

# DARBY GROWTH POLICY

Adopted August 23, 2022

This document is a direction for the growth of the Town of Darby and surrounding properties within its jurisdiction of planning. It is not to be interpreted as a legally governing document for procedures or plans for the municipality of Darby, Montana.

## Table of Contents

PART ONE.....	2
Background.....	2
Introduction.....	2
History.....	3
Land Use.....	3
Planning Area.....	4
Housing.....	5
Public Services And Facilities.....	6
Natural Resources.....	9
PART TWO.....	11
Goals, Objectives & Implementations.....	11
Community Facilities and Utilities.....	13
Commercial and Industrial.....	14
Aesthetics and Environment.....	14
Residential.....	15
Parks and Recreation.....	16
Natural Resources.....	17
Transportation.....	17
PART THREE.....	18
Assessment Of Needs.....	18
Opportunities and Constraints.....	20
PART FOUR.....	21
The Planning Process.....	21
Land Use Plan Map.....	21
Land Use Classifications.....	22
PART FIVE.....	24
Implementation Measures.....	24
Implementation Strategy.....	27

# **PART ONE**

## ***Background***

In 1999 the Montana Legislature passed Senate Bill 97 authorizing Local Governments to adopt a Growth Policy master plan, now referred to as a “growth policy”, and established a list of minimum requirements to be included in the plan. The list of requirements is included in Section 76-1-601 MCA and became law October 1, 1999. Some changes were subsequently made to the law by the 2001, 2003, 2007 and 2009 legislative bodies. The Darby Growth Policy is structured according to this Legislation providing the community with a technically sound method for dealing with future change, and giving local leaders a reference document establishing policies which will help guide them to the Town’s future vision. Realizing the importance of providing workable regulations and maintaining flexibility in the planning process, the law also requires that an implementation strategy be developed which includes a timetable for reviewing the plan at least once every 5 years and revising it if necessary.

## ***Introduction***

The planning process is a systematic approach to problem solving at the local and regional level, and provides an opportunity to identify and promote policies that will allow the community to achieve the goals and objectives of a vision for the future. The process follows a logical path that begins with a review of existing conditions, and continues by attempting to forecast anticipated changes and the need for services and facilities. Understanding changes and their impacts allows the Town to establish a framework that will result in development that is in the best interest of its citizens. The framework provided in the Growth Policy provides the necessary principles, criteria and policies to make logical, carefully considered decisions on matters that have a broad and lasting effect on the community.

The Darby Growth Policy is intended to serve as a planning guide for local officials and citizens throughout the planning period from its adoption in 2022 up to the year 2028. The document will be reviewed and updated at least every 5 years during the planning period.

The Darby Growth Policy includes an analysis of existing conditions, trends and resources in Part 1. Population and economic conditions as well as other demographic indicators are summarized in the front section of the document. Population projections and trends in land use, housing, economic conditions, local services and natural resources are discussed.

The public input process was initiated in the development stage of the Growth Policy in order to provide ample opportunity for all voices to be heard prior to the development of goals, objectives and policies that would provide guidance in the shaping of the Land Use Plan. The Town Council solicited public opinion on a variety of issues through distribution of a community needs survey of the project, and additional input was obtained throughout the process at civic meetings, and through information made available by the Resource Assessment Team and Town Council. Part 2 of the report contains a listing of goals and objectives adopted for use in implementing the Growth Policy. Part 3 includes a discussion of anticipated needs and impacts on community services and Part 4 shows the Land Use Plan. Part 5 contains the Implementation Measures.

## ***History***

(Provided by the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce)

The history of Darby dates back to 1888 when the town was platted. The town was incorporated in 1917. This led to other industries of agriculture, and lumber as well as mining for minerals other than gold. Darby is known for colorful inhabitants, and deeply rooted family values.

## ***Land Use***

### **Residential Development**

In general, the dwellings in Darby are older homes, but relatively well maintained. In a couple of sections of town, the housing is very old and in need of repair or replacement. The majority of housing is single family with multi-family occurring throughout town. Single family mobile homes occur in the single family and multi-family zoned areas. Subdivision activity has been minimal over the last 10 years within the town limits. New residential in-fill development could occur on open and vacant land inside the platted area using the existing street system provided that ground water, flood plain and land use compatibility issues are addressed. It is expected that subdivision activity will be increasing in the coming years. A newly annexed property on Darby's south end is slated for a fourteen (14) home development and thirty-two (32) space RV Park. There are also plans for a subdivision on Darby's northwest corner that covers approximately 30 acres. This subdivision is projected to include both single family and multi-family residences.

### **Commercial Development Pattern**

The Darby Business District is concentrated along Highway 93. The commercial activity occupies lots primarily in the half block area adjacent to the highway and is mixed with residential. There has been some recent commercial development along Highway 93 adjacent to the North and South town limits.

The activities include a variety of commercial operations including several bars, restaurants, a grocery store, banks, motels, automotive service and several other small business establishments. There are also several office buildings. The Business District has remained relatively unchanged in terms of distribution throughout the history of Darby, but improvements and changes have taken place over the last 20 years that have resulted in different commercial uses within the traditional retail commercial area. Although several businesses have been renovated, there has been some new construction as well. Darby Physical Therapy, Big Cat Café' and Bitterroot Health are either newly constructed or under construction at the time of this documents review.

### **Industrial Use**

There are no current intensive industrial establishments located in Darby.

### **Public or Government Use**

This land use category includes Government Buildings and Facilities, Schools, Churches, Library, Community Club House and Fraternal or similar organizations. Local Government, the

Community Clubhouse and Library facilities in Darby are located primarily in the center of town. Federal Government and the Schools are located in the northern portion of Town. Churches are located throughout Town.

Developed parkland is dispersed throughout the town. Parks in the Town of Darby are Tin Cup Park, South Park, Waincrest Park, Main Street Park, River Park, Skateboard Park, Rich Cromwell Rodeo Grounds along with tennis courts and ball fields that are located near the school. The most recent park is a Veterans Memorial Park located adjacent to Highway 93 on the South edge of Darby.

The Town is currently developing a non-motorized trail system around and within the town, which accesses the school, business district, parks and ball fields.

Of the total area of approximately 480 acres in Darby approximately 80% has been developed. An examination of the existing land use map illustrates that small vacant parcels are scattered throughout the developed area of the Town. However, it is evident that the majority of the vacant corporate land lies near the perimeter of Darby.

It is apparent that a significant part of any expected growth in Darby can be accommodated on presently vacant land within the existing Town Limits. Although it is expected that some subdivision activity will continue in the rural area adjacent to the Town Limits, existing conditions provide an opportunity for growth inside or near the existing platted area. The factors that are the primary determinants of how growth will be accommodated and distributed within the Town are: 1) The availability of community sewer and water service; 2) Primary access from arterial streets; 3) Zoning & Growth Policies.

## **Public Services and Facilities**

### ***Schools***

Enrollment projections for the Darby School show a continued decrease in students for the last seven years. In 2003, Darby School had 527 students; the student population in 2009 was 373 students and in 2017 it was 328. The school downsized in 2011 from a Class B to C category school. The current student population is 342 in 2022.

### ***Planning Area***

#### **Jurisdiction**

The jurisdictional planning area includes the area within the Town Boundary and extending approximately 1 mile on each side with irregular projections.

#### **Vicinity Map**

A vicinity map showing the setting of Darby and its relationship to surrounding topography as well as the Planning Area boundary and the platted street system to include block layout, are displayed on an ortho photo map displayed at city hall.

## **Population Economics**

The existing population of Darby is a key indicator of the type and extent of services that are needed to serve the community today, and when compared to recent and past trends, land development demands of the future can be more accurately anticipated. An awareness of recent population trends provides a valuable guide for planning, budgeting, and financing decisions. Population forecasts are used to determine future needs for infrastructure improvements, land development, housing and community facilities. As changes in population occur, the impact of these changes must be evaluated and provisions made to accommodate the needs of the community.

The Town of Darby has maintained a population level near 750 persons over the past two decades. The current 2020 census indicates a population of 783.

The reliance on agriculture, to include the timber industry, has declined as the dependence on retail trade and service occupations has increased. The trends show a decrease in agricultural employment and resource-based employment since 1980.

Typical of rural agricultural areas, per capita income for Ravalli County is less than the statewide average. For the period from 1996 through 2000, per capita income was consistently about \$3,000 higher for the State than for Ravalli County. The County and Darby have increased in per capita income by 29.8% between 2000 and 2019. This shows an increase from \$11,658 to \$16,606, and has somewhat closed the gap on the State average in recent years.

## ***Housing***

### **General**

Housing data is invaluable in considering programs for present and future community improvements. The information is important not only because it allows us to form a detailed picture of the physical aspects of the existing residential community, but because it permits us to arrive at conclusions regarding housing needs, trends, and infrastructure demands for the future. Although it is true that personal living environments change periodically in response to dynamic social and economic forces, it is a fact that the basic need of man for protection from the environment remains constant. Therefore, the provision of housing facilities for increases or changes in population should be a daily concern for government officials and others working in the public sector. Changes in housing demand, which may occur with respect to housing type, cost and geographic distribution, will be analyzed on a periodic basis, so that housing programs and public utility services, which cater to existing and future demand, can be designed and effectively administered. Housing within the town is structured by the zoning in effect. Zoning may need to be updated in the future to better suit the growth of the town. Zoning for single family and multi-family units are currently in place.

## **Number of Housing Units**

Town of Darby will use past and present U.S. census and may use data provided by governmental or private informational recourses to help plan for community growth and stability.

## ***Public Services And Facilities***

### **Law Enforcement**

The Town of Darby Police Department is currently staffed by two Officers.

### **Fire Protection**

Local residents depend heavily on the resources of the Darby Volunteer Fire Department. The Darby Volunteer Fire Department is an independent entity funded by a voter approved tax levy. The district area mirrors the Darby School District. The Town of Darby contracts with the Department for fire protection for Town residents. Because of the constant danger to life and property posed by the threat of fire, it is imperative that the community maintain fire equipment in operable condition and that it enlist the services of reliable, capable individuals for times of fire emergencies. Town benefits from the fire department for the safety of the local population, both in terms of performance in time of immediate need for fire prevention and through safety education programs.

Since the Fire Department is a necessary part of all communities, whether they are experiencing population growth or decline, it is important that local officials and others directly involved in the planning process maintain communication with fire officials to understand current services provided. The Darby Fire department is located at 500 N Main St.

### **Health Care**

In 2016, Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital (now known as Bitterroot Health) opened an extension clinic that offers primary care for everyone from prenatal and infants to the elderly. This includes preventive care, health and wellness education, acute care, and chronic care management. In addition, the ambulance that services the south valley is housed at the garage behind the facility and the ambulance staff have quarters in the clinic.

Extended care and special care services are provided in neighboring facilities in Hamilton and Missoula.

Bitterroot Health, is in process of building a new health clinic with complimentary staffing for general healthcare. Additional services include a fully operational pharmacy. This new; facility will be erected just north of Alpine Realty, addressed on Main Street (Highway 93). This property is newly annexed into the Town of Darby.

Extended care, specialty care, and major medical services are located in Hamilton at Marcus Daly Hospital and in Missoula at Providence & Community Hospitals. These facilities have a 24-hour



emergency room, inpatient and outpatient care and surgery and obstetrics departments. Providence Hospital also provides a center for cancer treatment.

These services are adequate to address most long-term care needs of Darby, but the primary response for emergencies comes from Bitterroot Health located in Hamilton.

## **Government Administration**

The Town Hall is located at 101 E Tanner Avenue and is the primary space for conducting town business and regular meetings of Darby elected officials.

The Town hall consists of a conference room which doubles as the Darby City Courtroom, the main Town Hall Office where the Mayor, Clerk/Treasurer and Assistant Clerk work and is the location of the Darby Marshal's Office.

Town records are stored in this building as well. The conference room will accommodate up to 35 people. There are public restroom facilities and parking is available in front and across the street from the building. The building is in good condition and there are no plans for expansion at this time.

The Public Works Department office is at 500 East Miles the Public Works Director and Public Works Assistant handle the water/sewer systems, streets, parks, cemetery, rodeo grounds and general Town maintenance.

## **Library**

The Darby Community Public Library opened in 2004 through the formation of a library district replacing the Darby Town Library. The library is located at 101 ½ South Marshall Street. This entity was established through an interlocal agreement between city and county, and covers the same geographical area as the Darby School District. The library is governed by a Board of Trustees and run by a Library Director who oversees the daily operation and supervises part-time staff and volunteers. The library provides programs, library materials for borrowing, free computers with internet access, and free Wi-Fi to library users as well as printing and faxing access. The library also provides for several children's It receives steady use and support from the community.

## **Parks & Recreation**

Parks are one of the most noticeable attributes of a healthy community. They are a reflection of the community's pride and hospitality. Attractive parklands display the natural environment and offer spiritual and physical refreshment to its users. The visual impact of the parks breaks the monotony of the streets and buildings and increases property value. They provide the opportunity for increased interaction between people and offer an especially important opportunity for the youth of the community. Parks allow young people to participate in constructive activities. Parks may be considered as a city's investment in each of its citizens. Darby's park facilities have been developed to serve the needs of the local population for outdoor sporting activities and to provide play areas for the young children of the community. Because of the rural nature of the Town and proximity to abundant open space there are many outdoor recreation opportunities. Parkland is widely dispersed in all areas of the Town boundary. The sites include four School softball/baseball fields, a school tennis court, four picnic areas, a skateboard park, and a rodeo grounds. Needed

park improvements including landscaping, sod and irrigation systems have been identified. The town is also in the process of constructing a non-motorized trail system around and throughout the town.

## **Solid Waste Collection and Disposal**

Bitterroot Disposal, a private enterprise, provides for the Town of Darby solid waste collection. Each commercial and residential user is responsible for their own solid waste.

## **Roads and Streets**

The street system in Darby is on the Highway 93 that traverses north to south through Town and serves as Main Street. Highway 93 is administered by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The paved roadway is in good condition and is maintained on a regular basis.

The Town of Darby is typified by paved streets and normal right-of ways. The street grades follow the terrain and includes steep grades accessing the elevated bench south west of town. Darby's streets are a mix of paved and hard packed gravel. This is a total of approximately 7 miles of paved streets and approximately 2.5 miles of gravel alleys. Due to harsh winter weather, Darby experiences frost upheavals resulting in continuous road maintenance. Repairs consist of patching potholes during the summer and fall. The sidewalks & curbs along Highway 93 are in good condition. Adding additional sidewalks on side streets is recommended.

## **Water System**

The Darby water system provides domestic water for the community as well as fire protection. The oldest portions of the system were constructed in the early 1960's. The water system consists of several components, including 3 operating groundwater wells, a pre-stressed concrete 900,000-gallon storage reservoir, distribution mains, and services. Many parts of the system are also showing the effects of age and inadequate long-range planning. Problem areas were addressed in the Water System Analysis prepared in the late 1980's following an investigation of the existing water system. The Town re-constructed a significant portion of the water system in 2009/2010. Repairs and upgrades are completed as needed.

The Darby municipal water supply treatment facility began operation in April 2010. The water is tested regularly and has proven to be a reliable source of quality groundwater. The water is classified as moderately hard. Tests for synthetic organic chemicals (SOC), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrate concentrations have consistently tested below allowable limits. A good portion of Darby's water system consists of pre-WWII steel pipe. This pipe is starting to fail with leakage in multiple locations. As with the sewer system, it will be necessary to turn attention to repair and/or replacement of portions of the water system.

## **Sewer System**

An analysis of the Town of Darby wastewater needs was completed in the late 1950's to identify existing deficiencies and anticipated future needs. The study results showed that the community is

facing the problem of funding major improvements to both the collection system and treatment facility in the relatively near future.

The original system was constructed in 1963. Several extensions have been made to the collection system, but the treatment system has not undergone any substantial improvement since the early 1970's. Darby's wastewater system consists of approximately eight miles lineal feet of gravity sewer laterals, mains, and interceptors which discharge to three cell treatment lagoons.

## **Treatment System**

The existing wastewater treatment system was also constructed in between 1960 and 1975. The DEQ has conducted routine inspections of the Darby facility throughout the years and the community has responded to problems noted during those inspections. According to the 1994-1995 Master Plan, Darby's treatment system was designed to handle a population of approximately 1500. The 2013 Census population was 733.

In 2020-2021 the Darby Town Council and Mayor's Office worked diligently to secure funding through various grants as well as "cash on hand" to 100% fund a complete overhaul of the town sewer treatment system. According to Triple Tree Engineering, this project is projected to be completed in October of 2023.

## ***Natural Resources***

### **General**

The Town of Darby lies in a mountain valley between the Bitterroot and Sapphire Mountains. The climate of the area is semi-arid and is characterized by large variations in precipitation between the valley and mountain elevations.

The geology and climate of the area are favorable for a healthy rural lifestyle that has the potential to attract many people to the area. The study area is not subjected to impacts from natural hazards such as extended periods of flooding or frequent high wind velocities, but earth quake potential is a concern for construction of public buildings and facilities.

Limitations to development in Darby and the surrounding vicinity are centered on impacts due to the influence of soils, surface water and groundwater. Local populations of fish and wildlife may also be affected by changes in use and management of existing agricultural lands.

### **Soils**

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a report for the Ravalli County Soil Survey in 1989 that covers the Darby area. "The soil survey is an inventory and evaluation of the soils in the survey area and can be used to adjust land uses to the limitations and potentials of natural resources and the environment. Also, it can help avoid soil-related failures in land uses." The information is useful in planning for management of soils for crops, pasture and rangeland as well as sites for buildings, sanitary facilities, recreation and wildlife habitat. The report contains tables showing a list of soils classifications and a corresponding series of tables that give information about the suitability of the soil for specific uses including, pastureland,

irrigated and non-irrigated cropland, crop yields, land capability and woodlands. Soils are also rated for their potential to support building foundations, sanitary facilities, as a source of construction materials such as gravel for road building, and water feature embankments. This soils map is available thru U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ravalli County Soil Survey.

### **Surface Water**

The Darby planning area is part of the Tin Cup and Bunkhouse watersheds that encompasses a four-square mile area. The streams from the mountain zones converge on the Bitterroot River.

### **Groundwater**

As previously mentioned, tests have shown that the groundwater in the area is of high quality. The Ravalli County Sanitarian's office does not have any record of water quality problems associated with septic systems. According to local sources and limitations indicated in well records, the groundwater level is relatively high in certain parts of town and may be a concern for development of structures with deep foundations or basements. The Darby planning area has numerous wells drilled for domestic and stock water use.

## **PART TWO**

### ***Goals, Objectives & Implementations***

#### **Objective Statement**

A very important element in this planning study has been the preparation of a goals and objectives statement. It identifies existing areas of concern, anticipated future concerns, and the desired condition or "state of the Town" in twenty years. Obviously, a goals and objectives statement cannot be prepared by anyone other than the residents of Darby.

As shown in the population projections in Part One, the planning period for the Growth Policy extends to the year 2027. The goals included here are intended to provide broad, general guidelines within the planning period and the objectives are mid-term more specific measures to be taken within the context of the long-term goals. The implementation goals listed are steps to be taken to reach objectives within the current short term or five-year period.

The people of Darby identified these issues during the seven listening sessions, which were designed to determine the challenges, strengths and future visions for their community.

#### **Original Issues Discovered**

##### **Housing**

- First Time Home Buyers
- Housing Rehab Program
- Visible Improvements
- Enforcing Decay ordinance & Demolition
- Lack of Mid-Priced Housing
- Multi-Family Housing
- More owner based residential homes

##### **Jobs**

- Living wage jobs
- Sustainable industry
  - Natural resources management and education
  - Workforce training
- Improve small business environment
  - Training and education
  - Expand market for products
- Tourism/destination community
- Main Street
  - Consistent appearance, i.e. old west theme

- Lighting, signage, parking
- Remove eyesores-blight

## **Communication**

- Re-engagement between Forest Service and community
- Re-invigorate the Civic Club group
- New people/ideas/money mesh with the long-time locals
- Continue to engage the school programs with the community residents
- Improved communication among community organizations
- Web site improvements and marketability
- Capitalize on positive leadership (council, mayor, etc.)

## **Recreation**

- Biking/Walking Trail
- Multi-purpose Center
  - Youth (see main topic also)
  - Senior Citizens
  - Performing Arts
  - Pool
- Skate Park
- Sports
- River Front Park
- Year Round/All Season Activities

## **Youth**

- After School Activities
  - Mentoring/Tutoring Program
  - Lack of programs for 7-12
  - Lag time after school/before events
- Sports
  - Improved community support
  - More Choices
- Jobs (high school employment plus future jobs)
- Re-introduce a drug awareness program into the school curriculum.
- Police Department to become involved and participate in the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). This program is designed to foster a symbiotic relationship between law enforcement, teachers and students. At least one officer will attend NASRO training.
- School enrollment steady and increasing)

## **Misc. Community Issues**

- Clubhouse-balance between utilization, pricing, staffing and costs
- Volunteer Burnout
- Domestic Abuse
- Drug Use – meth labs, lack of treatment or rehabilitation options
- Public transportation

## **Community Facilities and Utilities**

### ***Goal:***

Provide for the social, cultural, governmental and service needs of community at least cost to the taxpayers.

### ***Objectives:***

1. Encourage the continued provision of social and cultural facilities within Darby.
2. Ensure the community facilities are strategically located and are of attractive and adequate design.
3. Encourage the planning of efficient community services (most services for the least cost).
4. Ensure the continued high quality of such community services as the library, parks, fire protection, and construct senior facilities.
5. Encourage the coordination of agencies and organizations providing utilities, services and facilities.
6. Encourage the timely upgrade and/or expansion of municipal facilities (water, sewer, streets, etc.) to continue to provide quality service and to accommodate growth as desired.
7. Develop a program to solve the long-time problem of adequate quantity and quality of the community's water supply. Encourage the installation of underground facilities.
8. Ensure service fees are sustainable.

### ***Implementation:***

1. Maintain current level of funding and support to library, emergency services and Town Parks.
2. Continue to develop program for improvement of town water and sewer services, following previous studies to set priority projects. Pursue all grants possible.
3. Codify all town ordinances and nullify all that are obsolete. Communicate ordinances to populace.
4. Designate a Town Council member to represent Darby at all Ravalli County Economic Development meetings, reporting back to council.

## ***Commercial and Industrial***

### ***Goal:***

Improve the business conditions in the Darby downtown area and to provide more job opportunities.

### ***Objectives:***

1. Create an attractive downtown appearance by providing green areas where possible, adequate parking, adequate sidewalks, tree plantings, and building maintenance.
2. Retain the present Darby central business district as the focus of the community's business and shopping activity.
3. Encourage use of vacant floor space through expansion of business opportunities.
4. Discourage strip commercial development along arterial highways.
5. Encourage commercial development characterized by proper location, adequate sites, sufficient off-street parking and attractive design.
6. Encourage the development of tourist related commercial facilities, which will improve the community's position for tourist trade.
7. Encourage the development of service-related commercial ventures to meet the needs of the community (pharmacy, medical services, etc.).
8. Encourage the establishment of properly located, light industry, which will assist in improving available job opportunities. Provide for the proper location of light industrial uses according to the demand on public facilities, relationship to public facilities, and compatibility with surrounding land uses, protecting desirable locations from other unrelated or incompatible uses.

### ***Implementation:***

1. Develop Asset Based Community Development program.
  - a. Create a "Community Vision 2030".
  - b. Create a database of community members and skills,
  - c. Include student input and efforts to build database.
2. Promote "Shop Local" campaign to encourage community support of existing businesses.
3. Apply for "Montana Certified Community" status.
4. Initiate a zero-interest loan program to assist town businesses to rehabilitate and beautify their storefront. Set loan maximums and revolving fund.
5. Acquire parking lot for off-street parking near Main Street.
6. Replace sidewalks and improve handicap access to Hwy 93.

## ***Aesthetics and Environment***

### ***Goal:***

Provide for an attractive environment within the developed portions of Darby and the protection of the natural environment within the Bitterroot Valley.

### ***Objectives:***



1. Establish a program for improvement and maintenance of entrances to the community.
2. Encourage the use of visual screening between residential, commercial, and areas set aside for light industry.
3. Provide for land use controls, which will prevent incompatible land use development in the future.
4. Encourage adoption of regulations, which control the use of signs along roadways and in commercial areas.
5. Recognize the need for continued code enforcement of blighted and mixed land use areas and the development of programs to reduce or eliminate the effects caused by their existence.
6. Encourage the maintenance of vacant lots, alleys, and roadways.
7. Encourage the protection of the natural environment within the Bitterroot Valley.
8. Encourage the identification of historical buildings, structures, and sites within the community.
9. Encourage the use of the County Weed Plan for control and elimination of weeds.
10. Encourage the establishment of tree and shrubbery guidelines for public safety.

***Implementation:***

1. Assist Chamber in developing a Visitors Center offering information on Darby area. Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center was established on South Main Street in 2016.
2. Develop a history of Darby and the Bitterroot Valley, including historic buildings. Use in marketing campaign to promote uniqueness of Darby.
3. Adopt an ordinance for maintenance of trees and shrubs within town, for safety issues.

***Residential***

***Goal:***

Preserve and improve the quality of the living environment within Darby.

***Objectives:***

1. Encourage the provision of an adequate supply of sound housing to meet the needs of both present and future populations.
2. Develop necessary measures to prevent the effects of deterioration and blight within existing residential areas by encouraging the removal or improvement of all sub-standard structures, and the maintenance of vacant lots, fence lines, utility easements and road right-of-way's.
3. Encourage the preparation and adoption of building and housing codes.
4. Protect residential areas from the encroachment of incompatible or unrelated uses.
5. Ensure proper location of housing and residential areas through consideration of soils capability, flood plains, topography, groundwater, and such other conditions, which may act as a detriment to proposed development.
6. Develop residential areas in locations, which relate to existing and proposed public facilities and services (water, sewer, streets, etc.).

7. Develop both low and medium density residential areas with a variety of housing types, excluding mobile homes parks.
8. Provide for safer, more dust-free residential areas through more adequate street and subdivision design.
9. Encourage development of new residential areas to fill in the voids in existing development and prevent further sprawl.
10. Encourage the building and maintenance of sidewalks in residential areas.

***Implementation:***

1. Update and enforce "Nuisance" ordinances.
2. Adopt and enforce a leash law and/or other pet ordinances within town limits.
3. Provide incentive to remove abandoned buildings (i.e. "credit" or other benefit such as tax deductible donation to the Fire Department, etc.).
4. Repair all existing street lights and identify areas for possible additions of lights.
5. Monitor private property encroachment onto public roadways and other public properties

***Parks and Recreation***

***Goal:***

Promote the development of recreational facilities, which will benefit both the residents of Darby and the local economy.

***Objectives:***

1. Encourage the continued provision of park facilities and land areas commensurate with the needs of the community.
2. Encourage the development of facilities which will promote the recreational economy of the Bitterroot Valley covering a wide range of activities.
3. Encourage development of recreational facilities which will not detract from the natural environment.
4. Encourage the development of year-round recreational Facilities
5. Encourage the preparation of a master plan and improvement program for the parks acquired through subdivision requirements.
6. Encourage the joint use of park and recreational activities with schools.
7. Encourage community involvement and volunteers to work with the Parks
8. And Recreation Committee to ensure parks are maintained and enhanced.

***Implementation:***

1. Develop multi-phase plan to improve facilities with consideration given to a walking trail and/or bike paths.
2. Improve fencing and barriers at town parks.
3. Incorporate National Forest sites into marketing materials/Campaign for Darby.

## ***Natural Resources***

### ***Goal:***

Provide for the utilization of natural resources while retaining the environmental quality and natural character of the community.

### ***Objectives:***

1. Provide protection and proper management of natural resources.
2. Encourage measures which will minimize air and water pollution.
3. Ensure the protection and preservation of the natural character of the Bitterroot Valley.

## ***Transportation***

### ***Goal:***

Increase and improve the availability, quality and efficiency of transportation facilities in Darby.

### ***Objectives:***

1. Encourage the design of a balanced street system to serve the existing and projected land use pattern.
2. Develop adequate street design and construction standards according to the function the street serves such as arterial, collector, or residential access,
3. Encourage the design of residential street systems, which consider topography, safety, and well-being of present and future residents.
4. Encourage the paving of streets within Darby where traffic volume and public opinion warrant need.
5. Encourage the installation of curb and gutter and other drainage facilities where warranted.
6. Promote the development of adequate truck, railroad, and passenger services to the Darby area.
7. Provide for, maintain and enhance adequate, safe and easily accessible sidewalks and pedestrian pathways.

### ***Implementation:***

1. Pave or otherwise improve primary streets:
2. Improve drainage on primary streets.

## **PART THREE**

### ***Assessment Of Needs***

#### **General**

The analysis of data collected during the inventory phase and Resource Team Assessment Report highlighted recent trends and community attitudes, and provide insight into development issues and problems that should be addressed in the plan. To some extent, these issues are identified in the goals and objectives included in this report, but more specific needs are discussed in the following sections.

#### **Housing**

Census data for population and housing in Darby indicates that there has been a slight decrease from 2000 to 2010. This trend has reversed and it is expected that Darby's population will increase through 2027. Given the amount of vacant land within the town limits, housing needs for the population forecast during the planning period could conceivably be accommodated within the vacant platted area in the Town. It is more likely, however that some of the growth will occur on the fringe outside of the existing town boundary. Renovation of vacant housing units may account for a small portion of the housing needed during the next 10 years, but most new residential activity is forecast to be in-fill on platted and subdivided land within the Town. Any unexpected growth in response to unforeseen economic factors may result in new residential subdivisions outside of the existing town limits and may require an update to the plan recommendations.

Subdivision proposals must be closely scrutinized for impacts on existing uses and public services that would be required. It is likely that any new development proposed through the subdivision process will be on land outside the existing city limits in the area shown as unclassified on the Land Use Plan Map. Although it is not the intent of the plan to prohibit development in this area, it is preferable that the existing land use be continued, particularly where a viable agricultural operation will be negatively affected by a change in use.

The demand for single and multifamily housing has escalated since 2020 in Ravalli County. The demand for housing in Darby has followed suit. The inventory for new occupants is almost non-existent. As pointed out in Part One, there are proposed new housing developments at the south town limits as well as northwest corner.

#### **Business**

The commercial activities in Darby are historically very static because of the influence of Hamilton and Missoula retail outlets on the local buyers. Consequently, the need for additional commercial services and land in the planning area is dictated in part by the ability of new enterprises to compete with the established neighboring business community. The local population has nevertheless expressed a desire to expand the local business environment and maintain a solid core of local retail services in the existing down town district. It is also desirable to provide for additional commercial activity along Highway 93.

The emphasis should be placed on the preservation and enhancement of the existing business district in Darby as well as improvement and expansion of the highway commercial district.

## **Industry**

The Resource Assessment Report indicates that the planned community for Darby should include space for light industrial development as well as improvement of retail trade opportunities. Because the agricultural, mining and forestry industries no longer represent the largest share of county income, there is no need to provide adequate land for a continuation of local services for these enterprises. Preference should be given to preserving the existing land along the railroad corridor. Light industrial development should be concentrated in the area along the railroad and possibly on north Highway 93 beyond the existing town limits where light industrial/commercial activity is already established. The type of industrial activity allowed should be addressed in land use regulations adopted in accordance with the guidance established in the Growth Policy.

Additionally, because the opportunity to locate new "clean" light industrial or industrial/commercial uses may occur in the future, provisions should be made to allow for this type of use in areas conducive to a clean, quiet and aesthetically pleasing environment.

## **Public Services**

The streets and sewer and water systems are affected by expansion occurring within the service area of each system, and the impacts of development proposals on these systems must be considered before proposed development plans are approved. The Town is in the process of addressing the needs relating to sewer and water for the population anticipated during the planning period. The water system supply has recently been upgraded by the installation of new wells and meters along with a 900,000-gallon storage tank. As noted in Part One, the Treatment System is being rebuilt. The sewer system itself will still require repair, replacement and upgrading.

The street system in Darby, as in all communities in Montana, is in constant need of maintenance. Maintenance is completed on an as-needed basis. Most streets in Darby are paved.

## **Community Facilities**

Community services providing fire protection, law enforcement, health care, public administration and schools should be considered in the development of the land use plan since obvious shortages or inadequacies in existing facilities could result in the need for additional public land for future expansion. Typically, we must depend on detailed facility plans developed by the affected public entity (through study committees) to identify facility needs. Although there may be a shortage of some resources required to provide these services in Darby, there were no urgent needs identified within the limited scope of the growth plan. School facility planning should include a master plan to identify potential land to accommodate the facility, and methods of funding it should also be included in the study.

Capital improvements for the Town's public buildings are scheduled and budgeted within a priority system addressing all capital needs for the Town. A detailed Capital Improvements Program (CIP) includes priorities for funding and improving these facilities.

## ***Opportunities and Constraints***

### **Groundwater**

The Darby planning area has some areas with shallow depths to groundwater. Generally, the groundwater depth presents a constraint to urban use of the land because of increased costs associated with extending or maintaining public utility systems, and because of the difficulty in constructing stable foundations to support new structures. Data indicates that these shallow groundwater conditions occur in Darby in areas near streams, primarily from spring runoff. Seasonal high groundwater conditions near irrigation ditches severely limits development down gradient from the ditch. Since groundwater levels vary significantly throughout the town, site-specific conditions should be identified prior to authorization of new development proposals.

The effect of high groundwater on sewer and water main extensions does not necessarily present a barrier to future development; however, it is beneficial to be aware of the subsurface conditions because construction in groundwater drives up the cost of installation and maintenance. The need for additional planning for construction of foundation systems is evident for areas known to be subject to high groundwater conditions.

### **Floodplains**

Existing Floodplain - There are no officially designated flood plain studies or designations within the town.

## **PART FOUR**

### ***The Planning Process***

The plan includes a framework for the Planning Board and Town Council to make decisions on land use proposals that reflect and coordinate the needs related to public facilities and infrastructure, transportation, housing, land capability and economic development. The Darby area is experiencing changes in demand for essential services, and the community has recognized the need to plan carefully to maximize benefits of public expenditures and respond to preferences identified for growth and improvements to the Town. It is the intention of this plan to foster and encourage future development that will cause minimum impacts on the Town, protect the major elements of the economy, and preserve the rural quality of life enjoyed in the Town Of Darby today.

The Growth Policy (which includes the Data Element showing conditions and trends, Goals and Objectives, Land Use Plan, and Implementation Strategy) is a non-binding document developed through public process that identifies land use issues, and gives direction for dealing with those issues. Regulations, in contrast, carry out the direction and policy of the plan by articulating, in specific language, requirements that govern the use of land. Any land use regulations should conform to the adopted plan. The purpose of this concern is to ensure that land use regulations are drafted and enforced in the context of a broad, carefully considered, public purpose. The plan is the public's expression of a planning vision for the community. Regulations adopted in conformance with a plan are less likely to be arbitrary than those adopted in isolation.

### ***Land Use Plan Map***

#### ***General***

The land use plan illustrates the vision of the future development pattern for the Town of Darby. Based on the goals and policies expressed by the local population and government officials, the plan is an expression of desirable community attributes to be retained in future development proposals. It acknowledges the existing development pattern and infrastructure which have basically targeted or committed certain areas in Town for development, even though they may have some environmental or other constraints. The land use plan also reflects the community interest in preserving natural resource values, avoiding environmental degradation, preserving public investments in infrastructure and providing for efficient, cost-effective expansion of the community.

Facility plans for water and wastewater showing existing system capacities and limitations were important references in the designation of preferred growth areas.

The Bitterroot Valley resources, each with important functions and values, that must be protected. Darby is committed to protecting these valuable resources while providing for future growth of the community according to a plan that reflects the vision of the local population.

The land use plan is shown on the official Growth Policy map. The following sections discuss the selected land use classifications for the Darby Planning Area.

## ***Land Use Classifications***

### **Residential**

The land use plan map shows two density arrangements that should be used to guide the direction and intensity of residential land use in Darby. The distribution of these categories (as shown on the maps) is a reflection of existing land use trends and projected needs for land based on the population and densities discussed in the needs assessment. The classifications in the plan are:

#### **Medium Density Residential**

The central residential area has been developed on lots ranging in size from approximately 9375 square feet to over 1/3 of an acre. The plan density is to allow for new residential development to occur at densities as required to promote infill in the existing platted area, with the emphasis on small to medium lot size residential development. Multiple family units are encouraged, particularly on near Highway 93.

The use of mobile homes for new housing in the district should be allowed subject to standards developed by the governing body.

This designation recognizes the existing platted streets and lots of the town, and the need for expansion to occur on smaller lots that provide enough space for affordable housing. According to the plan, growth would include renovation of existing properties and infill in the Town with reasonable access to the existing sewer and water systems.

#### **Low Density Residential**

Future development proposals should include a plan acceptable to the governing body for connection to municipal sewer and water facilities.

#### **General Commercial**

The existing commercial district contains a small cross section of businesses in areas that are conveniently located for vehicular access and public visibility. The business district is centered along Highway 93. The land use plan shows a continuation of existing use and allows for expansion along the highway in the existing platted area.

Areas currently used for public activities and services are preserved while small pockets of residential use are recommended for eventual conversion to a business activity. It is the intent of the plan to promote improvements in the existing commercial district and to encourage innovative approaches to the most efficient use of the land for commercial services, parking and advertising.

As discussed in the needs assessment, development constraints that may exist on sites that must be mitigated are: highway access and connection to the Town's sewer and water systems. If new development is proposed in this area, environmental impacts must also be identified.



## **Public and Semi-Public**

### **Public Facilities**

Public buildings and facilities are an integral part of Darby and should be preserved and improved to serve future generations. Uses included in this classification are public offices, the library, fire department, schools, churches and lodges. As stated in the assessment of community needs, there is not an urgent demand for additional public land for expansion or improvement of services. It appears that school facilities required for the planning period can be provided on the existing site and that improvements for the Town's office space could also be adequately addressed through renovations on-site. Although other additional land has not been included for public facilities, any large development proposals can create additional needs that should be addressed in future plan updates. Public parcels are shown on the land use plan map.

Emphasis on providing better recreational opportunities in Town should be continued and planning efforts for improvements should be supported.

In the interest of supporting recreational development as outdoor interests expand and population increases, the development of a recreation trail is being pursued.

## **PART FIVE**

### ***Implementation Measures***

#### **General**

Several tools are available for use in applying the adopted goals and objectives of the growth policy to shape the future of Darby. The background conditions relating to population, land use, economics, public services and systems, and the natural environment were used in conjunction with policy statements to produce a land use plan for the Town. The general idea of what the local people advocate for their community growth is therefore apparent; however, because the growth policy is a non-binding document, we must look for a way of providing the most efficient and practical methods to provide regulatory guidance. Regulations must be drafted to carry out the direction of the plan by articulating specific requirements that govern the use of the land.

Traditional enforcement tools used in Montana include subdivision regulations, zoning regulations, floodplain regulations, and conservation easements. Building codes are also used to help improve the living environment consistent with adopted policies. Another type of enforcement tool, though less commonly used, is performance zoning or development permit regulations. Establishing annexation polices with clear and understandable procedures can be used as an effective tool for review and approval of new development that is consistent with the community goal of providing efficient community services.

The rural character of the Town of Darby and the simple yet structured existing development pattern would be compatible with regulations restricting various uses to certain zones. The expression of a continuation of this pattern for future development through the goals and objectives needs assessment survey, and land use plan indicates that a local zoning ordinance could be a logical and workable approach to regulating land use in a manner consistent with the direction given in the growth policy. This method of regulation and its relationship to the growth policy is summarized later in this report.

All future subdivision development proposals in the Town must be reviewed according to the procedures and standards established in any updated regulations. The application of development design standards and other subdivision requirements is an effective method of minimizing negative impacts and unidentified costs that can result from new subdivision activity.

Building codes in Darby are administered by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Building Codes Bureau, and provide a method of controlling the quality and safety of new construction in the area. The State Building Codes Bureau, through the Permit and Inspection Program, reviews all new public, commercial and industrial buildings and also regulates residential construction for buildings with five or more units. There is presently a building inspector contracted to the Town of Darby.

## **Zoning Ordinance**

The enforcement of the zoning ordinance is probably the most logical approach to establishing a reliable and functional planning process in Darby. Designation of residential, commercial and industrial zones in town creates specific boundaries compatible with the recommendations of the growth policy and allow for the enactment of rules and standards to be applied in each zone. The zoning map is therefore a crucial part of the ordinance and is closely tied to the land use plan map and the goals and objectives of the growth policy.

In Montana, municipalities are authorized to enact zoning regulations under the Municipal Zoning Enabling Act. State statute links the growth policy to zoning regulations by requiring that the local government have an adopted growth policy in place before zoning. A 2002 Attorney General's Opinion held that zoning regulations might not be adopted or substantively revised unless a growth policy has been adopted. The zoning regulations must conform to the policy plan.

## **Floodplain Regulations**

Floodplain regulations are currently enforced in Darby through the local floodplain administrator (public works director) and in the surrounding area by the county floodplain administrator. Subdivision design standards contained in the subdivision regulations address procedures and requirements for floodplain development review.

## **Capital Improvements Plan**

The goals, objectives and policy statements contained in this document make specific reference to the need for improvement and expansion of the public infrastructure system of Darby to adequately serve the existing and future population during the planning period. These infrastructure improvements are being implemented in an orderly and predictable manner through the development of a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

All communities are faced with the need for capital improvements - repair or replacement of existing physical facilities, land acquisition and construction of new facilities such as community centers, parks and playgrounds, fire stations, and sewage treatment plants. Capital improvements programming is the preparation and updating of a proposed schedule of public works and related equipment to be built or purchased by a community during the foreseeable future. Capital improvements programming cannot guarantee that all of the proposed projects will be undertaken, but it can go a long way toward guaranteeing the most effective use of limited resources.

A capital improvements program provides a vital link between a community's growth policy and the implementation of that plan. The CIP works in conjunction with the community's annual operating budget and its long-range fiscal policy and is one of the most effective management tools available to a community. By preparing and following a CIP, local officials are in a better position to make objective and informed decisions as to how their community will provide for its citizens. Capital improvements programming can also be the basis for improving intergovernmental and regional relations, as a proposed project may involve several communities.

These benefits, and others inherent in capital improvements programming, are not automatic but are dependent on the commitment of the community.

The objective of the CIP is to match needed improvement projects with revenue and financing sources to ensure that public facilities will be repaired, expanded, or constructed as required by future growth, public health and safety, or other community needs. How, when, and where public facilities are provided greatly affects the pattern of future land development and the public cost of providing these facilities.

At a minimum, the CIP should contain:

1. A list of needed capital improvement projects for several or all of the public facilities managed by the local government;
2. Clear priorities for funding and constructing the improvement projects (the needs list is put in priority order);
3. Potential and recommended funding sources to pay for each project; and
4. A rough time schedule for each project.

The growth policy indicates that there is a continued demand for improvements, particularly with regard to the, wastewater system, water system, street system, storm drainage and pedestrian/bicycle facilities

The community Resource Assessment Team Report and goals and objectives have identified community beautification as a high priority, as well as revitalization of the Main business district. Beautification projects could include demolition of dilapidated buildings and clearing vacant lots, and could also address the need for sidewalk and streetscape improvements. Priorities for business district revitalization and community beautification should be established following identification of design standards that are embraced by the business and planning community. Specific beautification and downtown revitalization projects should then be added to the list of improvements in the Capital Improvements Plan.

The projects listed in the improvement schedules of the sewer and water plans should be completed according to the priority schedule using a combination of available public funding sources and local monies. The funding sources should include participation in the CTEP, CDBG, DNRC and TSEP programs as well as available low interest loans available through a variety of other sources. An evaluation of the projects selected should be completed to identify costs and possible funding sources.

## **Annexation Review**

The process of annexation of new property on the perimeter of the town is an important consideration in evaluating and controlling impacts from new development. It is frequently desirable for the Town to annex new subdivisions in order to minimize adverse environmental effects and promote efficiency in provision of public utility services. The review process for a proposed development can be streamlined by creating a better understanding of the requirements of the process and its relationship to subdivision review. A comprehensive review of the existing policies of the town, and preparation of an annexation packet describing the town's current

application and submittal requirements as well as the process options available under state law. would be a tremendous aid to both the subdivision applicant and the reviewing authority.

### ***Implementation Strategy***

As discussed in the previous sections, the growth policy is an advisory document only and essentially lays the foundation for adoption of implementation measures. Zoning is another important implementation tool available to the town for administration of the principles contained in the growth policy. Other implementation measures related to community improvements and tied to the goals and objectives of the Growth Policy are included in the Implementation Plan.