

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Plan amends and updates the 1994 Plan and should provide vision for a 20 year period. Amendments and updates should occur on a regular basis and when necessary reflect changed conditions. Population in the County has increased dramatically and with it has come a broader range of land uses, values and changed conditions. The changed conditions and broadened perspectives on the future of Kootenai County have greatly influenced the basis for this Plan and will require the enactment of new zoning ordinances that are “in accordance with the policies set forth in the adopted comprehensive plan” (Idaho Code 67-6511). The goals and policies also necessitate updated administrative policies and enforcement procedures (adopted by ordinance) to meet the objectives of the County and to eliminate conflicts between this Plan and the laws that follow and support it.

The Plan and this Executive Summary comprise chapters, which comport with the requirements of Idaho Code 67-6508, that are arranged to lead the reader through the data that ultimately generates the goals and policies within the Plan. This Executive Summary is intended to pinpoint highlights of the Plan. It is not a substitute for careful consideration of the entire Plan and its accompanying maps, bibliography, and other important reference materials.

- **History and Special Sites.** An abbreviated history of Kootenai County, some cities within the County, and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe is provided in this chapter. Selected special sites, buildings, parks, and natural areas of cultural significance are discussed. This chapter emphasizes historic identification, preservation, and appreciation. Special care is encouraged to prevent destruction of any unique sites: this includes education for visitors and residents. The County has also appointed the Kootenai County Historical Preservation Commission to play a lead role in identifying and preserving historical sites. A complete history

of the County is available from this Commission.

- **Population.** The U.S. Census estimated population of Kootenai County in 2006 was 132,000. Growth from 2000 to 2006 was at the rate of approximately 3%. The 2008 Plan assumes growth over the next 10 years at approximately 2%+, based on various data sources documented in the Population chapter. Using a 2% growth rate, Kootenai County’s population will double in 35 years. The Plan accounts for all incoming population expectations. It also plans for substantial new growth in urban areas. Currently, the County’s land use is 70% urban and 30% rural. In order to preserve the community’s vision for the future, the County envisions a minimum of 70% of future growth to be located within cities.
- **Economic Development.** In 2005 the annual per capita income in Kootenai County was \$26,970. U.S. data for 2005 reflects a per capita income of \$34,471. Real average growth in per capita personal income from 2000–2005 in Kootenai County was 0.7%; the U.S. number was 0.9%. In 2006 the inflation adjusted median household income in Kootenai County was \$40,346; the U.S. number was \$48,451. Educational attainment at the high school level in Kootenai County was equivalent to the U.S. number, but is 3%–4% lower than the national average at the bachelor and post-baccalaureate degree levels. This is a significant component in current and future housing affordability. Kootenai County’s poverty rates are generally in line with those for the U.S. as of 2006. Median housing costs in Kootenai County increased from \$120,000 in 1999 to \$226,000 in 2006, lessening the affordability of housing over this period. The Plan encourages further exploration of affordable housing options, diverse types of new businesses, continuing education for both professional and technical jobs, and better choices for employment and housing. The Plan envisions coordinated efforts to attract employers, build facilities, and create higher-paying employment

opportunities .The Plan also acknowledges that tourism and our natural resources provide additional opportunities for economic development.

- **Housing.** The Plan assumes housing to be a critical component of both the community and the economy. In 2007 the median home price was \$204,000. In the coming years the market needs to accommodate more seniors. Affordable housing, appropriate housing for seniors, and rental options are identified as the three most common housing concerns. The Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight reported in 2005 that Idaho’s per capita personal income growth was 3.88%, while home prices appreciated over 18%. Policies in the Housing chapter include recognition that diverse and adequate housing for residents is a priority. This need should be coordinated with surrounding cities and developers. Land use regulations should facilitate special needs, promote a variety of housing types and densities, and consider preservation of historical structures. Zoning ordinances should promote these goals while preserving the rural quality of life for County residents not living in an urban area.
- **Education.** Currently, there are six public school districts and five public institutions of higher learning serving Kootenai County. The Plan recognizes the critical nature of adequate educational facilities to increase the quality of life and economic viability in the County. It encourages participation in a centrally located professional/technical education campus and calls for better school facility planning for future growth. It promotes coordination between developments and districts in order to address the need for, and to mitigate the costs of, new public schools.
- **Public Services and Utilities.** Kootenai County does not provide many of the public services or utilities in the County. Road maintenance, garbage collection, sewers, electricity, gas, and water are provided by special service agencies or districts over

which the County has no jurisdiction. The County does operate the jail, Sheriff’s Department, Solid Waste Department, Parks and Waterways, and the local airport. The Plan recognizes that the various regulating entities should reduce duplication and structure development applications to minimize excessive fees and conflicting requirements. Public services should be planned and expanded in anticipated growth areas. Impact fees should be adopted in accordance with statutory requirements as necessary. Recycling should be more available. Future sites for public facilities should be identified and the land obtained to ensure orderly and safe growth.

- **Transportation.** Roads in Kootenai County are operated and maintained by four highway districts and the Idaho Transportation Department. These are independent agencies with different jurisdictions. In 1997 the Kootenai Transportation Plan was created with the highway districts and surrounding cities to ascertain and plan for the traffic needs of the County through 2017. A new transportation plan was adopted by KMPO in 2008. A list of projects scheduled for construction through 2030 has also been created and considered in this Plan. Traffic, road repair, landscaping, and emergency access issues must be addressed around the County, especially when considering large developments. The Plan encourages more pedestrian-friendly walkways and bicycle trails. Continued collaboration with the highway districts and the State of Idaho is an important goal so that development is coordinated with the existing transportation system and planned improvements. Development projects will continue to be required to identify acceptable maximum traffic thresholds and mitigate excessive traffic impacts. This Chapter also identifies current and future concerns regarding the County’s airport and offers ideas about a continuing focus on public and other transportation options.

- **Parks and Recreation.** The recreational opportunities in Kootenai County have been identified by residents as very important. The Plan outlines the cooperative efforts of the County with other entities to maintain, improve, and expand the Centennial Trail, public boat docks, parks, bicycle paths, and walking trails. Long-range planning for acquisition of recreational facilities becomes even more critical as the County’s population increases. Parks and other quality recreation facilities are considered key elements of Kootenai County’s future growth and development.
- **Natural Resources.** This chapter outlines and documents the vast array of lands, topography, soils, minerals, lakes, rivers, wetlands, wildlife, and vegetation that exist in Kootenai County. The emphasis of this chapter is to preserve, protect, and enhance the County’s natural resources. The goals and policies recommend actions to promote and protect air quality, ground and surface water, sewage disposal, aquifer protection, erosion control, and the acquisition/preservation of open space. To enhance this effort, The Plan also encourages measures to maintain a close working relationship with all local, state, and federal regulating agencies and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe. The chapter also emphasizes additional development regulations to prevent urban sprawl, protect the lakes/rivers, and promote the continued use of land for resource industries. Goals and policies advocate future urban densities are designated to urban centers. Commercial and residential development must address environmental impacts. The chapter incorporates the public’s desire to preserve access to existing recreation sites in the County and to identify new ones.
- **Hazardous Areas.** Included in this chapter is the increasing awareness that development should not occur, or be strictly limited, in flood zones, watersheds, wetlands, areas of excessive erosion, or where slopes exceed 30%. The chapter outlines the science of heavy metal contamination in the Coeur d’Alene River Valley and the various controls and governmental oversight at each affected site. The goals and policies discourage new development in wildlife interface regions and encourage rigorous regulation of development in all identified hazardous areas.
- **Community Design.** This chapter provides a regional design framework that concludes that the natural environment and how humans interact with it are of primary concern to the public. It also recognizes that continued economic vitality and our “sense of community” are equally important. The County is analyzed in two ways: (1) at the countywide macro level, and (2) at the sub-area level. At the County level, the chapter explains that some land is unsuitable for development, some other development may require significant mitigation techniques, and “affordable housing” must mean more than the actual purchase price. At the sub-area level, the Rathdrum Prairie, North Kootenai and Selkirk sub-areas are the three areas best suited for future development. In some cases current development patterns have exacerbated traffic problems and do not achieve the community’s vision. A “Rural Dispersed Villages” concept for certain areas identified in the plan sharply delineates rural from urban uses. Population growth remains directed toward established urban centers in most regions of the County. Discussions about the future of individual sub-areas and communities are further explored in this chapter and then conceptually tied together in the Land Use chapter.
- **Land Use.** This chapter establishes the direction and policies of future land use throughout the County. The Plan creates land use designations that reflect the priorities incorporated from public visioning and the topography of the land itself. They are:
 1. Scenic. Large tracts of land set aside for public or private use. The focus of the designation is on environmental protection.

2. Resource/Recreation. Lands used to promote commercially viable or resource cultivation and/or to protect wetlands or other sensitive areas.
 3. Country. Rural lands protect open space, the “rural lifestyle” and promote subdivisions that allow single family residential and non-residential uses. Cluster subdivisions are allowed with adequate design methods and environmental protections. Economic activities are also encouraged that do not require a full range of services.
 4. Suburban. Parcels that promote the existing residential patterns.
 5. Shoreline. Parcels within 500 feet of bodies of water. The purpose of this designation is to protect the water, prevent erosion, and maintain the natural environment, including views of the shoreline.
 6. Village. A self-contained community. With the exception of one predetermined location, this designation will require a Comprehensive Plan amendment at the time of application. The Village regulatory procedures will be rigorous, and citizen input will be mandatory. Services are provided by and funded by the proposed community.
 7. Transitional. Land designated for future annexation into an incorporated area. This land will remain undeveloped until adequate roads and services are in place. The Transitional designation gives the surrounding cities the ability to properly plan for growth in conformance with Area of City Impact (ACI) agreements with the County.
 8. Border. The land in this designation is adjacent to municipalities. Urban growth is encouraged, but only after it has been annexed into the adjacent city.
- **Property Rights.** Property rights in Idaho follow those outlined and protected by the 5th Amendment to the United States Constitution, and Article 1 of the Idaho Constitution. They have been given great weight and consideration in the Plan both to explain the legal context and to address public concern about the topic. However, the Plan also explains that almost all public safety, welfare, and police power regulations (i.e., zoning and land use ordinances) do not constitute a taking or a violation of private property rights, for which compensation is required. Regulation of land use for purposes accepted pursuant to Idaho law is considered appropriate and necessary for orderly growth and the safety of the general public. The Idaho Supreme Court and the Idaho Attorney General have set forth a number of clear tests to determine if a taking requires compensation or is prohibited. Kootenai County is required to consider the Attorney General’s opinion in making land use decisions. Landowners may challenge the County’s determinations. Further, Idaho prohibits the taking of private property for any private use altogether.
 - **Plan Implementation.** This chapter identifies the actions necessary to ensure that the objectives of the Plan are carried out in an efficient and fair manner. Some of the implementation strategies include new zoning/development regulations; amended Area of City Impact agreements; a more efficient development review process that includes, but is not limited to, analysis of all potential impacts; continued coordination with local, state, and federal agencies; and education programs to deliver better public services. Individual County departments and entities must identify funding requirements necessary for the execution of each identified task of this Plan. Regular review and consideration of this Plan is also needed to keep the facts updated and the intent correct. A work program table with target dates is appended to the Implementation chapter which provides the public, county employees and county officials with a clear pattern of what must be done and by whom, to implement the Plan.
 - **Capital Improvements and Impact Fees.** In 2007 the Idaho legislature passed an
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amendment to Idaho Codes 67-8201 through 8216, which allows the County to enter into intergovernmental agreements with additional local jurisdictions (i.e., fire districts, highway districts, and water/sewer districts) to facilitate the development and implementation of capital improvement plans and impact fee ordinances. Thus, a Capital Improvements chapter is now included in the Plan pursuant to the Local Land Use Planning Act and the Development Impact Fee Act. When adopted pursuant to the substantive and procedural rules outlined in the statutes, impact fees can be used for jail expansion, land for upland parks and road expansion, fire equipment, and vehicles for fire, EMS, and highway districts. The goal is for new development to “pay its own way.” The impact fees are proportional to the impacts attributed to new growth and will be administered by the County. The districts utilizing these funds are encouraged to coordinate long range planning with the County and to adhere to the intent of this Plan.