



**WEST  
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**

3

3

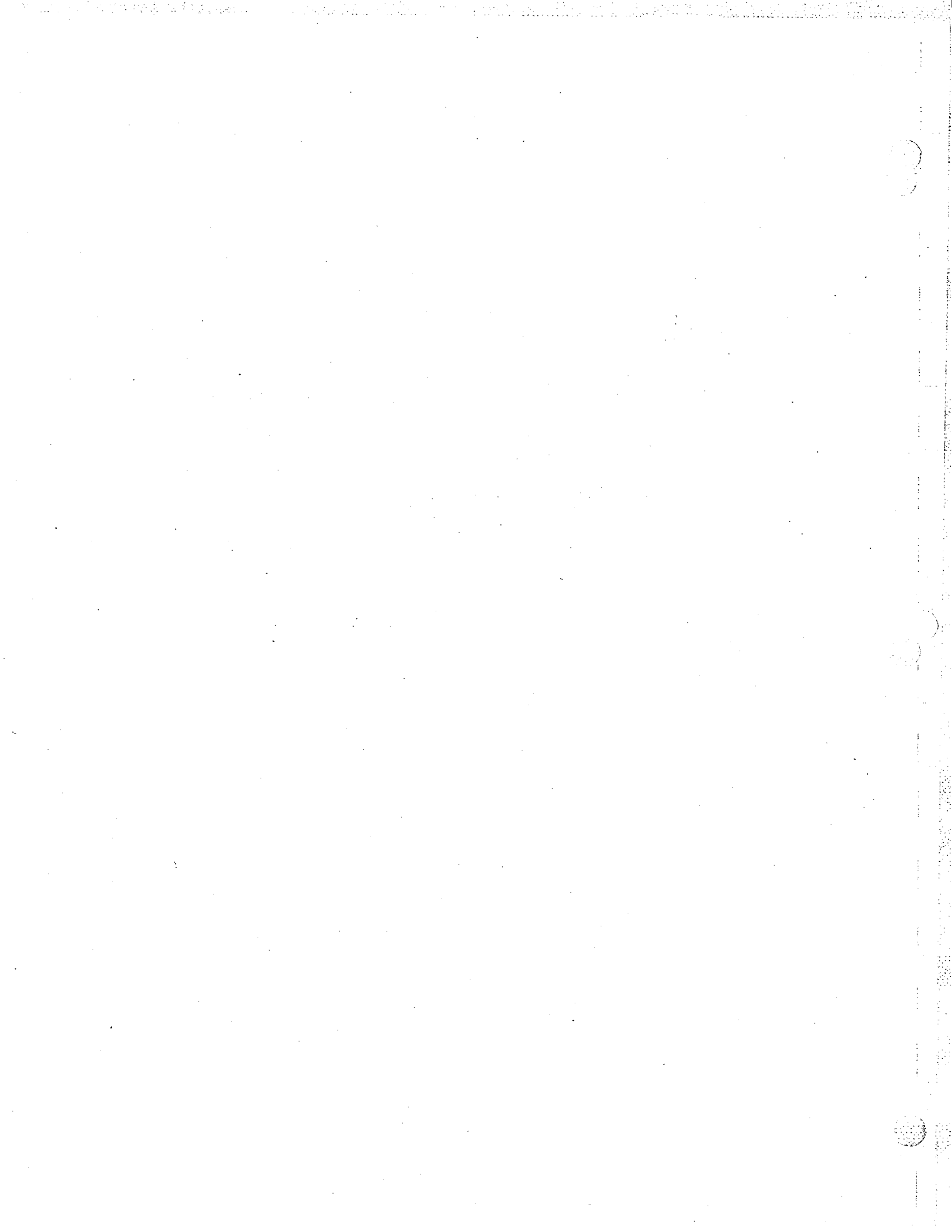
3

# ***WEST VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN***

**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**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND .....	1
PROCESS .....	1
WEST VALLEY STEERING COMMITTEE .....	3
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE .....	3
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....	4
PLANNING AREA .....	7
EXISTING REGULATIONS .....	7
PLAN ELEMENTS .....	10
LAND USE.....	11
AGRICULTURE .....	11
FOREST .....	13
RESIDENTIAL .....	16
COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL .....	18
OPEN SPACE .....	18
WEST VALLEY LAND USE GOALS.....	23
AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY POLICIES .....	23
RESIDENTIAL POLICIES .....	23
COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL POLICIES.....	24
OPEN SPACE .....	24
PUBLIC SERVICES .....	25
UTILITIES .....	25
Natural Gas .....	25
Telephone .....	25
Electricity.....	26
EMERGENCY SERVICES.....	28
POLICE PROTECTION .....	28
FIRE PROTECTION.....	28
EMERGENCY MEDICAL .....	31
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL RESPONSE.....	31
TRANSPORTATION.....	34
SCHOOLS .....	36

PUBLIC SERVICES GOALS .....	40
EMERGENCY SERVICES.....	40
TRANSPORTATION.....	40
SCHOOLS .....	40
IMPLEMENTATION.....	41
IMPLEMENTATION GOALS .....	42
IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES .....	42
WEST VALLEY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS .....	44
WEST VALLEY OVERLAY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.....	53

## **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.

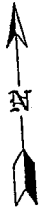
The impetus to pursue a formal review of the West Valley Planning and Zoning District evolved from a proposal to establish a neighborhood convenience store in the area of the West Valley School. Reaction to this proposal lead to a series of citizen-initiated meetings during the fall of 1995 to discuss 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.

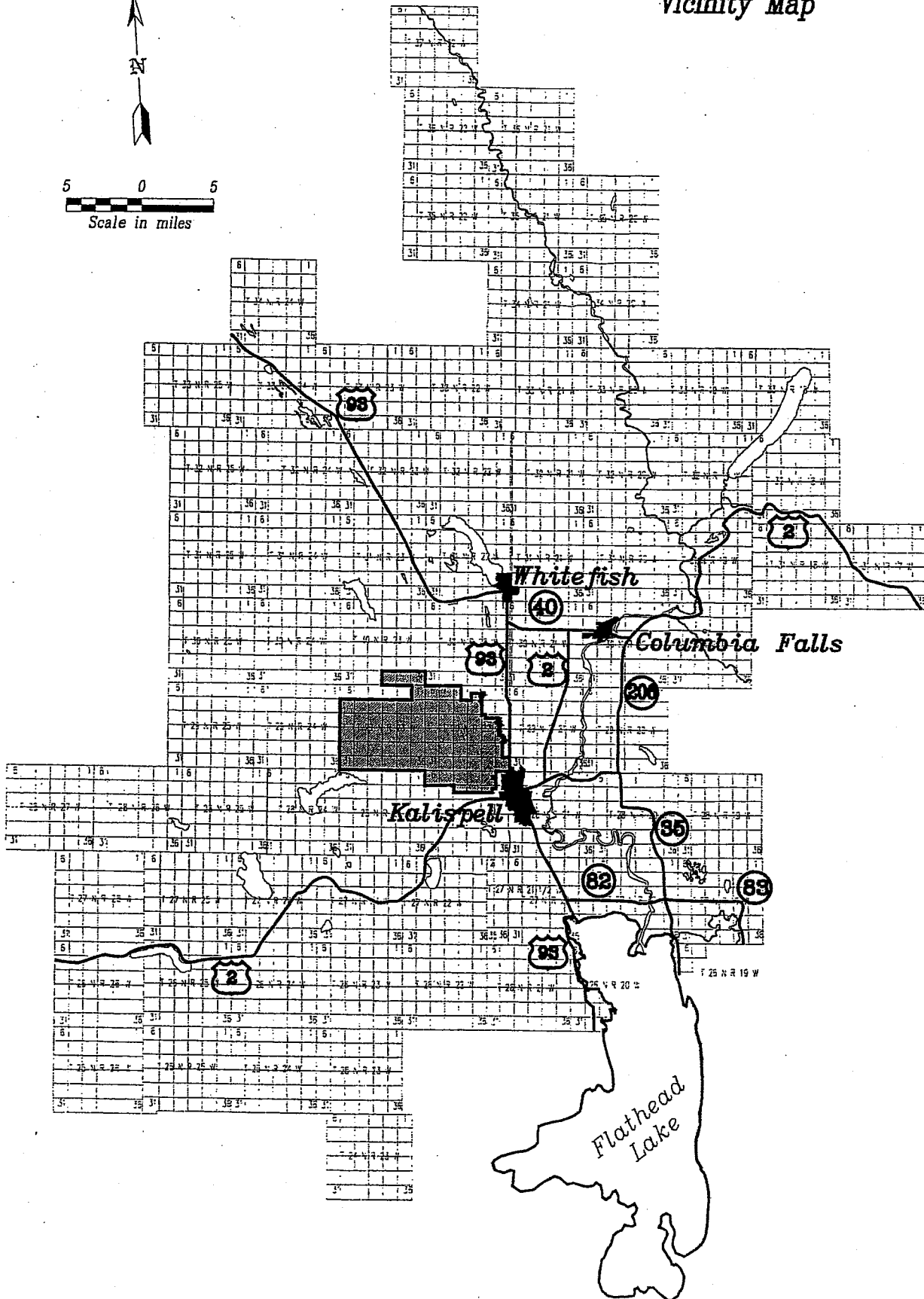
## **PROCESS**

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:

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

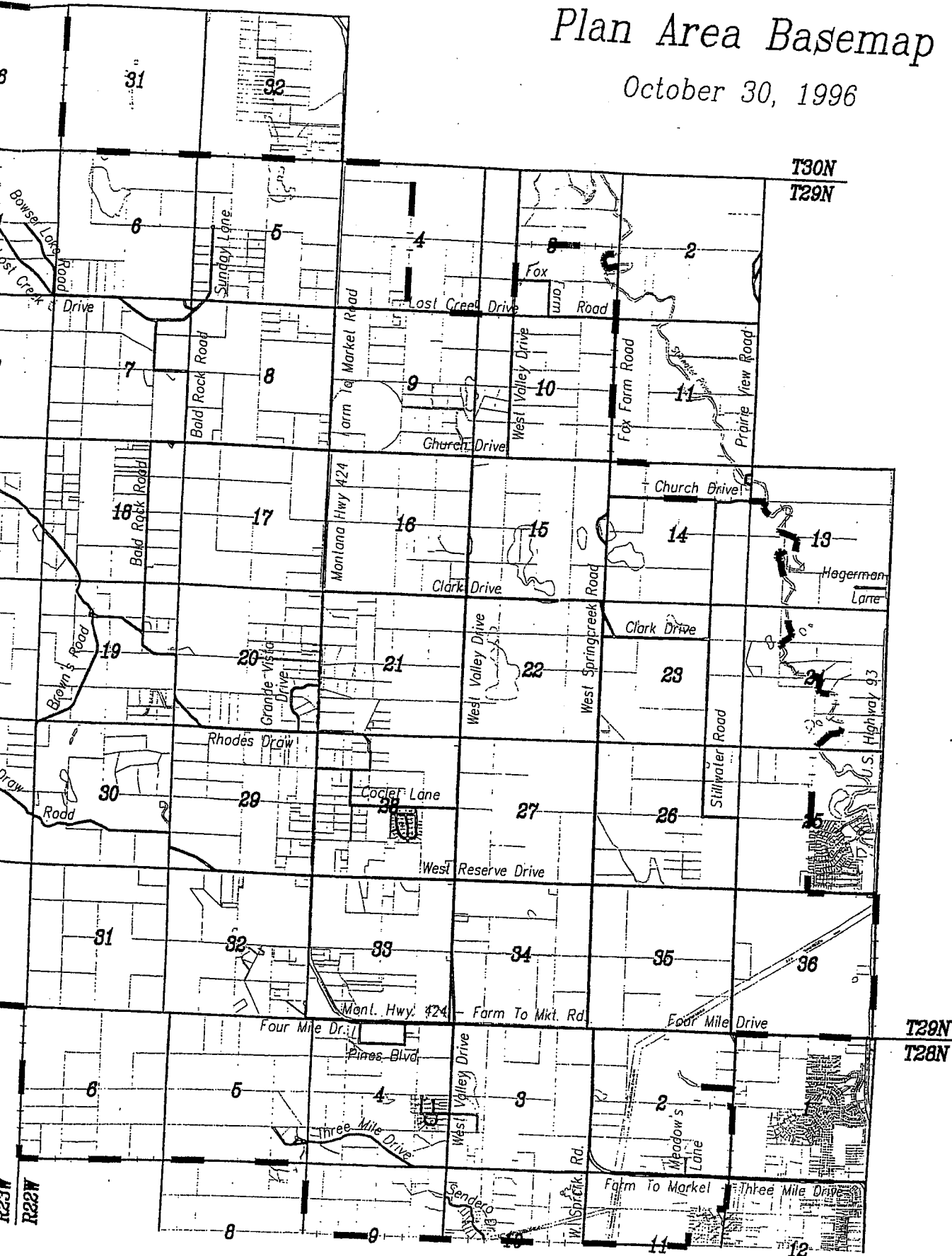
The purpose statement of the West Valley Planning & Zoning District is: "all lands both timber & farm land to be classified and maintained as food and fiber agriculture." The accompanying regulations generally apply to all lands in the area of School District 1, with a few exceptions. Portions of the 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.



# West Valley Neighborhood Plan Plan Area Basemap

October 30, 1996

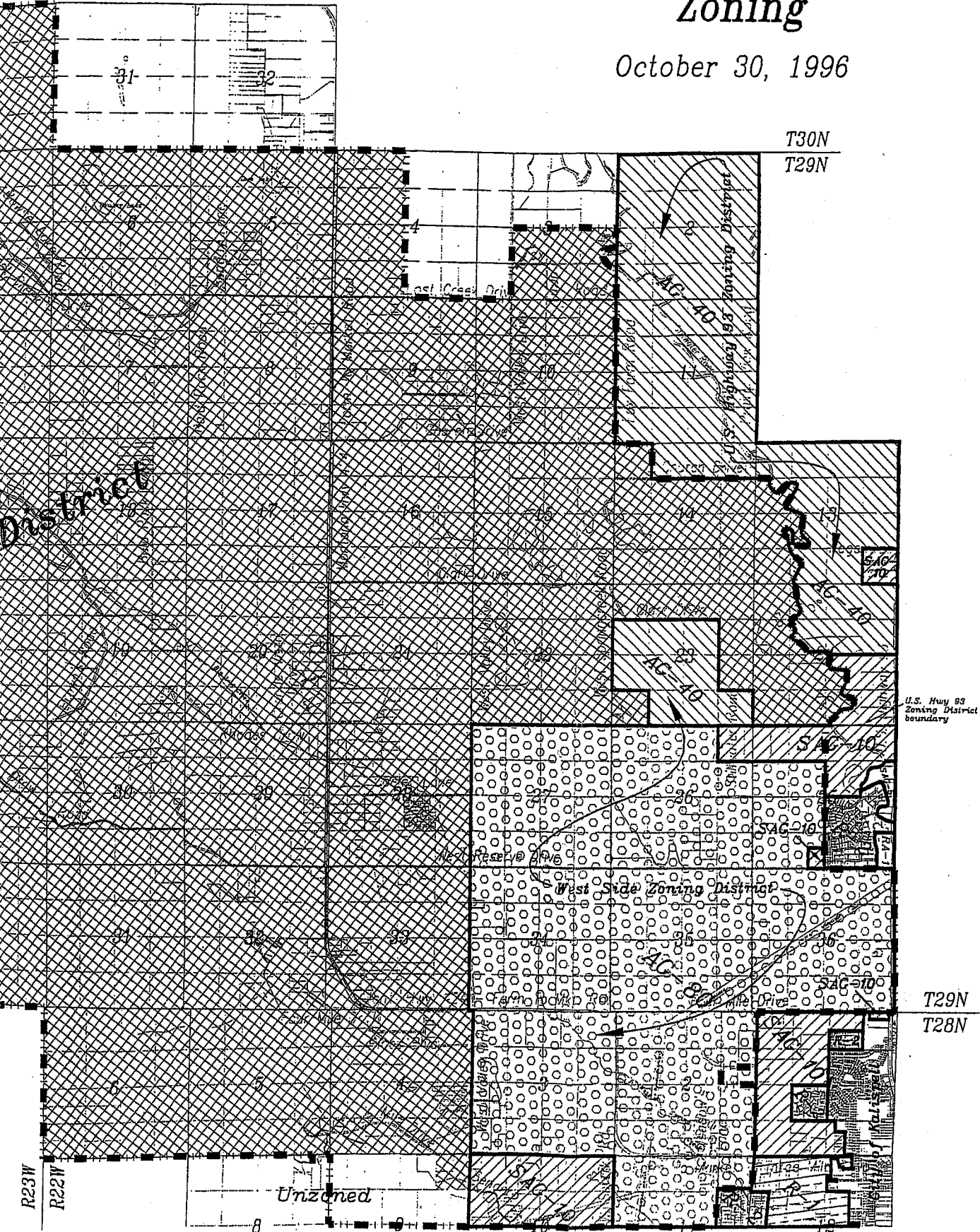






# West Valley Neighborhood Plan Zoning

October 30, 1996



3

2

1

## 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)