

# Acknowledgments

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## **Thank you to all participants**

A special thanks to all of the dedicated residents of Lake County who contributed to this growth policy in their free time by participating in public meetings, submitting comments, filling out surveys and questionnaires, answering our questions, and giving information and photos. Your time, efforts and ideas are very much appreciated and reflected in this plan. We would also like to thank local newspapers and radio stations who published articles and interviews on the growth policy rewrite and kept the public informed.

**Map 1 – Aerial Image of Lake County**



# A Glance From Afar

The preceding Map 1, being an aerial image of Lake County, is simply a stripped-away, or “naked” view of Lake County during a recent summer, when fields were green, and snow had retreated to only the highest mountains. As seen in this image, Lake County’s diversity is immediately apparent from afar. What do you see? What would an uninformed viewer see knowing nothing else of Lake County? The most prominent features include a big lake and many other water bodies, snow-capped mountains, green forests, irrigated farmland, dry grasslands, and immense open space, with many of these features divided up like a checkerboard.

These major features seen from afar provide a simple but insightful picture; those who know Lake County know that these features form the backbone of the county. They shape who we are and what the county has been and will become decades from now.

Flathead Lake is the main namesake of the county and represents a recreational destination and highly sought-after residential area and world class orchard and vineyard area that have contributed to the economic base and quality of life.

The other lakes also contribute to the county’s namesake and have unique recreational opportunities that boost the local economy and lifestyle. Because of their beauty and clean, clear water, all of the lakes and streams that support them have resulted in development pressure over the years.

The Mission and Swan Mountains add tremendous scenery to the county, as well as wildlife habitat, open space, and recreational opportunities. They are home to wilderness areas managed by the federal government and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes. Tribal management of the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area as wilderness results in a truly unique and perhaps the most truly “wild” area in the lower 48 states. The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex begins on the east side of the

Swan Range and Lake County forms the western gateway to this huge wilderness area.

The forests are in all forms of ownership and management regimes, from private land and large conservation easements to Tribal wilderness areas and United States Forest Service forests.

With irrigated farmland that is part of an extensive, 100-year-old irrigation project to vast, seemingly endless miles of open grasslands, the Mission Valley is home to quaint small towns and extensive agricultural resources. With small vegetable farms and fruit orchards ranging to large cattle ranches and potato farms, all kinds of agricultural producers call our valleys home. At times, this provides a place where not a single person or structure exists as far as the eyes can see, but towering mountains frame the horizon on each side of the.....well, big sky.



*The Mission Mountains Up High*

This is quintessential Montana. With a deep, layered history and cultures that take lifetimes and generations to begin to understand, Lake County carries complexities that make this document more than just a growth policy. Calling this just another county plan would fail to reveal the true place this is. This is for all of us – yes, this is the county government’s comprehensive plan for the future, but it is also a snapshot in time illustrated by words and figures – it is who we are today, and represents the vision of today’s leaders.

If “diversity” was a place itself instead of being a descriptive term, it would certainly be a place like Lake County. With this growth policy document, that diversity is to be given a fresh start,

*“Building a community of communities”*