



Citizens News

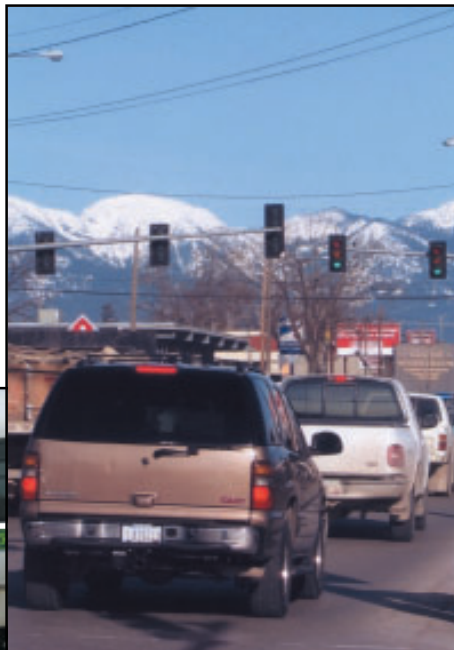
Read This Before You Drive

Nine reasons you should care about transportation policy

by Mayre Flowers

1 You are now a resident of the fattest nation on earth where transportation policy is linked not only to rising obesity rates, but also to health issues like asthma. A 1999 federal-state health survey of Montana found that 53 percent of adult Montanans are overweight and 16 percent are obese.¹ How can public health, community planning, and transportation officials work toward reducing the burden of physical inactivity? One strategy is to promote the integration of walking and bicycling into daily

2 You along with most Americans, spend more on driving than on health care, education, or food. The question worth asking is: Are we just



Traffic at a busy Kalispell intersection.

patterns of growth in our communities? Transportation policy.

3 You, as a typical Montana resident, drive more than ever, frequently on substandard roads. Between 1980 and 2000, Montana's population grew by 15 percent while the vehicle miles traveled grew by 49 percent. To support our driving habits, local and state governments are devoting increasingly larger portions of their budgets to meet



Eagle Transit provides an alternative to driving in the Flathead.

routines, substituting these activities for part of the 73 minutes a day that the average person spends driving.² Many communities, however, aren't designed to accommodate safe and convenient pedestrian or bicycle travel. Data from the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey revealed that in 1995, 89 percent of all trips were by automobile, while only 6.4 percent were by foot or bicycle.² The fewer alternatives a community offers to driving, the less we exercise, note many transportation and health officials. What creates these alternatives? Transportation policy.

driving to work or are we now working to drive? The average American spends 15-20 percent of his or her income on automobile ownership—that's close to two months of work per year.³ Over 60 percent of U.S. households own two or more vehicles. In 1970, that number was 33 percent.³ Additionally, the more we drive, the more we spend. According to a recent national report, the average American family living in a highly car-dependent area can pay thousands of dollars more per year for transportation than families in communities with development patterns that support alternative transportation choices like walking, biking, and buses.⁴ What shapes the



Enjoying an early spring pedal.

transportation needs. Federal dollars currently provide two of every three dollars spent by the state on transportation costs, so locally we fall way short of paying for our own transportation needs.⁵ Still, if you live in one of Montana's 14 largest cities, you pay more in fuel taxes than your community receives back from the state to build and maintain local roads. Many of these same communities have adopted transportation plans that will be long outdated before they will accumulate adequate funding to implement

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Citizens News is a membership publication for Citizens For A Better Flathead, a 501 C-3 non-profit organization. Citizens' mission is to

inform and empower citizens in cooperative community development that respects and encourages stewardship of the Flathead Valley's natural beauty and resources. Subscriptions are complimentary with any membership contribution.

Citizens welcomes letters and articles from interested readers. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. Write or call for permission to reprint any articles or illustrations.

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From Our Board...

Just as the promise of spring is bringing a new energy to our lives, so have the past months brought the energy of renewal and commitment to Citizens For a Better Flathead. We, the board and staff, have benefited greatly from the extensive, professionally led organization assessment in which we participated last fall. As we reviewed our history, revisited our mission and principles, and developed our strategic plan, we renewed our commitment and



Board Chair Jolene Smith helps give the Citizens' office a fresh look.

dedication to the people and the stewardship of the natural beauty and resources of the Flathead Valley. We serve as a vital resource for the individuals and neighborhoods who wish to have their concerns and issues heard and who wish to participate in the public process.

To reflect better our role, we revised our mission statement and principles. These beliefs will guide us well as we continue to serve the citizens of our valley.

Mission Statement

"to inform and empower citizens in cooperative community development that respects and encourages stewardship of the Flathead Valley's natural beauty and resources"

Our Principles

Stewardship – It is our responsibility together to care for the land, air, water, and character of the Flathead Valley for ourselves and for future generations.

Community – We must find ways to balance and bridge our differences in order to maintain the unique quality of life in the Flathead Valley.

Open Government – Fair and ethical decision making requires respect for process, transparency, inclusiveness, and well-informed participants.

Citizenship – It is our right and our responsibility to become informed and to participate in the decisions that affect our lives and our community.

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**Annick Smith and Bill Kittredge
 to Speak at Annual Meeting**

Citizens For A Better Flathead's annual meeting is Saturday, April 3 at the Rocky Mountain Lodge in Whitefish. We are pleased to present a full lineup of events that will ensure a fun-filled, educational, inspiring, appetizing, and all-around enjoyable evening. Missoula writers Annick Smith and Bill Kittredge will be the guest speakers.

Both authors have the amazing capacity to capture the true spirit of Montana with the written word. In Annick Smith's *Homestead*, she writes about her passion for living in this place, "It is this mix of festivity and danger, sparkle and dread that draws me so close to winter, to mountains, to Montana. When you can see your breath, you know you are alive."

Bill Kittredge writes in *Who Owns the West* about the concept of stewardship, "It's time we gave something back to the natural systems of order that

have supported us, some care and tenderness...Maybe it will be like learning a skill: how to live in paradise." Together they co-edited *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*.

Local musician Frank O'Brien will perform original acoustic tunes with his wife Kate O'Brien. Additionally, CFBF will give a presentation about current projects, and take the opportunity to introduce our new board members.

There will be a silent auction fundraiser with most of the items coming from

local artists, restaurants, and businesses. There will be a table of snacks and desserts for "light grazing."

Tickets for the speakers are \$3 for members, and \$5 for non-members (free for non-members joining that evening). Everyone is welcome. Seating will be limited, and tickets are available in advance. To reserve your tickets or donate an item for the silent auction, call the CFBF office at 756-8993.

CITIZENS' ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY, APRIL 3
ROCKY MOUNTAIN LODGE
6510 Hwy. 93 S. • WHITEFISH
MEETING BEGINS AT 6:00 P.M.
AUTHORS SPEAK AT 8:00 P.M.

Nine reasons you should care...

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them. What sets transportation funding priorities? Transportation policy.

4 You live in a state where more wildlife is killed by cars than by hunters.⁷ The Humane Society estimates that nationally more than a million animals are killed daily on roadways in the United States.⁶ Of course, there is a human toll to these animal-vehicle collisions as well. According to the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT), there were 1,796 collisions between motor vehicles and wild animals on Montana's roadways in 2002, resulting in three human fatalities.⁶ Roads reduce the amount of contiguous habitats needed for wildlife as our population and road building expands. One opportunity to improve the relationship between roads and wildlife is to incorporate wildlife crossing needs into all transportation planning, highway design, and construction projects. How does this get done? You guessed it. Transportation policy.

5 You travel in a state ranked by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety as having some of the weakest traffic safety laws in the nation.⁸ Safety gets our attention. It is an issue that we all care about. Federal highway programs pump millions of dollars into Montana annually to ensure our highways are safe and efficient, but are they? An internet search gave me no substantial answers. Only a limited amount of "fast facts" regarding Montana driving statistics can be found at the Montana Department of Transportation's website. Some states are now requiring an annual report card from their departments of transportation that provide citizen-friendly benchmarks of the state's goals and performance. Better statistical information about Montana's transportation trends, amount of statewide fuel consumption, and local and state expenditures for new roads and repairs should be made available and accessible to the public. What can open the door to this information? A transportation policy that is citizen-friendly.

6 You sit in traffic partly created by some nine million non-resident visitors who enter the state each year by car, along with approximately 700,000 licensed Montana drivers. Have you ever noticed, while sitting in a line of cars at an intersection, how many cars hold a single occupant? In Flathead County, 95 percent of residents drive to work and 77 percent drive alone. Forty-seven percent drive from a location more than 15 minutes away, just one way. On an encouraging note, 18 percent of the valley's residents carpool, walk, or use other public means to get to work.⁹ Cars will always play a key role in our transportation system, but we need to remember that people will make

other choices when given options. And let's not forget the fact that one quarter of our state's population doesn't drive because they are underage, have poor health, or cannot afford auto expenses. In 2000, the MDOT completed a well researched and



Residents of Willow Glen Road and Conrad Drive protest construction of the LaSalle Connector, which ignores the safety guidelines set by the local transportation plan.

well written report titled, "Montana Rural Passenger Needs." This study pointed out that only 17 percent of the most basic transit needs were being met in Montana. The Rural Needs study recommended that MDOT, at a minimum, should work to meet at least 25 percent of transit needs by 2010. MDOT would need to spend at least \$471 million between 2001 and 2010 to meet that goal. However, MDOT had planned on spending only \$14 million on transit between 2001 and 2004. What is needed to help ensure that such studies aren't ignored? A public that better understands the role of transportation policy and holds its officials accountable.

7 You live in a state where the way transportation dollars are spent significantly shapes where growth will occur. As the Montana Transportation Choices study notes, "... research has shown that investment in road capacity is often the most influential factor determining where growth will occur within regional markets." In large part, because of a growing body of research in this area, more and more states are requiring consistency between transportation planning and land use planning. Ensuring this consistency, of course, requires tightening up existing laws and transportation policy. Also, it requires an informed and involved public.

8 You, like most of the 75,000 residents of this incredible valley, think the Flathead is a very special place and want to keep it that way. This will require vision and leadership from our local elected officials and from the public, who can play an invaluable role in shaping policy and holding elected officials accountable. This, of course, also

means you will want to go online at <http://www.flatheadcitizens.org/media> and check out the recently-released "Montana Transportation Choices Study," which I have referenced several times in this article. It talks about transportation policy in citizen-friendly terms. What's more, it provides examples of the best transportation practices from around the country, as well as specific recommendations. These recommendations serve to ensure that our state's transportation policies are further fine-tuned to enhance the character of our communities, increase the safety of drivers and pedestrians, attract economic development to our urban centers, and conserve the natural landscapes that define Montana. Citizens For A Better Flathead is proud to have played a lead role in bringing this study to fruition. We will continue to provide strong leadership to build the needed consensus around the state that is required to implement its findings and recommendations.

9 You are a special person. Indeed, you are more than special. You're amazing. You made it all the way to the end of this article! That's impressive! You now know enough about transportation policy to start asking questions. I hope you want to learn even more. Pay attention to how transportation and land use decisions are handled. You'll be helping to elect a new governor and a whole slate of new government officials in November. Ask these candidates how important they think transportation policy is to our valley and state. Tell them you know about an important new study you think they ought to read!

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Is There a Community Radio Station in Your Future?

A group of volunteers recently formed the Glacier Community Radio Project (GCRP) with the intention of creating an independent radio station to serve the interests of the local valley community. GCRP is a non-profit organization that incorporated in the State of Montana last October and seeks to establish a non-commercial, people-powered radio station committed to the broadcast of original and locally-generated programming exploring musical diversity and issues vital to the community.

According to the GCRP, the envisioned community radio station would be a truly democratic media made accessible to all because ownership, decision-making, and programming would belong to the community. It would enhance the intellectual and cultural richness of the area it serves by promoting awareness of local groups, businesses, events, services and facilities. The station would empower citizens to air diverse viewpoints and engage in direct dialogue with their community. It would also be a powerful tool for education.

The idea of a community radio station in the Flathead Valley is nothing new. A few of GCRP's founders first inquired with the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) 10 years ago regarding the possibility of creating a small, non-commercial station. "The bureaucracy and costs were incredible," says GCRP Board Member Pat Linton. "If



you weren't already an established broadcaster you needed to be prepared to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars just to have a chance of obtaining a frequency on which to broadcast." What has since changed is the FCC's Localism Task Force initiative and the advent of a new class of FM station licensing: low-power FM.

The FCC created the Localism Task Force to evaluate how broadcasters are serving their local communities. The FCC has since shown renewed interest in requiring broadcasters to air programming that is responsive to the interests and needs of their communities. To facilitate this, in 2001 the

FCC began licensing low-power FM radio stations all across the nation. "It is still a complicated, costly and lengthy process, and there is no guarantee we will get the license we apply for," warns Linton, "but we are optimistic that we will get on the air one way or another, be it with a low-power or full-power broadcast license."

The group has begun fundraising to offset expenses, which include filing fees incurred by non-profit status requirements, costs of professional engineering and legal consultation, FCC application fees, and other administrative expenditures. They are in the process of getting their federal 501(c)3 tax-exempt status and are planning a fundraising event for the spring or summer. "We are at the point where we need to start bringing in some serious cash so we can keep moving forward with the momentum we have going for us," says Linton. "Folks have been overwhelmingly supportive of the idea of a new radio station. What we need to do now is to tap into that enthusiasm for the funds required to get the station on the air."

For more information about GCRP, to sign up for future volunteering, to offer your radio expertise, and/or to make a charitable donation, please contact Kate O'Brien at (406) 862-8073 or send a letter or check to Glacier Community Radio Project, P.O. Box 1750, Whitefish, MT 59937. Please make checks payable to GCRP.

New Board Members Bring Fresh Input and Energy to CFBF

Citizens For A Better Flathead welcomes five new board members this year. We are excited to have their fresh ideas and energy to contribute to our already stellar cast of members.

Cory Cullen is the owner of a curbside recycling company, New World Recycling. He moved to the Flathead Valley in July of 2002. He is a graduate from Montana State University with a degree in photography.

Mary Critchlow has been a teacher in Kalispell for the past 16 years. She teaches health and P.E.. Recently she took a sabbatical and traveled around the world. This trip really increased her appreciation for living in the Flathead and motivated her to get involved in the process to preserve the integrity of the valley.

Kay Lynn is a visual artist and educator who came to the Flathead 15 years ago from the Boston area. She has continued producing in her

Kalispell studio and has taught extensively both in our public schools and privately. She hopes to help preserve the beauty of our natural landscape and the sense of good will she has found in the community.

Susanne O'Connor is a Kalispell native who returned to the Flathead 23 years ago. She has worked for the past 21 years as the financial supervisor in the County Superintendent of Schools Office. She is concerned with urban sprawl and the detrimental effect it has on the quality of life in the Flathead.

Joe Biby currently spends half the year as an adventure guide in Montana, Idaho, and Alaska. Formerly with University of Montana Biological Station, he is interested in water quality and environmental issues and concerned with unregulated growth. He is a native of the Flathead Valley.

From our board... continued from page 2

We are very pleased to welcome talented new board members to our organization. They are taking an active role in our committees and are becoming knowledgeable of our programs and projects (see article on page 4.) Melanie Fortino, Development Director and Office Administrator, and Mayre Flowers, Program Director, continue to carry on the daily work with dedication and expertise. Casey Fagre is filling a much-needed role as temporary office staff until May. We are actively searching for an executive director who will help us meet the challenges facing this valley.

Meanwhile, we at Citizens are committed to our mission and principles in these important times of change. We are excited about the increased grassroots involvement by folks who are becoming aware and knowledgeable of the issues and are taking part in the public process. These people are expecting public officials to make good decisions based on researched information and the law. Indeed, "It is our right and responsibility to become informed and to participate in the decisions that affect our lives and our community."

Farm Hands: Connecting People with Working Lands

by Jen Bannon



This spring marks the third year of the Farm Hands group connecting people with working lands. Look for the Flathead Valley Farm Map at your local coffee shop, farmer's market, chamber of commerce, restaurants, and grocery stores. The map shows various farms where you can go to purchase everything from hay, berries, vegetables, eggs, flowers, meat, seeds, to horses...the list goes on.

This year's map also includes a harvest schedule, and will continue to offer visitors and residents opportunities to interact with the producers.

The Farm Hands Map is a unique tool that you can use to find locally produced agricultural products. By spending just \$10 a week on locally grown food, we can all do our part in supporting our community farmers and invest in our local economy. As a result, locals and tourists alike will begin to realize the breadth of the valley's agricultural heritage. The Farm Hands group hopes this

realization will foster a farmer-community relationship, which could lead to more demand for local products, better prices for these products, and a stronger farm economy.

Farm Hands is a group of local farmers and consumers who want to strengthen the natural bond between the people who produce the food and the people who eat it. Because a healthy society is not possible without healthy family farms, we are working to protect the Flathead Valley's rich, working farmlands for future generations.

The map is only a piece of the Farm Hands puzzle in fostering sustainable living in the Flathead. The group is currently planning further programs to enhance the farm-community-food connection. Ideas include cooking classes, summer camps for kids, curriculum for schools to educate students about food production, nutrition, economics of buying local, and summer bike tours of farms.

Mark your calendars for your local Farmer's Markets-Kalispell Farmer's Market: Kalispell Center Mall parking lot, west side, Tuesday 4-6 P.M. and Saturday 9 A.M.-12:30 P.M.; Whitefish Farmer's Market: Mountain Mall parking lot, Thursday 4-6:30 P.M.; Bigfork Farmer's Market: Bigfork High School on Grand Avenue, Wednesday and Friday 4-6 P.M. See you there! For more information about Farm Hands, email Jen Bannon: jen_bannon@yahoo.com.

Support Local Farmers... Join a CSA

by Julian Cunningham

Would you like to receive flavorful, in-season garden vegetables and fruits starting in late May and continuing into fall? Do you want to know where that food is grown and who grows it? Would you like your "food vote" to support local food production that aims to sustain and improve the health of our soils, water, and air? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, you would probably love being a member of one of the CSAs in the valley.

What is a community supported agriculture (CSA)? In its simplest terms, CSA consists of a partnership between agricultural producers and consumers. Consumers, generally called members or shareholders, provide money in early spring for the farm's operating expenses. In exchange, members receive a portion of that farm's produce weekly throughout the season.

CSAs are organized in a variety of ways. Some are operated by farmers, while others are run by farmers-consumer cooperatives (co-ops). Many of these farms grow over 40 different



vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Some supply meat, eggs, honey, and other farm products. CSAs vary greatly in size, from a half-acre to over 300 acres, and generally involve from 10 to 200 households.

Swallow Crest Farm and Raven Ridge Farm work together to provide the Bigfork and Kalispell areas with organic produce and fruits. As a CSA co-op, they will be growing for 60 families in 2004. Swallow Crest Farm is located just north of Bigfork. Julian Cunningham owns this farm along with his family and delivers produce to Bigfork Farmer's Market on Friday afternoons. (Call Julian at 756-0462 with questions or to arrange a CSA subscription in the Bigfork area.)

Kip Drobish of Raven Ridge Farm grows and distributes produce at his Riverside Garden on the east side of Kalispell. For members of the co-op picking up food in the Kalispell area, produce distribution is on Tuesday evenings (5 to 7 p.m.). Please call Kip at 752-6837 (PLA-NTER) with questions and to arrange your produce share for this season. Both farms in the CSA co-op are certified organic by the new Montana State

Organic Program.

Terrapin Farm, owned by Judy Owsowitz, is located a few miles southwest of Whitefish on Farm-to-Market Road. This farm has been certified organic for many years. Judy grows a large variety of bedding plants, vegetables, and herbs. Call Judy at 862-6362 to ask about CSA arrangements for the 2004 season. Terrapin Farm CSA members pick up produce at the farm.

CSA is a means to strengthen the relationship between the consumer and the producer of fresh food. As our culture becomes more urbanized and our small local farms vanish, there is a growing need to retain connections between where food is grown and who eats it.

Take time today to call about a CSA membership that not only will provide food for your family, but a greater sense of community and connection to nearby farmland.



Whitefish State Trust Land Plan Draws Passionate Crowd

by Melanie Fortino

On March 4, the public packed a meeting room at Grouse Mountain Lodge to comment on the future of state lands around Whitefish. This was the first opportunity for significant public input in many months. The public let it be known that they expect an innovative and detailed plan that protects the character and natural resource values that these lands provide the Whitefish community.

The Whitefish Advisory Committee has put together a set of goals and policies as an initial step in the framework for coming up with a strong neighborhood plan for the state trust lands surrounding Whitefish. Tyler Tourville, an advisory committee member, commented, "I personally think we need to see some more detail put into the goals and policies. This will be the guiding document for what happens to these lands. If it is not specific, it will be left for interpretation, I don't want to see that." At the March 4 meeting, the committee presented issues relevant to these goals and policies. At this stage, the committee is looking to identify the issues for the sub-neighborhood areas near Beaver Lake, KM Ranch/ Happy Valley, Stillwater, Spencer Lake, and Swift Creek. The public was given the opportunity to provide comments on this draft list of issues.

In order for the neighborhood plan to carry forward the values and concerns of the community, the advisory committee will need to develop specific criteria to bring to the table. "Specifics are very important in implementation strategies," noted Whitefish Planning Board Chair Mike Jopek. "The reason why is because this plan will be interpreted in the future by the County Commissioners as development proposals come forward."

The Whitefish City-County Master Plan, it was pointed out, provides a valuable framework of issues, goals, policies, and recommendations that have

already been identified to guide future growth. This master plan, also, provides detailed guidelines for what should be included in a proposed neighborhood plan.

Alternative scenarios should be well developed and given preference and priority so that innovative solutions can compete fairly with more traditional resort and high-end home solutions. These are public lands that provide a unique array of services, including Whitefish's source of drinking water, significant wildlife habitat, recreation, and view sheds with beauty we often take for granted. They have values that the local community may partner in creative ways to secure for the future.

The law requires that revenue generated from the state lands not just benefit the state, but, also, the local community. At first glance, open space and recreational opportunities might not appear to be values that generate significant revenue. However, they are, in fact, inviting attributes to individuals looking to move to this community and do indeed attract economic growth.

The effectiveness of the neighborhood plan will lie in the detail and research behind the recommendations. It is no small task to establish a plan to

manage 13,000 acres. Any recommendation will have a significant impact on the land itself and the surrounding community.

Continued public support is critical to give the Whitefish advisory committee the support to carry a strong plan forward to the State Land Board. The Whitefish Trust Land Plan Advisory Committee meetings are held the first and third Thursday of every month. The meetings are located in North Valley Hospital and start at 6 p.m. They are open to the public, and there is a public comment period at the end of each meeting.



How will state lands surrounding Whitefish, such as the popular Spencer Lake area, be managed? Share your thoughts at Whitefish Advisory Committee meetings, held the first and third Thursday of every month.

First Whitefish, Now the Whole State: DNRC to announce guidelines for development across the state

by Mayre Flowers

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Real Estate Management Bureau, is moving closer to the release of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or PEIS. The PEIS offers three alternative approaches to the management of school trust lands across the state for special uses. The process will result in the selection of a preferred alternative that would, in turn, become the DNRC Real Estate Management Plan.

This is where the brochure that was recently mailed by DNRC, announcing the pending mid-June release of the draft PEIS for public comment, gets scary. The identified alternatives for these lands that have been traditionally managed for forestry and agriculture uses appear to boil down to three choices, all of which open the door to non-traditional uses such as commercial and resort residential development.

Indeed, the new alternatives offered seem to simply be 1) some development, 2) a fair amount of development, and 3) a lot of development. Under the preferred alternative chosen, land proposed for development would then move through a coarse filter that would limit development on steep slopes and flood plains and go through some level of local review to provide for adherence to, or requests for, modification of local land use plans. Of significant concern is language in the alternatives that suggests that the state may now move to "pro-

actively" promote these lands for development.

The plan that results from the chosen alternative will impact over 5 million acres of state school trust land located across the state. These show up on a map in mostly square mile sections as a detailed checker board pattern that blankets the state. They are literally in everyone's backyard. In the Flathead, they include sensitive lands in the North Fork, as well as on Flathead Lake and elsewhere.

If the process in Whitefish has shown the public anything, it is that developing a land use plan for even 13,000 acres is a huge task. This is even truer for a community that had, for the most part, taken these lands for granted as permanent open space, wildlife havens, recreational meccas, and water and view sheds. Preserving the services these lands provide for the broader community will require time and creativity, unpressured by short-term real estate opportunities. It, also, points even more the urgent need to revisit the constitutional interpretation of "highest and best use," a key definition that will slow or speed this proposed conversion of state school trust lands to non-traditional uses.

Whitefish residents who have been so passionate and involved in the local planning process need to bottle some of their spirit and commitment. It's a formula that will be needed by others across the state as the DNRC seeks to reap greater monetary returns from school trust lands.

Cost of Growth Revisited

by Don Schwennesen

Remember that great old "Peanuts" cartoon strip that still runs at least once a year? Where Lucy promises to hold the football for Charlie Brown's kick but always pulls it away at the last moment?

It's allegorical for much in our society, including the promises made for the Flathead's newest developing box store complex north of Kalispell, the site of the proposed Glacier Mall.

The promises are of high-paying jobs, lots of construction, and visitors coming from far-flung places just to spend their money in Montana's largest shopping mall.

That's why I visit Glacier National Park: to shop at a mall, right?

Year after year, the Lucys of the development world hold out the football of prosperity to the Charlie Browns of the Flathead Valley. And as predictable as sunrise, Charlie ignores the past evidence and races toward the next debacle.

Because past studies have shown time and again that the promises are hollow ones.

If you're not sure what I'm talking about, you should be reading or re-reading two of the major studies published by Citizens for a Better Flathead since the turn of the century: *Striking the Roots of Sprawl* (in 2000) and *Roots of Sprawl II* (in 2001).

And you might want to pay closer attention to the "box store tax" proposed by Rep. Ken Toole, D-Helena, during the last legislative session, an idea that narrowly failed on a tie vote and one that is expected to be re-introduced next year.

Toole gave a public talk in Kalispell last month. When these big projects come to town, "it's just like sticking a big straw in that sucks all the cash out," he said in an interview with *Citizens*.

Roots of Sprawl II cited studies by the National Trust for Historic Preservation showing that locally owned businesses returned some 60 percent of their profits to the local economy while chain stores returned only about 20 percent.

In a year when most of the state's gubernatorial candidates are campaigning for a return to strip mining, large-scale corporate logging and "resource development like it was 1950," Toole is advocating a fresh look at Montana's total tax structure, with more attention to the state's changing economy.

"Montana's tax system, I think, fails to recognize how our economy's changing," he said. "We need to be thinking, in terms of taxation, where is the money being made now."

Box stores simply do not do much to help local communities or shoulder local tax burdens, Toole

said, though they are enormously profitable to their far-away owners.

Take Wal-mart, he said. With 1.2 million workers, it's now the largest single employer in



America and accounts for 2 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. In 2002 it had profits of \$6.6 billion. Five of the 10 richest Americans are members of the Walton family.

Yet the average employee works only 32 hours per week and makes \$13,000 a year. More than half get no health benefits, and those that do pay one-third of the cost.

And that's just one example.

While developers like to tout the construction work and the new retail jobs that their box stores will bring, national studies don't support those contentions.

Roots of Sprawl II cited one such study in Greenfield, Mass., where a box store brought in 177 new jobs but caused the loss of 148 jobs elsewhere in the community. The net result: a slight increase in jobs, but a net loss in community revenues and wage-multipliers.

Modern myths about growth were deflated in *Striking the Roots of Sprawl*. One such myth is that growth automatically means higher wages and more jobs. In fact, unemployment is paradoxically higher in high-growth areas because the promise of jobs draws in a surplus of workers from other places. That means prospective employers can offer lower wages instead of the higher ones promised.

"Box stores tend to drive the wage scale in a community, and they tend to set the standard very low," Toole said. "Even the construction jobs are pretty short-term and transient."

Again, a similar theme was sounded in *Roots of Sprawl II*, which noted that box stores often exploit reduced architectural standards, to build cheaper buildings that will be taxed at a lower rate.

Add to that the standardized building designs and materials and experienced contractors often brought in for much of the work.

Then there's the tendency for most box stores to locate just outside the city limits, to sap the shopping population without sharing the tax burden needed to support the city's infrastructure. This location choice is encouraged by state laws that tax downtown land more.

According to *Roots of Sprawl II*: "In downtown Kalispell in 1999, businesses were taxed at an average rate of \$7.25 per square foot for the land their stores are built on. Meanwhile, just outside town, Wal-mart was taxed at \$2.75 per square foot for its land," while Costco, several miles out of town near the airport, "was taxed at 25 cents a square foot for its land."

Toole said even in Montana's conservative legislature, rural community lawmakers are starting to think about the impacts of box stores, particularly as they watch local businesses dry up and dodge traffic exiting the smaller towns for the box store suburbs on Saturday mornings.

His tax plan would target only the biggest of the boxes in Montana, those with \$20 million in sales each year. By that measure, even large chain grocery stores such as Safeway in Helena and Rosauer's in Kalispell would probably slip under the bar.

The tax would hit the 161 largest retail stores in Montana. Those with sales over \$20 million would be taxed 1 percent of their gross sales over \$20 million, then 1.5 percent of sales over \$30 million and 2 percent of sales over \$40 million.

The tax would generate an estimated \$21 million, scarcely one-third the amount of the tax breaks given to large out-of-state corporations by the 2001 legislature.

The box store tax idea "got a lot of people to start thinking outside the box," he said.

Even if Toole's re-election bid proves unsuccessful this fall, others are already poised to re-introduce the idea.

Meanwhile, Charlie Brown, why don't you run way out past Reserve Street for a long pass...



Did You Know? Fun facts about the Flathead



General

- Flathead County is roughly the size of the state of Connecticut. 3
- Flathead Lake is the size of the island of Guam. 4
- From 1970 to 2000, 33,357 new jobs were created in Flathead County. 9
- Services and Professional accounted for 24,655 of these new jobs. 9
- Population of Flathead County in 2000 was 74,471. 5
- The population density in Montana is 6.2 people per square mile compared to 80.5 nationally. Montana is a state with compact cities and towns and vast areas of open lands. 6

Waste

- The amount of trash being hauled to the Flathead County Landfill is increasing at an average rate of 6 percent per year. Typically the rate of increase has only been 1 to 2 percent per year. 7
- The Flathead County Landfill receives about 200 tons of waste per day. 7
- The national average is 4 pounds of trash per person per day. 7
- More than 100,000 tons of waste were buried at

the Flathead County Landfill from August 2002 to August 2003, a 20 percent increase from the amount that was buried for the same period in 2000. 7

Mall

- The acreage for the proposed Glacier Mall site is 481 acres. This is eight times the size of downtown Kalispell and 14 times bigger than Kalispell's Woodland Park. 10

Kalispell

- Kalispell was the name the Blackfoot and Blood Indians who lived in the area called the town when the first white settlers arrived. Kalispell means "Prairie above the Lake." 4
- The median income for a household in the city is \$28,567. 4
- For every 100 females age 18 and over, there are 82.1 males in Kalispell. 4

Transportation

- One-fourth of Montana residents don't drive. 6
- There are more public road miles in Montana than Interstate miles in the entire United States. 8

- Flathead County has the most public road mileage of any county in Montana, with 2,510 miles. 8

Montana

- Montana has the largest migratory elk herd in the nation. 1
- The Montana Yogo Sapphire is the only North American gem to be included in the Crown Jewels of England. 1
- In 1888, Helena had more millionaires per capita than any other city in the world. 1

Sources:

- 1-www.shgcities.com
- 2-www.montanawants.com
- 3-www.umt.edu
- 4-www.flatheadonline.com
- 5-quickfacts.census.gov
- 6-Montana Transportation Choices 2004
- 7- www.flatheadcitizens.org/wastenot
- 8-www.mdt.state.mt.us
- 9-Economic Profile System
- 10- compiled from Tri-City Planning Documents

Mall Petition Drives to Continue: New opportunity for all county voters to sign

Let the People Vote announced recently that it had collected approximately 3,500 signatures of county residents who want to see the Glacier Mall put to a vote. They also announced that although this number of signatures falls short by about 800 of the number needed to place this issue on the June ballot, the petition drive will continue.

For now, this current petition drive must wait for a ruling of the Montana Supreme Court. Under a ruling the county made, only county residents outside the three cities and their planning areas have been allowed to sign the petitions to date. Let the People Vote, however, has asked the Montana Supreme court to rule on the legality of the county's decision. Let the People Vote holds that it is the constitutionally protected right of all county residents to vote on a decision made by our county government.

If the court rules that all county residents should have been allowed to sign the petition, the petition

drive will be continued. A decision could be issued later this spring, but could come even later, given a backlog of cases before the court.

Therefore, Let the People Vote is launching a second petition drive. This new petition drive seeks to put the county's decision to rezone this same property, near the intersection of U.S. 93 and Reserve Street, to a vote of ALL county residents. Unlike the growth policy decision, there are no conflicting laws that would prohibit any county resident from signing this petition. If approximately 8,000 signatures are gathered 90 days after the county approves this new petition, then the county's decision to rezone the property will be put to a vote of all county residents. This vote would likely occur on the November ballot.

Had the petition process for the putting the county's growth policy decision to a vote not been complicated and delayed by who could sign the petition, necessitating a court challenge, the second

petition drive would not be needed. A vote to void the growth policy decision would have also voided the zone change.

Let the People Vote stated in a recent press release that it is dedicated to preserving the fundamental right of county residents to hold their government leaders accountable for major decisions impacting the future of our valley. "We are committed to securing the fundamental right of all county residents to be able to vote on a decision that county residents find significant enough to petition to place on a ballot for a vote," the group stated.

Let the People Vote had the support of 140 volunteers who helped to collect signatures. They invite anyone interested in volunteering to help with the renewed petition drive to call 756-5868 or 752-4944.

County Voters Will Soon Choose: Is there a better way to run county government?

by Mayre Flowers

Is it time for a change in Flathead County? Can a non-professional, three-person commission continue to manage the broad ranging bureaucracy - including seven separate offices and numerous boards, commissions and special districts - of one of the state's fastest growing counties without the assistance of a manager?

What governmental structure do other counties in the state or regions use? If Montanans saw the need to rewrite our state constitution in 1972, might

Does a three-member commission form of government concentrate power in the hands of one or two commissioners and thus ultimately fail to provide the broad-based leadership and accountability necessary for a truly representative and healthy government?

it be time that Flathead County residents review the type of government put in place in 1893? Is it true that some forms of county government would give us more local control? Is more local control what we need?

If your idea of the three best county commissioners were currently sitting in office, should you still care about how our county government is structured? Considering that our county population has doubled in the last decade, can three people, when a majority is two, fairly represent the broad range of concerns of those living in their districts?

The three cities in the valley elect nine people to represent them and they have a professional manager to carry out the policies they set. Why should county residents have only three representatives? Should there be elected city representatives on the county board of commissioners to represent the perspective of city residents? After all, city residents are county residents, too.

Why are city council elections non-partisan, but county commissioner candidates run representing a political party? Would it be cheaper to have nine elected, non-paid commission members and a paid professional county manager like most large cities have? Is it true that even though the county commissioners receive an annual salary of some \$45,000, they have no legal requirement to work a fixed number of hours and often work much less than a 40-hour week?

Enough questions? Want some answers? This is your lucky year!

It's lucky because since 1972, when Montana adopted a new constitution, county and city governments are required to offer voters a choice to set up a Local Government Study Commission to review and make recommendations on the best way to structure county (or city) government. This means if voters choose to set up a study commission, they can ask the commission to answer questions like those above.

It also means that after answering the public's questions and seeking public input, the commission can recommend and place on the ballot for a county-wide vote any changes that may be needed. The study commission's charge is to help our county government more effectively represent the concerns of all county residents in a cost-effective manner that secures the long-term interests of current and future generations.

If voters approve a study commission for county government, which the county commissioners have now placed on this June's ballot, then a nine-member study commission will be elected on the November ballot. Any county resident (except elected officials) can apply to serve on this study commission. Every applicant's name will appear on the November ballot.

In 1994, 33 of Montana's 56 counties and 79 of its 126 municipalities voted to set up a two-year study commission. Of these, eight counties and 14 cities chose to change their form of government. These changes ranged from making the election of county commissioners non-partisan to adopting a county manager form of government.

In 1997, Flathead County voters were given the option of adopting a commissioner-manager form of government with five commissioners, but voters decided to stick with the current three member commission. Lately though, we at CFBF are hearing a cross-section of community leaders express

Would it be cheaper to have nine elected, non-paid commission members and a paid professional county manager like most large cities have?

interest in a commissioner-manager form of government. The concerns expressed are similar to those raised by the Flathead County Study Commission in 1996 that found: "...citizens are concerned about the lack of leadership, the lack of accountability, the lack of economy and efficiency of government, the lack of quality services and the level of taxes ..".

To cover the work of the study commission (members are not paid) voters would also need to approve the levying of one additional mill, which would equate to about \$3.30 in additional property taxes on a home valued at \$100,000. In 1994 Flathead County voters approved taxing themselves to study this issue. Of the total raised by mill during the two-year study period, approximately \$47,000 was spent, with over \$63,000 being returned to the county general fund as unspent.

This June, county voters have an important choice to make in deciding whether or not to set up this study commission. Meanwhile the fundamental questions to ponder are these: Does a three-member

The study commission's charge is to help our county government more effectively represent the concerns of all county residents in a cost-effective manner that secures the long-term interests of current and future generations.

commission form of government concentrate power in the hands of one or two commissioners and thus ultimately fail to provide the broad-based leadership and accountability necessary for a truly representative and healthy government? Given the growth pressures our county faces, what government structure would best unite all valley residents behind a vision of how we will both preserve our quality of life and provide cost effective and equitable county services?

We all care about taxes and the changes growth brings to our valley. At least once every 10 years, it seems we should also care enough to consider whether our current government structure serves us well. Because after all else is considered, not only do we usually get what we pay for, we get what we vote for.

Want to learn more about this topic? Visit the Local Government Center at Montana State University's web site at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwlgc/index.shtml> or read the Montana laws that define the work of a study commission and discuss alternative forms of government at http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/mca_toc/7.htm.. We would also like to hear from our readers if they have interest in our hosting a discussion group meeting on this topic. Call us at 756-8993.

Waste Not Project Aims to Reduce Recycle Bin Contamination

by Casey Fagre

This spring, the Waste Not Project is addressing the issue of the contamination of recycle bins around the county with non-recyclable and inappropriate items. Data collected by Evergreen Disposal, which contracts with the county to process the recycle, shows a disturbing trend: about one-third of the items put in recycle bins are non-recyclable garbage! Of the 49,000 pounds of recyclable materials collected from county recycle bins in January 2004, approximately 18,000 pounds were categorized as trash. Evergreen Disposal staff attempt to sort out the problematic waste, but many of the contaminated bins cannot be salvaged, resulting in loads of otherwise recyclable materials getting dumped in the landfill.

Inspired by the successful Adopt-a-Highway program, the Waste Not Project has put recycling bin sites up for adoption by clubs and school groups. Flathead County supplies recycling bins at six of the county's satellite dumpster sites located near Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Kila, Creston, Lakeside, and Coram. Evergreen Disposal provides recycling bins at locations in Kalispell, and the City of Whitefish operates sites within Whitefish as well. To date, several schools



Casey Fagre, Waste Not Project coordinator, poses with a compost barrel and recyclable materials. She will be conducting composting tours at the landfill for local schools starting in April.

have decided to adopt a site. After becoming certified "Master Recyclers" as part of an interactive classroom presentation on the art of proper recycle sorting, students will engage in campaigns to teach others in their school and neighborhood. The school groups will be able to track their progress with weekly data summaries of the level of contamination in the bins.

Art classes and community groups are also getting creative with soda cans, milk jugs, tin cans, cardboard, and other locally recyclable items to construct imaginative, large-scale sculptures that will be displayed in public venues around Flathead Valley for Earth Day and the month of May. These eye-catching sculptures, accompanied by informative signs, will aid in educating the community about which items can and cannot be recycled at county sites.

The Waste Not Project is in its 10th year providing consumer education to help reduce the volume and toxicity of our county waste stream. It is a collaborative project of the Flathead County Solid Waste District, the Flathead Valley Community College Service Learning Program, and Citizens For A Better Flathead. For more information or to get involved in any aspect of the Waste Not Project, please contact Casey Fagre at 756-8993.

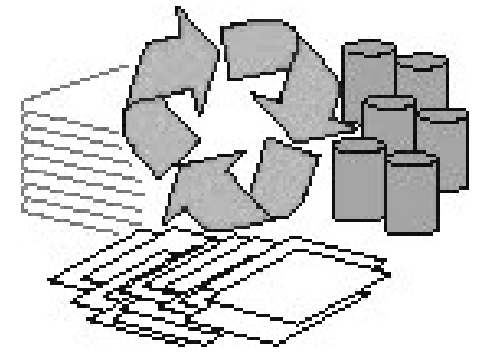
Landfill Tours Encourage Recycling

The Waste Not Project is also offering its ever-popular fieldtrip to the county landfill and compost demonstration garden in April and May. The tour offers youth an in-depth understanding of the structure and daily operations of the landfill, as well as providing hands-on composting and recycling activities. Kids are especially enthusiastic about vermiculture composting, but perhaps it is not a surprise that a box full of squirming worms would get rave reviews!

If you are interested in learning more about compost, the compost garden can always use a helping hand. Community work days in compost garden are scheduled for May 1, 8, and 15 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

County Offers Small Businesses Opportunity to Save Money on Disposal of Hazardous Waste

Flathead Valley businesses have the chance to cost-effectively and properly dispose of their hazardous waste at the second annual Small Business Hazardous Waste Collection Event to be held June 4. The advantage of this joint collection strategy is that different businesses can combine small quantities of the same substance in a single drum, allowing them to save up to 50 percent of the cost of conventional hazardous waste pick-up and disposal.



The following items are accepted at the county recycle drop-off sites.

CORRUGATED CARDBOARD

Un-waxed cardboard boxes
Paper Board, includes cereal and cracker-type boxes
Beer Cartons
*Please flatten all boxes.

NEWSPAPER

All parts of the paper, including glossy inserts that come in the newspaper

MAGAZINES

All magazines, catalogs, paperback books, and phonebooks
*Only offered at the Columbia Falls and Landfill sites

ALUMINUM AND TIN CANS

All clean aluminum and tin cans are accepted, but please sort them separately.
*No need to crush cans or remove labels

#1 AND #2 PLASTICS

#1 Plastics such as soda and other drink bottles (clear, glass-like plastic)
#2 Plastics such as milk containers (translucent, whitish plastic)
*Look for the recycling symbol with a #1 or #2 on the bottom of the container.
*No Solid #2 Plastic (like detergent bottles), Lids, or Plastic Bags

Items NOT listed above, such as office and computer paper, are NOT accepted at county sites, but may be recycled at other local recycling centers.

For a complete guide to recycling options in the Flathead Valley, visit:
www.flatheadcitizens.org/wastenot or call:
756-8993

A New Way to Bring Glass Recycling to the Flathead Valley

My name is Cory Cullen, and I am the owner of New World Recycling. For a year and a half, I have been accepting glass as part of my curbside service. I have used methods such as shipping it to Idaho 19 garbage cans at a time and grinding it down to sand in a six-cubic-foot cement mixer.

As my customer base grows, these methods have proven inefficient. In order to allow a larger percentage of the valley to recycle glass, I have come up with a possible solution. I intend to buy a glass pulverizer.

This machine has the capability to grind a ton of glass in just an hour's time and uses only 80 cents of electricity in the process. I plan on using the pulverized glass in the valley for such projects as a "glassphalt" mixture in the rails to trails bike path, filter sand for septic systems and utility piping, an icemelt glass aggregate mixture for icy roads, and



Cory Cullen and a whole lot of glass to be recycled.

even a glass-gravel mixture used in creating roadbeds.

The uses of recycled glass are limitless with a little creativity and intelligence. Much like Taos, New Mexico, the Flathead Valley can also win state awards for beautification with the uses of recycled glass. Since New World Recycling is still a small company with only 140 customers, I am going to need some assistance with the purchase of this pulverizer. I appeal to the citizens of the Flathead Valley to step forward and help me change this area into a glass-friendly place to live.

The pulverizer costs \$25,000 and thanks to a generous 40 folks, I am now \$7,000 closer to the goal. I hope to find another 160 people to contribute just \$150 dollars and our goal of glass recycling in the Flathead Valley can be realized. To make a pledge, please call Cory Cullen at 863-9311. Thank you, and stay green.

Before You Recycle, Try Freecycle!

The Freecycle Network is an innovative way to clean out those unwanted items collecting dust in your garage, basement, or attic and share them with someone who really wants them. Freecycle provides an electronic forum, hosted by Yahoo!Groups, for individuals and non-profits to "recycle" unwanted items. In keeping with its name, everything posted to the list must be free. "Think of it as eBay without the money and with a dose of 'think globally, act locally'," said Mary Wallace, moderator for the local Flathead Freecycle group. Members can choose to receive messages once a day by email or view the postings by visiting the group's webpage. In the two months that Flathead Freecycle has been up and running, group members have offered items such as bicycles, craft supplies, mattresses, and children's clothes, which were enthusiastically taken by other members. Flathead Freecycle currently has about 150 members, while the worldwide network has more than 30,000 members organized into 253 groups.

Kalispell resident Mary Wallace was inspired to start Flathead Freecycle after learning of the global grassroots movement that began in Tucson, AZ in May 2003. To join the local group, visit www.freecycle.org or send a blank email to FreecycleFlathead-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. For more information, contact Mary Wallace at 257-8316.



Need Some Good Karma Points?

Here at the Citizens For A Better Flathead office, (which, by the way, is sporting a bright new colorful look) we are always looking for new helping hands. If you would be interested in volunteering for the organization, we promise that you will have good karma for making a contribution to your local non-profit organization, and a big thank you at the end of the day.

If you have a particular talent or skill that you can contribute, say taking photos or creating flyers, we can put you to work in that area. Currently we have volunteers clipping news articles that are relevant to our program work of looking at growth policies, zoning, water quality, planning issues, etc.

We have a number of upcoming events where a number of volunteers could be very helpful. If you are interested in contributing some of your precious time, "it's for a good cause." Contact Melanie in the CFBF office at 756-8993.



CFBF volunteer Denny Gignoux lends a hand painting the office on a recent Saturday.



Check out our new Web site
www.flatheadcitizens.org

Asked in the Valley...

by Melanie Fortino

Alice Cabell



1. No. Well, things are getting railroaded in because of a lack of vision. The long term picture isn't being looked at. There seems to be a lack of thought for the future with current zoning decisions.

2. I think the most challenging thing is that people are so spread out in this valley. It seems there is a lack of community sometimes. People need a venue to discuss the issues. Living out in Kila, there is currently no forum to get together and discuss the issues out there. As far as county decisions, it seems there could be a representative from different areas in the community that could bring issues to the table.

Tim Noonan



1. I don't personally know the views of the county commissioners.

2. If I myself get more involved. I think the opportunities are there. If the county commissioners wanted to represent us, there could be a policy where public input weighed in on a decision, say 40 percent and the county commissioners decision weighed in at 60 percent. I don't know how it would work exactly, but that way they can't count out our input.

This June county voters will vote on whether to form a study commission to look at the effectiveness of our current form of county government. Under the Montana constitution, every 10 years voters across the state are given the opportunity to set up study commissions to explore ways to improve their county (or city) form of government. In 1994, 33 of Montana's 56 counties and 79 of its 126 cities voted to set up a study commission. That overwhelming response indicates that county and city residents care about local politics and want to know if they are getting the fair, qualified, and informed representation they expect from the form of government they have chosen. (See article on page 9 to learn more about the different choices Montana communities have in establishing the structure of their local government.) In looking at this issue, we recently asked a sampling of valley residents the following questions:

1. Do you feel adequately represented by county government and the decisions that are made regarding the rapid growth of our county? Can you give an example?

2. What issues do you feel need to be addressed to strengthen the leadership you expect our county government to provide?

Vinnie Rannazzisi



1. Absolutely not. With the mall issue there has been so much opposition to it in the papers, there should be a referendum vote to the public on whether or not they want the mall. It seems like developers and the county commissioners are trying to skirt the process. That is just one glaring example.

2. We need better mediums for educating people. A good example would be the state lands process where the DNRC is working with a public advisory committee. That way, there is a forum for public input. It seems with a contentious issue we should encourage community groups to provide input on any county issue.

Shandy Otto



1. No. I don't like to see giant strip malls happening around the valley. Home Depot and that whole stretch happened recently. Growth is inevitable, but it can be done in a way to benefit the community in a tasteful way. I don't think that view is adequately represented by the county commissioners.

2. Maybe generate more public awareness and interest. I wonder if more county commissioners would give more perspective on an issue. It seems with only three county commissioners there would be more of a chance of the decisions benefiting those three people.

Your membership dollars support our work to preserve the economic, cultural, and ecological health of the Flathead Valley. Call 756-8993 for more information.

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER FLATHEAD • 2004 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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- \$35 Family
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- _____

Please send to Citizens for a Better Flathead
P.O. Box 771, Kalispell, MT 59903