

# Helena Valley Area Plan Overview

FEBRUARY 10, 2021

ZONING ADVISORY PANEL

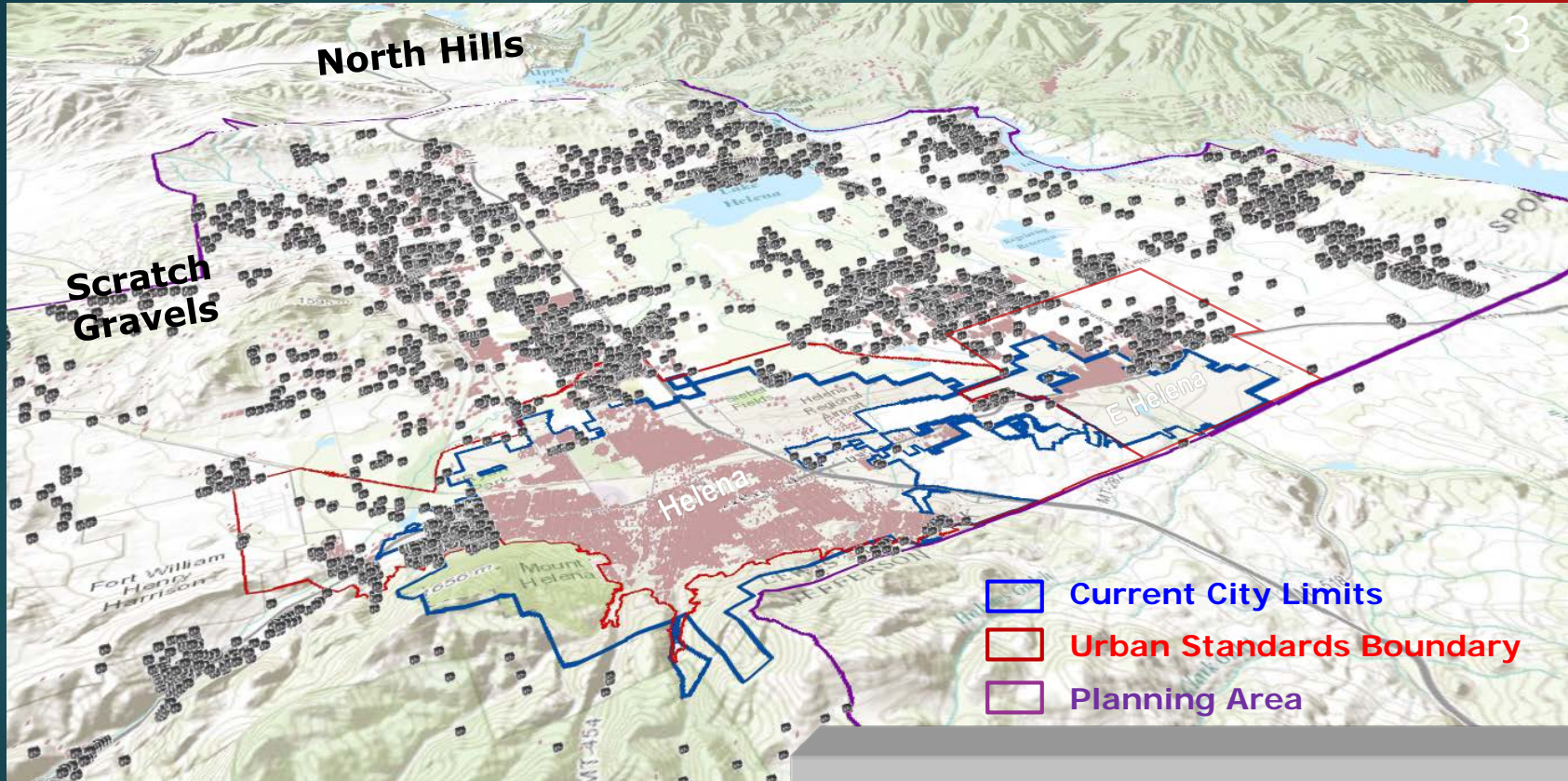
GREG MCNALLY, PLANNER III

## 6 PLANNING AREAS

- AUGUSTA
- LINCOLN
- WOLF CREEK/CRAIG
- MARYSVILLE/CANYON CREEK
- CANYON FERRY
- HELENA VALLEY



# GROWTH IN HELENA VALLEY 2000-2010

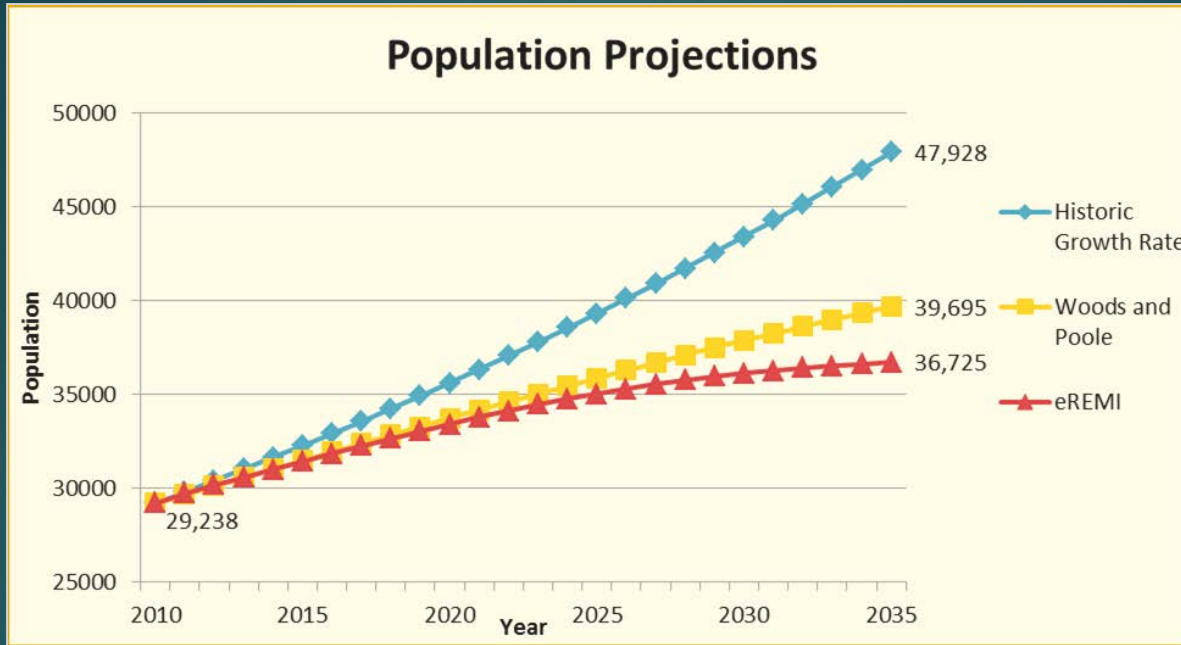


PERIOD	NEW ADDRESS POINTS (Outside City Limits)
2000-2010	<b>6036</b> (600/Yr)

**GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS**  
**KEY POINT #1** — The Helena Valley Planning Area contains 95% of the County's population and has experienced 98% of its development activity over the past decade.



# CHAPTER 1 – GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS



CH 1 FIGURE 3— Population projections for the next 20 years based on 3 different growth scenarios and population models. Estimates range from a low of 7000 people being added to as many as 18,000 more.

## GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

**KEY POINT #3** — A conservative estimate of growth over the next two decades is that about 10,000 people will move into Helena Valley and build 4000 new housing units.

## GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

**KEY POINT #4** — The 2004 Growth Policy for Helena Valley calls for the County to manage growth to establish Urban, Transitional, and Rural areas with development plans to guide orderly growth.



## GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

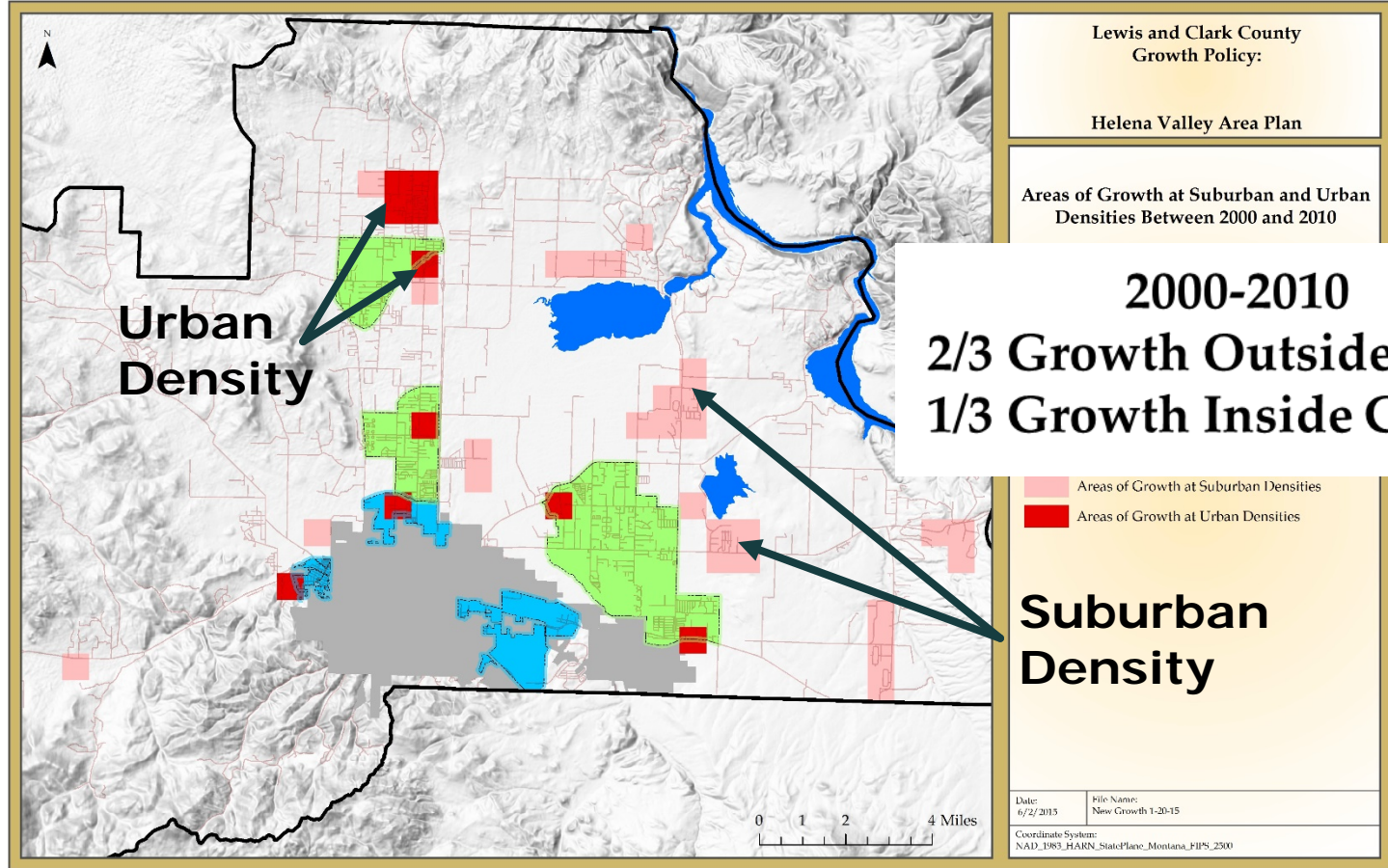
**KEY POINT #5** — Rather than managing growth according to the Growth Policy, the County has let the State DEQ determine development densities.



## GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

**KEY POINT #6** — The 2004 Growth Policy is inadequate and ineffective to properly manage growth that is happening in Helena Valley.

**CH 1 FIGURE 4** — Under State DEQ minimum lot size rules, high density subdivisions with lots as small as 7000 square feet were developed in rural areas that lack infrastructure and public services to support such urban development patterns.



## PUBLIC INPUT

**KEY POINT #1** — The Planning Board, staff, and consultants undertook a multi-pronged and multi-phase campaign to maximize public input into the preparation of this report.

## PUBLIC INPUT

**KEY POINT #2** — Public participation included meetings with 13 stakeholder groups and consultations with individuals from 3 more.

**Lewis & Clark County, MT**

Understand the Growth Policy

Know the key issues involved

Have your say in the outcome

**Helena Valley Growth Policy Update**

**Project Overview**

Lewis & Clark County adopted a long range community plan – a growth policy – in 2004. The Growth Policy includes different planning areas, including one for the Helena Valley.

To address the most critical issues facing Helena Valley now and in the near future, the county is beginning to update this portion of the growth policy.

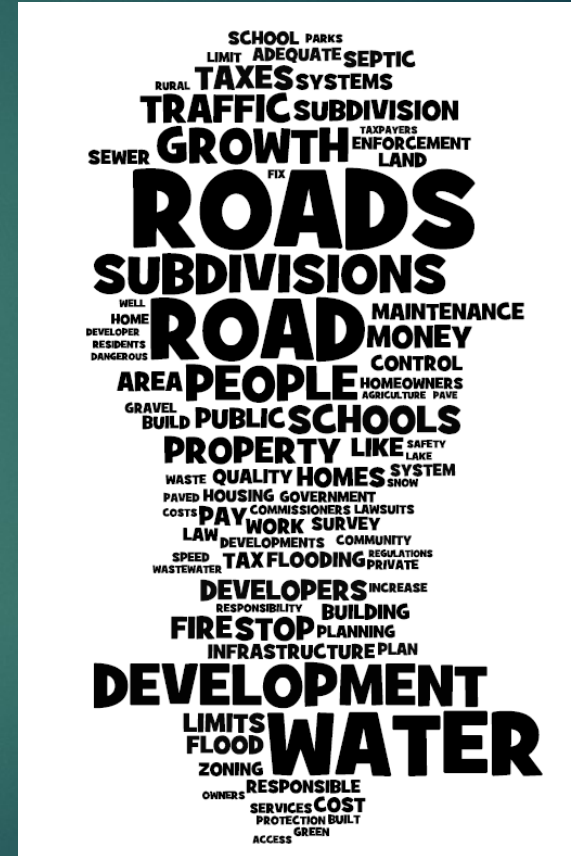
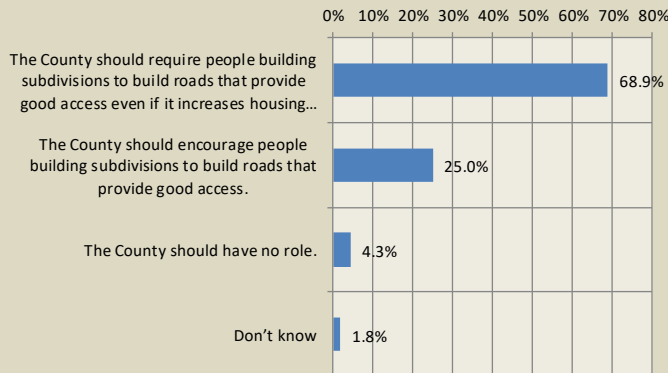


## PUBLIC INPUT

**KEY POINT #3** — A mail survey was sent to 10,355 addresses in Helena Valley. A total of 2977 were returned for a response rate of 29%. A third of those included written comments.


### Question 14:

In order for fire fighters to get to fires and to evacuate residents if necessary, roads in and out of subdivisions need to be adequate. In your opinion, what should be the role of the county in this area?





# CHAPTER 7 – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

<p>Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy Open House</p>	<p><b>ISSUE: Fire Protection</b> Fighting wildland fires is more complicated, more expensive, and more dangerous when homes are involved. Called the Wildland Urban Interface, this mix of homes and wildlands is growing in the Helena Valley. We've been fortunate to only lose a few homes in recent fires, but we've been warned a bigger disaster is possible.</p>	<p>Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy Open House</p>	<p><b>ISSUE: Future Fire Protection</b> There is a lot of land that can be developed in areas of high potential for wildland fire. As the population of the Valley grows, we can expect the number of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface to increase along with the risks of catastrophic events.</p>	
<p><b>Background and Current Conditions</b></p> <p>The forested hills surrounding the Helena Valley are designated as 'high fire hazard areas' by public safety experts due to dry conditions and forest insect infestation. Fire protection is provided by volunteer departments throughout the Valley that lack resources to keep up with new development.</p> <p>We have witnessed the havoc created by wildfires throughout the West and right here in Helena Valley with the recent Corral Fire. How can we reduce the threats that already exist while ensuring new development is designed with adequate water supplies, vegetation clearance to roads and structures, escape routes, and other safety measures needed to protect lives and property?</p> 		 <p><b>Complicated Management</b></p> <p>The Wildland Urban Interface is a complicated thing to manage. In places, there is a mix of federal, state, and private lands all together. Roads are often winding, narrow, and steep making access for fire fighters difficult, especially in the face of people trying flee the flames. Homes are often isolated, spreading resources for protection out very thin. The number one priority is to protect lives, that means the lives of the firefighters too. If it is too dangerous, the fate of the home is left to the fire.</p> <p>With more homes being built in the foothills and forests, the resources to protect them are getting spread thin. And with more homes, you have more people engaged in activities that have the potential for starting wildfires, as was the case with the Corral Fire.</p>	<p><b>2000</b> Acres burned in the 3-day Corral Fire</p> <p><b>4</b> Homes burned in the Corral Fire</p> <p><b>Survivable Space</b> Vegetation management that removes flammable fuels from around a structure</p> <p><b>250 GPM for 2 Hours</b> Smallest sized water source for fire protection allowed in new subdivisions</p> <p><b>1500 Gal - 10 Minutes</b> Water carried by tank trucks and time it lasts to fight a fire before they must go and refill</p>	<p><b>Business as Usual</b></p> <p>Our rural, state, and federal firefighters do a fantastic job protecting our homes and lives. In the Helena Valley, the job is largely done by volunteers, people who take time off their job and spend time away from home in training for and responding to fires. Since most people work in Helena, response times of volunteers in emergencies are extended.</p> <p>The County has taken some actions to address these issues. New development must provide a water source for the firefighters. New roads need to meet design standards, and all subdivisions must have at least two evacuation routes. But the County does not have any policy direction on how and where growth should occur in the Wildland Urban Interface. There are no policies discussing building materials such as fire resistant roofing. There is no policy setting the County's role in fuels management.</p>  <p><b>Is the Helena Area in a similar situation as Colorado Springs?</b></p> <p>In 2012 and 2013, wildfires devastated the city of Colorado Springs, Colorado. These fires were different than others we have seen. They ripped through entire neighborhoods, burning hundreds of homes, and killing several people. Fire officials from Colorado Springs came to our community and saw the same circumstances here that led to the destruction there.</p> 

CH 7 FIGURE 3 A, & B — Graphic displays presented at Open House Meetings to provide background information on the key issues, implications for Helena Valley if current trends continue, and requests for ideas on possible policy responses.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

**KEY POINT #8 — This report is being circulated for review and comments by other County Departments, State agencies, and stakeholders before moving forward with drafting of policy changes.**

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #1 —** The recommendations of the 2004 Growth Policy for Helena Valley have had little if any effect on the development that occurred here over the past decade.

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #2 —** There are five major constraints to new development that must be addressed in the Growth Policy to ensure that growth can continue in an orderly and safe manner.

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #3** — We need a new way of doing the business of managing growth that addresses future costs and consequences of ignoring the development constraints.

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #4** — Public investment in water and wastewater systems, road improvements, and fire services could address the development constraints, but it is expensive and there are risks to the public investors.



## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #5** — Zoning can control development density according to the constraints, but it can increase housing costs and reduce construction flexibility.

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #6** — Subdivision regulations also affect housing costs, and zoning may be a more effective way to address constraints than project by project reviews.

## POLICY OPTIONS

**KEY POINT #7** — A combination of investment, zoning, amended regulations, and education may be needed to effectively manage growth in the Helena Valley Planning Area.

# KEY ISSUES REPORT CH 8 – POLICY OPTIONS

13

**POLICY OPTIONS #1**

**INFRASTRUCTURE  
INVESTMENT**

**POLICY OPTIONS #3**

**IMPROVED  
PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

**POLICY OPTIONS #2**

**DENSITY CONTROLS**

**POLICY OPTIONS #4**

**EDUCATION**

**POLICY OPTIONS #5**

**COMBINATION OF 1-4**

# KEY ISSUES REPORT CH 2-6 – DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

14

**CONSTRAINT #1**

**WATER AVAILABILITY**

**CONSTRAINT #3**

**ROAD CONDITIONS**

**CONSTRAINT #2**

**WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT**

**CONSTRAINT #4**

**RURAL FIRE PROTECTION**

**CONSTRAINT #5**

**FLOODING**



# 2015 GROWTH POLICY SUMMARY POINTS

15

- 1. Helena Valley Area has 95% of County population & 98% of development activity**
- 2. Conservative estimates are adding 10,000 people & 4000 new housing units in 20 yrs**
- 3. Recommendations for urban, rural, & transitional areas in 2004 Growth Policy haven't addressed the key issues**
- 4. We must look for new ways of doing growth management to meet the challenges ahead**

# 2015 GROWTH POLICY GOALS

16

- 1. Effectively respond to the development constraints (water, wastewater, roads, fire protection, & flooding)**
- 2. Provide multiple policy options**
- 3. Have flexibility to meet market needs**
- 4. Offer trade offs (harder to do projects that saddle taxpayers with unfunded liabilities, easier to do projects that recognize constraints)**

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY  
**GROWTH POLICY UPDATE 2015**  
**VOLUME 2—HELENA VALLEY AREA PLAN**

Adopted March 3, 2016

**SUBMITTED BY:**

CITY-COUNTY CONSOLIDATED PLANNING BOARD

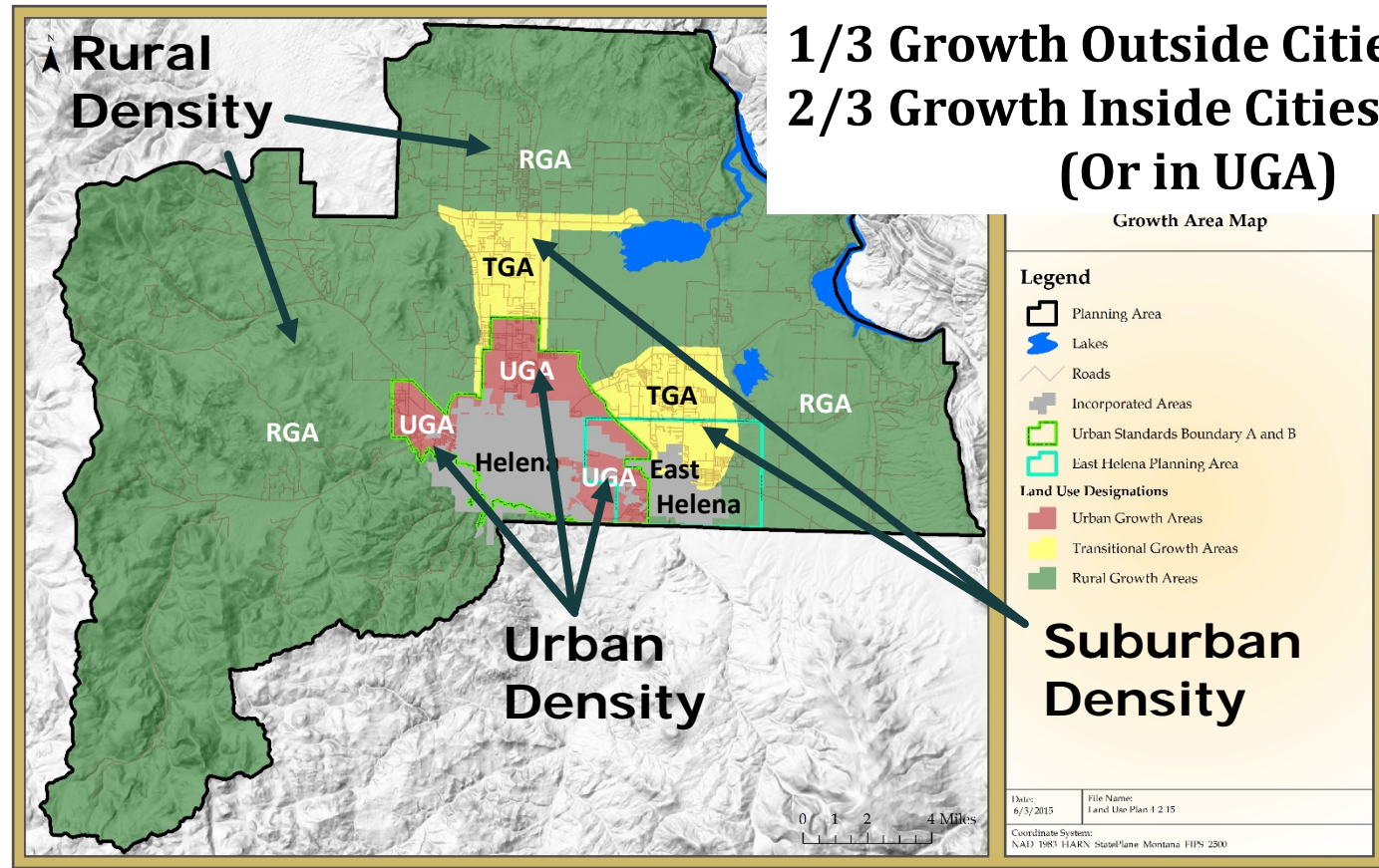
Patrick Johnson, Chairman  
Craig Charlton, Vice Chairman  
Jonathan Jackson  
Margaret Strachan  
Dick Thweatt  
Kory Kennaugh

**PREPARED BY:**

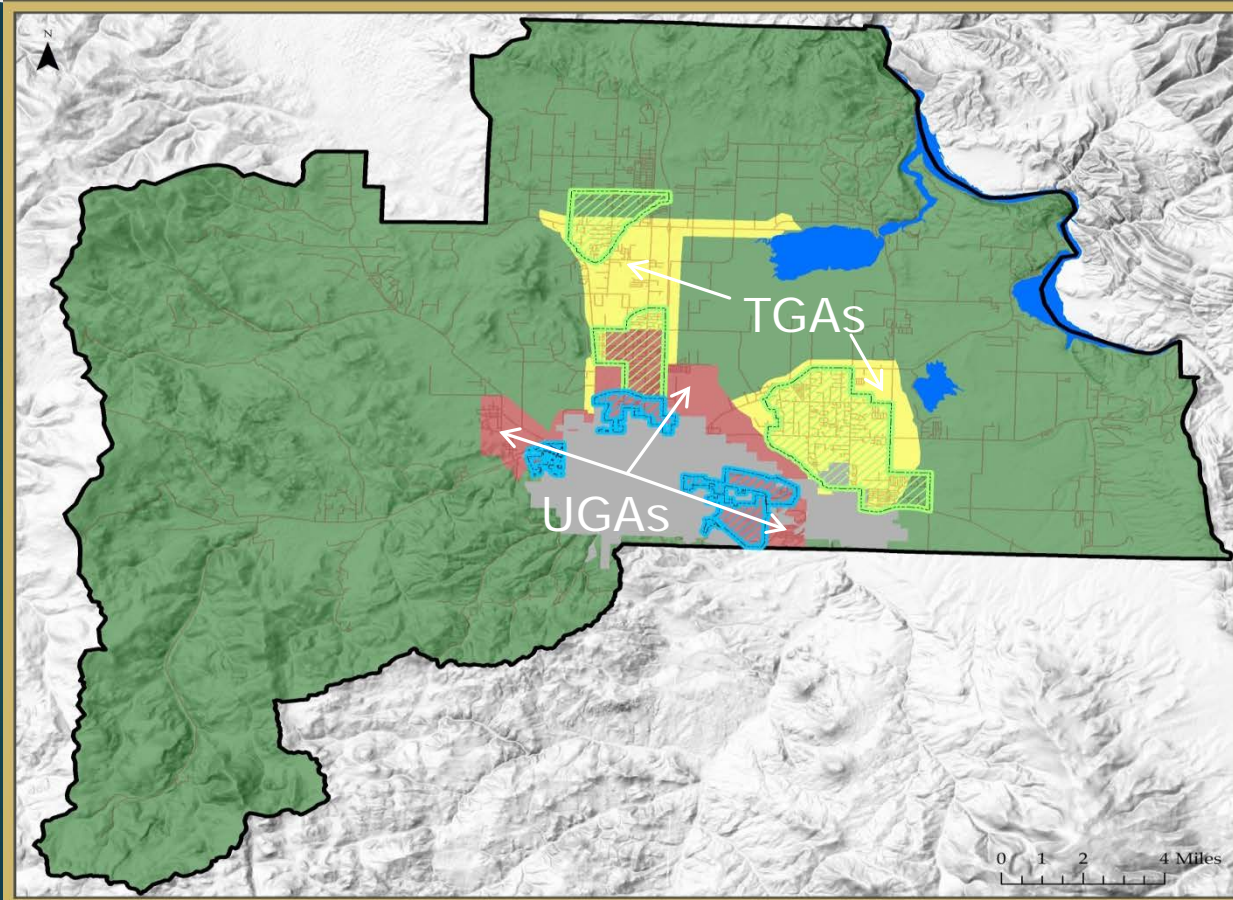
George Thebarga AICP, Director of Community Development & Planning  
Andrew Hagemer AICP, Land Solutions LLC  
David DeGrandpre AICP, Land Solutions LLC  
Greg McNally, Planner II  
Cole Peebles P.E., Great West Engineering  
Jerry Grebenc, Great West Engineering



**2015-2030 Goal**  
**1/3 Growth Outside Cities**  
**2/3 Growth Inside Cities**  
**(Or in UGA)**



# Chapter 3 – Policy Options for New Growth Management System



2015

## GROWTH POLICY

Urban Growth Areas  
(+7000 acres)

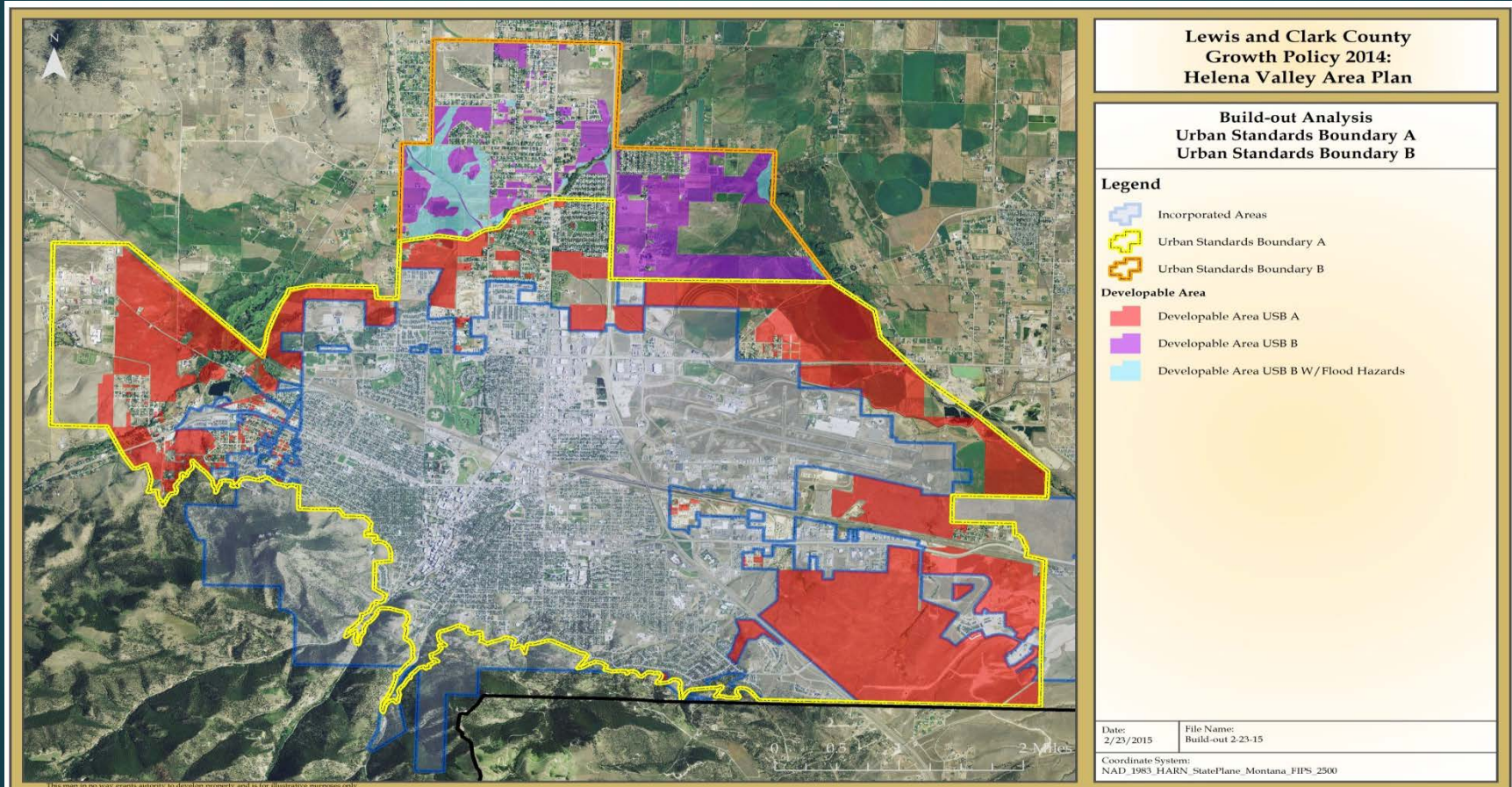
Transitional  
(Suburban) Growth  
Areas (+5000  
acres)

Rural Growth Areas



# CHAPTER 3 – POLICY OPTIONS FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT

- Conservative estimate of the build out potential of the Urban Standards Boundary is 8800 units (4000 needed over next 20 years)

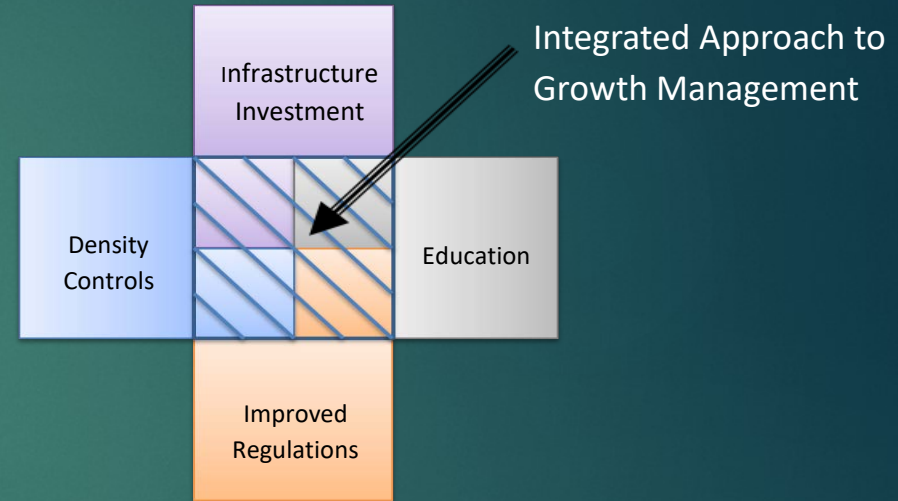


# Chapter 3 – Policy Options for New Growth Management System

2004 ALL GROWTH AREAS  
Emphasized improved regulations



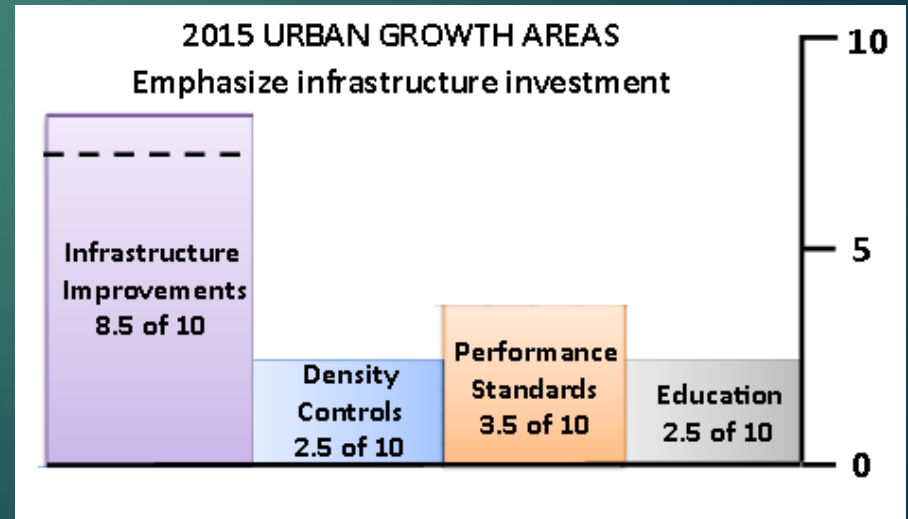
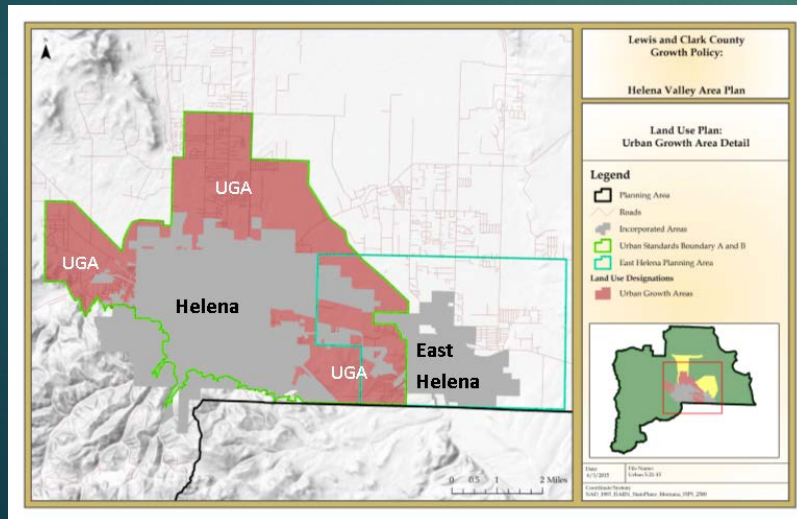
2015 ALL GROWTH AREAS





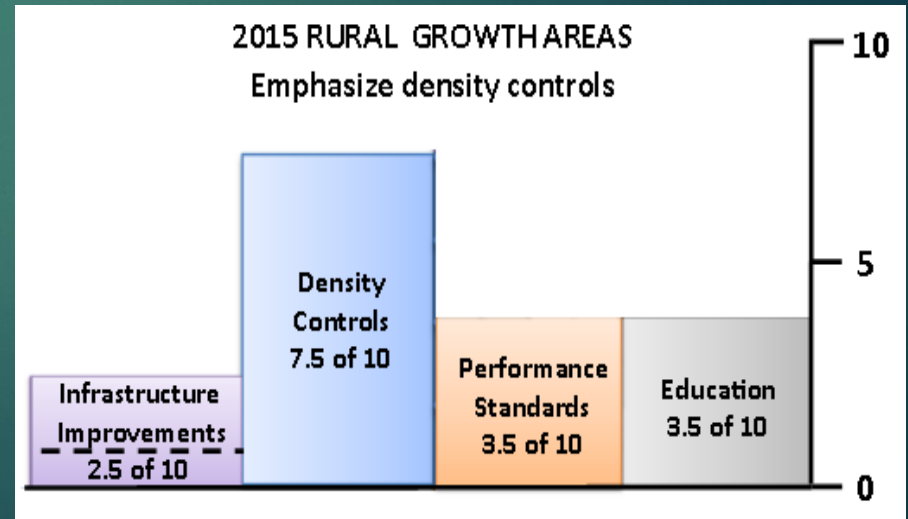
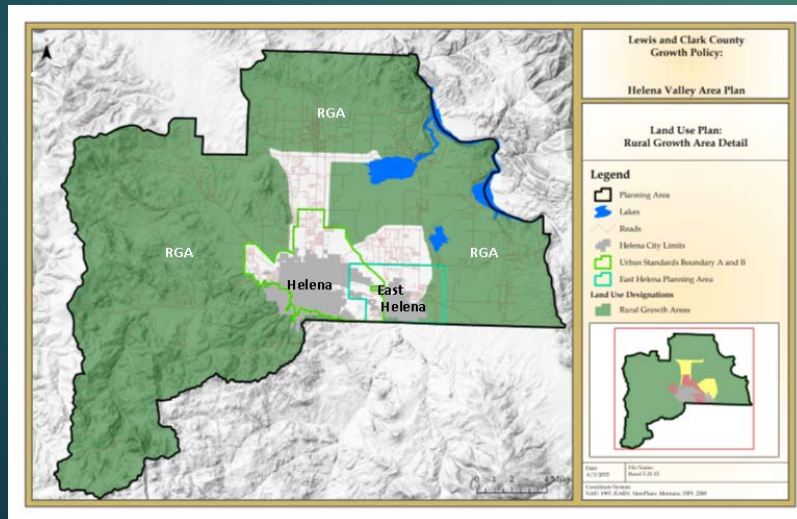
## Urban Growth Area Goals:

1. Create orderly & efficient land use pattern for cost-effective expansion of public utilities.
2. Provide incentives for development at urban densities through public-private partnerships and streamlined development reviews.
3. Coordinate growth management strategies with the Cities.
4. Address development constraints through zoning and other mechanisms.



## Rural Growth Area Goals:

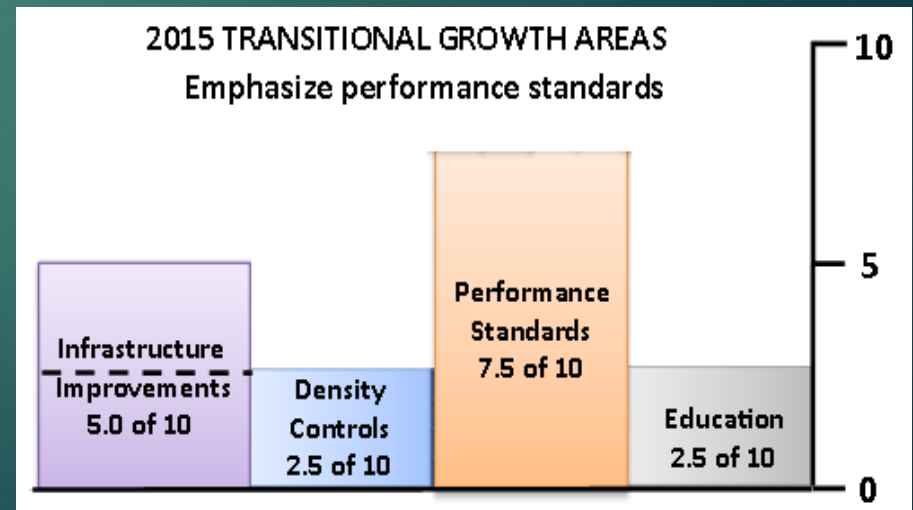
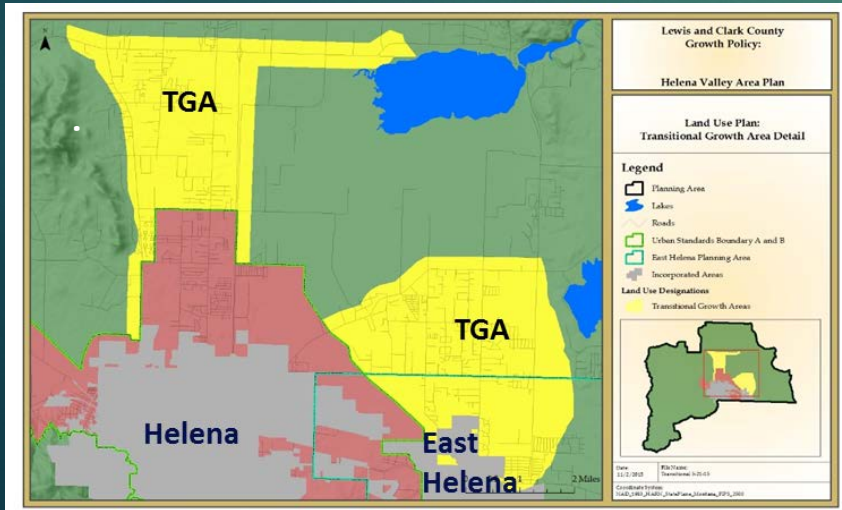
1. Limit development densities per constraints of water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection.
2. Adopt rural design standards that reflect and work for the reduced development densities.
3. Develop public-private partnerships to improve roads and fire protection.
4. Provide flexibility with expedited cluster subdivision reviews and Planned Developments that address the development constraints.



# HELENA VALLEY AREA PLAN CH 5 – FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

## Transitional Growth Area Goals:

1. Provide general suburban density that responds to the development constraints.
2. Limit development density on poor quality roads and in flood plains.
3. Adopt design standards that match the density of development.
4. Develop public-private partnerships to improve roads and fire protection.
5. Provide flexibility with Planned Developments that address the development constraints.





316 North Park Avenue, Helena, Montana 59623

## **ZONING ADVISORY PANEL**

### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING - AGENDA**

The Helena Valley Planning Area – Zoning Advisory Panel (ZAP) is an advisory body established by the Board of County Commissioners. The panel operates in accordance with its By-Laws as set forth in Board Resolution 2021-8.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Zoom): <https://zoom.us/j/9894780402>

The virtual meeting can also be accessed via telephone by dialing any of the following telephone numbers and entering the Meeting ID when prompted: (253) 215 8782; (346) 248 7799; (669) 900 6833; (301) 715 8592; (312) 626 6799; or (929) 205 6099 US **Meeting ID: 989 478 0402**

**Date and Time:** February 10, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.

**Contact Information:** email [planning@lccountymt.gov](mailto:planning@lccountymt.gov) Phone 406-447-8374

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. ZOOM Meeting Protocols
4. Introductions
5. Approval of January 27, 2021 Meeting Minutes
6. Election of Panel Officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary) (tabled from January 27, 2021)
7. Business Items:
  - Ground Rules Review;
  - State and local land use codes and regulations; and
  - Helena Valley Planning Growth Policy Update Overview.
8. Public comment on any matter within the scope of the ZAP that is not on the agenda.
9. Announcements
  - Homework
  - Information Library
10. Next Meeting: February 24, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.
11. Adjournment

**ADA NOTICE** — Lewis and Clark County is committed to providing access to persons with disabilities for its meetings, in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Montana Human Rights Act. The County will not exclude persons with disabilities from participation at its meetings or otherwise deny them County's services, programs, or activities. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in the County's meetings, services, programs, or activities should contact Keni Gross, as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to arrange for the requested accommodation, at any of the following: (406) 447-8316 TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091 or 711 kgrose@lccountymt.gov 316 N Park, Room 303





## Meeting Break

- ▶ The Zoning Advisory Panel has<sup>27</sup> taken a break from the public meeting proceedings. The public meeting will resume at
- ▶ In the event you are removed from the Zoom meeting please re-join the meeting in the same manner in which you first joined.

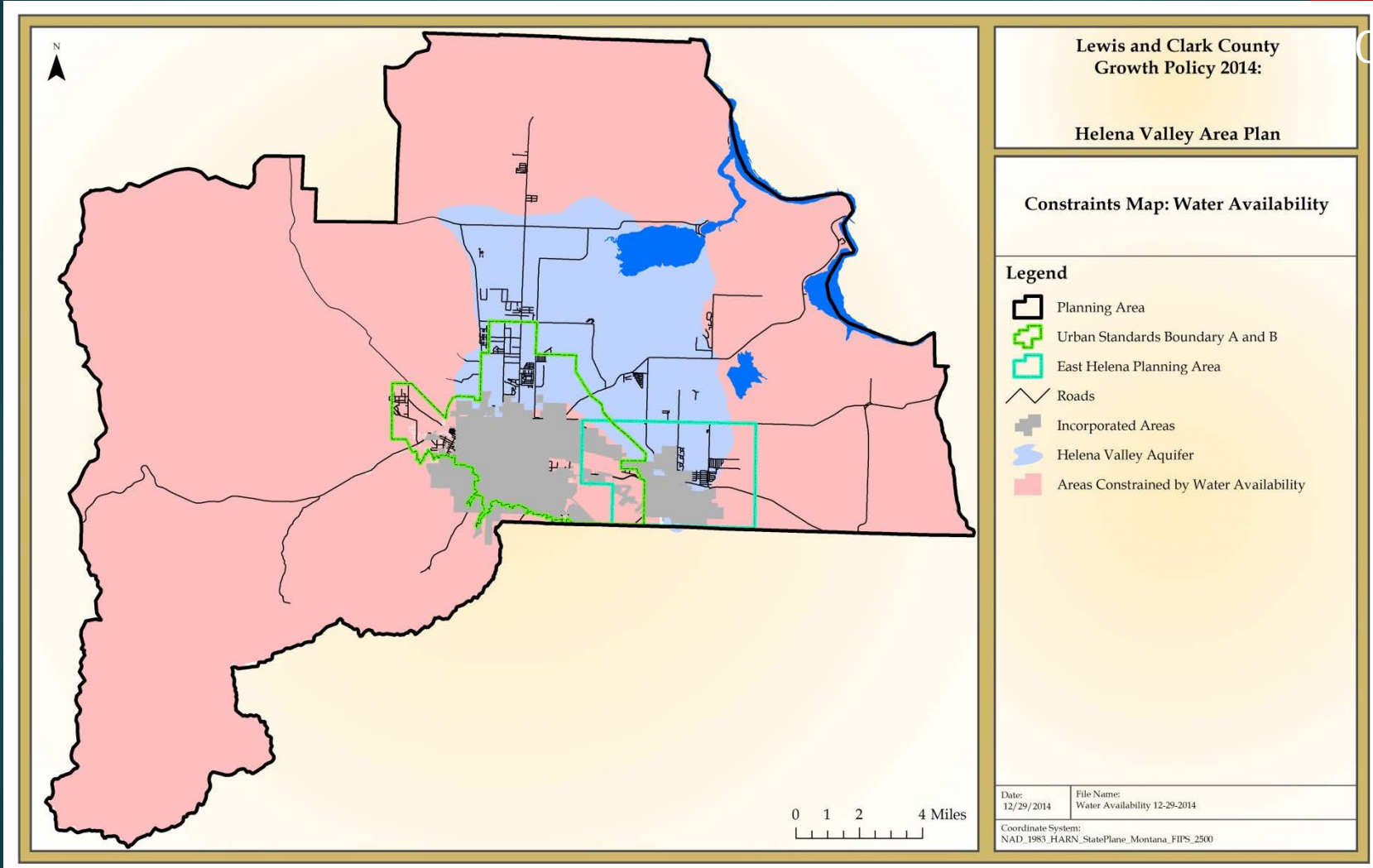
Please  
Stand-By

- ▶ If you have joined us via Zoom –  
We are currently experiencing technical difficulties and will resume shortly.
- ▶ In the event you are removed from the Zoom meeting please re-join the meeting in the same manner in which you first joined.





# CHAPTER 2 – WATER AVAILABILITY



MAP 2 — PORTIONS OF THE HELENA VALLEY PLANNING AREA THAT ARE CONSTRAINED DUE TO LIMITED OR UNKNOWN WATER AVAILABILITY







# CHAPTER 3 – WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Lewis and Clark County  
Growth Policy 2014:

Helena Valley Area Plan

Constraints Map: Wastewater Disposal

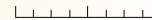
## Legend

-  Planning Area
-  Urban Standards Boundary A and B
-  East Helena Planning Area
-  Roads
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Groundwater Depth Less Than 5 Feet

Date: 8/27/2014 File Name: Wastewater Disposal 8-27-14

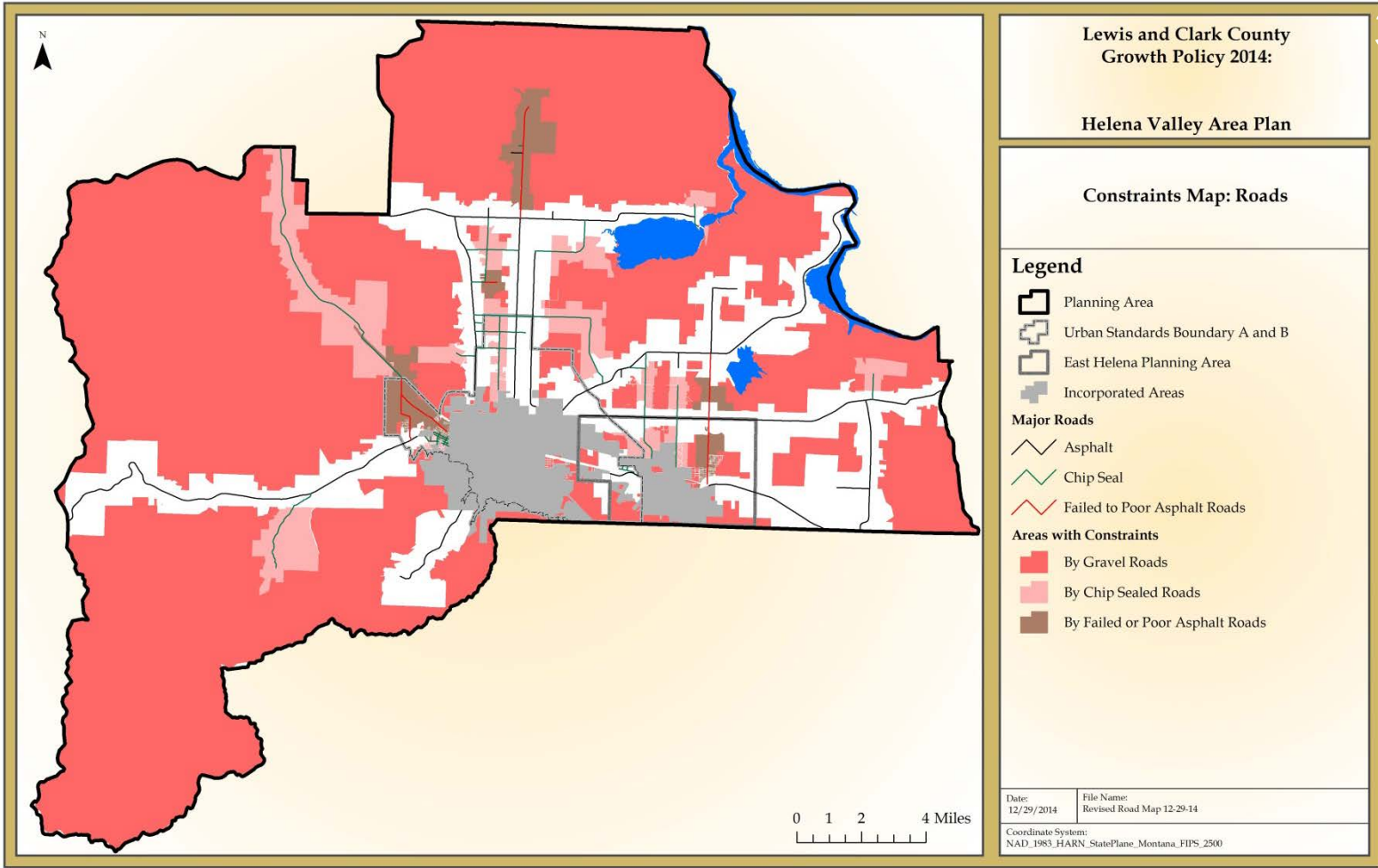
Coordinate System: NAD\_1983\_HARN\_StatePlane\_Montana\_FIPS\_2500

0 1 2 4 Miles



MAP 3— PORTIONS OF THE HELENA VALLEY PLANNING AREA THAT ARE CONSTRAINED DUE TO HIGH GROUNDWATER

# CHAPTER 4 – ROADS



MAP 4 — PORTIONS OF THE HELENA VALLEY PLANNING AREA THAT ARE CONSTRAINED BY GRAVEL ROADS AND FAILING HARD SURFACED ROADS.

# CHAPTER 5 – FIRE PROTECTION

Lewis and Clark County  
Growth Policy 2014:

Helena Valley Area Plan

### Constraints Map: Fire Protection

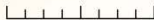
#### Legend

-  Planning Area
-  Urban Standards Boundary A and B
-  East Helena Planning Area
-  Roads
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Limited by Rural Firefighting Services Capacity
- Fuel Hazard Rating**
-  Limited by High Fuel Hazard Rating
-  Limited by High to Severe Fuel Hazard Rating

Date: 12/29/2014 File Name: Fire Protection 12-29-14

Coordinate System: NAD\_1983\_HARN\_StatePlane\_Montana\_FIPS\_2500

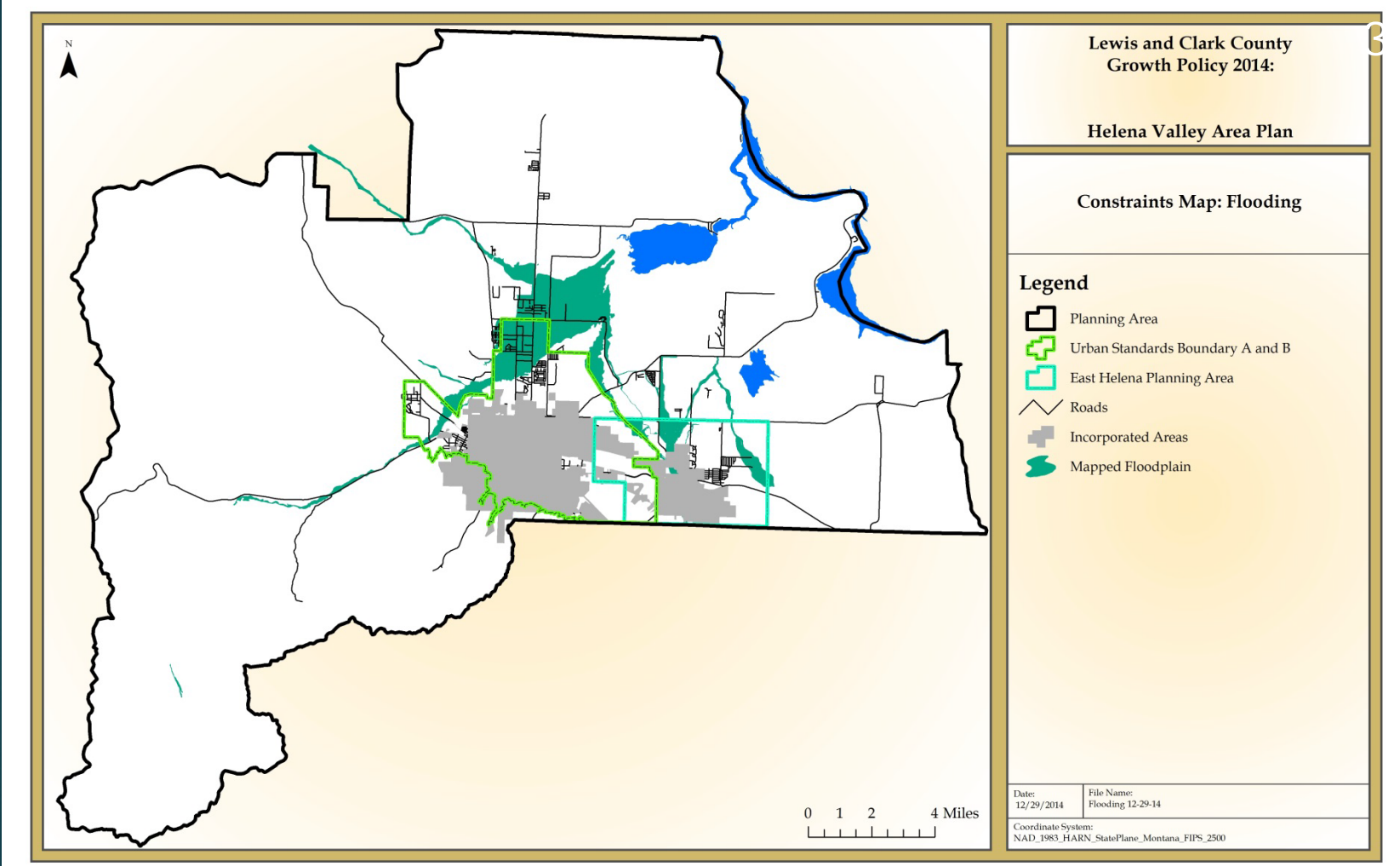
0 1 2 4 Miles



MAP 5 — PORTIONS OF HELENA VALLEY PLANNING AREA THAT ARE CONSTRAINED BY WILDLAND FUEL HAZARDS AND RURAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES.



# CHAPTER 6 – FLOODING



MAP 6 — PORTIONS OF THE HELENA VALLEY PLANNING AREA THAT ARE CONSTRAINED DUE TO PERIODIC FLOODING.