

1. What is a Rural Improvement District (RID)?

A Rural Improvement District (RID) is a legal taxing authority that can raise funds in specific areas for specific services. An RID allows Lewis and Clark County residents, living outside incorporated cities and towns, to finance public improvement and maintenance projects by assessing a special district tax on each benefitting property within the district.

2. How is an RID created?

RIDs are created one of three ways:

1. Citizen-initiated through a petition with public hearing and protest period;
2. Developer-initiated as part of subdivision approval; or
3. County-initiated for public interest.

For more information on this process, contact Jessica Makus, jmakus@lccountymt.gov or 406-447-8029.

3. What services can an RID provide?

An RID may be used to finance, construct and maintain the following for public use:

- existing road beds and surfacing;
- Ditches;
- Ancillary road features such as turnouts for mailboxes and school busses, sidewalks, culverts, curb and gutters;
- Grading, dust control and vegetation management;
- Stormwater systems;
- Fire suppression systems;
- Flood control systems;
- Public parks, trails and open-space lands.

4. How are RID assessments determined and paid?

When an RID is created, annual costs for improvements and maintenance are estimated and split equally among each benefitting property, regardless of development. This cost is paid through a special assessment included in annual property taxes.

5. Why do I need to pay for an RID if I already pay property taxes?

Money collected in general property taxes goes to a variety of public uses (such as schools, libraries, law enforcement, etc.) as well as County road maintenance. As with many large, primarily rural Montana counties, there is not enough funding to maintain all public roads, many of which only benefit a few properties. RID funds are used directly for services within the RID and only that RID.

6. Who controls RID funds?

The County collects RID payments and enters them into separate accounts for each RID. When work is completed, the County pays for it out of the RID account. Financial records are open to the public and funds carry over each year, earning interest. If at any time an account had insufficient funds or an unnecessary surplus, RID residents can request the Board increase or decrease the annual assessment.

7. Who determines when work is completed?

The County encourages RIDs to determine a point of contact for each RID to coordinate maintenance needs. If you would like to become a point of contact to help facilitate work projects within your RID, please contact the Special Districts Program Coordinator, Jessica Makus, jmakus@lccountymt.gov, or 406-447-8029.

If snow plowing is a component of the services in an RID, residents should coordinate with Jesse Whitford, jwhitford@lccountymt.gov, 406-447-8040 or Calob Marquis, cmarquis@lccountymt.gov, 406-447-8069, to have a contractor plow the roads.

8. Why are roads within an RID boundary not receiving services?

Some roads within an RID may not be covered. Reasons may include low frequency of use or a prohibitively high cost of improvement or maintenance. Roads included within each RID are identified in the resolution creating the district.

9. How does an RID differ from a Homeowners' Association (HOA)?

RIDs can be similar in function to a HOA; however, the County oversees an RID to ensure funds are collected and work is conducted. Each RID is analyzed individually for the type of work proposed and properties that benefit from it. An RID ensures your road will be maintained regardless of a HOA's operational status or the availability of HOA collected funds.

10. How can RID services, boundaries or assessments be changed?

All actions to create, amend, change the boundary, and/or adjust the tax assessment of an RID must be taken by the Board at a publicly noticed meeting. When any of the noted actions are contemplated, all landowners in the area affected by the RID would be notified by the County. County staff will assist with this process, contact Jessica Makus, jmakus@lccountymt.gov, 406-447-8029 for more information.