

PREFACE

This is Volume I of the revised draft Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy, a stand-alone executive summary that is the main public review document. The executive summary contains the main issues, goals, policies, and implementation strategies in the Growth Policy, but lacks most of the background and inventory material found in the full plan.

The Montana Codes Annotated (MCA) authorizes local governments to adopt a Growth Policy under section 76-1-601, MCA. The Growth Policy—previously referred to as a comprehensive plan—is intended to be a long-range, non-regulatory planning document for Lewis and Clark County. The Growth Policy establishes a broad framework for how to proceed with more detailed shorter-range planning.

Because of changes in state statute and the general nature of the document, individual subdivision applications will not be evaluated based on compliance with this Growth Policy. One of the main implementation tools for the Growth Policy are the County Subdivision regulations, which—according to state statute—must be in accordance with this document. The subdivision regulations are currently in the process of being revised in light of proposed changes to the Growth Policy, and will be available for public review in 2004.

Lewis and Clark County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1983, portions of which were updated in 1989. The focus of that Plan was the Helena Valley area, but sections on the rural areas were also included. In 1996, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a more specific area plan for Lincoln and the Upper Blackfoot Valley; this was initiated in response to a major open pit gold mine proposed in the vicinity. The County began the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan in 1997, and established more specific area plans for the rural portions of the County listed below:

- Augusta
- Wolf Creek-Craig
- Canyon Creek-Marysville
- Canyon Ferry-York
- The Helena Valley

The starting point for these revisions to the Growth Policy is the document adopted by the County in December 2000, after extensive public involvement. The composition of the Commission changed as a result of elections held in November 2000, and the reconstituted body that took office in January 2001 voted to take a fresh look at the recently adopted Growth Policy.

The Lewis and Clark County Planning Board held a public hearing on the proposed changes in February 2003, following open houses in Craig, Canyon Creek, York, and the Helena Valley. After their public hearing, the Planning Board passed their suggested changes on to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

The BOCC reviewed the Planning Board's recommendations and held public hearings of their own on the document in Lincoln, Augusta, and Helena in December 2003. After considering public comment and incorporating a number of relatively minor changes into the October 15, 2003 review draft, the BOCC adopted the revised document at their hearing on December 23, 2003; this document reflects those revisions.

If after reading the executive summary (volume I) you are interested in looking at the full Growth Policy, the document and accompanying maps can be accessed at the Lewis and Clark County web site (www.co.lewis-clark.mt.us), or can be viewed at the Lewis and Clark County Planning Department. The full Growth Policy is divided into two volumes, as listed below:

- Volume II contains the following topical elements of the Growth Policy: demographics and economics; land use; housing; natural environment; transportation; and implementation strategies. This document includes the main directional elements included in the executive summary, plus all the background information.
- Volume III contains the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), which is part of the Growth Policy, but different enough from the other elements so that it has been packaged as a stand-alone document. The Commission and Planning Board made no substantive changes to this volume, although there have been some organizational changes. The intent is to update the CFP between 2004 and 2006.

Questions about these documents may be addressed to the following:

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