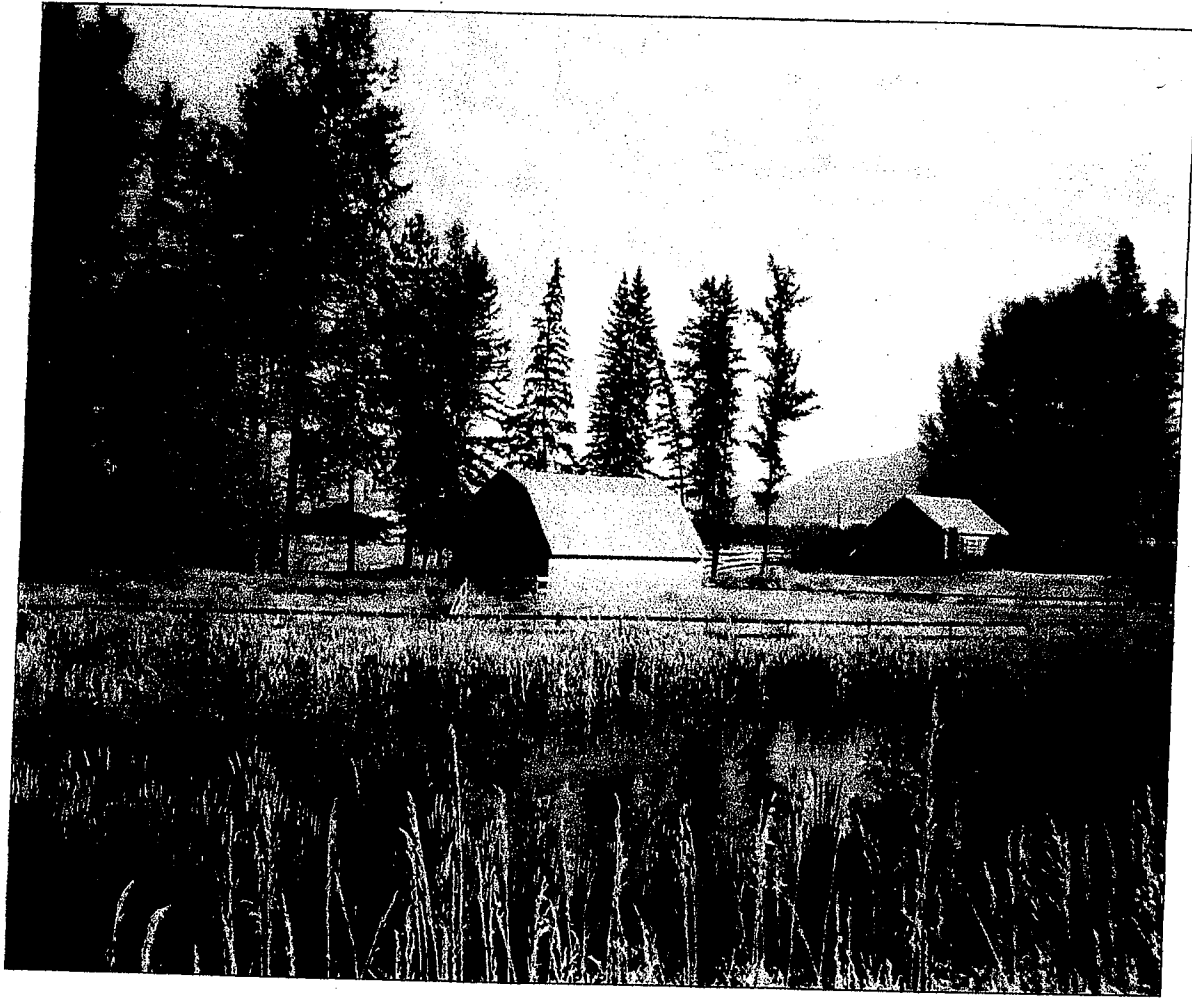


# HELENA FLATS

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# NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



# **Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan**

RESOLUTION NO. 789 AA

WHEREAS, Helena Flats Land Use Coalition, has requested a revision to the Flathead County Master Plan by the adoption of the Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan as an addendum to the Flathead County Master Plan. The Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan covers approximately 4,800 acres between U.S. Highway 2 on the West and the Flathead River on the East and between Rose Crossing on the South and Pioneer Road on the North;

WHEREAS, the Flathead County Planning Board recommended that the Board of Commissioners adopt the revision to the Flathead County Master Plan;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution of intent (Resolution No. 789 Z) to consider the requested plan change on July 21, 2005, and gave notice that it would consider public comment received prior to August 26, 2005; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has considered the information presented to it since the adoption of that resolution of intent.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to Section 76-1-604, M.C.A., by the Board of Commissioners of Flathead County, Montana, that it hereby adopts the Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan as a revision to the Flathead County Master Plan, covering approximately 4,800 acres between U.S. Highway 2 on the West and the Flathead River on the East and between Rose Crossing on the South and Pioneer Road on the North. The property described is shown on the attached map as Exhibit A, Flathead County, Montana. The Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan, as adopted, is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

DATED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2005.

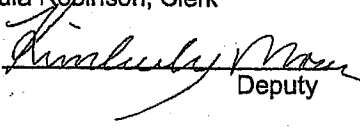
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Flathead County, Montana

By   
Gary D. Hall, Chairman

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Robert W. Watne, Member

By   
Joseph D. Brenneman, Member

ATTEST:  
Paula Robinson, Clerk

By   
Deputy

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2004 the Helena Flats community held three meetings at the Helena Flats School to discuss growth and development in their neighborhood. The meetings were organized in large part because of a recent spate of development proposals in the area that the residents felt would greatly alter the character and quality of their neighborhood.

Out of the above-mentioned meetings came the following main sentiments: a desire to preserve the rural atmosphere and all of its associated amenities (wildlife, agriculture and forests); a concern for the water supply due to the lack of public sewer and an increase in waste water systems; a concern that the roads are inadequate and unsafe to support increased traffic in the area; and a desire to see well-planned development in the area.

With input from the Helena Flats Land Use Coalition Committee, a draft Neighborhood Plan was prepared to reflect the sentiments expressed at the March 15 and 16, 2004 neighborhood meetings. Using June 1, 2004 county records at the Plat Room and a current GIS map, landowners in the area were notified by mail that the draft had been prepared, they were provided summaries of pertinent elements of the draft and they were advised how to review and obtain copies of the draft. All landowners were invited to attend one of two neighborhood meetings held on June 22, 2004. Public input at those meetings resulted in additional changes to the draft plan.

This document represents a formalized plan of the community's vision for how growth should occur in its neighborhood and is meant to serve as a guideline for developers and property owners wishing to develop their land. Based on concerns and opinions expressed by the residents, this plan outlines goals and policies for the Helena Flats neighborhood.

The Helena Flats Neighborhood Plan is bounded by the Flathead River to the east; U.S. Highway 2 on the west; Pioneer Road on the north and Rose Crossing/Addison Roads close the planning area to the south. The entire area within these boundaries is included in the neighborhood plan. The planning area contains approximately 4,870 acres.

## I. HUMAN AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

### **A. HISTORY AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN**

In the mid 1930's the population of the entire Flathead County was approximately 19,200 people. At that time, the Helena Flats area was sparsely populated compared to today's standards. Helena Flats was primarily made up of 80 and 160 acre parcels that were used for agricultural purposes. Land owners made their living off of the land. In addition to agricultural lands, there was quite a bit of timber remaining among the fields. Highway 2, which forms the western boundary of the Helena Flats neighborhood, did not exist, as it is known today. Rather, LaSalle Road from Columbia Falls to Kalispell was nothing more than a dirt road. Helena Flats Road only went as far north as Reserve Street. Residents of the Helena Flats area were able to reach Kalispell by train from a siding at Rose Crossing and generally only did so about once a week or as the necessity arose.

Being so close in proximity to Kalispell, the area began to feel the pressures of development as early as the 1950's. In the early 1950's, the Harvey Aluminum Company purchased approximately 1500 – 2000 acres to install an aluminum plant. After purchasing the land for the aluminum plant, the Harvey Aluminum Company realized that the soil in the area was too unstable for construction of the proposed facility. Soil samples revealed a layer of quicksand under the topsoil and gravel layers. The Company had no use for the land so they sold it to Jim Edmiston. Mr. Edmiston turned the land into a large cattle ranch and farm, which fit in well with the uses of his many neighbors. The large cattle ranch and farm proved to be financially viable until sometime in the mid 1970's. At that point Mr. Edmiston divided the ranch into fairly large acreages and sold most of it to a rancher from Roundup. The rancher from Roundup did the same thing as Mr. Edmiston. He used the land for a period of time as a ranch and then again divided it up into smaller parcels and sold a number of them. This trend continues to date. Many ranchers and farmers, as their profession becomes less and less financially viable, choose to subdivide and sell small portions of their land.

Currently, the highest density development in Helena Flats is in the southern portion of the Helena Flats Neighborhood. This is largely due to its proximity to the City of Kalispell and to the Helena Flats School.

It is important to note that the current settlement pattern in the Helena Flats Neighborhood has not been influenced much by government standards. There have been no zoning or other land use controls enacted in the area. The only type of governmental regulation in the area has been through the county's subdivision review process.

### **B. POPULATION**

Helena Flats' population in 1990 was 566. The 2000 census claimed a population of 662. That equates to a population increase of 96 people or a rate of 16.9% over the decade. This is significantly lower than the growth rate for the entire Flathead County, which experienced a 25.8% rate of growth during the same period. Based on these previous years, it can be assumed that the population of Helena Flats will grow at least 1.7% per year.

## C. HOUSING

### Existing Conditions

The residents of Helena Flats realize that there must be adequate housing for future growth. At the present time there is a fairly wide spectrum of housing in the area. The densest development in Helena Flats is located in the southwest portion of the neighborhood. The housing in that area is, generally speaking, more affordable than the other housing throughout the area. The homes in the southwest section include a large proportion of manufactured homes and trailers. The southeast portion of the neighborhood, near the Flathead River, is less dense, with larger parcel sizes than the southwest. The southeast portion of the Neighborhood contains a mix of housing. There is some affordable housing as well as some modest homes in this area. The northern portion of Helena Flats is still composed of large parcels, many being used for agriculture. The development in this area is generally much less dense than in the southern sections and generally contains a mix of newer, expensive homes as well as older homes, barns, and outbuildings associated with agriculture.

There are currently 468 recorded lots in the Helena Flats Area (see Map 1), owned by 283 individual property owners. Clearly, some owners own multiple lots at this time. The lots are held by a number of different entities. Individuals own some of the lots, some are held in trust, some are held by various corporations, and some are held by speculators. Due to the varying types of ownership present in the area, not all lots are used for residential purposes.

It should be noted that unlike Flathead County as a whole, the population of Helena Flats is not seasonal and therefore the housing production is not expected to occur at a pace faster than the area's population growth.

### Goals

- Recognize the need for housing and cooperate to provide well-planned subdivided lots within the constraints of infrastructure and natural resources.
- Develop housing in appropriate locations in a manner that makes reasonable use of the land and respects natural resources.
- Develop housing in a manner that recognizes the economic value of variables such as open space and scenic view in maintaining a rural atmosphere.

### Policies

- Encourage mixed use of land to enable agricultural landowners to develop portions of their land that are no longer suitable nor economically feasible for agricultural production.
- Allow development throughout the Helena Flats Neighborhood that respects the historic development patterns and the natural resources of the area.