and the Clancy Water and Sewer District Board of Directors have taken an active role to find solutions for this problem and have had a preliminary engineering report (PER) prepared to identify alternatives.

Other Communities

As Montana City continues to grow, the community may need to consider establishing a public water system. Having such a system would help to better monitor groundwater usage, thus protecting a finite natural resource.

Public Wastewater Facilities

Jefferson County does not currently own or operate any public water waster systems. Several of the County's communities do have public water systems that need periodical upgrades and other communities may need to explore installation of systems as population growth occurs.

Basin

The Basin Water and Sewer owns and manages the public wastewater treatment system. No projects are currently planned for that facility, but as the system ages and more development occurs in that area upgrades may be needed.

Clancy

The Clancy Water and Sewer District has explored the possibility of installing a wastewater treatment system but has instead opted to focus on installing a water supply system. If installation of a water supply system proves impossible or is not cost prohibitive, installing a wastewater treatment system may become essential.

Montana City

As Montana City continues to grow, the community may need to consider establishing a public wastewater facility. Having a modern, sustainable wastewater system would help protect public health and safety while protecting the area's natural resources.

Schools

Jefferson County is home to two high schools (Jefferson & Whitehall) and six elementary schools (Whitehall, Cardwell, Boulder, Basin, Clancy, & Montana City). In Jefferson County the schools serve as educational institutions and as local gathering spots for the community when there are sporting events and other school functions. The schools face significant challenges as the growth in the County's student-age population rises and the school buildings and other associated infrastructure ages. The need for qualified personnel, modern facilities, comprehensive health services, and cutting-edge technology in rural schools is a rising need to ensure that every child has access to a quality education.

As depicted in Figure 16, Jefferson County's schools have seen increased enrollment. The influx of new families moving into the county is contributing to the increase in students as well as school districts opening their facilities to provide services to out of district students. It is worth noting that Clancy Elementary School's enrollment dropped in 2024, but it had climbed significantly over the past nine years. Additionally, the number of home-schooled students continues to rise in Jefferson County; there were 60 registered home schoolers in 2024.

Figure 16 - School Enrollment Numbers, 2023 - 2024

School	Enrollment Numbers	
	Fall 2023	Fall 2024
Basin	10	19
Boulder	218	220
Clancy	396	372
Montana City	455	471
Cardwell	35	35
Whitehall Elementary	240	193
Whitehall Middle/High School	237	270
Jefferson High School	299	306

Source: Jefferson County School Superintendent, 2024

To deal with community needs, schools have started provided additional services as funding opportunities are available. For instance, some of the elementary schools provide an Early Literacy program which provides an opportunity for younger children to learn prior to entering Kindergarten. This service has been beneficial to provide early educational services particularly in communities where incomes are lower, and the availability of preschools and daycares is limited. After-School programs are also offered in many of the local schools. This provides the students the opportunity to complete additional learning after the school day has ended or over the summer, which also helps alleviate the issue of daycare in communities where families have lower incomes and services are limited. To help ensure students are receiving meals, some schools also provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks during the school day and at summer programs. Backpacks of food are also provided to students that may need nutritional assistance on the weekends. This helps to assure students are not going hungry since that can decrease their ability to learn.

Senior Centers

The Boulder-Basin Senior Center is operated as a 501C3 by a Board of Directors. The Rocky Mountain Development Council (RMDC), which is based in Helena, provides staff that cooks and serves healthy, well-balanced meals at this Senior Center and provides home delivery through Meals on Wheels. Meals are provided on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11:30 to 12:30.

Whitehall also has a senior center. RMDC provides staff that cooks and serves healthy, well-balanced meals at the Whitehall Senior Center and provides home delivery through Meals on Wheels. Meals are provided at this facility Monday through Friday from 11:30 to 12:30.

In 2024 RMDC served 990 meals at the Boulder Senior Center and 1710 meals at the Whitehall Senior Center. Additionally, RMDC delivered 1,878 meals in Boulder and 4,830 meals in Whitehall through the Meals on Wheels program.

In addition to providing healthy, well-balanced meals, the Senior Centers also provide social activities and serve as gathering places for older adults. These facilities are a necessity as they can help reduce isolation and loneliness, which can help improve overall mental health.

Utilities

Gas, electric, and communication utilities are provided by private utility providers throughout the County. Some of these utility providers include:

- NorthWestern Energy – natural gas and electric
- Vigilante Electric – electric
- Qwest Communications – telephone/cable/internet

Jefferson County is not directly responsible for the maintenance and expansion of these utilities but supports developing these utilities to provide better service to its residents.

As the primary provider of electrical services in the County, NorthWestern Energy (NWE) faces the major challenges in protecting its electrical service infrastructure from hazards such as wildfire. To address the threat of wildfire, NWE created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan. The mitigation in the plan includes the following potential actions:

- Investing in new infrastructure.
- Vegetation management to reduce fuels.
- Monitor weather and environmental conditions.
- Flexible operational practices.
- Higher levels of system preparation to more quickly address issues.
- Communications and outreach.
- Worst case scenario: a shutdown of portions of the electrical infrastructure.

It is important for County residents to understand that NWE may need to act on some if not all these actions in the event of a wildfire that threatens its infrastructure. County residents need to plan, so they are prepared if shutdowns do occur.

Land Use

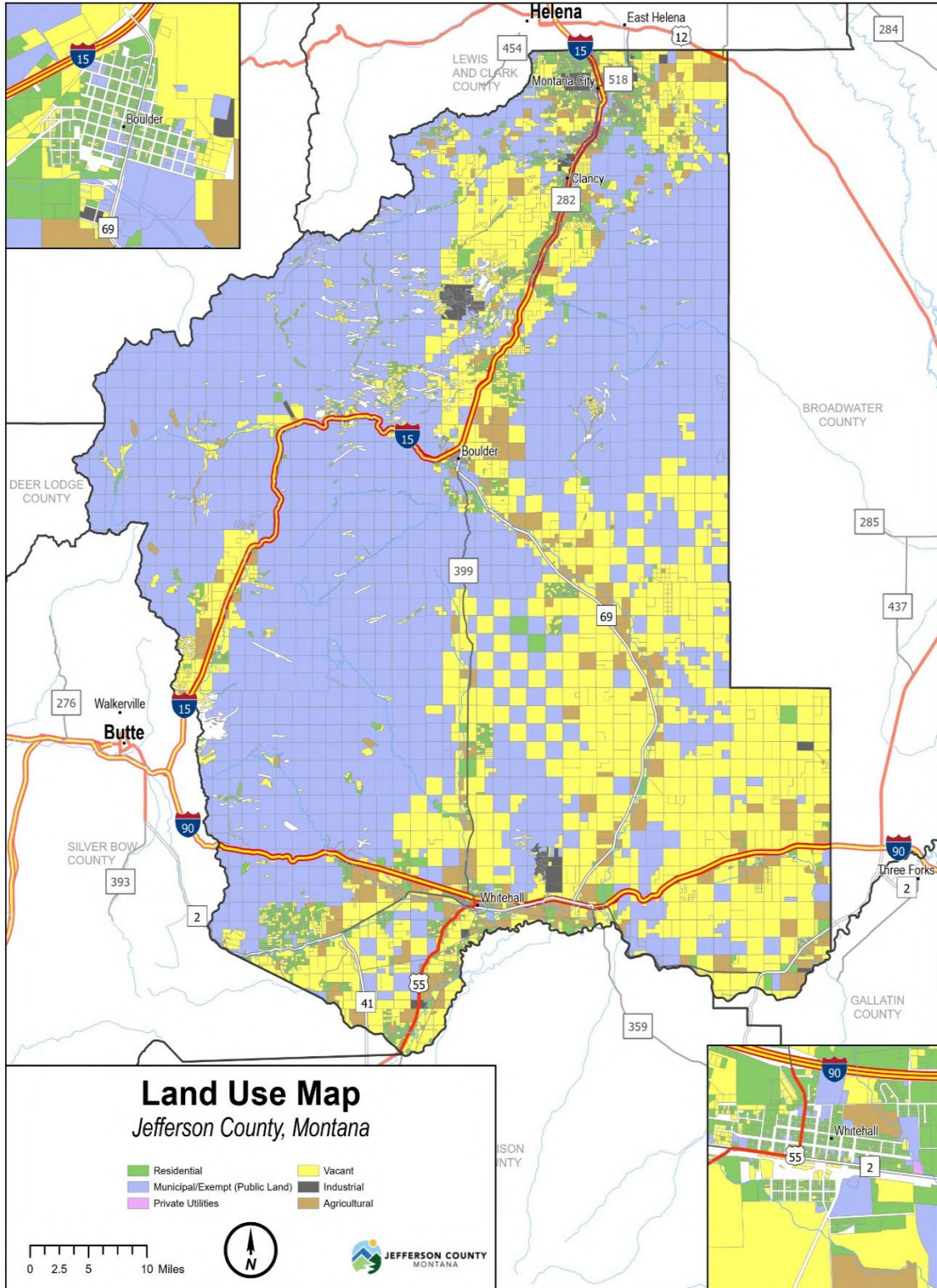
Introduction

Figure 17 includes a map of the current land uses occurring in Jefferson County.

The most apparent land use changes have occurred within the Jefferson County's northern end. Properties in the Montana City area were historically used for mining or for grazing. Some mining still occurs there to supply raw materials for the Ash Grove cement plant, but such activities are much more reduced than they were previously. Much of the land found here has been converted to residential and commercial developments to accommodate growth attributable to the area's proximity to Helena. Zoning has been established at the northern end and zoning regulations have been adopted to help manage development. The District's regulations allow for a mixture of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, and basic resources, while trying to reasonably minimize conflicts by limiting or mitigating for incompatible uses.

As a stark contrast to the substantial development occurring in the County's northern end, many properties in Elk Park, the Boulder Valley, and Milligan Canyon, consist of larger tracts that have historically been used and continue to be used for agricultural purposes, such as crop and cattle production. To protect the agricultural value of properties in these areas, landowners from Milligan Canyon and the Boulder Valley petitioned the Jefferson County Commissioners to create the Milligan Canyon/Boulder Valley Agricultural Zoning District and adopt zoning regulations, thus buffering the agricultural properties from potential development impacts. This zoning has been in place since 2000 and has served as a safeguard, shielding many of Jefferson County's agricultural operations from the impacts of development.

Figure 17 - Land Use Map



Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Jefferson County is part of the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group. The Working Group developed a joint Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2020 known as the Tri-County CWPP. The CWPP has been adopted by Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark County.

According to the 2020 Tri-County CWPP:

“The tri-county region reflects the typical characteristics seen in much of the intermountain west: a growing population within established communities combined with exponential residential development within the wildland areas that surround them. All three counties, as well as the State of Montana, unanimously agree in their current Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans that wildfire is the greatest hazard they face. That identified hazard combined with the life safety exposure of substantial residential development into the wildland underscores the importance of more clearly identifying the details of the wildland urban interface profile, the wildfire hazard that may affect it, the associated risk assessment, and most importantly, the mitigation steps that may reduce that risk.”

As depicted in Figure 18, Jefferson County has a significant amount of acreage and addressed structures located within the WUI. A map of the WUI is included in Figure 19. Figure 20 includes a wildfire risk map that depicts a significant amount of Jefferson County’s lands are at risk for wildland fires.

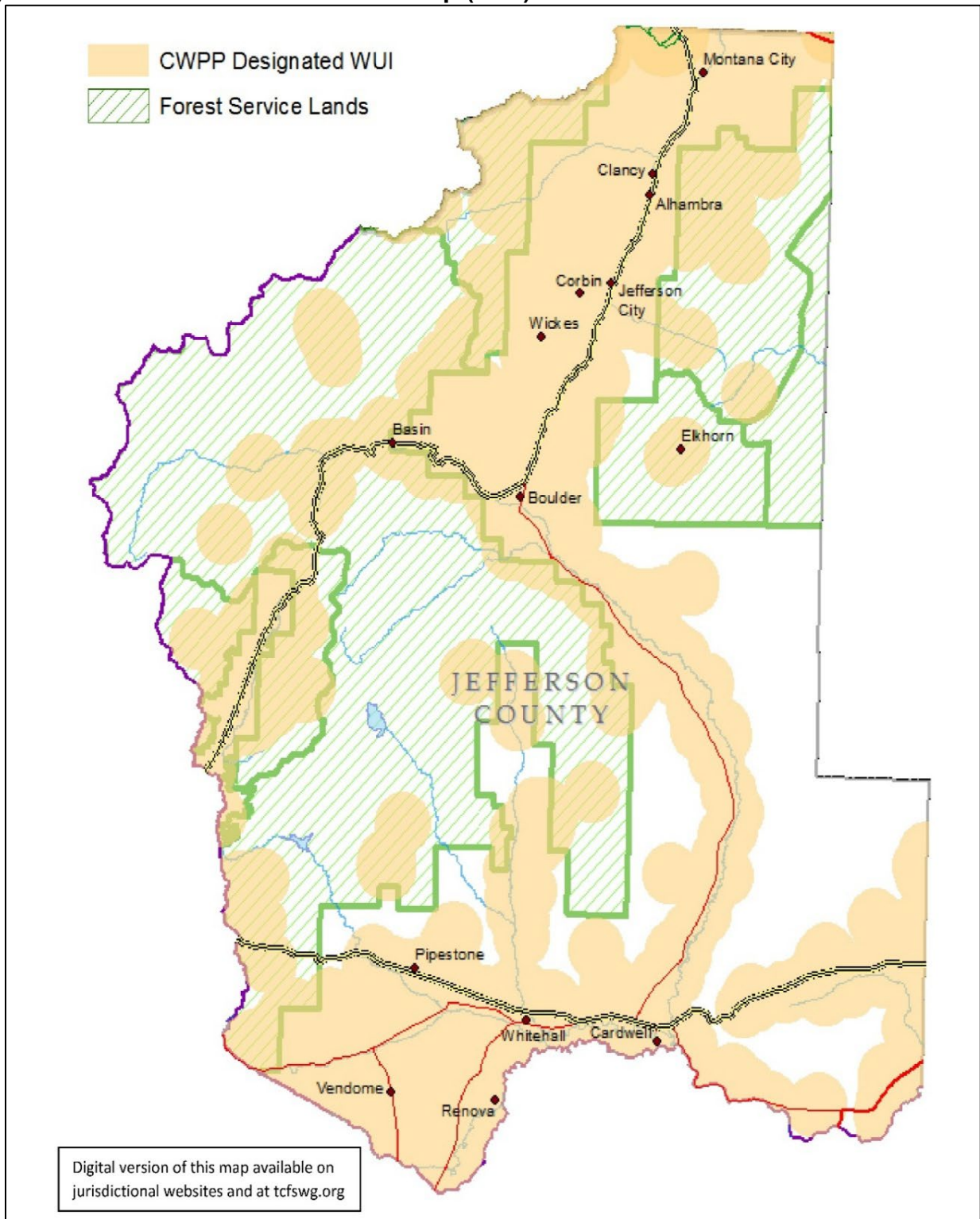
Figure 18 - Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Statistics

WUI Acres per Classification:				
	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
Broadwater	35,089	64,495	106,502	227,584
Jefferson	182,858	147,275	113,421	162,842
Lewis and Clark	333,592	421,067	170,256	226,349
Total:	551,539	632,837	390,179	616,775

Address points per Classification:				
	Extreme	High	Moderate	Low
Broadwater	46	72	757	2533
Jefferson	646	1986	850	2446
Lewis and Clark	3490	9155	3919	17438
Total:	4182	11213	5526	22417

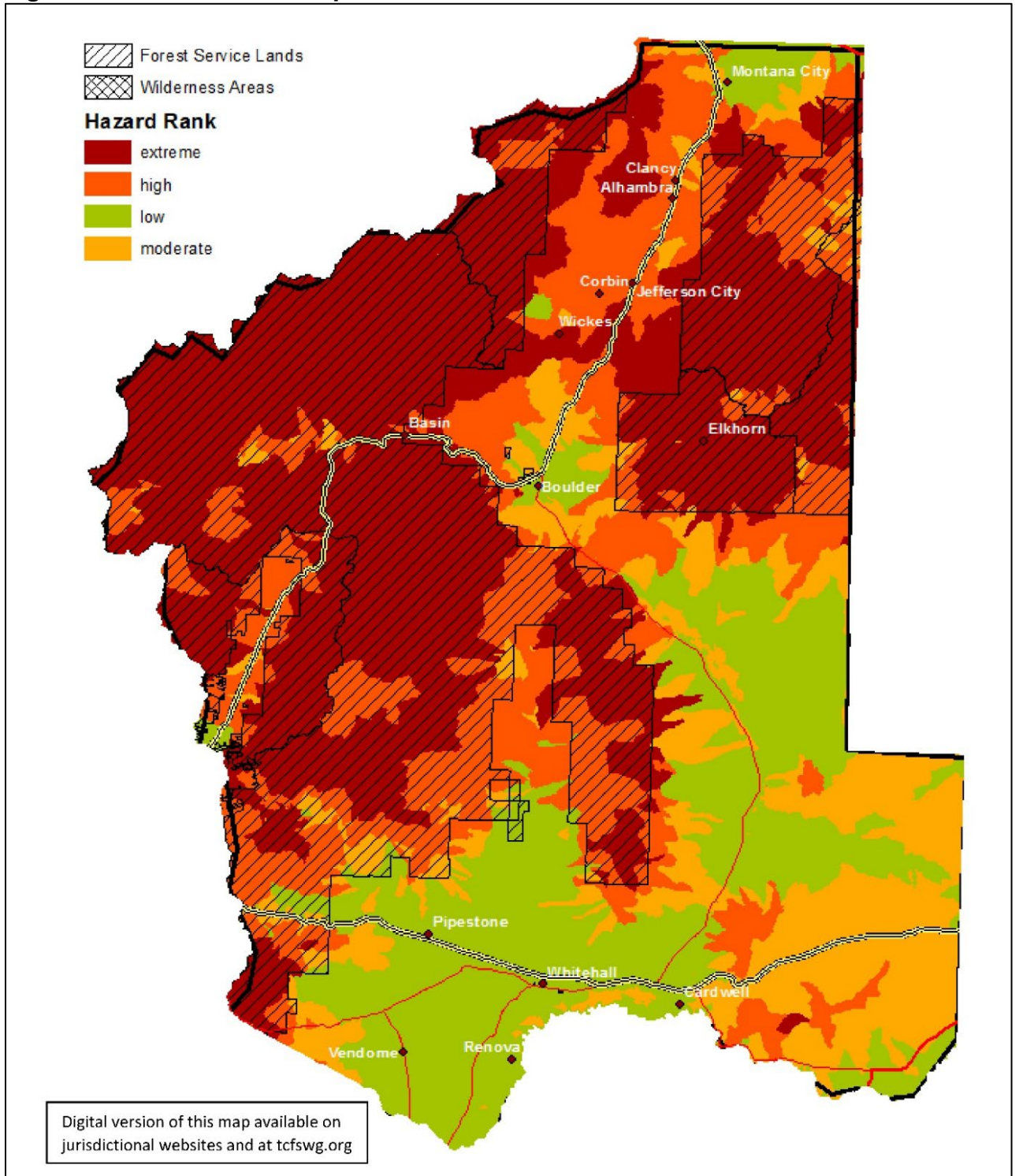
Source: Tri-County Regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2020

Figure 19 - Wildland Urban Interface Map (WUI)



Source: Tri-County Regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2020

Figure 20 - Wildfire Risk Map



Source: Tri-County Regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2020

Maps and data used in this section were obtained from the Tri-County CWPP, which can be consulted for more information about wildfire conditions in Jefferson County and adjacent counties. It should be noted that wildfires do not know the limits of county or other jurisdictional boundaries, so Jefferson County will need to continue diligently working with other jurisdictions at the local, state, and federal levels to help provide the best protection for public health and safety.

With the update of the Subdivision Regulations, the County Planning Board and the County Commission will consider addressing WUI issues such as fire wise requirements related to water supplies, road construction, improving access, limiting dead-end roads, and requiring defensible space between residential structures and vegetation. In addition, fire education should be continued and expanded to help reduce the fire danger to existing structures and infrastructure.

Fish & Wildlife Habitat

Jefferson County contains a wide variety of birds, waterfowl, fish, wildlife, and other animal species, which are valued by its residents and visitors. The region's abundant wildlife and fisheries also attracts hunters and anglers, photographers, bird watchers, and others who enjoy the outdoors. Hunting, as well as other outdoor related activities, provide a substantial boost to the area's economy.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program provides a website (<http://mtnhp.org/>) that contains information about the wildlife, animal, and plant species found throughout the state. The Natural Heritage Program also includes other useful information such as species observations, species of concern, and ecological and wetland information.

Common species found here include, but are not limited to trout, waterfowl, turkeys, upland game birds (i.e. pheasants, grouse), predatory birds (i.e. bald and golden eagles, hawks, osprey), song birds (i.e. robin, Western Bluebird, Western Meadowlark), grizzly and black bears, whitetail and mule deer, elk, moose, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, antelope, mountain lions, bobcats, wolves, and coyotes. Other smaller species found here include mink, muskrats, beavers, porcupines, badgers, skunks, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and snakes.

The variety of vegetation types, precipitation levels, temperature regimes and elevations within Jefferson County provide different habitats that are needed for species to survive.

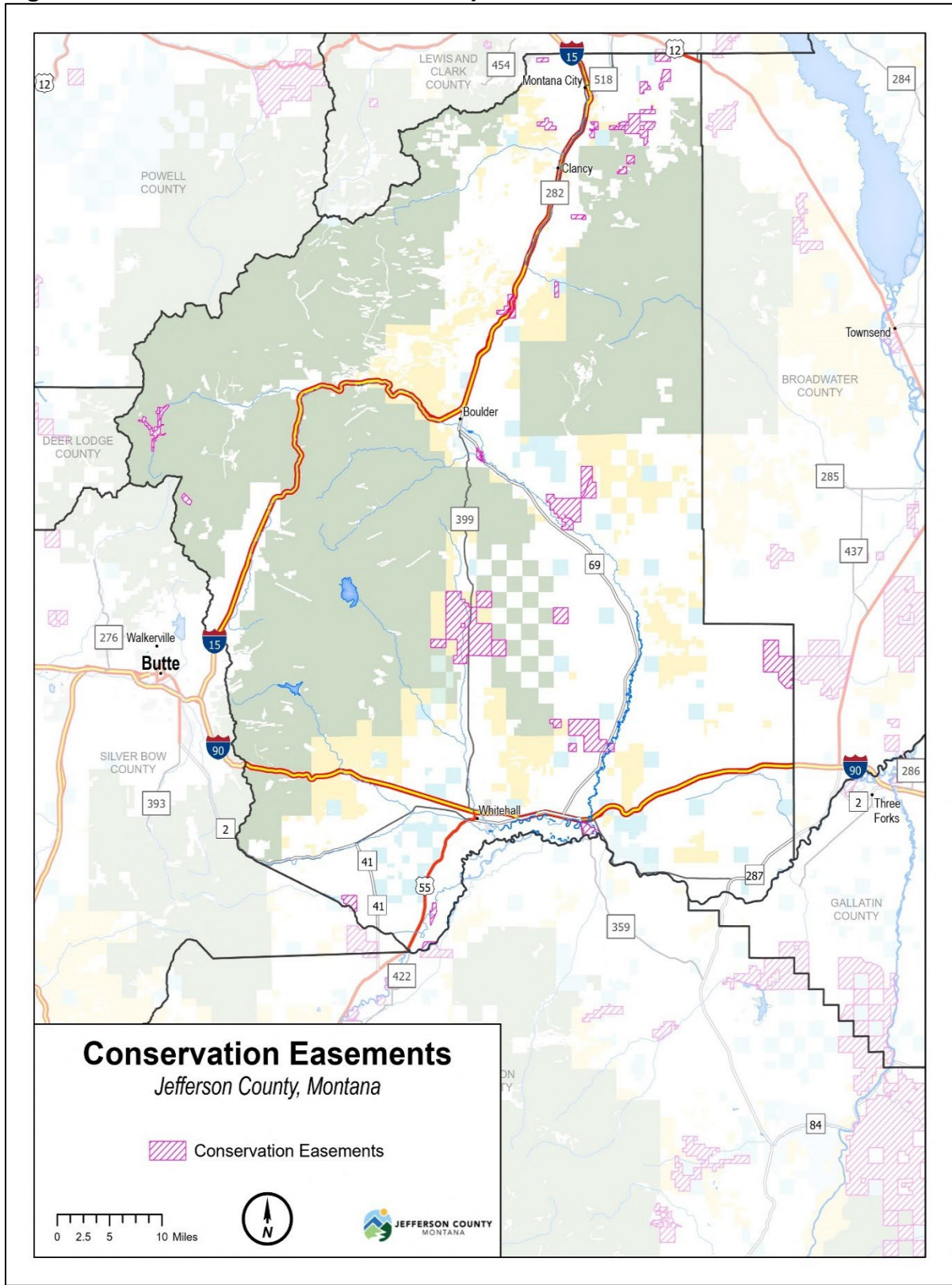
Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that is recorded between a landowner and a land trust organization that limits the uses of the land for a set period or in perpetuity to protect the land's conservation values. There are approximately 27,789 acres of land in conservation easements in Jefferson County as shown on the map included in Figure 21. Conservation easements can serve as an effective method

for agricultural operations to keep the farm or ranch in the family and to continue agricultural production. They can also preserve and protect valuable habitat for fish, wildlife, and riparian species from development and other encroachments and they can help preserve open spaces.

The County should promote conservation easements that are consistent with the Growth Policy including those benefitting agriculture or protecting valuable fish, wildlife, and riparian habitat. Conservation easements proposed in areas near the County's municipalities and unincorporated communities where higher density development would be appropriate should be discouraged unless the land is unfeasible for such development (i.e. subject to flooding or high ground water or other public health and safety concerns).

Figure 21 - Conservation Easement Map



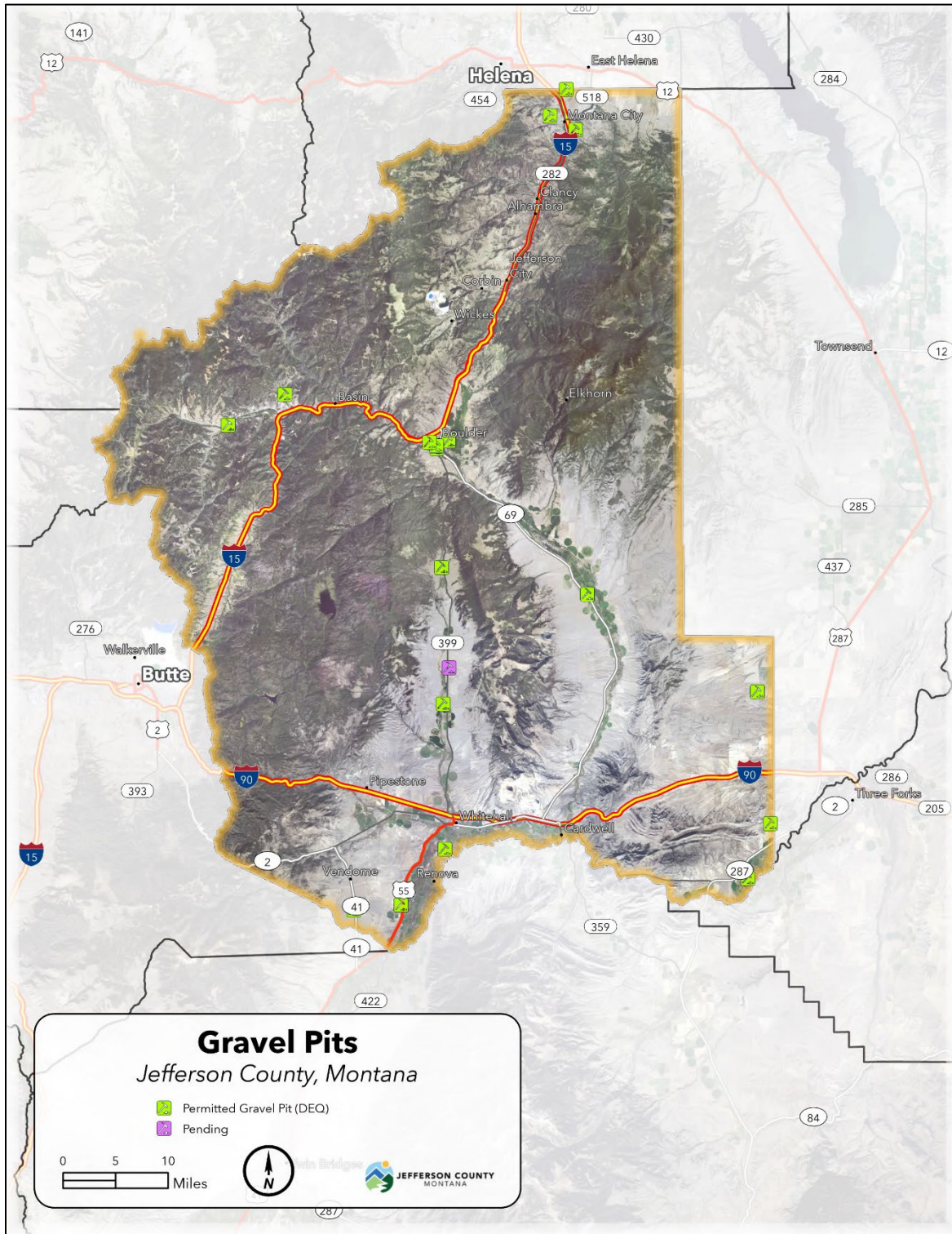
Sand and Gravel Resources

Access to sand and gravel is important for the construction and maintenance of streets and roads as well as the construction of new homes and businesses. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Open Cut Mining Program there are approximately fourteen (14) permitted gravel pits in Jefferson County. Figure 22 includes a map of currently permitted gravel pits and pending permit locations.

Sand and gravel pits may be placed anywhere within Jefferson County unless zoning regulations specifically prohibit the use. If pits will be located within zoned areas, the pit owner/operator is required to obtain any approvals required by the zoning prior to opening or expanding the pit. In zoned or unzoned areas, landowners/operators seeking to develop a new pit or expand an existing pit may also need to obtain a license from Montana's Department of Environment Quality (MDEQ) as required under the Open Pit Mining Program (Section 82-4-431, MCA). As part of obtaining a license, pit owners/operators are required to submit comments from Jefferson County regarding zoning compliance to ensure the proposed use is compatible with any applicable area zoning. Jefferson County should continue to work with MDEQ to assure that sand and gravel pits are properly licensed if a license is required, and that they meet any requirements of the zoning.

Jefferson County encourages individuals seeking to open new pits to contact the Planning Department to determine where new facilities would be most beneficial and appropriate with regards to existing development and future growth potential. When determining a location for a new pit, it would be beneficial for pit owners/operators to consider the existing uses currently occurring near the proposed pit location to reduce potential land-use conflicts. Some of the most common causes of conflict are associated with noise, dust, and other inherent issues that can be associated with commercial and industrial types of operations. While it is not expected that these types of development will have no impacts, many impacts are considered nuisances can be mitigated by taking simple measures such as limiting the hours of operation and lighting used, reducing noise levels, installing landscaping buffers, and implementing other measures that help to buffer and reduce impacts.

Figure 22 - Gravel Pits Map



Zoning

Introduction

Jefferson County currently has three zoned areas within its jurisdictional boundaries. Figure 23 contains a map that depicts the location of each of the zoned areas. These districts include the North Jefferson County Zoning District located adjacent to the City of Helena, the Milligan Canyon-Boulder Valley Zoning District located in the southeastern part of the county and along Highway 69, and the Sunlight Zoning District, which includes the Sunlight Business Park and associated Tax Increment Financing District located near Whitehall.

North Jefferson County Zoning District

The North Jefferson County Zoning District encompasses lands in and around Montana City. The district contains ten (10) different districts with the following densities and uses:

- R-1 - minimum lot area required by MDEQ.
- R-2 - minimum lot area of 2 acres.
- R-3 - minimum lot area of 5 acres.
- R-4 – minimum lot area of 10 acres.
- R-5 – minimum lot area of 22 acres.
- Residential/Commercial Mixed Use: minimum lot area required by MDEQ.
- Basic Resource: minimum lot area of 160 acres.
- Conserved Space: minimum lot area of 10 acres.
- Commercial: minimum lot area required by MDEQ; and
- Industrial: minimum lot area of 1 acre.

The zoning regulations and associated zoning map for this district were last revised in 2013. Since that time significant development has occurred within in the zoning district. Changes to the regulations are necessary to clean-up items within the document and to address changes in State law since the zoning regulations were adopted in 2013. At a minimum, the Planning Department staff will review the zoning regulations after each state legislative session and make a recommendation to the Planning Board regarding any amendments to the zoning regulations that should be considered. No amendments shall be considered by the County Commissioners unless they are brought forward following the required public review process. Landowners are required to obtain a zoning site development permit from the County's Planning Department prior to adding new development to lots within the North Jefferson County Zoning District and the Sunlight Zoning District.

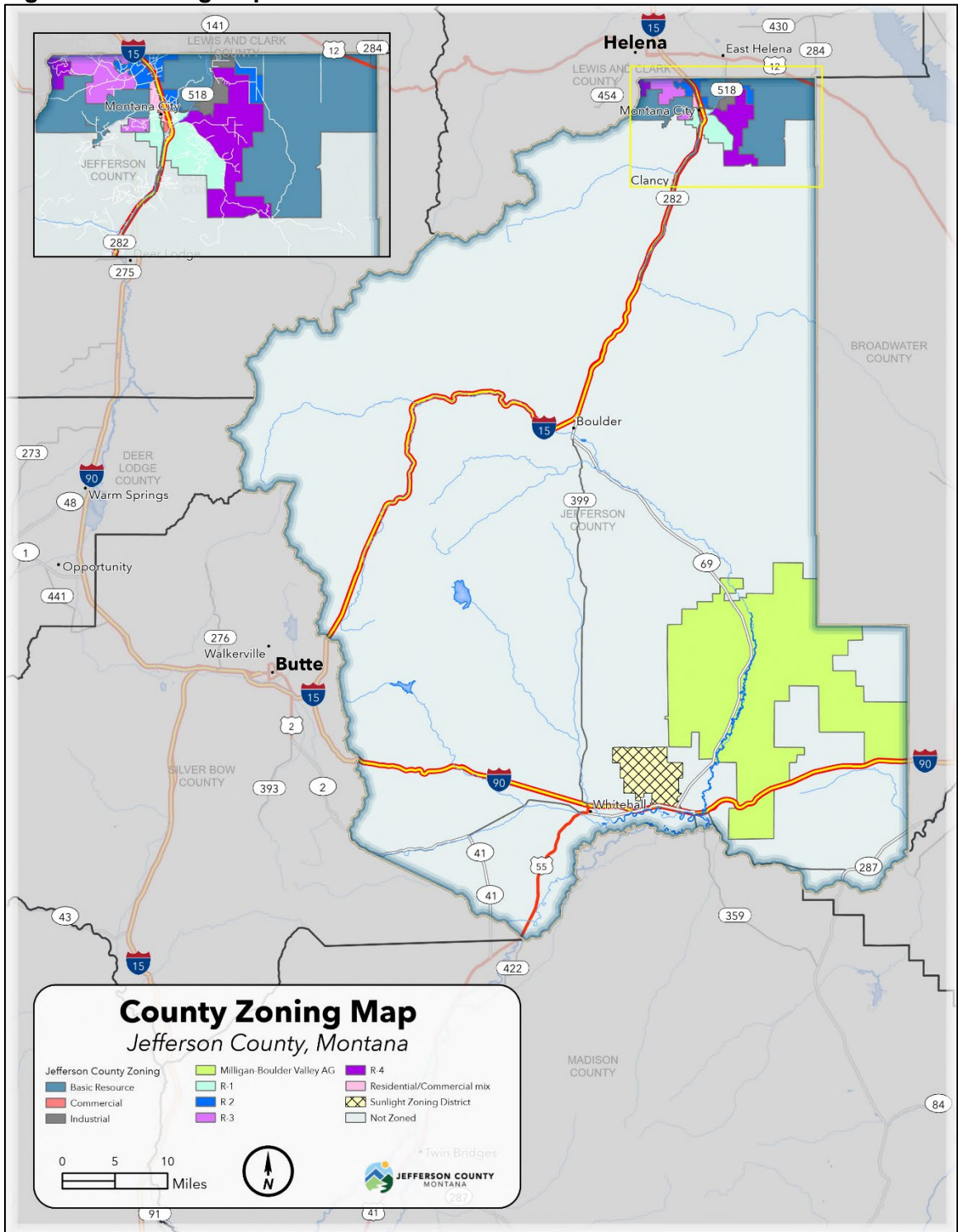
Milligan Canyon/Boulder Valley Agricultural Zoning District

Milligan Canyon/Boulder Valley Agricultural Zoning area is located near the southeastern corner of Jefferson County. This zoning area encompasses approximately 90,000 acres of land that is primarily used for agricultural purposes and has limited development present. Periodically the regulations should be thoroughly review by the residents, County planning staff and the County Commission to identify and address what amendments should be made. No County planning approvals are required prior to developing in this zoning district so long as development complies with the zoning regulations

Sunlight Zoning District

The Sunlight Zoning District includes all lands located within the Sunlight Tax Increment Financing District (TIFID). These lands are all zoned industrial and uses must follow the State of Montana's requirements for TIFIDs and the Sunlight Zoning Regulations. A zoning site development permit is required to be obtained from the County's Planning Department prior to establishing uses or developing within this zoning district.

Figure 23 - Zoning Map



ADMINISTRATION & REGULATIONS

Introduction

Jefferson County has a full-time staff that administer land use, sanitation, and addressing. This includes a Planning Director, Planner, the Sanitarian/Floodplain Administrator, and the GIS/Rural Addressing Coordinator. This staff evaluates and ensures that all proposed land development adheres to County regulations and environmental standards, which benefits public health and safety.

Jefferson County has volunteer boards, with members appointed by the County Commissioners, that also assist the Planning Staff and Environmental Health Staff with certain functions. The Planning Board consisting of five to nine members depending on the number of volunteers wishing to join. Their main duties include reviewing land use and other issues and making recommendations to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners. The Planning Board also assists in the update of the County's planning documents such as the growth policy and subdivision regulations. The Health Board consists of five members board that are responsible for the supervision of the sanitarian and public health staff, and they perform many duties including adopting the local wastewater regulations.

County Addressing and Road Naming

Jefferson County's GIS/Rural Addressing Coordinator is responsible for the naming of new roads and assigning addresses to new residential and commercial development. Having accurate addressing is essential to assist emergency services through E-911 and with the transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911) and for the delivery of mail on rural routes and package delivery by private carriers such UPS and Fed Ex.

NG911 is a digital, internet protocol (IP)-based system that will replace the analog E911 system that has been in use for decades. NG911 is meant to enhance emergency number services to create an emergency response system that is supposed to allow voice, photos, videos, and text messages from the public to the County's 911 network.

Achieving such accurate addressing requires using nationally accepted standards for assigning address numbers and for naming roads and streets. The County is working towards integrating into the NG911 system. As part of the process, the County will evaluate its addressing and road naming system to ensure that it is meeting the needs of residents and ensuring integration into the NG911 system.

Sanitation Regulations & Permitting

Jefferson County's Environmental Health Department provides education, permitting/licensing, investigation, and resolution services to ensure clean air, water, food, sanitary living conditions and appropriate waste disposal are managed to protect human health and the environment. Some of these tasks are carried out by performing the following functions:

- Inspecting food establishments, grocery stores, meat processors, bakeries, bars, hotels, campgrounds, trailer courts, RV parks, daycare centers to assure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.
- Investigating truck wrecks that involve food, drugs or cosmetics that may be adulterated, to assure the products are disposed of properly instead of being received by consumers.
- Permitting and inspecting wastewater treatment systems and performing site evaluations and analyzing soils to determine absorption capabilities.
- Reviewing surveys for compliance with the Sanitation in Subdivisions Act.
- Reviewing subdivisions under a contract with MDEQ, for water, wastewater and stormwater runoff facilities and determines if the division will cause significant impacts to ground and surface waters.
- Assisting with the removal of abandoned and voluntarily released vehicles for proper disposal through the junk vehicle program.

Floodplain Regulations & Permitting

Jefferson County's Environmental Health Department administrates Floodplain Regulations for those areas that have identified floodplains. The current floodplain maps for Jefferson County are from the 1970s.

Jefferson County has been working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MDNRC) to study local tributaries to gather the data necessary to produce new digital floodplain maps with aerial imagery that delineates the 100-year floodplain, 500-year floodplain, and floodway along the larger tributaries where the greatest development is located. The draft floodplain maps are currently undergoing review with FEMA; they are expected to be adopted by Jefferson County in 2025. Having updated floodplain maps will provide more accurate data that can be used when developing or considering land uses for properties located on or near waterways. Major tributaries that will have all or portions of their floodplains mapped include:

- Boulder River
- Jefferson River

- Prickly Pear Creek
- Clancy Creek
- Warm Springs Creek
- Basin Creek
- Whitetail Creek
- Big Pipestone Creek
- Little Pipestone Creek
- Pipestone Creek
- Buffalo Creek
- Red Rock Creek
- Muskrat Creek
- Fish Creek
- Little Boulder River

Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations (BLR)

State statute (Title 76, Chapter 8, Montana Code Annotated) requires every jurisdiction in the state to adopt regulations addressing the lease or renting of buildings for residential and commercial purposes. The exception to this requirement is if certain criteria are met, such as the existence of zoning regulations in the jurisdiction. Jefferson County adopted BLR regulations in 2021.

Zoning Regulations

State statutes (Title 76, Chapter 2, Montana Code Annotated) allows jurisdictions to adopt zoning regulations that are made in accordance with the growth policy and are designed to secure safety from fire and other dangers; promote public health, public safety, and general welfare; facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks, and other public requirements. Citizens may petition Jefferson County to consider creating zoning districts for local areas. Local governments may adopt zoning regulations as a tool to help carry out the purposes of the zoning district.

The Planning Department helps facilitate the processes with creating a zoning district and serves as the zoning administration of the zoning regulations.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are meant to address issues related to the division of land for new residential and commercial development. These include ensuring accurate surveying, providing legal and physical access, provision of utilities, parkland requirements, right-of-way location and mitigating hazards.

The current regulations were last updated in 1996 and do not comply with all the statutory changes made by the Montana Legislature since that time. The County is undertaking an

update of the subdivision regulations in conjunction with the update of the County Growth Policy.

Some of the issues that need to be addressed in the update of the subdivision regulations include:

- Rural Improvement Districts (RID) for the maintenance of new subdivision roads and fire protection water supplies.
- Fire protection water supply requirements
- Provide for long-term maintenance of wildland fuels mitigation projects;
- The provision of multiple ingress and egress routes.
- Provide a pathway for new roads or existing roads that meet county specifications to be adopted as county roads; and
- Addressing and road naming standards.

Statutory Requirements:

The Montana Code Annotated (MCA) requires that the County Commission provide a statement in this plan explaining how they will:

Define the review criteria found in 76-3-608 (3)(a) M.C.A. i.e., impacts upon agriculture, local services, public health, and safety etc.; and

Evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608 (3)(a) M.C.A.

Local Definitions Associated with 76-3-608, MCA Review Criteria

Jefferson County uses the following definitions as found in the current Jefferson County Subdivision Regulations for each of the review criteria listed below.

- **Agriculture:** All aspects of farming, including the cultivation and tillage of the soil; dairying; and the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities, including commodities defined as agricultural commodities in the federal Agricultural Marketing Act and the raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry; and any practices, including forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with farming operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation market, excluding any consideration of whether the proposed subdivision will result in a loss of agricultural soils.
- **Agricultural Water Users Facilities:** Those facilities which provide water for agricultural land as defined in 15-7-202, MCA, or which provide water for the

production of agricultural products as defined in 15-1-101, MCA including, but not limited to ditches, pipes, and head gates.

- Local Services: Any and all services or facilities that local government entities are authorized to provide.
- Natural Environment: The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, sound, light, and objects of historic and aesthetic significance.
- Public Health and Safety: condition of optimal well-being, free from danger, risk, or injury for a community at large, or for all people, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.
- Wildlife: Living things which are neither human nor domesticated.
- Wildlife Habitat: Place or type of site where wildlife naturally lives and grows.

Evaluation of Subdivisions Based Upon 76-3-608, MCA Review Criteria

The review of subdivision applications by Jefferson County includes documentation and an analysis as to whether or not the proposed subdivision will impact agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety.

The County will evaluate each subdivision with regard to the expected impacts upon each of the criteria and the degree to which the subdivision applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse impacts. This evaluation will be based on the subdivision application, staff review, reports, and the information gathered from public hearings and other sources of information as deemed appropriate.

Upon the County's completion of its review, evaluation, and recommendation, the County Commission will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the Jefferson County Subdivision Regulations, the Jefferson County Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

Prerequisites to Approval

The governing body may not approve or conditionally approve a subdivision application and preliminary plat unless the proposed subdivision:

- provides easements for the location and installation of any planned utilities;
- provides legal and physical access to each parcel within the subdivision and the notation of that access on the applicable plat and any instrument transferring the parcel;
- assures that all required public or private improvements will be installed before final plat approval, or that their installation after final plat approval will be guaranteed;

- assures that the requirements of 76-3-504(1)(j), MCA, regarding the disclosure and disposition of water rights have been considered and will be accomplished before the final plat is submitted;
- assures that the requirements of 76-3-504(1)(k) regarding watercourse and irrigation easements have been considered and will be accomplished before the final plat is submitted; and
- provides for the appropriate park land dedication or cash-in-lieu.

Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agriculture

- Is the proposed subdivision or associated improvements located on or near prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service? If so, identify each area on a copy of the preliminary plat.
- Describe whether the subdivision would remove from production any agricultural or timber land.
- Describe possible conflicts with nearby agricultural operations (e.g., residential development creating problems for moving livestock, operating farm machinery, maintaining water supplies, controlling weeds, or applying pesticides; agricultural operations suffering from vandalism, uncontrolled pets or damaged fences).
- Describe possible nuisance problems which may arise from locating a subdivision near agricultural or timber lands.
- Describe the effects the subdivision would have on the value of nearby agricultural lands.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are located on or adjacent to prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service are considered to have an adverse impact on agriculture.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that border land defined as agricultural or timberland by the Montana Department of Revenue or state trust lands are considered to have an adverse impact on agriculture.

Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agricultural Water User Facilities

- Describe conflicts the subdivision would create with agricultural water user facilities (e.g. residential development creating problems for operating and maintaining irrigation systems) and whether agricultural water user facilities would be more subject to vandalism or damage because of the subdivision.
- Describe possible nuisance problems which the subdivision would generate with regard to agricultural water user facilities (e.g. safety hazards to

residents or water problems from irrigation ditches, head gates, siphons, sprinkler systems, or other agricultural water user facilities).

- Proposed subdivisions located on land with agricultural water user facilities or adjoining an agricultural water use facility are considered to have an adverse impact on agricultural water user facilities.
- Proposed subdivisions that involve the abandonment or transfer of water rights from the property being subdivided, or that involve the abandonment or removal of agricultural water user facilities are considered to have an adverse impact on agricultural water user facilities.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that will alter access for maintenance of agricultural water user facilities are considered to have an adverse impact on agricultural water user facilities.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that will alter the movement or availability of water are considered to have an adverse impact on agricultural water user facilities.

Evaluation Criteria for Effects Upon Local Services

- Describe the additional or expanded public services and facilities that would be demanded of local government or special districts to serve the subdivision.
- Describe additional costs which would result for services such as roads, bridges, law enforcement, parks and recreation, fire protection, water, sewer and solid waste systems, schools or busing, (including additional personnel, construction, and maintenance costs).
- Who would bear these costs (e.g. all taxpayers within the jurisdiction, people within special taxing districts, or users of a service)?
- Can the service providers meet the additional costs given legal or other constraints (e.g. statutory ceilings on mill levies or bonded indebtedness)?
- Describe off-site costs or costs to other jurisdictions may be incurred (e.g. development of water sources or construction of a sewage treatment plant; costs borne by a nearby municipality).
- Describe how the subdivision allows existing services, through expanded use, to operate more efficiently, or makes the installation or improvement of services feasible (e.g. allow installation of a central water system or upgrading a country road).
- What are the present tax revenues received from the unsubdivided land?
- Would new taxes generated from the subdivision cover additional public costs?

- How many special improvement districts would be created which would obligate local government fiscally or administratively? Are any bonding plans proposed which would affect the local government's bonded indebtedness?
- Proposed subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within a designated urban growth area, will use existing utilities, will have safe and adequate access to existing road networks and will meet applicable city zoning and building standards are considered to have a minimal impact on local services.
- Proposed subdivisions that will require the extension of city or public sewer or water are considered to have an adverse impact on local services.
- Proposed subdivisions that are not contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within a designated urban growth area will be considered to have an adverse impact on services including but not limited to police, fire, and emergency services, school busing, and roads.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Historic or Natural Environment

- Describe and locate on a plat overlay or sketch map known or possible historic, paleontological, archaeological or cultural sites, structures, or objects which may be affected by the proposed subdivision. How would the subdivision affect surface and groundwater, soils, slopes, vegetation, historical or archaeological features within the subdivision or on adjacent land? Describe plans to protect these sites.
- Would any streambanks or lake shorelines be altered, streams rechanneled, or any surface water contaminated from sewage treatment systems, run-off carrying sedimentation, or concentration of pesticides or fertilizers?
- Could groundwater supplies be contaminated or depleted as a result of the subdivision?
- Would construction of roads or building sites require cuts and fills on steep slopes or cause erosion on unstable, erodible soils? Would soil be contaminated by sewage treatment systems?
- Describe the impacts that the removal of vegetation would have on soil erosion, bank, or shoreline instability.
- Would the value of significant historical, visual, or open space features be reduced or eliminated?
- Describe possible natural hazards the subdivision could be subject to (e.g., natural hazards such as flooding, rock, snow or landslides, high winds, severe wildfires, or difficulties such as shallow bedrock, high water table, unstable or expansive soils, or excessive slopes).

- How would the subdivision affect visual features within the subdivision or on adjacent land? Describe efforts to visually blend the proposed development with the existing environment (e.g. use of appropriate building materials, colors, road design, underground utilities, and revegetation of earthworks).
- Proposed subdivisions that are within a designated urban growth area and will use existing utilities are considered to have a minimal impact on the natural environment except as otherwise provided in the evaluation criteria.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed in locations with riparian areas, rivers streams, lakes, wetlands, or other natural surface waters are considered to have an adverse impact on the natural environment which may be mitigated.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on land with a high-water table (less than 4 feet from the surface) or designated groundwater recharge areas are considered to have an adverse impact on the natural environment.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed in locations with evidence of soils with building or site development limitations as defined by the soil survey, or are proposed on slopes greater than 25 percent, are considered to have an adverse impact on the natural environment.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on land with historical, cultural, archeological, or paleontological features are considered to have an adverse impact on the natural environment.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Public Health and Safety

- Describe any health or safety hazards on or near the subdivision, such as: natural hazards, lack of water, drainage problems, heavy traffic, dilapidated structures, high-pressure gas lines, high voltage power lines, or irrigation ditches. These conditions proposed or existing should be accurately described with their origin and location identified on a copy of the preliminary plat.
- Describe how the subdivision would be subject to hazardous conditions due to high voltage lines, airports, highways, railroads, dilapidated structures, high-pressure gas lines, irrigation ditches, and adjacent industrial or mining uses.
- Describe land uses adjacent to the subdivision and how the subdivision will affect the adjacent land uses. Identify existing uses such as feed lots, processing plants, airports or industrial firms which could be subject to lawsuits or complaints from residents of the subdivision.

- Describe public health or safety hazards, such as dangerous traffic, fire conditions, or contamination of water supplies which would be created by the subdivision.
- Proposed subdivisions are located where existing police, fire, and emergency services can respond within a timely manner and the subdivision is likely to have a minimal impact on public health and safety.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are in an area identified as a medium to severe fire hazard area by a fire district are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety. If the level of fire hazard has not been determined for the site, then the developer shall receive a determination from the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group (TCFSWG) before submitting a subdivision application.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on land with high pressure gas lines or high voltage lines are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on land or adjacent to Superfund or hazardous waste sites are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on or adjacent to abandoned landfills, mines, wells, waste sites, or sewage treatment plants are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety.
- Proposed major or subsequent minor subdivisions located outside of areas where police, fire, and emergency services can respond within 5 minutes for 90% of all emergencies are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are located in an area identified as a high seismic hazard area are considered to have an adverse impact on public health and safety.
- Any other adverse impacts on health or safety that may result from the proposed subdivisions or associated improvements.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- Describe what impacts the subdivision or associated improvements would have on wildlife areas such as big game wintering range, migration routes, nesting areas, wetlands, or important habitat for rare or endangered species.
- Describe the effect that pets, or human activity would have on wildlife.
- Describe what impacts the subdivision or associated improvements would have on wildlife areas such as big game wintering range, migration routes, nesting areas, wetlands, or important habitat for rare or endangered species.

- Describe the effect that pets, or human activity would have on wildlife habitat.
- Proposed subdivisions that are within a designated urban growth area are considered to have a minimal impact on wildlife except as otherwise provided in the evaluation criteria.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed in locations with riparian areas, wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, or other natural surface waters are considered to have an adverse impact on wildlife.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed in an area with rare, threatened, or endangered species, as identified by state or federal agencies, are considered to have an adverse impact on wildlife.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements that are proposed on or adjacent to land identified by state or federal agencies as critical habitat are considered to have an adverse impact on wildlife.
- Proposed subdivisions or associated improvements are proposed in locations that would interfere with known important or critical wildlife corridors are considered to have an adverse impact on wildlife.

Community Impact Report

At a minimum, the Community Impact Report must provide estimates and describe impacts to the following, as a result of the subdivision:

- Education and Busing,
- Roads and Maintenance,
- Water, Sewage, and Solid Waste Facilities,
- Fire and Police Protection,
- Payment for Extension of Capital Facilities, and
- Other community impacts as identified by Jefferson County during the pre-application process.

Public Hearing Procedure for Subdivisions

The Jefferson County Planning Board and County Commission both conduct their meetings open to the public following the public notice requirements as prescribed by state code. Major subdivisions and those minor subdivisions treated as major subdivisions are subject to public hearings by both the Board and Commission.

The Jefferson County Planning Board shall provide public notice of proposed subdivisions following the notice requirements as prescribed by statute. Public hearings are required for major subdivisions and subsequent minor subdivisions. Hearings are not permitted for first minor subdivisions.

Public hearings held by the Planning Board shall use the following format:

1. The Planning Board President opens the hearing. The planning staff will present a report that provides background information and describes the key technical points of the application and the proposal's relationship to any land use regulations and the Growth Policy, and the draft Findings of Fact and Conditions. Planning Board members are permitted to direct any relevant questions to staff.
2. The subdivider or representative may present information and testimony relating to the proposed subdivision. Planning Board members are permitted to direct any relevant questions to staff or the applicant.
3. Any written comments submitted prior to the hearing will be noted and made available to the public upon request. The President may read correspondence aloud. If the President deems that the written comments are numerous or voluminous, he may request that the written comments be summarized.
4. The floor is opened to public comments and members of the audience will be given an opportunity to comment on the application or proposal. Comments should be factual and relevant to the proposal. Each person speaking must give his or her name, address, and nature of interest in the matter.
5. After public comment is complete, the subdivider or representative may respond briefly.
6. Planning Board members may voice other considerations and may pose any relevant questions through the President.
7. The President closes the hearing on the subdivision proposal.
8. The Planning Board will then deliberate the Findings of Fact and Conditions outlined in staff's report, the subdivision application and preliminary plat, the environmental assessment, the summary of probable impacts and proposed mitigation, the adopted Growth Policy, information provided at the public hearing(s), and any additional information authorized by law, then vote to make a recommendation to the County Commission for approval as proposed, approval with conditions, or denial.
9. The Board of County Commission will hold a public meeting to review the Planning Board's recommendation, in addition to the Commission Report and any other supporting information from the Planning Board, the Findings of Fact, Conditions or Approval, and render a decision for approval, conditional approval, or denial of the proposed subdivision.

PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

Gathering the ideas and advice of County residents was a critical step in creating the Growth Policy. The creation, objectives, and action plan has been based upon the advice and guidance of County residents in the months prior to the adoption of the document.

The County created a community survey to assist in gathering advice and guidance from residents about what opportunities and issues were priorities, what they like/dislike about living in Jefferson County, and what the future should look like for the County. The survey was available to residents in a hardcopy format and online. 184 people participated in the survey. Some of the more notable results of the survey showed the following:

- Most respondents think the County is either an excellent or good place to live.
- Many respondents own their own home.
- A little over half of respondents think the County is doing a good job of planning for growth.
- Many respondents think the highest housing need is for single-family homes and that new growth should occur in existing communities.
- Respondents indicated that rural lifestyle, quality of lifestyle and safety were the main reasons they live in Jefferson County.

In addition to the community survey, the Planning Board held several open houses around the County to focus on the outreach feedback received and establish an action plan.