



EST
ALLEY

Adopted by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners
April 9, 1997
Resolution No. 955AA

and

Adopted by the Kalispell City Council
April 7, 1997
Resolution No. 4323

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WEST VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

**Adopted by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners
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Resolution No. 955AA**

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BACKGROUND

The West Valley Neighborhood Planning process really began during the mid 1970s when the community adopted zoning regulations and established a West Valley Land Owners Association. However, over the years the role and identity of the "Owners Association" has become less defined and the legal stability of the zoning district has increasingly been in question. The need to update the West Valley Planning And Zoning Regulations to reflect the more traditional zoning statutes of 76-2-201 et seq., MCA, has been a long standing objective of the County Commissioners.

The original intent of the West Valley Planning and Zoning District was to minimize conflict with agricultural and timber practices in the area. With this as an objective, minimum lot sizes were set at 40 acres. But over the past 20 years, the liberal use of "occasional sale" and "family transfer" exemptions and the granting of variances has transformed many areas of West Valley into rural residential neighborhoods.

The preparation of Neighborhood Plans has been gaining increased interest amongst local communities in recent years. Example plans includes those prepared for Bigfork, Lakeside, Little Bitterroot Lake, and the Canyon. The Flathead Regional Development Office (FRDO) has offered to assist any "neighborhoods" wishing to pursue a planning process and the County Commissioners reserved funding to hire a planning consultant to help facilitate the neighborhood planning process.

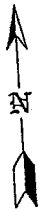
The impetus to pursue a formal review of the West Valley Planning and Zoning District evolved from a proposal to establish a neighborhood convenience store in the area of the West Valley School. Reaction to this proposal lead to a series of citizen-initiated meetings during the fall of 1995 to discuss this and other issues pertaining to the West Valley Planning and Zoning District. A citizen steering committee formally requested assistance from the County Commissioners to help prepare a neighborhood plan for West Valley.

A vicinity map of the West Valley area is included on the following page.

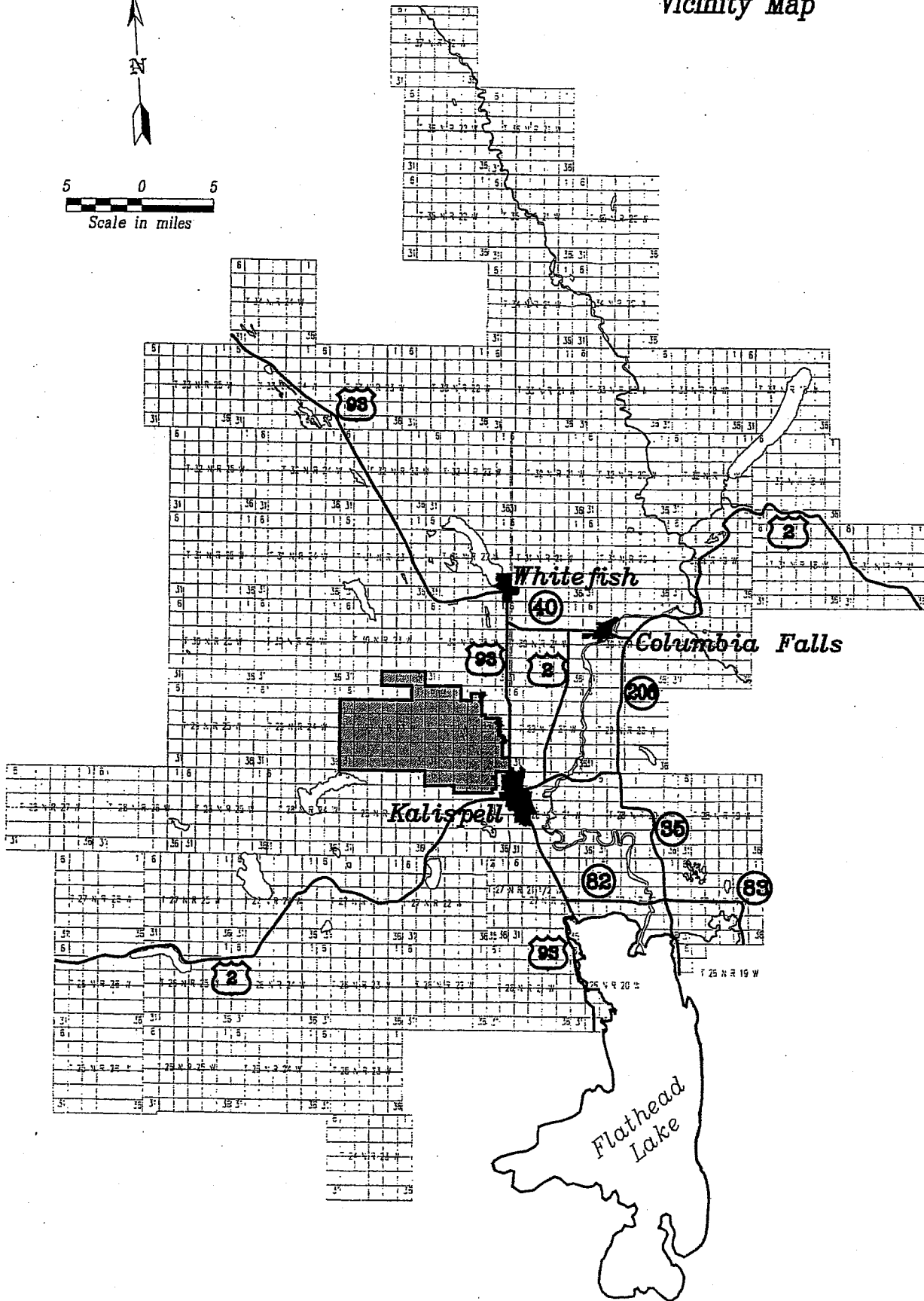
PROCESS

The planning process was designed to be flexible and to pace the interests of the community. Every effort was made to invite all landowners to participate in the process. Mailings of a survey and newsletter to all landowners in the planning area were utilized to enhance public awareness and to give everyone an opportunity to express ideas and concerns. Monthly meetings were held to solicit input from community members and to provide routine updates on progress. A steering committee of local land owners offered overall guidance to the process.

West Valley Neighborhood Plan Vicinity Map



5 0 5
Scale in miles



WEST VALLEY STEERING COMMITTEE

The decision to develop a neighborhood plan for West Valley emerged over a period of several months following discussions at the neighborhood level with technical advise from the Flathead Regional Development Office. Following the initial meeting of "interested" citizens on August 14, 1995, Bonny Ogle commented in a follow-up letter to all attendees that it may be time to update the existing plan.

"After you are brought into the world, there is a need for at least an occasional check-up even if you feel just fine. Otherwise, you may end up going to a doctor when you don't feel well only to find out you have an incurable disease which could have been dealt with at an early stage. Our land and community are facing these same problems now."

Bonny Ogle (9/1/95)

It was agreed by those attending the meeting in September 1995 to formally organize as a "Steering Committee" to help define and guide a planning process for West Valley. Judy Hepper was approved as "Chairperson" of the Steering Committee. A monthly meeting schedule was approved and membership and/or participation on the Committee was determined to be open to anyone owning land or living in the community.

The initial meetings held by the Steering Committee between September 1995 and January 1996 largely focused on efforts of "education" and community awareness. Various speakers were invited to address such topics as "schools", "police protection", "roads", and "taxes". An important product of those early meetings included a preliminary listing of those aspects of the community that are "positive" and "negative" and a listing of "concerns" relative to regulations. The school district boundary was selected as the planning boundary.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The FRDO advised the Committee in October 1995 that the County may hire a planning consultant to assist the planning efforts of two "neighborhoods" in the coming year and that it might be appropriate to request this type of assistance. The Steering Committee determined that some technical advise and/or facilitation may be appropriate to the process and made the request to the County Commissioners. The request was granted and Montana Planning Consultants of Kalispell was assigned by the County Commissioners to assist with the preparation of a West Valley Neighborhood Plan.

The primary role of the Planner was that of a facilitator and information gatherer. The collected information was presented in mapped and written formats for consideration by the Steering Committee, who had the ultimate responsibility for approving the final language of the Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation and involvement was encouraged throughout the process. The Steering Committee evolved out of a small group of interested citizens and expanded to anyone interested in the process. Meeting sign-up sheets were used to establish a meeting notification list.

Other efforts to involve citizen involvement included the mailing of a newsletter and land use surveys to all land owners in the planning area. The newsletter helped to explain the intentions of the planning process and invited public participation. The survey offered every landowner an opportunity to express personal viewpoints and to "vote" on various issues. Both of these documents and the survey results are included in the Appendix.

Monthly meetings were held at the West Valley School in an effort to actively encourage citizen participation. Hands-on exercises were conducted to identify and rank community issues. Major agenda topics for each public meeting are listed below:

SEPTEMBER 14, 1995	
▶	Formalize a Steering Committee
▶	Agree on Study Area
▶	Planning Process and ID Community Concerns
▶	Establish meeting Dates
▶	Public Notification
OCTOBER 18, 1995	
▶	Presentation by School District
▶	Presentation by Sheriff's Office
NOVEMBER 15, 1995	
▶	Strengths & Weaknesses of Present West Valley Plan & Regulations
DECEMBER 6, 1995	
▶	Discussion/review of issues identified in November

▶ Community outreach ideas
▶ Representation/membership of Steering Committee
▶ Designation as a county Neighborhood Plan area
JANUARY 24, 1996
▶ Presentation by Flathead County Road Superintendent
▶ Presentation by FRDO staff on Consolidated Mill Levy
▶ Introduction of planning consultant
FEBRUARY 7, 1996
▶ Presentation of Draft Maps
▶ Meeting Schedule
▶ Draft Survey
▶ Draft Newsletter
MARCH 20, 1996
▶ Recap of Past Meetings & General Overview of Planning Process
▶ Progress Report on Mapping Efforts & Technical Reports
▶ Survey Results
▶ Sub-Neighborhood Identification Exercise
APRIL 17, 1996
▶ Recap of Last Meeting
▶ Break-out Groups to List Community Issues
MAY 15, 1996
▶ Recap of Last Meeting
▶ Ranking of Community Goals & Objectives
JUNE 19, 1996
▶ Review of Draft Goals & Policies Plan
JULY 17, 1996
▶ Final Plan – Approval of Amendments
▶ Regulatory Concepts — Clustering, Convenience Store
JULY 31, 1996

▶ Committee Discussions on Clustering & Home Occupations
AUGUST 21, 1996
▶ Discussion of Home Occupations & Clustering Performance Standards
▶ Discussion of Performance Standards for Convenience Store
AUGUST 29, 1996
▶ Release and Mailing of Draft Regulations Together with Survey
SEPTEMBER 18, 1996
▶ Overview of Draft Zoning Regulations
▶ Results from Zoning Survey
SEPTEMBER 25, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on Citizen Advisory Group Provisions & Home Occupations
OCTOBER 2, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on Density Provisions (Part I)
OCTOBER 14, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on Density Provisions (Part II)
OCTOBER 21, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on Convenience Store Criteria
OCTOBER 23, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on List of Permitted Uses
OCTOBER 30, 1996
▶ Zoning Subcommittee Meeting on Expansion Provisions for Existing Subdivisions
OCTOBER 30, 1996
▶ Presentation by Zoning Committee on Recommended Changes to Proposed Zoning Regulations
▶ Recommendation by Community to Forward Regulations to Planning Board

PLANNING AREA

The boundaries of the planning area coincide to the boundaries of the West Valley School District. Said boundaries overlap into the planning jurisdiction of the Kalispell City-County Master Plan. Approval of the West Valley Neighborhood Plan will require an amendment to both the Flathead County Master Plan and Kalispell City County Master Plan. Refer to the **Basemap** of the planning area on the following page.

EXISTING REGULATIONS

State law requires zoning to be in conformance with an adopted Master Plan or "Development Plan". The West Valley Zoning District is considered to be an "Agricultural and Timber" district that requires large minimum lot sizes. An amendment to the 1978 West Valley Planning & Zoning District would be necessary to recognize "other" land use opportunities in the area. The purpose of the West Valley Neighborhood Plan is to identify land use options based on the various physical, biological, social, and public services features of the area. The findings of the Plan establish the framework and justification for updating the regulations.

The purpose statement of the West Valley Planning & Zoning District is: "all lands both timber & farm land to be classified and maintained as food and fiber agriculture." The accompanying regulations generally apply to all lands in the area of School District 1, with a few exceptions. Portions of the original district have been abandoned and replaced with more traditional zoning classifications, including all that area lying within the planning jurisdiction of the Kalispell City-County Master Plan. A change of zoning to Suburban Agriculture SAG-10 has also been approved in the area of Saddlewood Subdivision. Refer to the **Zoning Map** at the end of this Section.

The uniform application of a single zoning district to such a large area fails to recognize the variability of land features throughout the district. Not all the land can easily be classified as either "timber" or "agriculture", especially when considering how the land use character of the area has changed dramatically, even with zoning in place. The liberal use of subdivision exemptions (family transfers, occasional sales) over the past 17+ years has created a suburban development pattern in many locations. Other changes occurring in the area and vicinity, including changing public attitudes, combine to create the rationale for amending the West Valley Planning & Zoning District.

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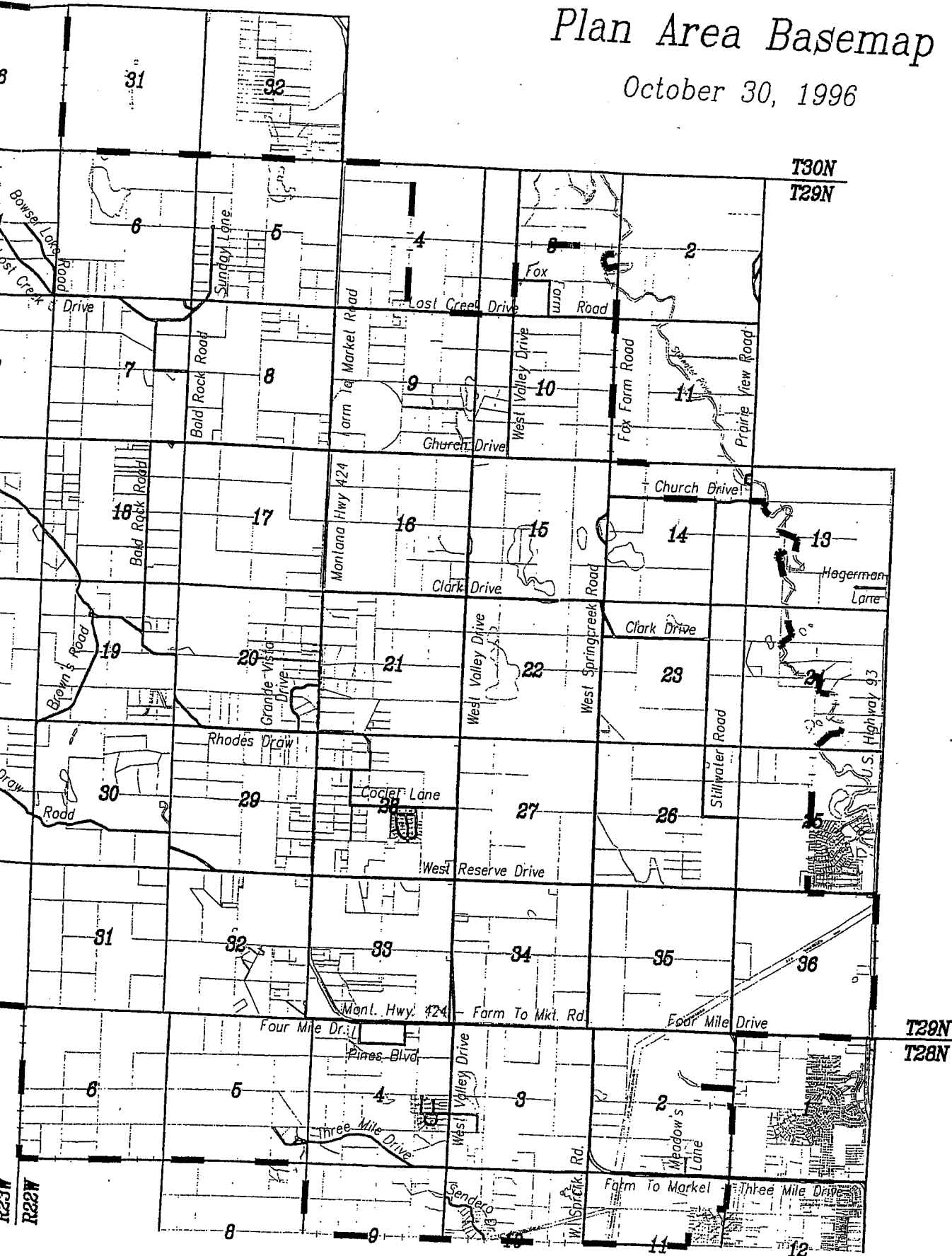
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West Valley Neighborhood Plan Plan Area Basemap

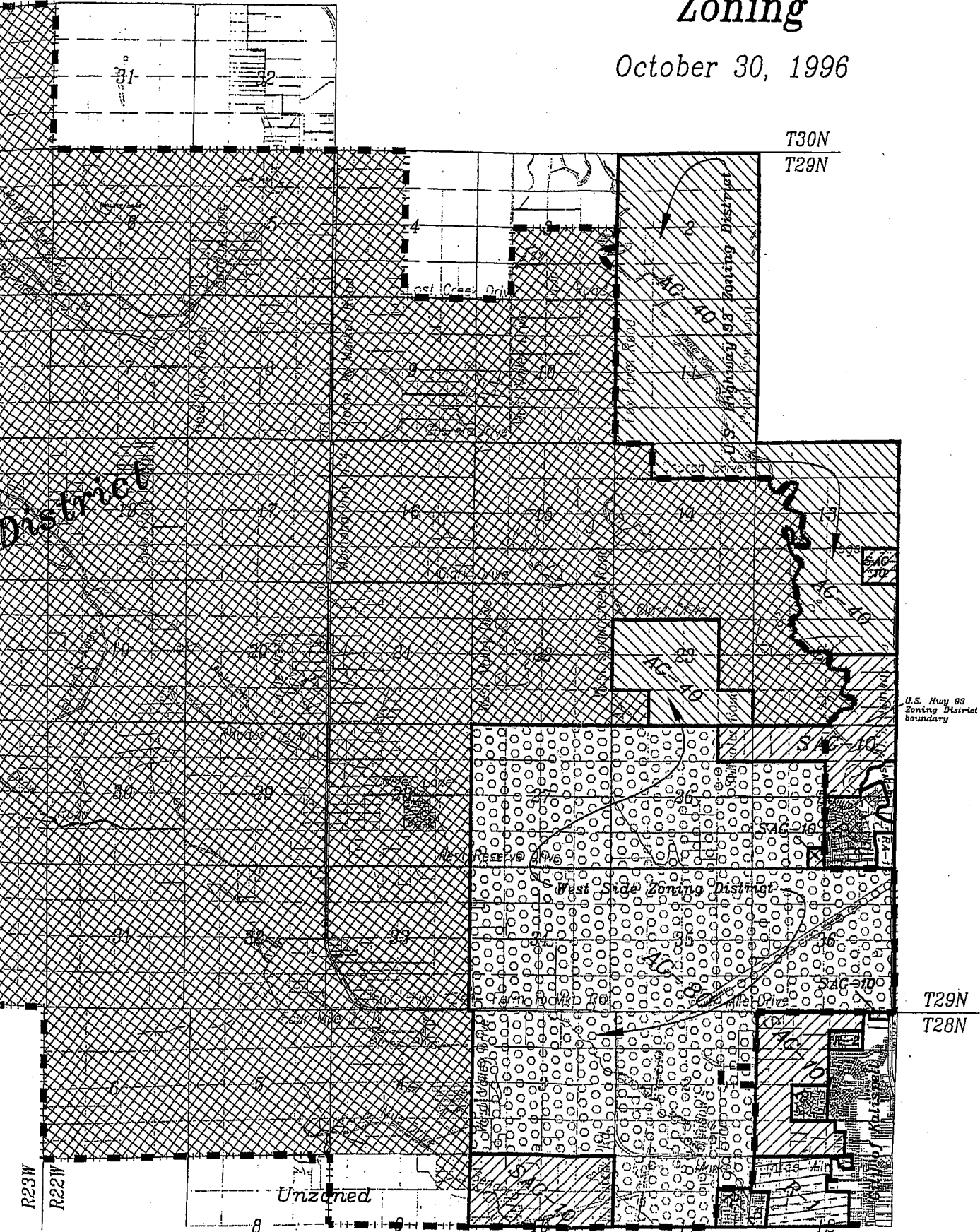
October 30, 1996





West Valley Neighborhood Plan Zoning

October 30, 1996



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PLAN ELEMENTS

Information was collected on a variety of topics and presented to the steering committee and general public as part of the planning process. The mapped and written information helped to present a factual framework when discussing topics of land use and public services.

Elements of the plan are organized as follows:

ELEMENTS		
LAND USE	PUBLIC SERVICES	IMPLEMENTATION
↓	↓	↓
Agriculture & Forestry	Emergency Services	Zoning Regs
Residential	Transportation	Subdivision Regs
Commercial & Industrial	Schools	
Open Space		

Each of the Plan Elements is introduced by lead-in discussions on related topics followed by a listing of community *Goals & Policies*.

LAND USE

The land use character of West Valley is primarily a mixture of "Residential", "Agriculture", and "Forest". Agricultural lands are generally located to the east, forest to the west, and residential in between.

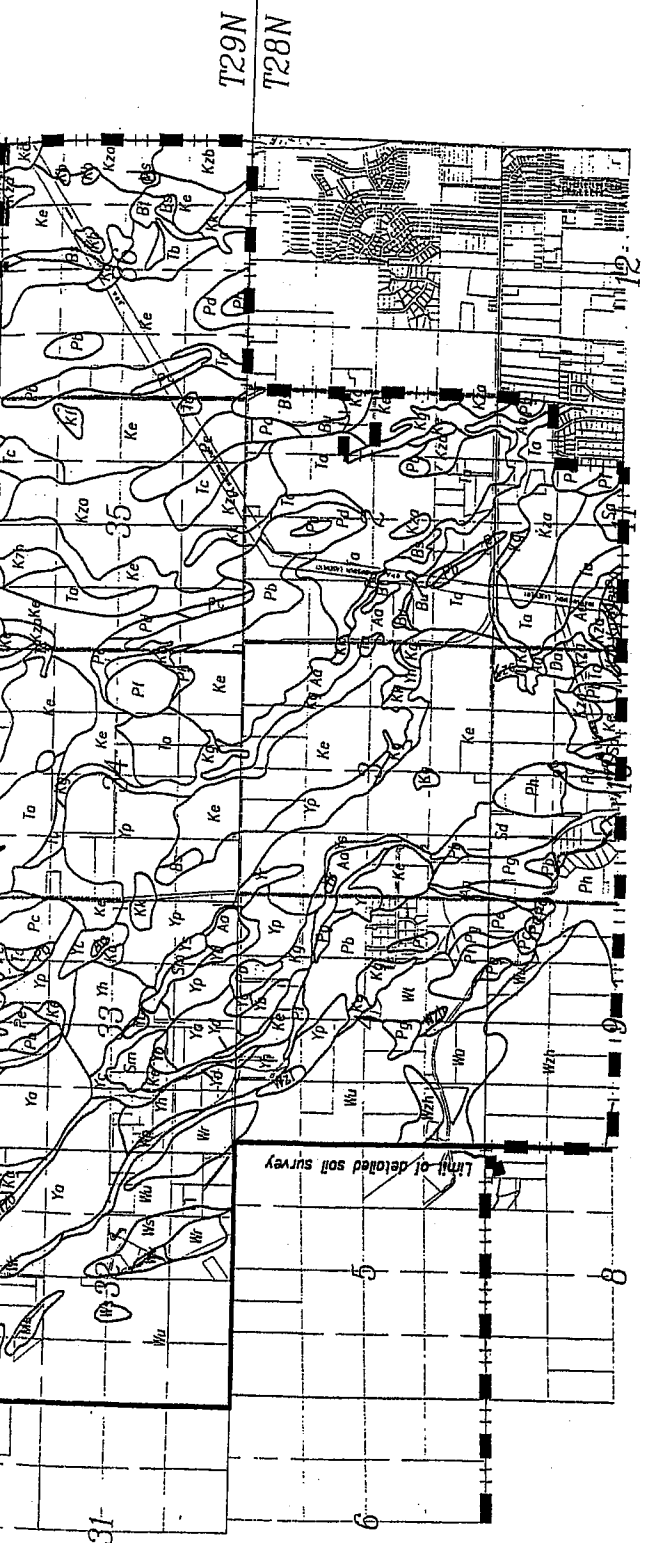
AGRICULTURE

It is difficult to determine the actual amount of agricultural lands in the planning area since even casual agricultural practices, such as the keeping of livestock, is occurring on small acreages throughout the area. However, in simplified terms, most of the prime agricultural soils and actual farming practices occur in an area extending from West Valley Drive on the west to the Stillwater River and Highway 93 on the east. (Refer to the **Soils Map** on the following page.) The total land area within that general boundary is nearly 9,000 acres.

Agricultural pursuits in West Valley are extremely diverse. Important crops include cereal grains (wheat, barley), hay, potatoes, and peppermint. One of the largest dairies in Montana is also located within the planning area.

ISSUES: The general issues facing all agriculture in the county have been extensively discussed. The dilemma faced by the agricultural community has been clearly identified as a result of increasing real estate values, rural development pressures, increasing nuisance complaints, high tax burdens, and general absence of flexibility in zoning regulations. Suggested solutions to resolve some of the agricultural issues include:

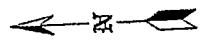
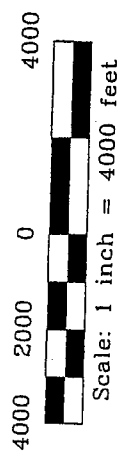
- ▶ passage of a "Right to Farm Ordinance";
- ▶ enable the formation of Agricultural Districts;
- ▶ establish an Agricultural Lands Protection Committee;
- ▶ rural cluster incentive;
- ▶ transfer development rights (TDR);
- ▶ encourage conservation easements and limited development; and
- ▶ purchase of development rights program (PDR)



Source: Soil Survey Upper Flathead Valley Area, Montana, USDA Soil Conservation Service 1960

Map Class Symbol/No.	Description
5	Alluvial land, poorly drained
6	Alluvial land, well drained
Bs	Blanchard very fine sandy loam, 0-7% slopes
Bl	Blanchard very fine sandy loam, 7-12% slopes
Bu	Blanchard very fine sandy loam, 12-20% slopes
Bv	Blanchard very fine sandy loam, 20-45% slopes
Cd	Corvallis silty clay loam, 0-3%
Da	Demers-Kalispell silt loam, 0-3% slopes
De	Depew silty clay loam, 0-3% slopes
Df	Depew silty clay loam, 3-7% slopes
Ha	Half Moon silt loam, 0-3% slopes
Hb	Half Moon silt loam, 3-8% slopes
Hc	Half Moon very fine sandy loam, 0-3% slopes
Hd	Half Moon very fine sandy loam, 3-7% slopes
Hf	Half Moon soils, 12-45% slopes
Kb	Kalispell gravelly loam, mod. deep over gravel, 3-7% slopes
Kc	Kalispell gravelly loam, mod. deep over gravel, 7-12% slopes
Kd	Kalispell gravelly loam, mod. deep over gravel, 12-40% slopes
Ke	Kalispell loam, 0-3% slopes
Kf	Kalispell loam, wind eroded, 0-3%
Kg	Kalispell loam, 3-7% slopes
Kk	Kalispell loam, 7-12% slopes
Km	Kalispell loam, 12-25% slopes
Kn	Kalispell loam, mod. deep over gravel, 0-7% slopes
Ko	Kalispell loam, mod. deep over gravel, 3-7% slopes
Kza	Kalispell-Tuffit silt loams, 0-3% slopes
Kzb	Kalispell-Tuffit silt loams, 3-7% slopes
Kzc	Kalispell-Tuffit silt loams, 7-20% slopes
Mg	Mires gravelly loam, 0-3%
Mr	Mountainous land
Ms	Muck and peat
Pa	Prospect loam, 0-3% slopes
Pb	Prospect loam, 3-7% slopes
Pc	Prospect loam, 7-12% slopes
Pd	Prospect loam, 12-20% slopes
Pe	Prospect stony loam, 3-7% slopes
Pf	Prospect stony loam, 7-12% slopes
Pg	Prospect stony loam, 12-20% slopes
Ph	Prospect stony loam, 20-45% slopes
Sd	Somers silt loam, 0-3% slopes
Sm	Stryker silt loam, sandy subsoil, 0-43% slopes
Ta	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 0-3% slopes
Tb	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 0-3% slopes
Tc	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 3-7% slopes
Te	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 7-12% slopes
Tg	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 12-20% slopes
Tp	Tally, Blanchard, & Flathead soils, 12-20% slopes
Wl	Whitefish cobbly silt loam, 0-7% slopes
Ws	Whitefish cobbly silt loam, 0-7% slopes
Wt	Whitefish cobbly silt loam, 7-12% slopes
Wu	Whitefish cobbly silt loam, 12-20% slopes
Wv	Whitefish cobbly silt loam, 20-45% slopes
Wz	Whitefish gravelly silt loam, 7-12% slopes
Wzb	Whitefish silt loam, 0-3% slopes
Wze	Whitefish stoney silt loam, 0-7% slopes
Wzf	Whitefish stoney silt loam, 7-12% slopes
Wzg	Whitefish stoney silt loam, 12-20% slopes
Wzh	Whitefish stoney silt loam, 20-45% slopes
Ya	Yeoman cobbly loam, mod. deep over sand, 0-3% slopes
Yb	Yeoman cobbly loam, mod. deep over sand, 3-7% slopes
Yc	Yeoman cobbly loam, mod. deep over sand, 7-12% slopes
Yd	Yeoman cobbly loam, mod. deep over sand, 12-25% slopes
Yk	Yeoman cobbly loam, mod. deep over sand, 0-3% slopes
Ym	Yeoman gravelly loam, mod. deep over sand, 3-7% slopes
Yn	Yeoman gravelly loam, mod. deep over sand, 7-12% slopes
Yo	Yeoman gravelly loam, mod. deep over sand, 12-20% slopes
Yp	Yeoman gravelly loam, mod. deep over sand, 20-40% slopes
Yr	Yeoman loam, mod. deep over sand, 0-3% slopes
Ys	Yeoman loam, mod. deep over sand, 3-7% slopes
Yza	Yeoman stoney loam, mod. deep over sand, 7-12% slopes
Yzb	Yeoman stoney loam, mod. deep over sand, 0-7% slopes
Yzc	Yeoman stoney loam, mod. deep over sand, 20-35% slopes

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Kf	Kalispell loam, wind eroded, 0-3%
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Kk	Kalispell loam, 7-12% slopes
Km	Kalispell loam, 12-25% slopes
Kn	Kalispell loam, mod. deep over gravel, 0-7% slopes
Ko	Kalispell loam, mod. deep over gravel, 3-7% slopes
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Kzb	Kalispell-Tuffit silt loams, 3-7% slopes
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Mg	Mires gravelly loam, 0-3%
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Ms	Muck and peat
Pa	Prospect loam, 0-3% slopes
Pb	Prospect loam, 3-7% slopes
Pc	Prospect loam, 7-12% slopes
Pd	Prospect loam, 12-20% slopes
Pe	Prospect stony loam, 3-7% slopes



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FOREST

A substantial portion of the West Valley Planning area is forest covered and exhibits variable to mountainous terrain. (Refer to the **Topography Map** at the end of this Section.) Forestry practices are routinely pursued on many of these lands. The ownership pattern of the lands lying west of Farm-to-Market Road is dominated by large tract ownership (see attached **Ownership Map**) as outlined below.

OWNERSHIP	TOTAL ACRES
Montana Forest Products	2,223 acres
Stoltze Lumber Co	7,397 acres
USDA Forest Service	3,705 acres
State	1,887 acres

ISSUES: The timber industry shares many of the same concerns as identified for "agriculture". Many people view corporate timber lands as being "public" so trespassing is a major concern. Nuisance complaints concerning dust and logging traffic are increasing as people move deeper into the woods. The forest landowners worry about the high cost of taxes that could result with the creation of Rural Special Improvement Districts to pay for road improvements in rural areas. A substantial portion of the forested areas are located on steep topography. Steep slopes, remote access, together with dense forest vegetation combine to create high fire hazard situations in some locations.

Forest-related issues were identified during the process and the recommendations include the following:

- ▶ Flathead County should pass a "right to Forestry" ordinance;
- ▶ Flathead County should encourage forestry through tax incentives and land trades that result in consolidated forest ownership;
- ▶ Flathead County should work with cities, other public agencies, and private landowners to encourage continued productive resource management;
- ▶ As a matter of policy, Flathead County should recognize the multiple use opportunities on private and public forests, while affirming the primary economic function of private forests;
- ▶ Resource industries should use management practices that protect the environment and maintain the long-term productivity of the resource base.
- ▶ As a matter of equity, forest owners should be allowed to realize other, non-forest related land values through well-planned, environmentally sensitive development.

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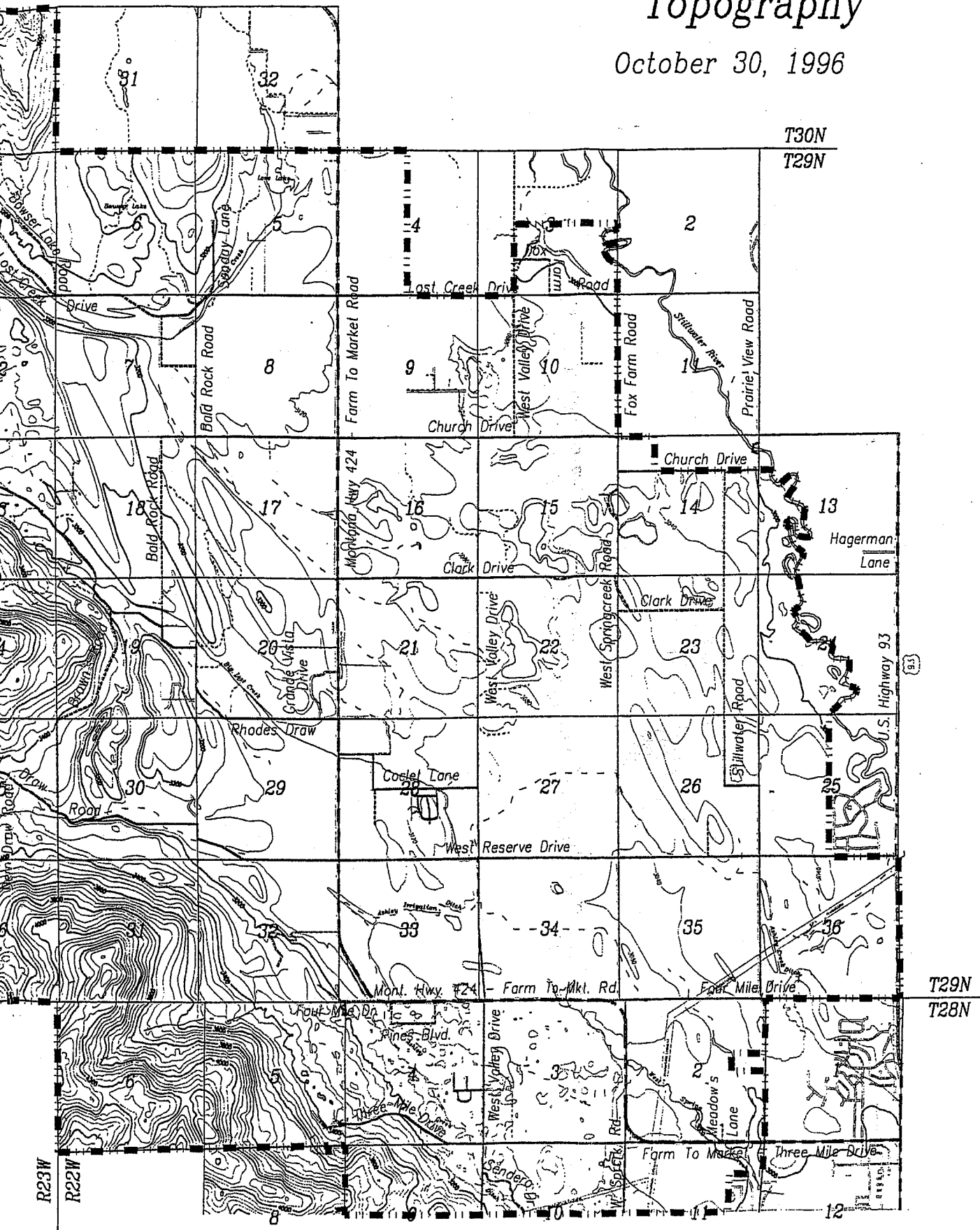
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West Valley Neighborhood Plan

Topography

October 30, 1996



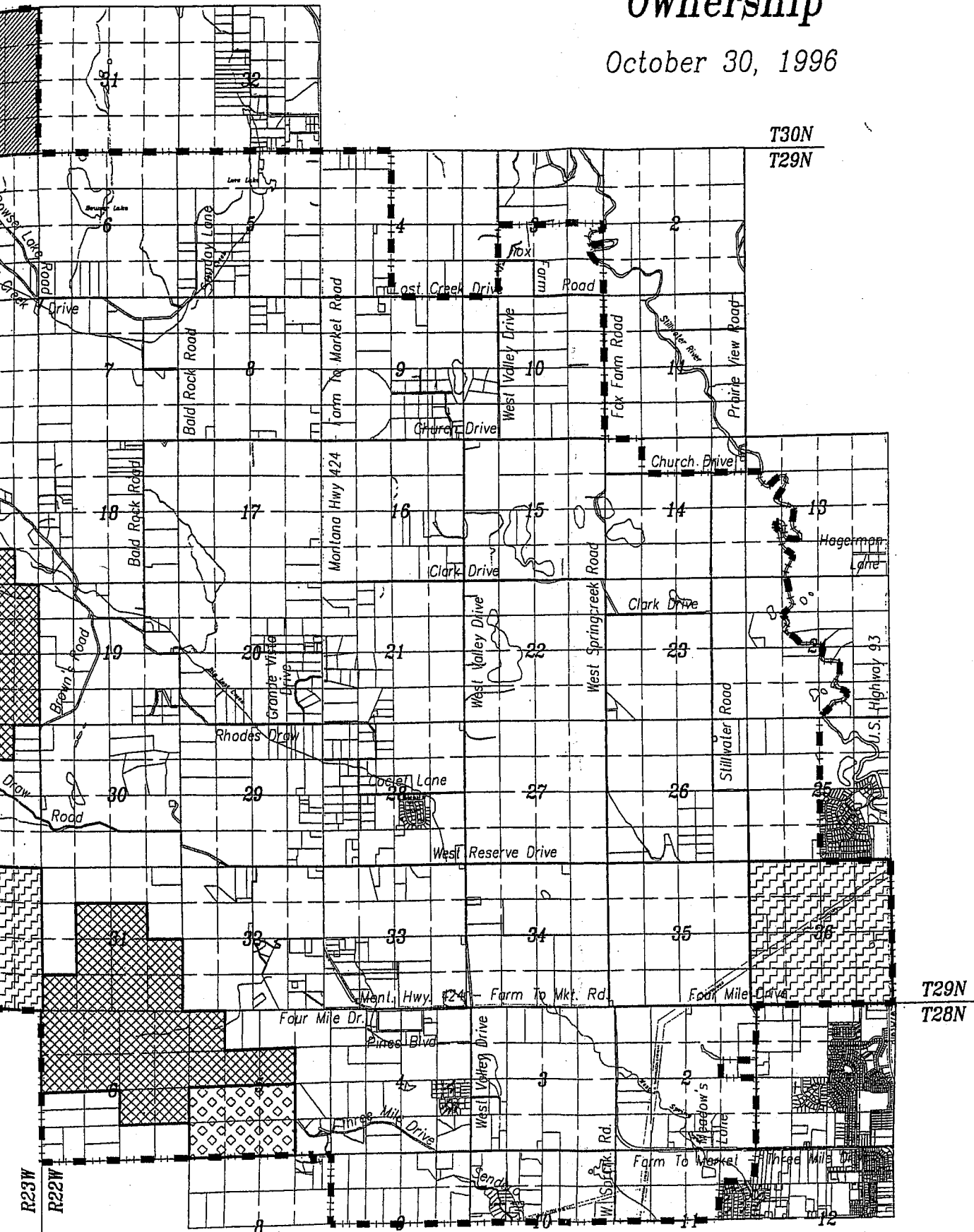
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West Valley Neighborhood Plan Ownership

October 30, 1996



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RESIDENTIAL

Residential dwellings and small lots comprise a third major land use component of the West Valley area. Although not calculated, the number of dwellings and residential lots has increased significantly over the past 17 years, despite the 40 acre minimum lot size requirements of the West Valley Planning & Zoning District. Lot numbers have increased via the liberal use of subdivision exemptions, such as the occasional sale and family transfer exemptions. It is estimated that approximately 1,420 separate tracts of land now occur in the West Valley planning area. A windshield survey indicates up to 700 dwelling units. (Refer to the **Land Use Map** on the following page.) The 1990 Census for the area of School District 1 estimated 828 dwelling units and a total population of 2,135 persons. Major population clusters in the planning area include:

- McMannamy Draw
- Rhodes Draw
- West Valley Pines
- Pleasant Hills
- Coclet Lane
- Grand Vista Drive
- Sunday Lane
- Church Drive by Stillwater Lutheran Church

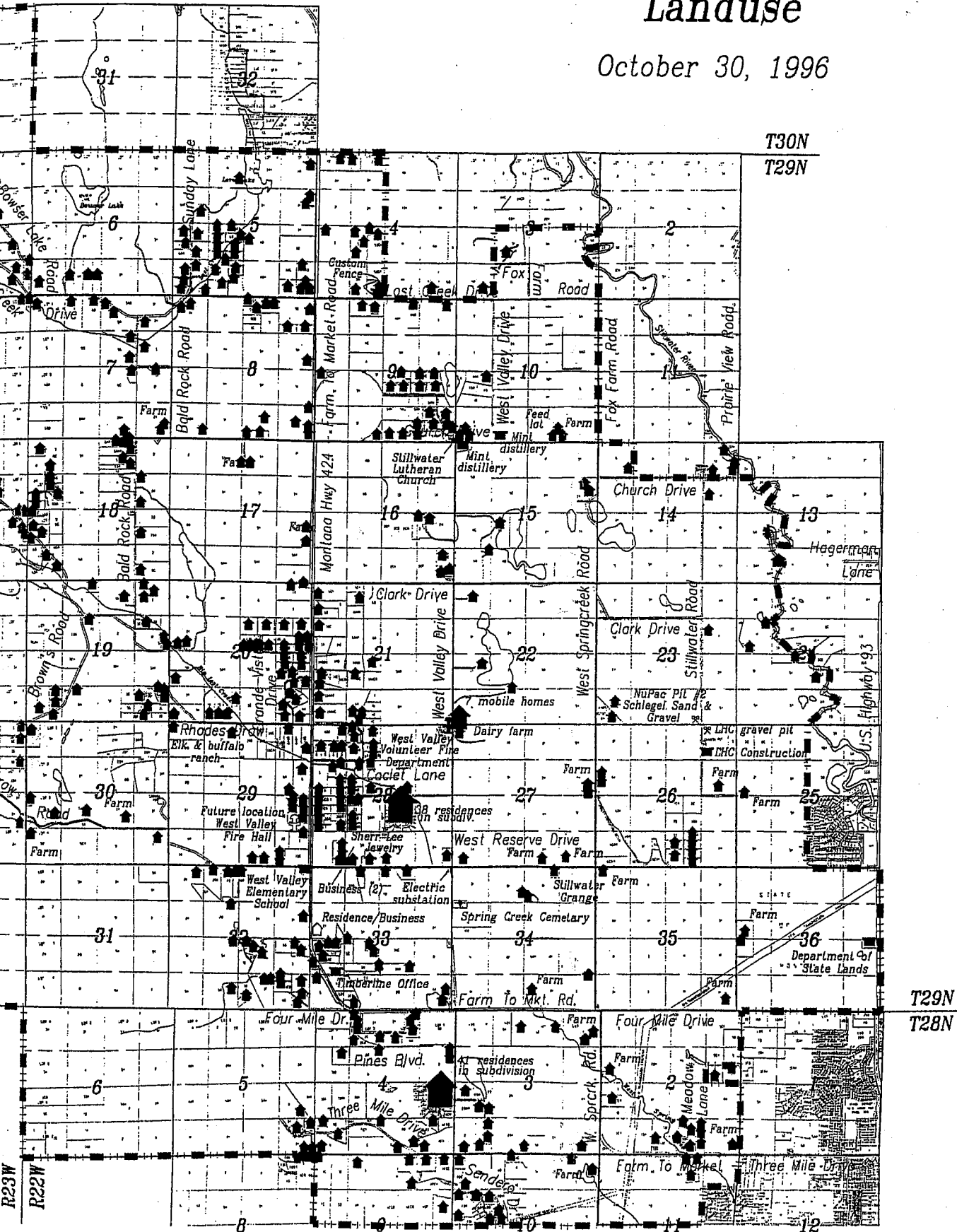
ISSUES: Residential land use issues were determined from survey results and group work sessions. Residential densities are expected to remain sparse while recognizing opportunities to divide lands where justified based on criteria related to the availability of services, topography, soil type, etc. Generalized conclusions are listed below.

- ▶ "Sub-neighborhoods" exist within the larger West Valley area;
- ▶ Land use densities in the 5-20 acre range are appropriate in some areas;
- ▶ Clustering is an important tool to minimize sprawl and the loss of farmland;
- ▶ Opportunities probably exist for expansion of existing subdivisions;
- ▶ Control the spread of noxious weeds;
- ▶ The residential character should be single family -- multi-family dwelling units and mobile home parks are to be discouraged; and
- ▶ Target new residential subdivisions away from prime agricultural soils and forest lands.



West Valley Neighborhood Plan Landuse

October 30, 1996





COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL

Few freestanding commercial or industrial uses are located within the planning area. Although the existing regulations for West Valley have considerable flexibility for the creation of residential lots, few allowances are permitted for commercial or industrial uses. "Cottage Industries" are permitted by the existing regulations and many of these home based businesses do exist in the planning area. Existing Industrial uses include a saw mill, gravel operations, and various agricultural-dependent uses, such as mint stills.

ISSUES: Public opinion on this subject appears to oppose any dramatic change from the philosophy of the existing regulations pertaining to these uses. In general, new industrial uses are not to be encouraged but some allowance for limited retail commercial may be OK, with restrictions. Issue statements concerning industrial uses and commercial uses are listed below.

- ▶ Prevent strip commercial development;
- ▶ Permit home occupations;
- ▶ Continue to prohibit commercial uses but allow consideration of a neighborhood convenience store (mini-mart);
- ▶ Allow opportunities for gravel extraction; and
- ▶ Industrial uses should not be permitted except those accessory to normal farm operations.

OPEN SPACE

Open space is a description of land that is either natural or "open" in the sense that it is undeveloped. General perceptions of open space include forest land and farm land. The traditional use of the phrase, "open space", is normally associated with public lands or protected natural resources. In West Valley, the ratio of public lands to private lands is (1:8). The general landscape of West Valley appears to be very open due to the abundance of farm and forest land. However, the owners of the farm land and private forest lands are quick to point out the distinctions between public versus private lands. Permanent open space on private lands, while difficult to achieve, may be accomplished through purchase or easement agreements. Large minimum lot size requirements is not the long term or best solution to the preservation of large contiguous areas of open space.

Significant natural features can be identified for special consideration when development is proposed. Important local natural features include the Stillwater River corridor, small lakes & streams, and wetlands. Slopes in excess of 25% often pose as limitations to development and should be protected to the extent possible.

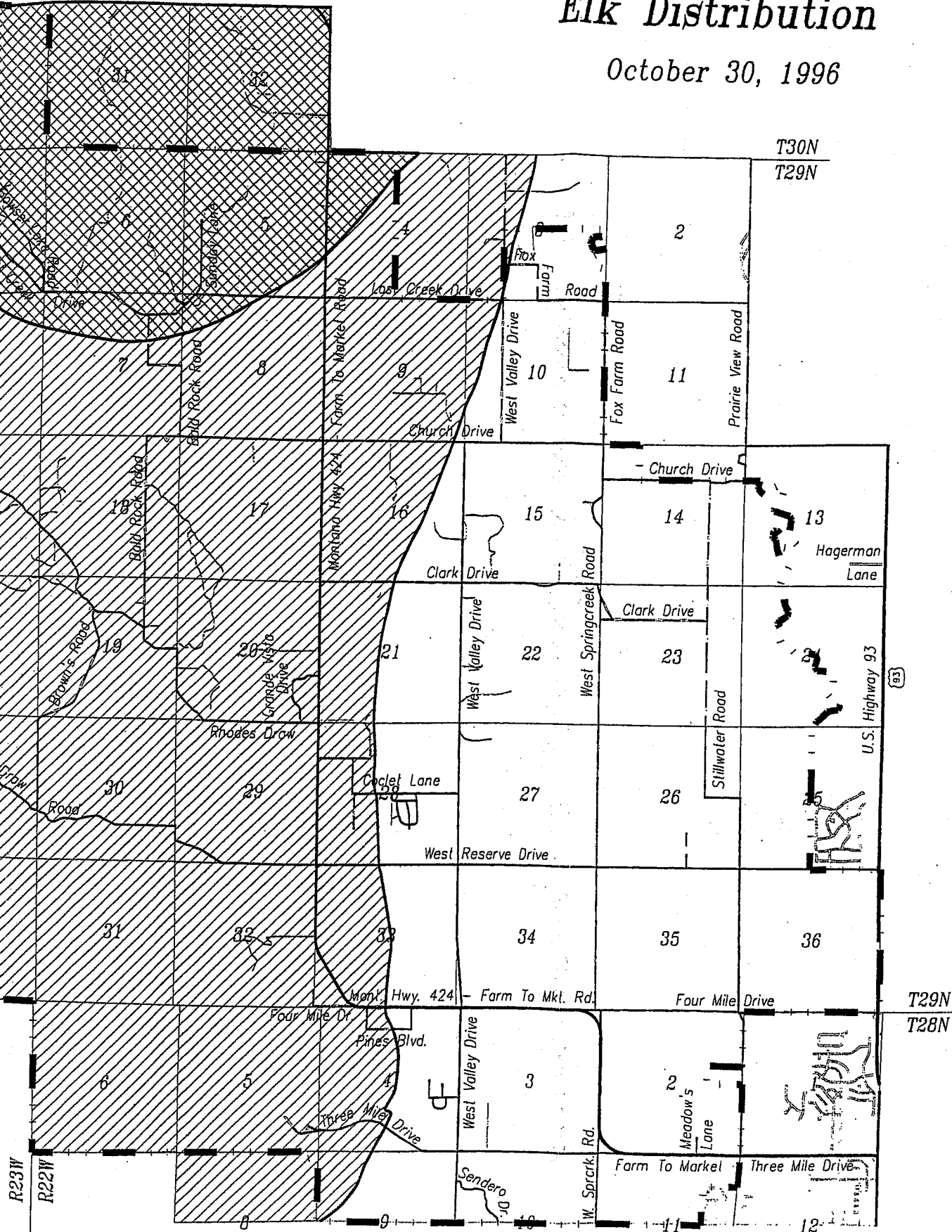
Prime agricultural soils are also considered to be a significant local resource. A "school" section of State land (Section 36, Twn 29N, Rng 22) is located just north of Kalispell along U.S. Hwy 93. Historically, the land has been farmed with a small area reserved for a DNRC office. In recent months, the city of Kalispell has been pursuing a lease option for the southerly 160 acres of the 640 acre section to establish a large recreation complex, consisting of ball fields and other similar uses. Accordingly, a "public designation" is being suggested for the affected area of land.

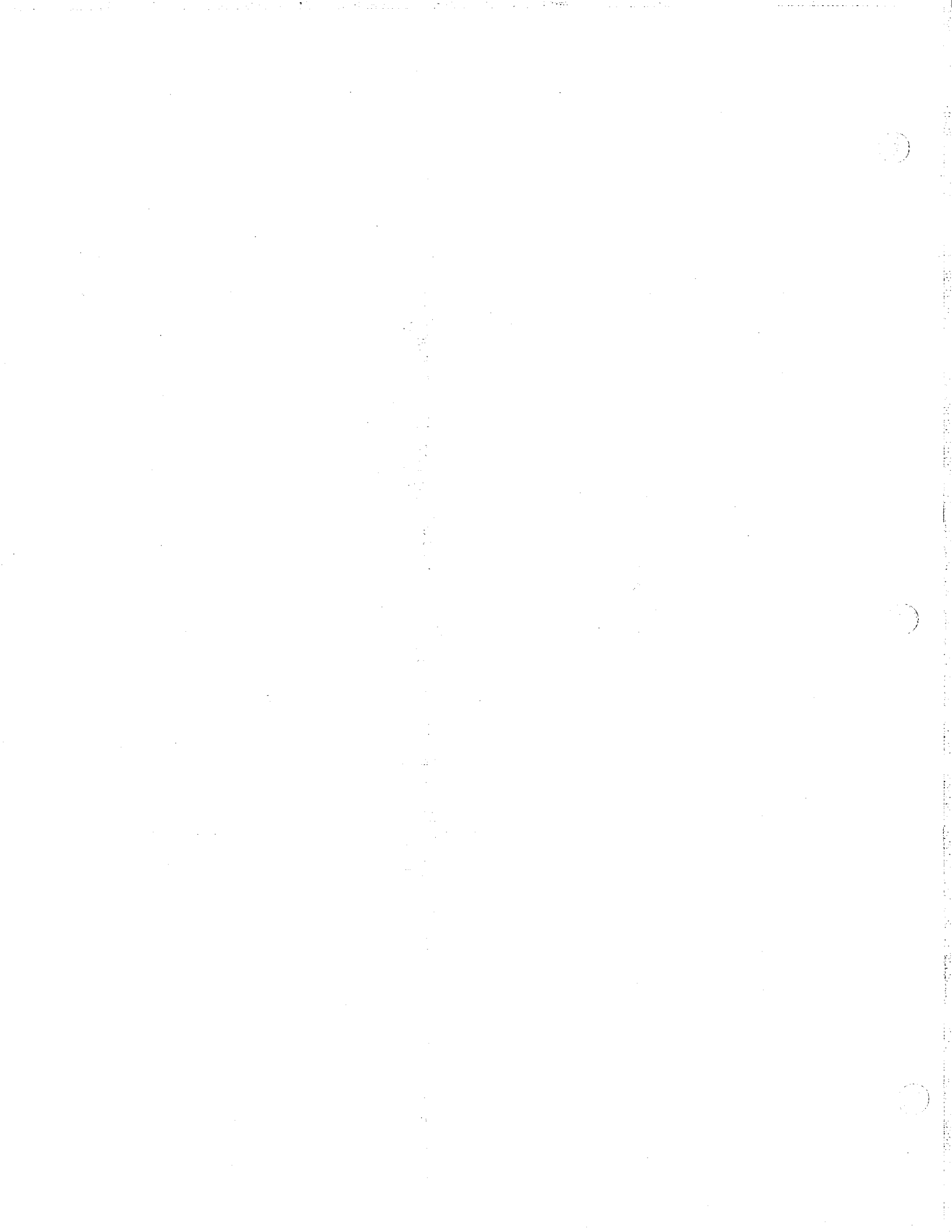
West Valley also provides suitable habitat for elk and deer (refer to the **Elk & White-tailed Deer Distribution Maps**). Some of the more significant habitat features, such as riparian habitat, should also be protected to the extent possible (refer to the **Water Features & Floodplain Map**). "Incentives" was cited as an important philosophy to help maintain open space in West Valley. Other stated issues are as follows.

- ▶ Protect water quality;
- ▶ Protect air quality;
- ▶ Sustainable use of forests;
- ▶ Preserve agricultural areas;
- ▶ Discourage clearcuts except in extraordinary circumstances deemed appropriate and necessary by accepted silvicultural practices;
- ▶ Maintain recreation access to public forest lands and seek to maintain an open lands policy on private forest lands in cooperation with the affected landowners; and
- ▶ Better enforcement of game laws.

West Valley Neighborhood Plan Elk Distribution

October 30, 1996





West Valley Neighborhood Plan White-Tailed Deer Distribution

October 30, 1996



