

# Chapter 4

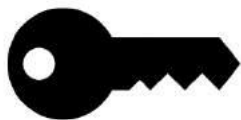
## Key Issues



## Introduction

The following are the five “Key Issues” that surfaced early in the rewrite process based on the planning process’s attempt to summarize and group the top issues facing Lake County for discussion purposes. Those key issues were boiled down during the process of developing this growth policy, and their groups provide some structure for the multitude of issues this growth policy is intending to address and that the implementation table in Chapter 9 is organized around:

### Key Issue



1. Quality of Life
2. Housing
3. Economic Development
4. Local Governance and Leadership
5. Land Use and Development

The following are summarized ‘issue statements’ for each of the five key issues, along with vision statements that summarize Lake County’s vision for what the county should strive to achieve in relation to each issue.

## Key Issue 1: Quality of Life

Issue statement: Lake County is a unique place with fabulous natural and cultural amenities that provide a base for our economy and enhance our quality of life. Lake County seeks to protect those amenities while providing for public health and safety for residents and visitors.



### Vision statement:

Communities and rural areas in Lake County are clean, safe and healthy for all residents and visitors and we protect our natural and cultural resources and amenities for the benefit of residents, visitors, and the local economy.

## Key Issue 2: Housing

Issue statement: There is a lack of housing for sale and for rent in the price ranges that are needed. Wages are not keeping up with the real estate housing and rental markets. As a general trend, young people are leaving Lake County and not returning, and many who start their careers here are not staying, which is partly attributable to housing costs. Housing types must also meet the needs of an aging population. Much of existing housing stock is in need of rehabilitation.

Additional housing for sale or rent must be accomplished without increasing the tax burden on other property owners.



### Vision statement:

There is sufficient housing for sale and for rent in all price ranges. Homes and residential lots are readily available and are affordable even for those Lake County citizens making modest or average incomes. Lack of affordable real estate is not a cause of people leaving Lake County, and is sufficient to attract new people and those who have left. Housing options are diverse, and retirees and senior citizens can view Lake County as an attractive living option.

## Key Issue 3: Economic Development

Issue statement: The key to economic development in Lake County is to capitalize on the local competitive advantages such as Flathead Lake, a healthy natural environment and our small town rural character, building on our strengths and addressing our weaknesses. Lake County must strive to provide attractive, unique and functional communities; support business retention and development; conserve





and utilize important natural and agricultural resources; and support and provide culturally-appropriate public access to recreational lands.

Vision statement: Communities and rural areas in Lake County protect our competitive advantages and maintain their distinct character while improvements are created that promote the long-term economic viability of the area.

## *Key Issue 4: Local Governance and Leadership*

Issue statement: In Montana, many governments and agencies provide public services. These entities must work together to provide efficient and effective service delivery. Lake County is more complex than most counties because approximately two-thirds of the county overlaps with the Flathead Indian Reservation. Issues related to the overlapping

jurisdictional areas are paramount to efficient and effective governance. The limited tax base that comes with a high volume of tax-exempt federal and tribal lands that still require some forms of public service is a major issue.



The Lake County Commissioners see the current situation with fee land going into tax exempt status at a critical stage that if not addressed by the county, the federal government, the state, and/or the tribes may result in a failed county government. A related issue is the different land use regulation of tribal and non-tribal properties, with many residents believing regulations are not equally applied. Exempt lands not under the jurisdiction of Lake County are still part of the essential fabric of the county and the county must therefore participate in land management decisions when possible.

It is also often in the best interest of the Lake County public for the county government to assist

municipalities and local districts with providing infrastructure and services, and to align county regulations and policies with those of the municipalities and other local units of government in circumstances that promote more efficient services and well-planned communities.

Vision statement: Lake County is a leader, providing a model of efficient and effective public services. The county government works cohesively with other local, state, tribal and federal governments. Lake County residents contribute to this 'community of communities' and participate in various levels of government. Communities are well planned and realize the visions of local participants, leaders, and units of government.

## *Key Issue 5: Land Use and Development*

Issue statement: It is important to understand the effects of land use policies and regulations over time, including impacts on natural and cultural amenities, the economy, county residents, and county staff and budgets. Therefore, it is important to have in place a realistic mechanism and timeframe for policy and regulation evaluations and updates.

Vision statement: Lake County's land use regulations are innovative, yet

simple and consistently applied throughout the county and across different jurisdictions. County approval processes are appropriate for their times and contexts and respond to the needs of the public while serving the purposes of promoting effective and high-quality community development, protecting natural and community resources, and avoiding land use conflicts. Land use policies balance individual rights guaranteed by the state Constitution with overall community welfare.

