

MEAGHER COUNTY GROWTH POLICY PLAN 2014

Meagher County, Montana



ABSTRACT

Rural Meagher County prepares for new economic activity and a sustainable future.

Prepared by Montana Business Assistance Connection. Contact: mbac.biz

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Meagher County has significant assets including fabulous outdoor recreation of golf, snow skiing, river rafting, hunting and fishing; scenic beauty of mountains, forests, valleys, hot springs and rivers; abundant wildlife including trout, turkey, elk, deer, bear, and antelope; established and prosperous cattle ranching and wheat farms; nationally successful entrepreneurs; and a unique history with the Ringling Brothers Circus, historic route to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, and mining for gold, silver and copper.
- Meagher County has the following demographic trends.
 - The population has been declining over the past 30 years, in that period of time, the population has decreased by 263 in 2010, a 12.2% decline.
 - The number of adults over the age of 45 is disproportionately larger than the youthful population.
 - The enrollment in the schools is steadily declining due to the decreasing youthful population.
 - If the proposed copper mine is approved, the net population increase is expected to be 396 citizens by 2020.
- The results of a survey sent April 2014 to the citizens of White Sulphur Springs determined that the top three preferred improvements for the town were more jobs, roads and streets, and the water system.
- A public meeting of county citizens held on May 13, 2014 confirmed the survey results and brought up more citizen concerns including the need for sustainable development, support for the copper mine, and implementation of land use policies.
- If the proposed mine starts it will create 330 regional jobs during the construction period (lasting 2 years) and 238 regional jobs when the mine is fully operational (lasting 10.5 years).
- Based on the current built environment, potential trends, a survey of citizens, consultation with Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs elected leaders, and recommendations of professional civil engineers, suggests the following are the Meagher County 2014-2019 Growth Policies:
 - Improve the county's economy,
 - Implement land use regulations,
 - Pursue sustainable development with or without approval of the copper mine,
 - Make improvements to downtown White Sulphur Springs, and
 - Concentrate new development to minimize infrastructure costs and taxes.
- The majority of citizens and officials want to promote economic development in the county via support for the following:
 - The proposed new copper mine,
 - Creating opportunities to attract more tourism, and
 - Attracting new businesses and residents.

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OVERVIEW

Meagher County is a rural Montana county with 1,891 persons in 2010. White Sulphur Springs, with 939 persons in 2010, is the county seat and only incorporated town. Agriculture is the primary economic activity in the county with cattle being the major product. In 2014, a permit was granted to explore the option of opening a new copper mine in 2016. The purpose of this *Growth Policy Plan* is to prepare Meagher County for a sustainable future and a possible new mine employing hundreds.

Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs both have their own Growth Policy Plans. The plans are made similarly to allow for coordination and cooperating on matters regarding growth policy.

HOW THE GROWTH POLICY WAS DEVELOPED

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| October 2013 | MBAC and County Commissioners meeting regarding updating the February 2003 Growth Policy Plan. |
| January 2014 | MBAC awarded contract to update the Growth Policy Plan. |
| February-March 2014 | MBAC meets with County Commissioners regarding policy issues. |
| January-June 2014 | Gathering data: several visits to county areas to learn characteristics, citizens survey, publication and distribution of policy fact sheet to County Officials and citizens, public focus group. Interviews with key stakeholders to discover issues. A process of public education was done to inform public about trends and potential impacts. Citizens were engaged to recommend policies according to trends. |
| June 2014 | Submit draft for public review and comment. |
| June 2014 | Revise draft and submit final draft to County Officials. |

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Most of the inhabited lands in Meagher County are in a valley of generally flat grazing lands about 5,000 feet above sea level. The valley is defined by the *Big Belt Mountain* range on the west and the *Little Belt Mountain* range on the east with heights reaching 8,500 feet above sea level. Significant water resources include the Smith River that flows north into the Missouri River and the natural hot springs in White Sulphur Springs. The valley is bisected south to north by Highway 89 that was the popular historic route between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.

The county has a rich diversity of wildlife including game animals of deer, antelope, turkey, and elk. The county is famous for trout fishing.

In the late 1800's, many mineral deposits were discovered and mined including lead, gold, silver and copper. The county also has substantial timber resources in the Belt Mountains.

Sand and Gravel Resources

There are no existing sand or gravel pits in Meagher County. In order to obtain sand and gravel when needed, the county purchases rock from private landowners and has contractors crush out gravel.

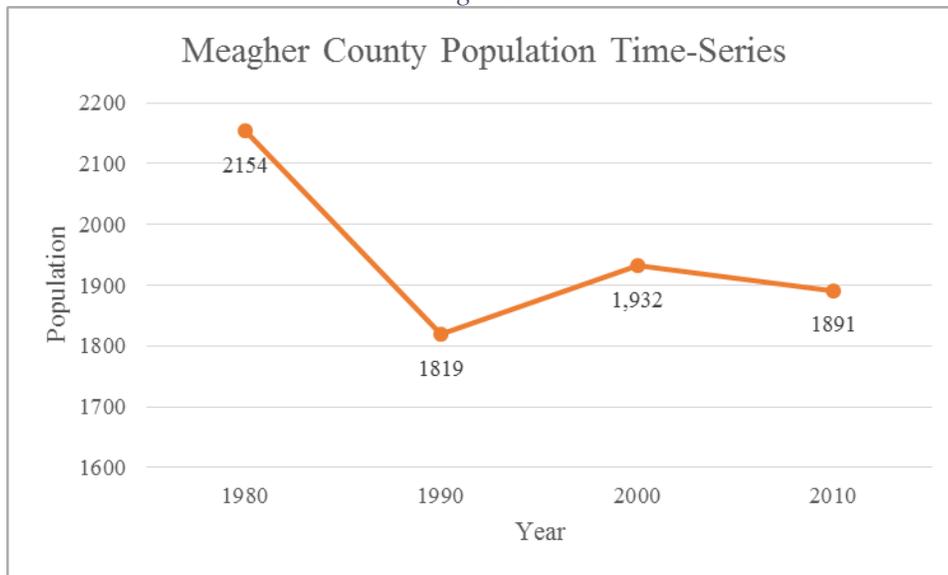
DEMOGRAPHICS: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION

Demographics, or characteristics of the population, affect almost all aspects of an area. Demographic trends affect housing, infrastructure, schools, police, fire protection, transportation, businesses, and community facilities such as libraries and parks. Thus, demographics affect how the local government needs to budget in order to provide services and infrastructure to the public.

Population of Meagher County

In 2010, Meagher County’s total population was 1,891 (US Census Bureau 2010). Figure 1 shows the changes in Meagher County’s population from 1980-2010.

Figure 1



Source: US Bureau of the Census; U.S. Census Bureau 2000; U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Many local and national factors have reduced Meagher County’s population: the 1984 closure of a lumber mill, a major employer in the county at the time, accounts for some of the county’s decline in population between the years 1980 and 1990. Additionally, the US Census Bureau reports that since 1970, there has been a steady out-migration from the Midwest—the largest group of US migrants is people in their 20’s (Ihrke and Faber. 2012). The US population, however, continues to grow in urban areas, the urban growth consists of the losses from rural areas and international immigration (US Census Bureau 2012).

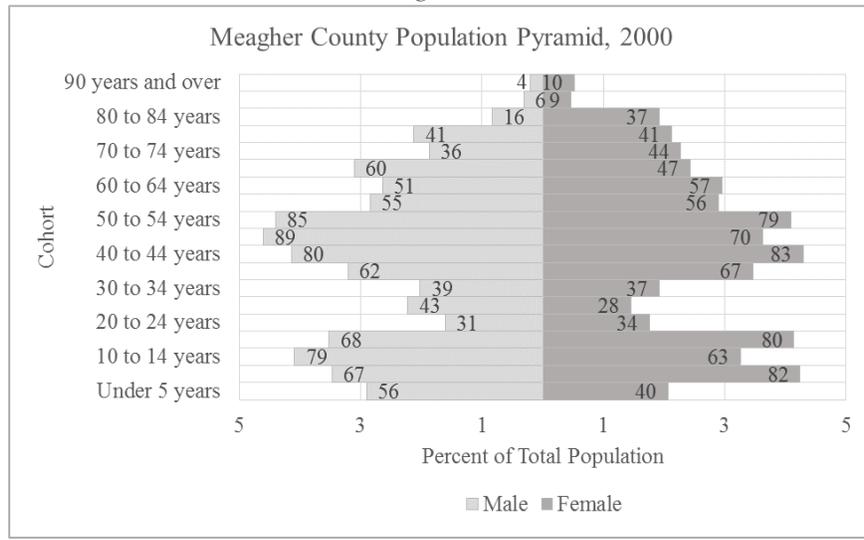
Population Pyramids

Population pyramids visualize the age components of a population and are used to project population. The population is broken up into age cohorts by gender. This process, in a typical population, should give the chart a pyramid-like shape with a high percentage of young people and a low percentage of elderly people. In Meagher County, however, the older cohorts are larger than the younger cohorts illustrating an unusual population profile (see Figures 2-5).

Population of Meagher County by Age; 2000, 2010

Figure 2 is a population pyramid for Meagher County population cohorts in 2000.

Figure 2

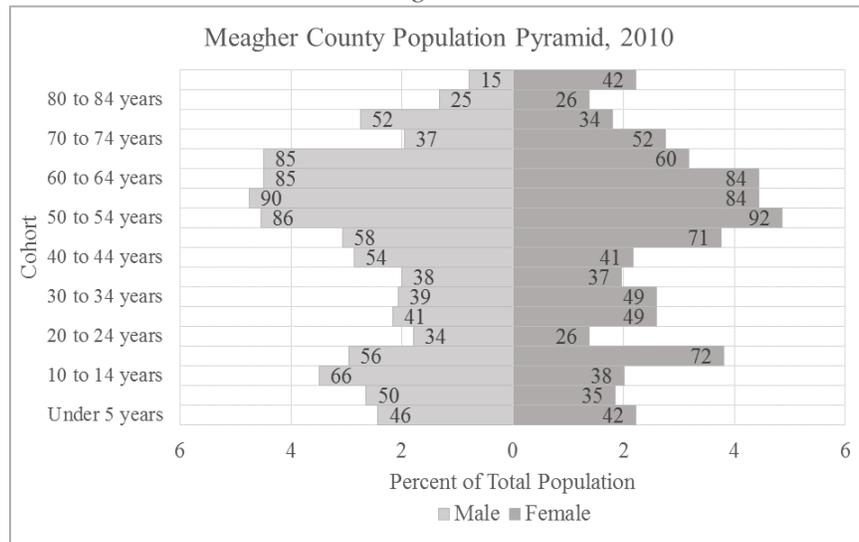


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

As can be observed in Figure 2 above, from the top there is a shape resembling a pyramid, but younger age group cohorts for both men and women shrink. Lack of a younger population will cause future problems in the county’s economy: a decreasing workforce and an increasing dependent population.

The population pyramid in Figure 3 shows the Meagher County population cohorts from the 2010 census.

Figure 3

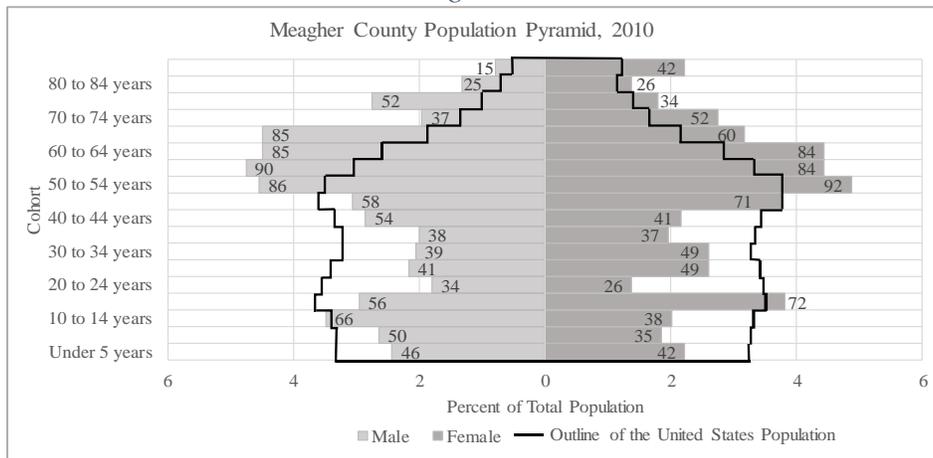


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

In 2010, the percentage of the total population in the younger cohorts is even smaller than in 2000. This is expected because the shrinking number of women of childbearing age reduces replenishment of younger cohorts.

Figure 4 compares the population cohorts in Meagher County and the United States in 2010.

Figure 4



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

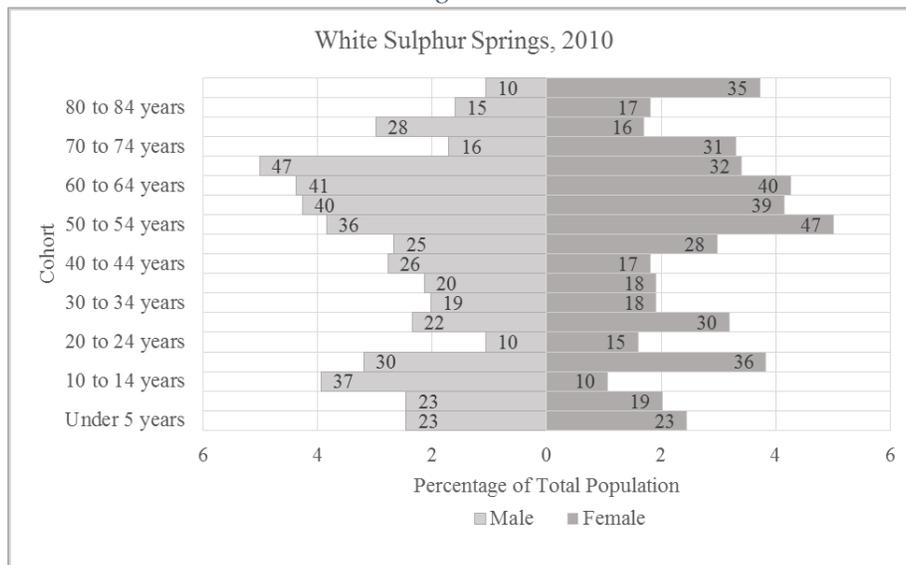
Meagher County has a significantly older population than the United States; the percentage of Meagher County's population is higher than the United States for all male and female cohorts, ages 50 years and older. In 2010 the median age in Meagher County was 50 years and the median age in the United States was 37 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). There is an obvious difference in the populations of the younger cohorts—specifically the 0-10 and 20-45 year old cohorts—between the County and the United States with the exception of 15-19 year old females.

A notable population trend is the decreasing population of youth in Meagher County and the growing percentage of the elderly population. This trend is an example of the 20's out-migration previously mentioned, two main drivers of the 20's out-migration are to attend college and to find a job.

Population of White Sulphur Springs by Age, 2010

The population pyramid in Figure 5 shows the White Sulphur Springs cohorts from the 2010 census.

Figure 5



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

In 2010, White Sulphur Springs had a total population of 939 that accounted for 49.7% of Meagher County's population. The median age was 51 years old, 14 years older than the median age of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). White Sulphur Springs exemplifies the national trend of persons in their 20's migrating out of rural areas to urban areas.

Population Density

Population density is defined as the number of people per square mile. Figure 6 and Figure 7 on the following two pages are population density maps of Meagher County and the city of White Sulphur Springs.

Most of Meagher County is uninhabited with populations of 1-50 persons per square mile scattered throughout the county. A majority of the populous areas are located in the City of White Sulphur Springs. In Figure 7 the City of White Sulphur Springs is more densely populated area than the rest of Meagher County.

Figure 6

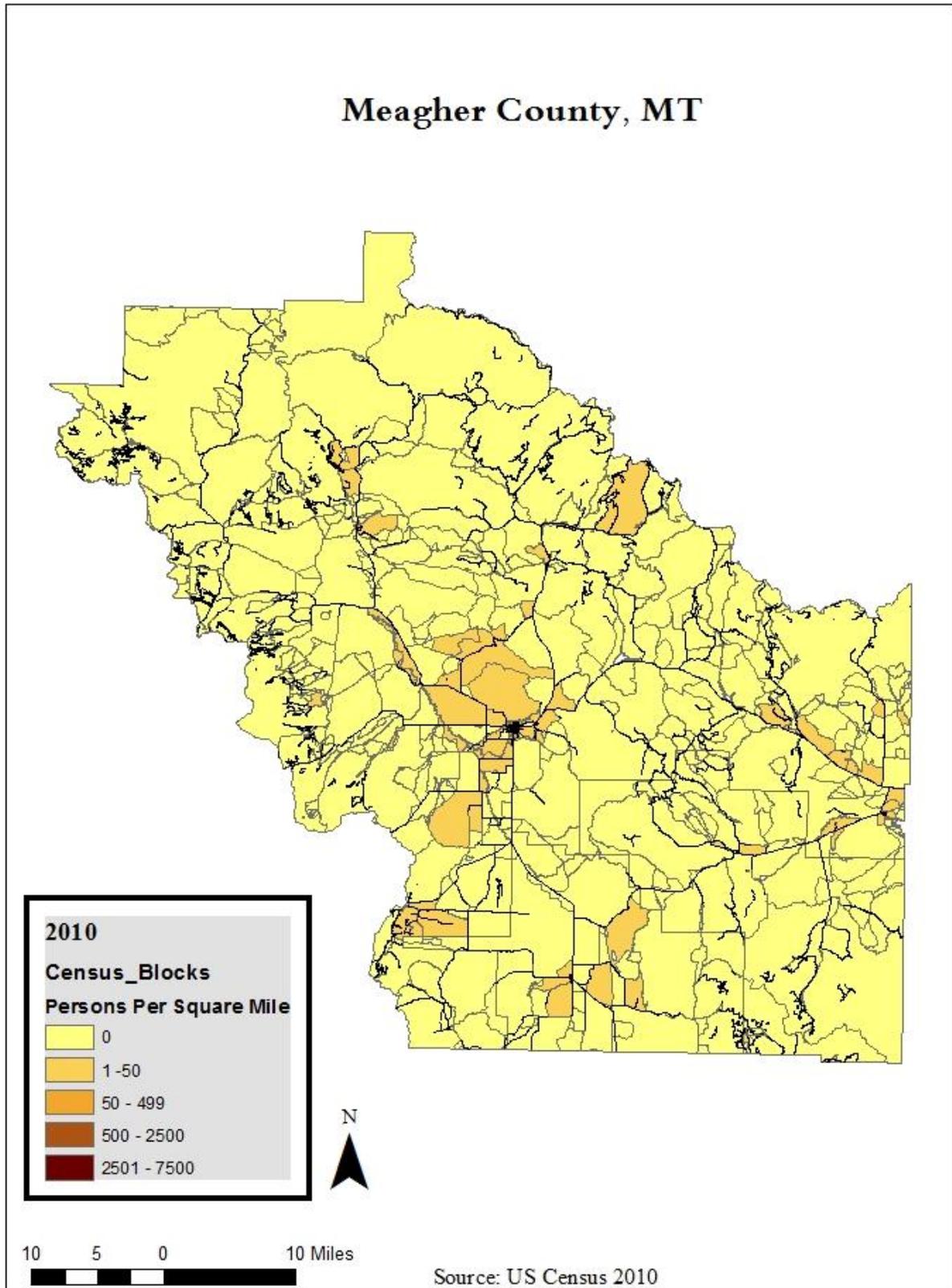
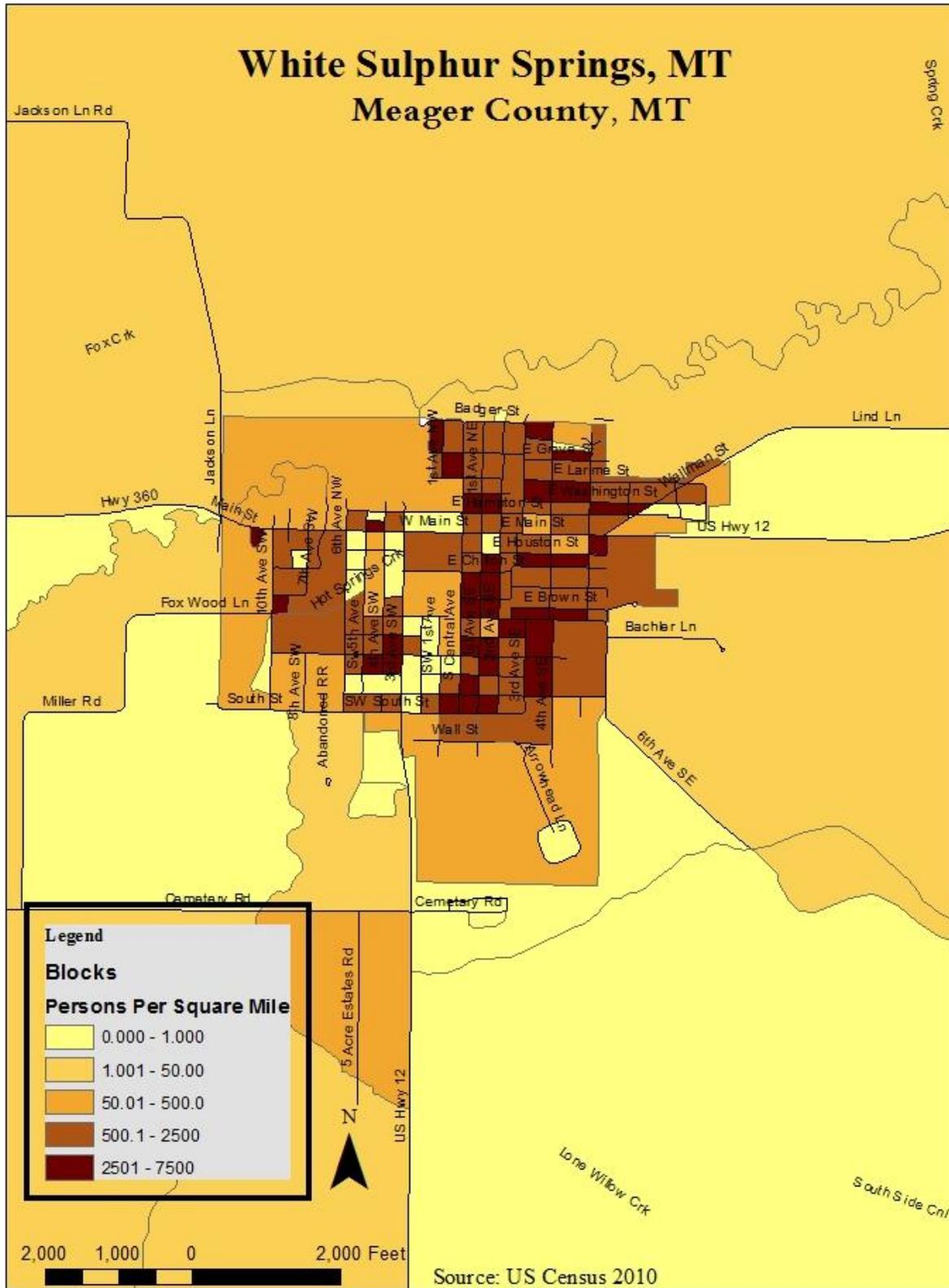


Figure 7



Projected Population

Based on historical trends of population cohorts from 2000 to 2010, the 2020 county population is estimated to decrease to 1,846 persons. The population could increase if the proposed copper mine is approved; the impact of the mine’s development on the population is estimated to increase the 2020 population to 2,242 persons (Historical trends plus mine’s impact). Table 1 below estimates the additional population that will migrate to Meagher County if the copper mine is approved.

Table 1

Preliminary Population Estimate of New Mine in Meagher County				
New Mine	Investment ³	Job Multiplier ¹	Total Jobs ²	
Construction in \$ million	\$ 24.65	13.3939	330	
Operation in Jobs	175	1.3586	238	
Meagher Co. 2013	18-65 Persons	Unemployed Rate	Available Labor	Persons / Home
	1,077	6.40%	69	2.69
Time Period ->			Construction	Operations
Workers move-into county			261	169
Percent of persons with families			5%	50%
Multiply by County persons per household		*	2.69	2.69
Potential County Population Increase			296	396
1. Multipliers source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis RIMS II Type 1 for the region (2013).				
2. Total of all types of jobs created in the economy.				
3. Tetra Tech. Updated Report to Tintina Resources (2013).				

During the period of time when the mine is being constructed, 261 workers are expected to move into the county; when including the workers’ families, the total population expected to migrate is 296 persons. When the mine is fully operational, 169 workers are expected to move into the county; when considering the workers’ families, the total population expected to migrate is 396 persons. Given the small amount of housing in Meagher County outside of White Sulphur Springs and the high vacancy rate of old housing and parcels in White Sulphur Springs, we assume that all new population growth due to the mine will occur in White Sulphur Springs.

Although more workers are needed for constructing the mine than operating it, the construction period is relatively short; therefore, the amount of workers that bring their families with them will be considerably less than the workers when the mine is operational. Figure 8 and Figure 9 display the projected populations for Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs with and without the mine.

Figure 8

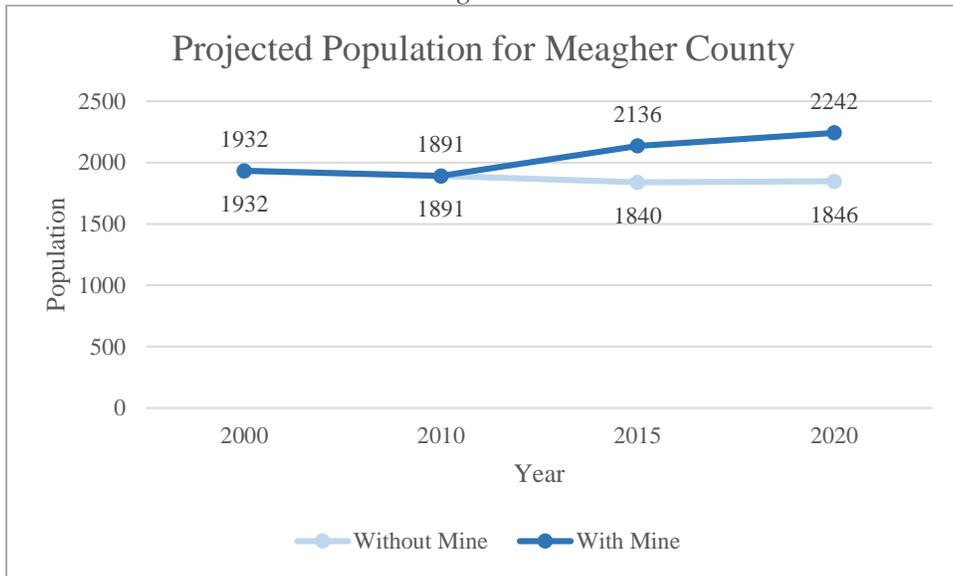
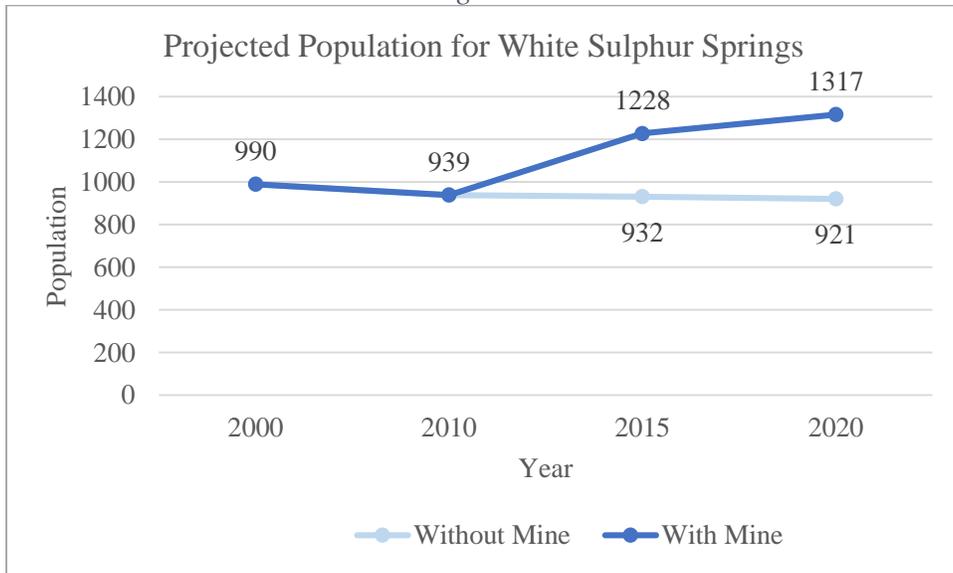


Figure 9



School Age Population

Table 2 uses the projections from Table 1 and Figure 8 to estimate the total number of school age children (ages 5-19) for the years 2015 and 2020:

Table 2

Projections for School Age Children (5-19 years old) With & Without Mine			
2015		2020	
Potential Population Increase	296	Potential Population Increase	396
(Workers)	<u>(261)</u>	(Workers)	<u>(169)</u>
Family Members	35	Family Members	227
Percentage of School Age Kids	<u>*0.13</u>	Percentage of School Age Kids	<u>*0.14</u>
Potential School Age Increase with mine	5	Potential School Age Increase with mine	31
Without Mine School Age Population	<u>+248</u>	Without Mine School Age Population	<u>+250</u>
Total School Age Population with mine	253	Total School Age Population with mine	281

During the mine’s construction period it is estimated that only five school age children will need to be incorporated into Meagher County’s education system. When the mine is fully operational, however, an estimated 31 new students will be moving into Meagher County and need to be incorporated into the school system. Note that the expected increase in enrollment may create a need for more teachers and/or classrooms at the schools.

HOUSING

Meagher County has an unusually high amount of vacant housing; with a 43.7% vacancy rate, Meagher County’s percentage of vacant housing is more than three times the rate for the United States. This issue may be caused by a combination of the out-migration of 20-year-old population, the supply of old housing (most of the houses in Meagher County are over 60 years old and in need of improvements), and vacant housing purposed for seasonal or occasional use.

Home Occupancy and Age

In 2010, the U.S. Census states 1,432 total housing units are in Meagher County, an increase of 69 units between 2000 and 2010. Of the total units, 806 were occupied and 626 were vacant (Meagher County housing unit vacancy rate: 43.7%). Of the vacant units, it is important to note that 77% were purposed for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Furthermore, 44% of platted lots in White Sulphur Springs have no buildings on them.

Table 3

Percentage of Vacant Housing	
Meagher County	43.72%
Montana	15.16%
United States	13.26%

Sources: U.S. Census 2010 State and County QuickFacts

As displayed in Table 3, the percentage of vacant housing in Meagher County is substantially greater than in the United States as well as the state of Montana. The percentage of vacant housing in Meagher County is more than 3 times that of the United States. Vacancy in the county may be caused by a variety of issues; two notable issues are the number of people that are out-

migrating instead of buying homes and the old age of the available housing. Table 4 shows the percentage of houses that were built in each time period.

Table 4

Age of Housing in Meagher County	
Year Structure was Built	% of Total
2010 or later	0.00%
2000 to 2009	9.80%
1980 to 1999	20.80%
1960 to 1979	24.90%
1940 to 1959	15.40%
1939 or earlier	29.10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Most of Meagher County’s housing is over 60 years old. Street by street observations in January 2014 reveal that a majority of housing is in dire need of refurbishment, and based on the age of housing, it is very likely most of the housing stock is poorly insulated.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in the county is \$116,500, almost \$70,000 less than the US median value of \$186,200 (U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts—2008-2012). Of Meagher County’s population, 68.1% (1,288 people) reside in owner-occupied housing units, 174 residents live in group quarters and 429 residents live in renter-occupied housing units (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Meagher County has 2.6% more of the population residing in owner-occupied housing than the United States’ 65.5%.

White Sulphur Springs

In 2010, the U.S. Census states there are 563 total housing units in the city of White Sulphur Springs. Of the total units, 443 were occupied and 130 were vacant (23.09% vacancy rate). The percentage of vacant housing in the city of White Sulphur Springs is much lower than Meagher County and is closer to the vacancy rates in Montana and the United States; however, the rate is still about 5% higher than Montana’s. Of White Sulphur Springs’ population, 712 residents live in owner-occupied housing units, 210 residents live in renter-occupied housing units, and 17 live in group quarters. Table 5 shows the percentage of houses in White Sulphur Springs that were built in each 10-year period.

Table 5

Age of Housing in White Sulphur Springs	
Year Structure was Built:	% of Total
2010 or later	0%
2000 to 2009	8%
1990 to 1999	12%
1980 to 1989	8%
1970 to 1979	12%
1960 to 1969	9%
1950 to 1959	8%
1940 to 1949	9%
1939 or earlier	35%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in White Sulphur Springs is \$106,300, almost \$80,000 less than the US median value of \$186,200 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). Much of the housing in White Sulphur Springs is in need of restoration.

ECONOMY

Meagher County's economic benchmarks fall short of the United States for both income and housing value. The county has a poverty level that is 41% higher than in the United States.

Animal production and agriculture account for the largest exports for the county. Agriculture followed by entertainment/recreation are the sectors that employ the most people within the county; however, both of these industries pay below the per capita income for the United States. In fact, the entertainment and recreation sector is the lowest paying industry in Meagher County.

Many available natural resources give the county a large market for eco-tourism. If the proposed mine is approved, the County's taxable value is projected to increase by \$20,000,000 by 2020.

Income

Table 6 compares economic benchmarks in Meagher County to the United States. Meagher County is below the national averages in every benchmark.

Table 6

Meagher County Economic Benchmarks Compared to Nation

2011	Meagher County	United States	Meagher County % of US	
Per Capita Income	\$ 18,147	\$ 27,915	65%	Lower
Median Household Income	\$ 33,846	\$ 52,762	64%	Lower
Poverty Level	20.2%	14.3%	41%	Higher
Median Housing Value, Owned	\$ 111,500	\$ 186,200	60%	Lower
Median Income / House Value	30%	28%	7%	Higher
			(CO. More Expensive)	
2012				
Persons 65 and over (At Risk Population)	24.0%	13.7%	75%	Higher

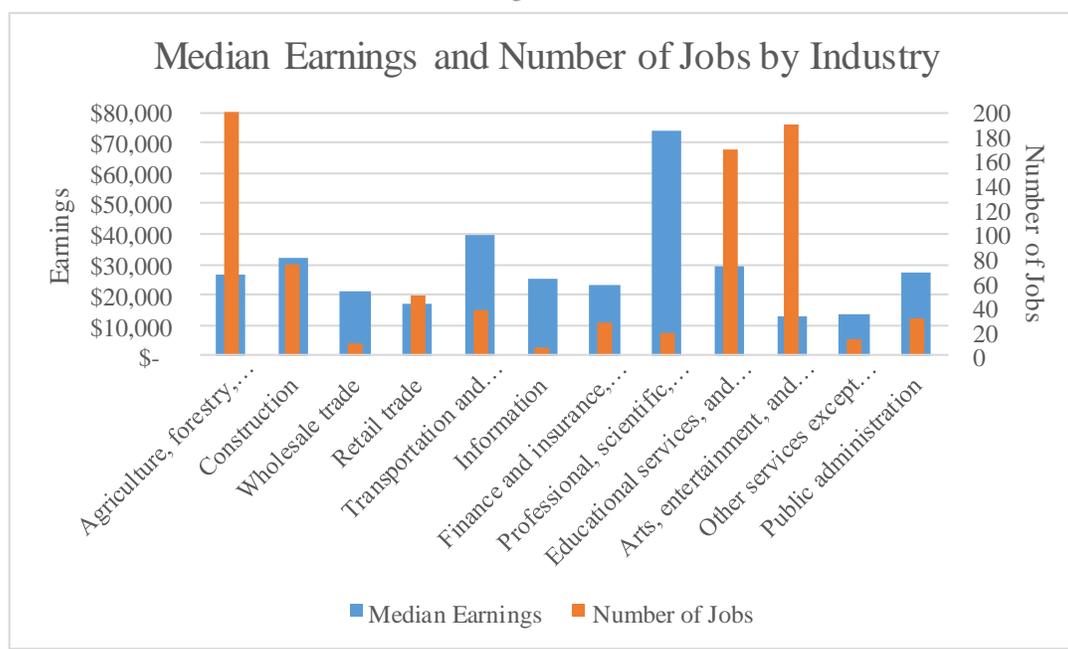
Source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30/30059.html>

Comparison of Median Earnings to Employment, 2010

The total civilian employed population 16 years and over in Meagher County is 853 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008-2012).

Figure 10 shows the number of Full-time and Part-time jobs for the civilian employed population 16 years and over as well as the median annual wage earnings for each industrial sector in Meagher County.

Figure 10



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

In Meagher County, professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services is the highest paying industry; however that sector only employs 18 people in the county. The three industries with the highest amount of people employed are agriculture, educational services, and arts and entertainment. The median earnings in the United States is \$28,899 (US Census Bureau 2010), of the top three most employed industries, only education’s median earnings exceeds this figure. Median earnings for agriculture fall below the US median earnings and the arts and entertainment industry is the lowest paying economic sector in the county. Meagher County has a 20.2% poverty level; this is 41% higher than the poverty level of the United States (see *Income*). The high amount of poverty can be partially explained by the comparison of industry number of jobs and earnings; the jobs that employ the most people do not earn enough to support the citizens above the poverty line.

Economic Exporting Industries

Exporting industries are important to Meagher County because they bring money into the county’s economy, cause increased sales to other county businesses, and help to increase household income. Based on a *location quotient* analysis of 2012, employment and wages, livestock production, and transportation are the major export activities that positively affect hotels and restaurants in Meagher County.

Location Quotients

Location quotients measure export industries, specifically, they are a ratio of industry-specific employment in Meagher County to total employment in Meagher County divided by the ratio of industry-specific employment in the nation to total employment in the nation. Location quotient values greater than 1 indicate an exporting industry. A larger value indicates a larger exporting industry for the county. Table 7 summarizes the exporting industries in Meagher County and their respective location quotients.

Table 7
Export Industries in Meagher County, Montana.

North American Industry Classification System Code	Description	Location Quotient
NAICS 112	Animal production and agriculture	98.52
NAICS 236	Construction of buildings	2.24
NAICS 445	Food and beverage stores	1.84
NAICS 484	Truck transportation	2.99
NAICS 721	Accommodation	3.45
NAICS 722	Food services and drinking places	1.18
NAICS 813	Membership associations and organizations	1.51

Source: Calculated from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data for 2012.

Animal production and agriculture is the top exporting industry affecting the county’s economy. Exporting industries have higher multiplier effects to the rest of the economy. Exporting

businesses create demand for restaurants, services and retail thus creating additional jobs in those peripheral industrial sectors.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Historically, agriculture has been the primary economic activity in Meagher County with total sales of \$25.3 million, over 138 farms with an average size of 5,887 acres, and a farm average value of \$6.8 million with farm average net income of \$36,380 (USDA 2007). The largest amount of agriculture income is from cattle with 48,500 cattle in 2012. The major crop is wheat with 4,700 acres in spring wheat production of 157,000 bushels in 2011 (USDA 2012).

The northeastern part of the county is the mountainous *Lewis and Clark National Forest* that has substantial timber resources. However, due to lower demand for wood after the 2009 recession, increasing costs, federal government regulations and slow growth of Montana timber, lumbering has declined and is unlikely to expand in the future.

Mining

The mining industry started in Meagher County in 1867 with copper (Roby 1950). Over the next 20 years there were several other ore discoveries leading to the mining of lead, copper, zinc, silver, and gold. To 1947 the largest amounts of ores extracted were lead (29+ million pounds) and copper (703+ pounds), however, the highest dollar value ores extracted were silver and gold.

In 1899, copper mines were dug for oxidized copper. In 1910, John Lee dug copper mines for un-oxidized copper and mined them for many years. In 1989, exploration drilling was done and discovered large amounts of copper ore. By 2013, TinTina Resources, Inc. focused exploration on John Lee's site and named it the "Johnny Lee Deposit." TinTina Resources, Inc. plans to acquire permits and conduct mining operations starting in 2016 and continuing for approximately 11 years.

If approved and funded, the TinTina Resources mining operation will make an initial capital investment of \$218 million and an estimated operating cost of \$66 million (TinTina Resources 2013). The estimated combined funding of \$284+ million will have a tremendous impact on the Meagher County regional economy as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

County Net New Increases due to Proposed Mine	
Total TinTina Resources, Inc. Investment	\$284,000,000
Area total new jobs during construction (2 years)	330
Area total new jobs during operations (10.5 years)	238
Population	396
School Age Population	31
Housing Units	112
County's Taxable Value	\$20,260,365
Property Tax Revenue	\$3,725,679
Government Admin Costs*	\$42,720
Annual Retail Sales 2020*	\$3,428,929

*See METHODOLOGIES: Retail Demand and Net Government Administration Costs for details

Tourism

Meagher County has a noteworthy history of tourism and has significant opportunity for tourism attractions.

Tourism History: Ringling Brothers Circus

The, now non-operational, *White Sulphur Springs and Yellowstone Park Railway* (WSYP) that ran 22.8 miles between Ringling, MT (located in Meagher County) and White Sulphur Springs played a large part in bringing tourism to Meagher County. The transcontinental railway main line of the *Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad* (aka the Milwaukee Road) had a station stop in Ringling, MT. The Ringling station acted as a link between the Milwaukee Road and the WSYP and allowed tourists from around the country to visit White Sulphur Springs.

Ringling, MT was named after John Ringling—one of the seven Ringling brothers from the world renowned Ringling Brothers Circus—who was the president of the WSYP. The WSYP was constructed in 1910; about 20 years after the Ringling Brothers Circus began traveling by railroad. The unusually warm winter climate due to the chinook winds in the Ringling area was highly attractive to John Ringling from a business standpoint; the warmer weather allowed the Circus to put on performances in the area throughout the winter season. In addition, the Ringling spot is roughly the mid-point between Yellowstone and Glacier National Park on Highway 89, the main highway of the time for tourists.

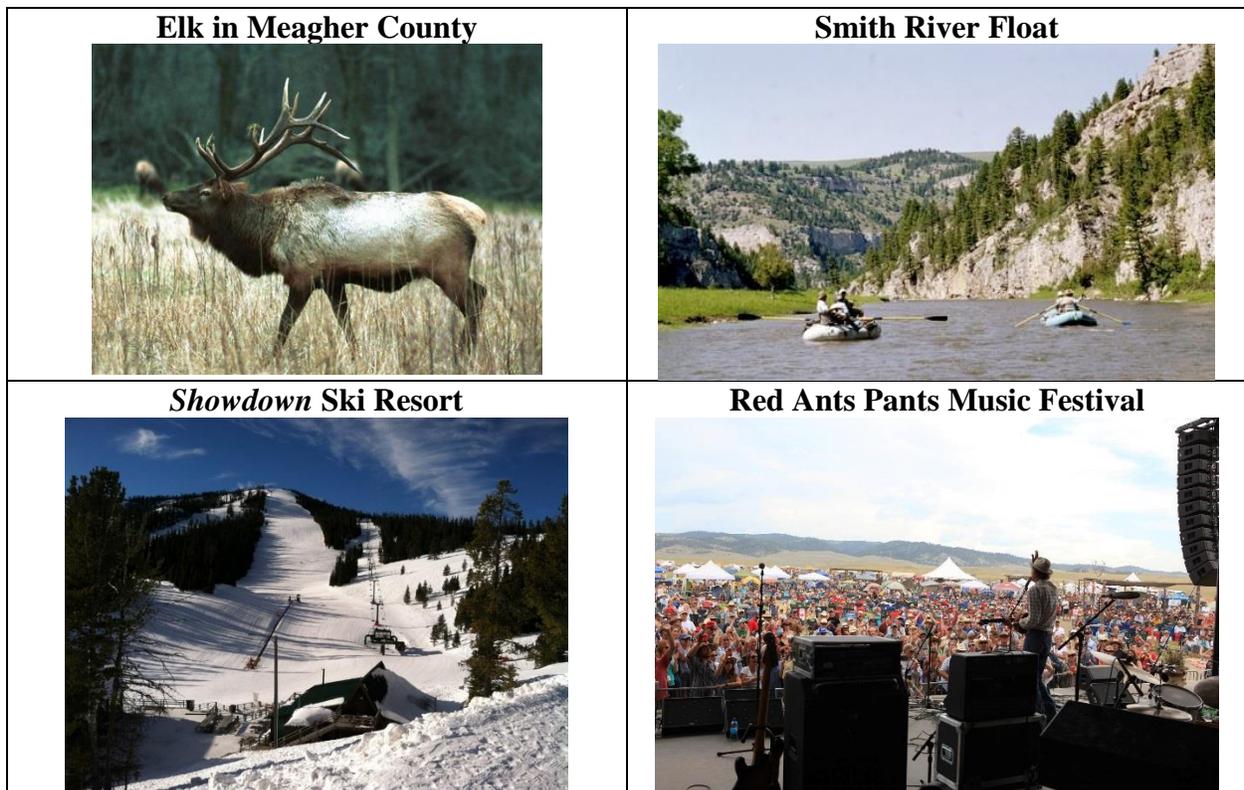
John Ringling also purchased a summer home and the hot springs in White Sulphur Springs. He had dreams of building a hotel resort on the hot springs that would attract even more tourism opportunity when his circus came to town and increase his railroad's profits. However, when the Great Depression hit, John Ringling lost nearly all of his fortune and was unable fund his dream hotel in White Sulphur Springs.

In 1980, more than 40 years after Ringling’s death, both the Milwaukee Road and the WSYP were abandoned. The depot in White Sulphur Springs was restored for the filming of *Heartland* in 1982 and has since been boarded up and kept in decent condition. A heavyweight coach, sleeper car, stock car and ballast car still sit in front of the depot. Inquiries are being made to explore the logistics of refurbishing the heavyweight coach and opening a Ringling Brothers museum in White Sulphur Springs. (Sources: White Sulphur Springs and Yellowstone Park Railway; John Ringling; Ringling, Montana).

Current Tourism Attractions

Historic Highway 89 exits the county through *Kings Hill Pass* at 7,393 feet above sea level and affords significant tourism resources for snow skiing and backpacking. The bountiful natural environment of mountains, open space, and Smith River support substantial opportunity for hunting, fishing, and river rafting.

Major tourism attractions include the Smith River for river floating, Showdown Ski Resort, and the natural hot springs. These eco-tourism assets are further enhanced by special country events of Professional Rodeo, Cowboys Association Labor Day Rodeo, and the *Red Ants Pants* national country music festival attracting thousands of tourists from the United States and overseas.

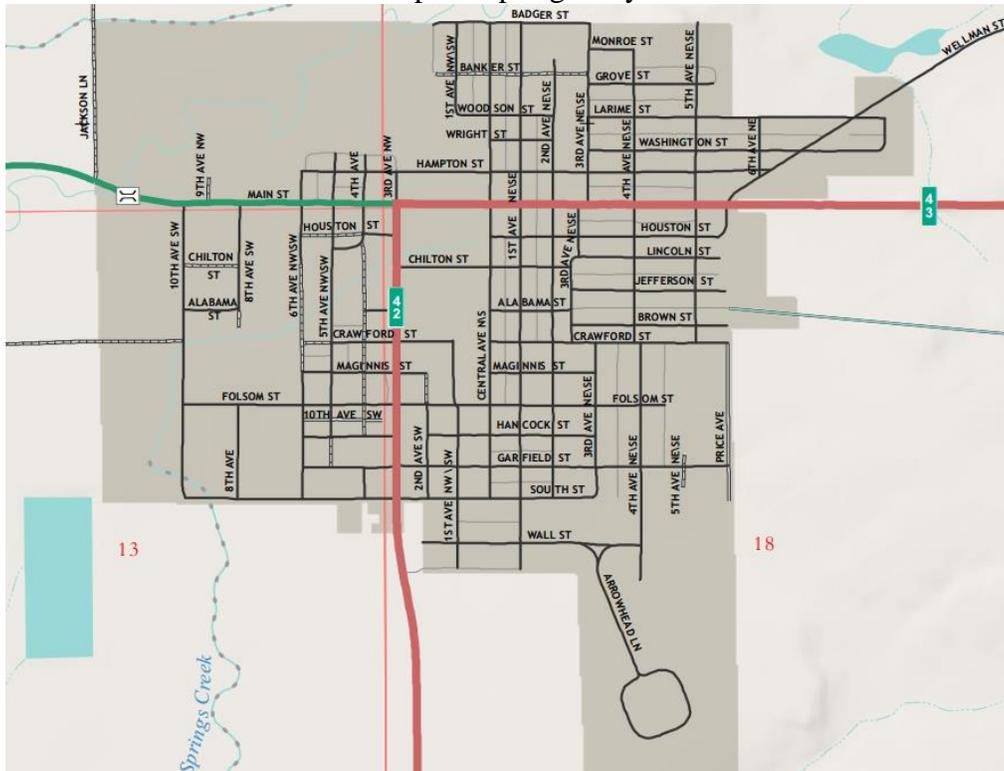


Government

Meagher County government has a three-person county commission. White Sulphur Springs has a city commission and mayor form of government.

Figure 11 shows the city limits for White Sulphur Springs.

Figure 11
White Sulphur Springs City Limits

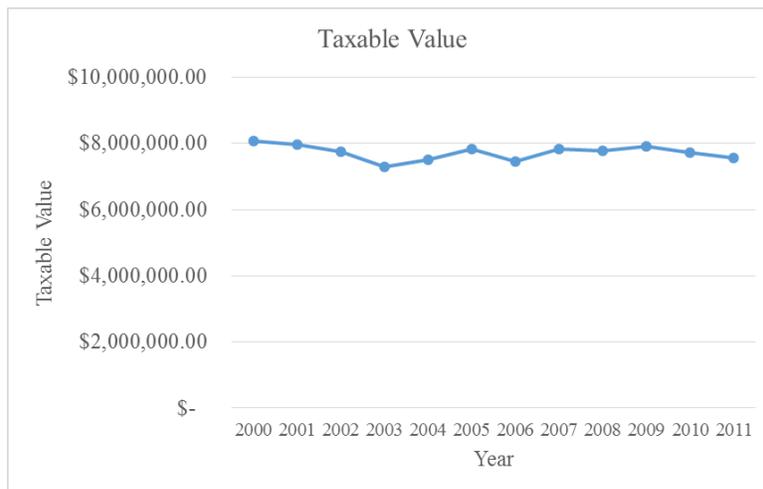


Source: Montana Department of Transportation

Taxable Value

Figure 12 shows the change in taxable value for Meagher County from years 2000-2011:

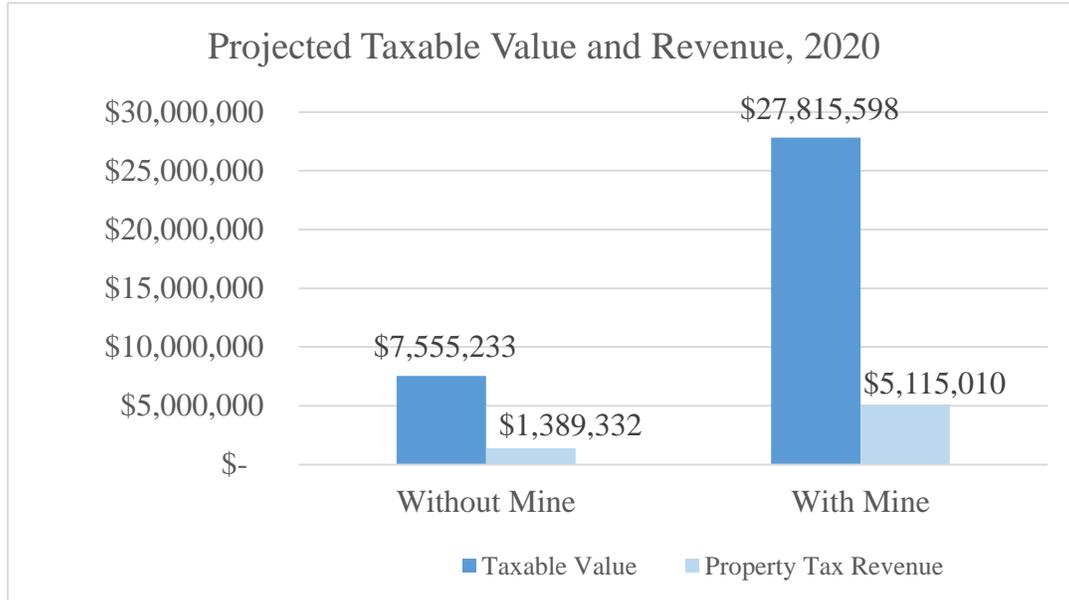
Figure 12



Source: The Montana Tax Foundation

Figure 13 depicts the projected taxable value for Meagher County in the year 2020 (for data calculations see *Methodologies-Taxable Value Projection*):

Figure 13



Sources: The Montana Tax Foundation; TinTina Resources, Inc.

With the mine, Meagher County will increase its property tax revenue by more than 3.5 times of the expected tax revenue without the mine in 2015 and 2020.

Budget Projections

Table 9 projects the future budget needs for governmental administration in Meagher County. The estimated budget spending per capita on governmental administration expenses is \$107.88 (see Table 10 in *Community Facilities and Services Benchmarks*).

Table 9

Projected Budget Needs					
	Current	2015		2020	
	Meagher County	Without Mine	With Mine	Without Mine	With Mine
Spending per Capita	\$ 107.88	\$ 107.88	\$ 107.88	\$ 107.88	\$ 107.88
Population	1891	1840	2136	1846	2242
Budget	\$ 204,000.00	\$ 198,445.11	\$ 230,377.42	\$ 199,188.68	\$ 241,908.94

Source: County of Meagher, 2013

TRANSPORTATION

Meagher County transportation includes US Highways 12 & 89. Historic Highway 89 bisects the county north to south, and Highway 12 bisects the county east to west. The majority of paved roads are in White Sulphur Springs and are in fair condition; however, the city has many unpaved roads as well.

Street traffic is at a level A with no significant wait or stop times (see Figure 14). However, significant truck traffic could increase if the new copper mine begins operations. In 2014, the tentative plan was to have copper mine trucks haul loads south to Townsend for rail shipment. The route from the mine to Townsend goes through White Sulphur Springs on Main Street (see Figure 15, Main Street is located where highway 12 turns east at White Sulphur Springs).

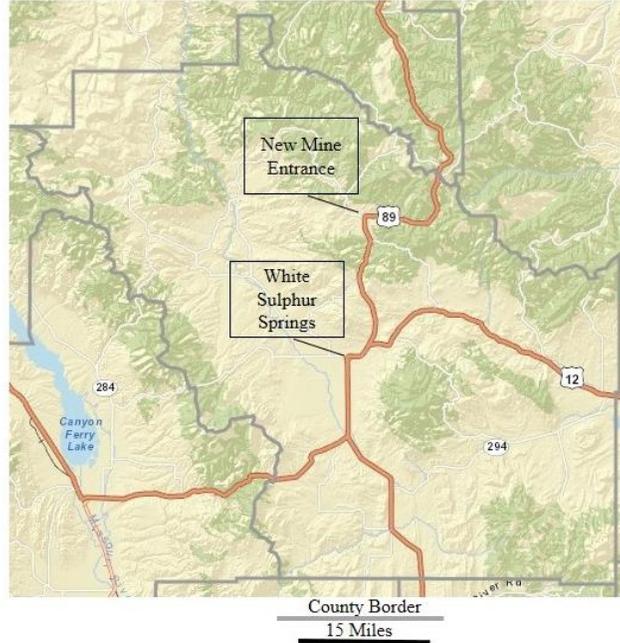
Figure 14

**White Sulphur Springs
Average Daily Traffic 2012**



Figure 15

Meagher County, Montana



In 2016, the Montana Department of Transportation plans to repair Highway 12 on Main Street in White Sulphur Springs. This construction will impede traffic flow and limit access to the stores located on Main Street. As explained in Figure 15, Main Street has the highest traffic flow in White Sulphur Springs so the 2016 Main Street/Highway 12 construction must be carefully coordinated in order to prevent the closures of businesses.

A general aviation airport is located three miles south of White Sulphur Springs on Highway 12. There are four runways, the longest is 6,100 feet long, paved, and in good condition. The airport averages 106 air operations per week and its FAA Identifier is 7S6.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Meagher County has adequate services and facilities for the community with the exception of the sewer system in White Sulphur Springs. The system is currently undergoing a 2-phase rehabilitation project in order to fix a serious infiltration and inflow issue. The county has 10 times more firefighters per 1000 people than the ratio for the United States, which is necessary due to the forest fire trends during Montana summers. There are many public recreation services and opportunities available in the county (also see *Tourism*).

Water System

Most of Meagher County's population is served by property-owner water wells with the exception of White Sulphur Springs. White Sulphur Springs' population accounts for 49.7% of the county population and it also contains the majority of housing units and businesses. White Sulphur Springs will attract the majority of any new residential development in the county making its water system a critical asset for the county.

The City of White Sulphur Springs' water system was analyzed in 2010 by a "Preliminary Engineering Report." The report, using a modest growth rate of 1% per year until 2020, describes the supply and storage system as adequate for general consumption. However, current storage and distribution are not sufficient in several areas of the city for estimated fire-fighting needs of 1,500 gallons per minute for two hours (minimum flow for fire sprinkled structures according to the Uniform Fire Code). The chlorination disinfection system is a health issue due to inadequacies and is in need of replacement. Another issue is that the transmission system is leaking.

Sewer System

White Sulphur Springs has the only operating sewer system in Meagher County. According to a 2012 Preliminary Engineering Report analysis, it has a very old collection system constructed in 1916 that feeds into two treatment lagoons built in 1959 (Anderson-Montgomery Consulting Engineers, Inc. 2013). Treated sewage from the lagoons flows into downstream creeks and rivers.

The system has very serious infiltration and inflow (I&I) into the lines that eventually drain into the treatment lagoons. The additional I&I flow dilutes treatment bacteria levels in the lagoons reducing sewage treatment capabilities. The treated sewage effluent levels are out of compliance with environmental regulations and pose a health problem to downstream tributaries.

In 2014 a Phase 1&2 Sewer Rehabilitation project started. The map of projects can be found on the next page in Figure 16. According to the contracted engineering firm:

"Phase 1 - objective is to eliminate as much as 70% of the infiltration & inflow (I&I) from the wastewater collection system. Reducing the hydraulic load will allow us to downsize the treatment/disposal system, be better equipped to meet MDPES discharge permit limitations and provide enhanced treatment. The I&I is primarily made up of geothermal water which is high in dissolved solids. The salts as well as the volume of clear water greatly affect the ability to remove pollutants with conventional treatment technologies.

Phase 2 - once the rehabilitation is complete and I&I have been minimized, we will focus on new treatment and disposal. Alternatives we will explore include advanced treatment and discharge; conventional treatment and groundwater disposal; conventional treatment, disinfection and spray irrigation disposal; conventional treatment and total retention. The objective is to achieve a treatment/disposal system that is in compliance with State standards." (Anderson-Montgomery Consulting Engineers, Inc. 2013)

(Meagher County Sheriff's Department 2014). There is no county data regarding crime rates available for Meagher County on the US Department of Justice, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics website.

Fire Protection

Meagher County has four fire protection agencies: The City of White Sulphur Springs V.F.D., Meagher County Fire, Martinsdale Fire Service Area, and Grassy Mountain Rural Fire District. In total, Meagher County has 12 structure trucks, 7 tenders, 58 volunteer fire personnel, and 1 Ario Bucket Truck. There are 8 pressurized hydrants in the town of Martinsdale, 81 pressurized hydrants in White Sulphur Springs, and 11 dry hydrants in the county. (Meagher County Fire Chief/DES Coordinator 2014, WSS City Fire Chief: Otto Ohlson 2014).

Hospital and Nursing Home

Mountainview Medical Center—based in White Sulphur Springs—provides inpatient, outpatient, and long-term care as well as diagnostics and emergency services to all of Meagher County. The center has 25 beds, 4 day nurses, 3 night nurses, 2 Physicians Assistants, and 1 Doctor. The facility was remodeled in 2004 with the original building's footprint. The remodel included making changes and updates to the lab, x-ray room, emergency room, patient rooms, and some of the office spaces. (Mountain View Medical Center 2014).

Emergency Medical Services

In Meagher County, there are 18 certified EMT's and 3 ambulances to provide emergency medical services to the residents (Meagher County Fire Chief and DES Coordinator 2014).

Schools

There are two schools in Meagher County. Both of the schools are located in White Sulphur Springs. The White Sulphur Springs Elementary School teaches grades K-8 and has an enrollment of 95 students. The elementary school employs 7 teachers—1 for each grade except for 2nd—and has 10 classrooms (White Sulphur Springs Elementary School 2014). The White Sulphur Springs High School has an enrollment of 58 students and employs 9 teachers. The high school has 14 classrooms. Six of the faculty members are shared between the elementary school and high school (White Sulphur Springs High School 2014).

Newspaper

The *Meagher County News* is published once a week in White Sulphur Springs. It is available at local newsstands on Wednesday afternoons and delivered directly to subscribers' mailboxes on Thursday mornings. (Meagher County News 2014)

Community Facilities

Library:

Meagher County City Library is located in White Sulphur Springs. A new library has been proposed on a new site; however, there are no funds available for a new library building.

Museums:

“The Castle” (see Figure 17) is an imposing mansion built in 1892 by Bryon Roger Sherman and is now the home of the Meagher County Museum. The mansion has twelve rooms all laid with

hardwood floors and covered with Belgian and Oriental rugs. In the bathrooms are washbowls and stands of Italian marble as well as light fixtures made of crystal and brass. The Victorian landmark is made of hand-cut granite blocks hauled by oxen from the nearby Castle Mountains. The museum is complete with period furniture, mineral samples, clothing and artifacts from the region's past.

Figure 17
Castle Museum



Charles M. Bair Family Museum

“Charles M. Bair came to Montana in 1883. He worked as a conductor on the Northern Pacific Railroad and went into the ranching business in 1891. He made his fortune in the Alaska gold rush and went on to invest in banking, mining, oil and real estate. Bair was one of the most successful sheep ranchers in the world, at one time running over 300,000 head. Among his friends were Will Rogers, Chief Plenty Coups, Teddy Roosevelt and many other U.S. Presidents.” The museum (see Figure 18) is located adjacent to the Bair Family’s home in Martinsdale and features 4 galleries that present the family’s art collections (Bair Family Museum).

Figure 18
Bair Family Museum



Solid Waste Disposal:

Meagher County Solid Waste Transfer Station and Landfill

Public Recreation Areas and Facilities:

Smith River, Lake Sutherland, Newlan Creek, Martinsdale Reservoir, Bair Reservoir, Arrowhead Meadows Golf Course, Spa Hot Springs

Senior Center:

Meagher County Community Senior Center in White Sulphur Springs.

Public Airport:

White Sulphur Springs Airport

Banks:

Bank of the Rockies, Dutton State Bank

Community Facilities and Services Benchmarks

Table 10 compares Meagher County’s Community Resources to national benchmarks.

Table 10

Benchmarks		
	Meagher County	United States
Police Officers per 1000 inhabitants	1.59	1.7*
Firefighters per 1000 Inhabitants	30.67	3.6
Fire Vehicles per 1000 People	10.58	0.471
Fire Stations per 1000 people	0.53	0.164
Physicians per 1000 people**	1.59	2.4
Nurses per 1000 people	3.70	9.8
Beds per 1000 people	13.22	3
Student to Teacher Rate	9.56	13.5***
Budgeted Spending per capita****	\$107.88	\$113.89***

*West Region of the U.S. (Includes Montana) **Physicians include generalist and specialist medical practitioners. ***Montana. ****Spending on Governmental Administration. Sources: U.S. Department of Justice; NFPA Survey of Fire Departments; NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2010-2012; World Health Organization; NEA Research; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 Census of Governments

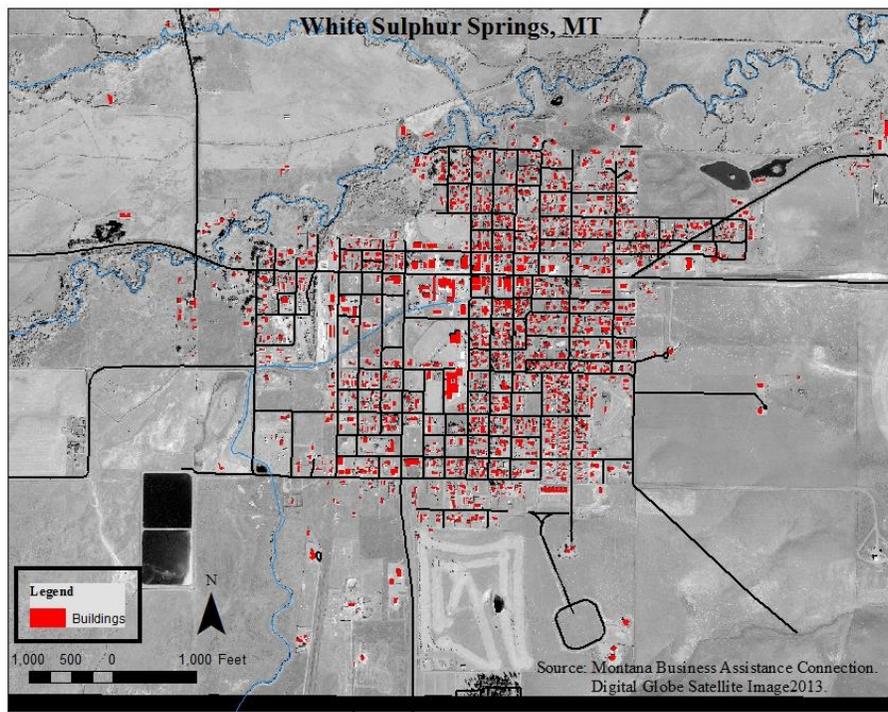
Comparing Meagher County to the United States’ benchmarks, there are a similar number of police officers; however, due to its small, rural population and the necessity for adequate fire protection, rates that involve fire are all higher than the U.S. The county has fewer nurses and physicians per 1000 people than the U.S. but more beds are available per 1000 people. When compared to Montana, Meagher County has a similar, but slightly less, student-to-teacher ratio. This is most likely because enrollment is lower than average for the state of Montana due to the county’s lack of youthful population (see Figure 4). Meagher County budgets \$107.88 per capita

for spending on governmental administration; this amount is about \$6 per person less than average county budget in the state of Montana.

LAND USE

The majority of Meagher County's land uses are natural environment and agriculture. The county seat of White Sulphur Springs has the most variety of other land uses: residential, commercial, industrial and institutional. Due to its size, activities, and infrastructure, White Sulphur Springs will attract the majority of new commercial and residential land development relative to the start of the new copper mine. The new copper mine will create jobs resulting in population increases creating the demand for housing and commercial activities such as retail.

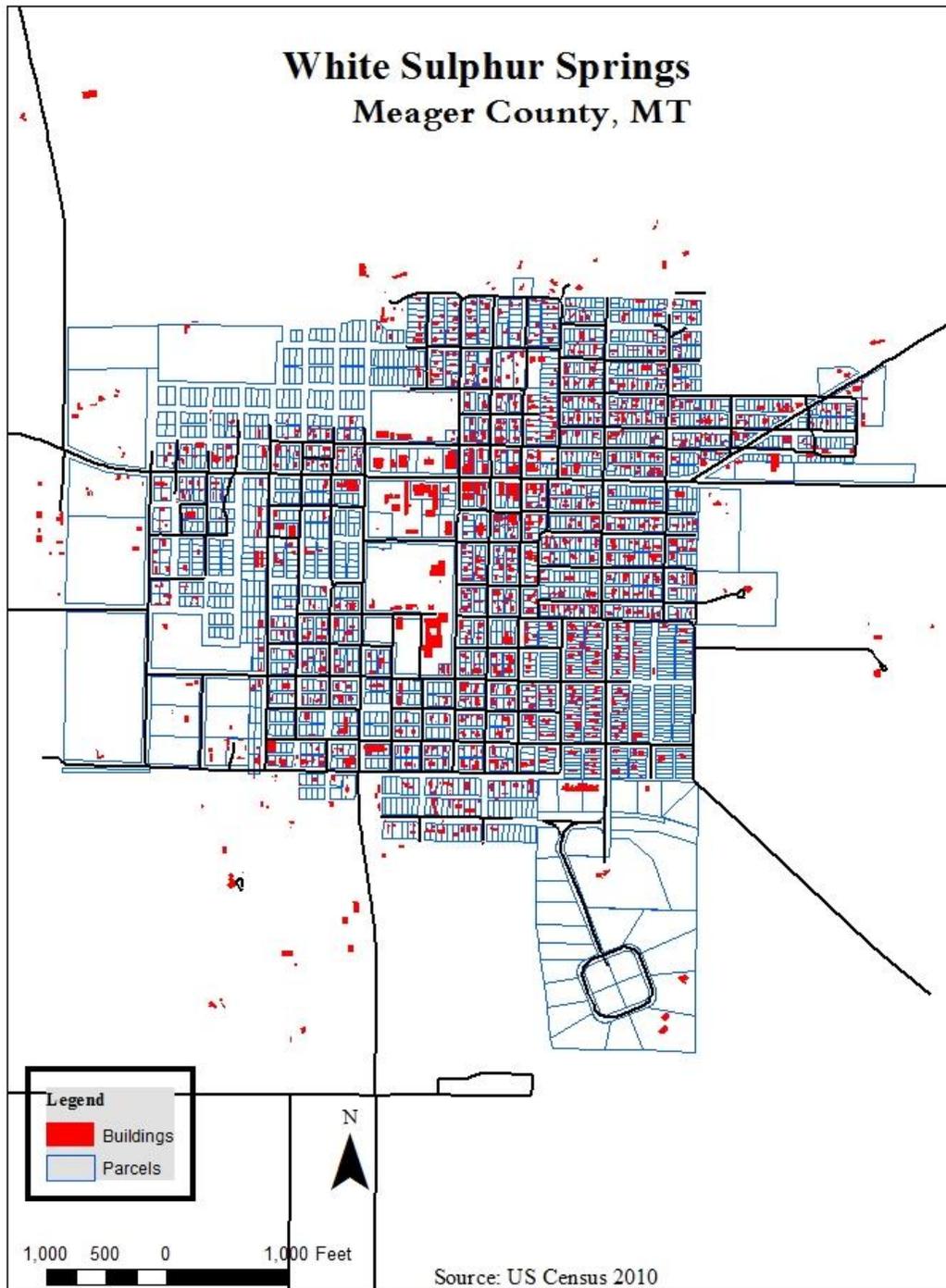
Figure 19
White Sulphur Springs Area Satellite Image September 2013



Vacant Buildings and Land

Due to the decline of economic activity and population, White Sulphur Springs has had an increase in vacated housing and commercial buildings. According to the 2010 Census, 23.1% of housing units in White Sulphur Springs are vacant and is almost double the national rate of 12.5%. A comparison of existing buildings with land parcels in Figure 20 shows a large number of parcels with no buildings. White Sulphur Springs has a sufficient number of vacant parcels for more residential development. As can be seen in the following map of the built environment 44% of platted lots in White Sulphur Springs have no buildings on them.

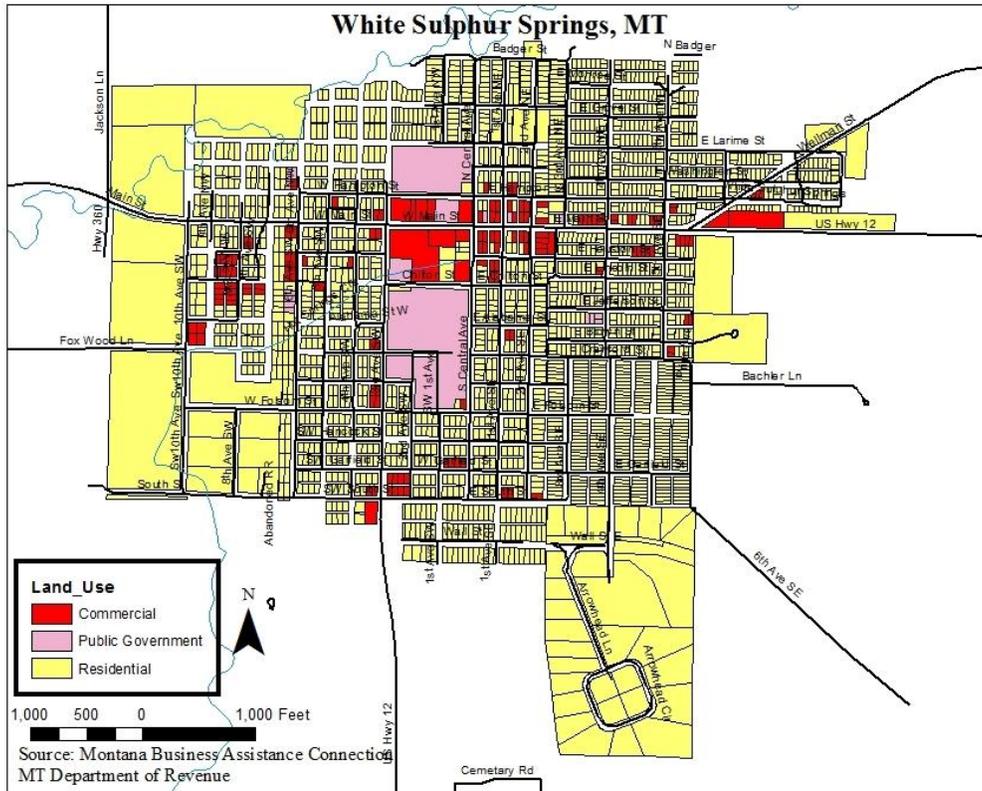
Figure 20
Built Environment



CURRENT LAND USE POLICIES

Meagher County revised its subdivision regulations in 2013 to guide land subdividing. Figure 21 is a map of how the land in White Sulphur Springs is currently being used.

Figure 21
Current Land Use Map



Public hearings regarding proposed subdivisions are conducted in accordance with the existing county subdivision regulations based on state statutes.

Projected Land Use without a new mine

Based on historical population growth trends that indicate a decreasing population, no significant changes in land use should occur to 2020. Capacity constraints of water and sewer systems further reduce the possibility of changes in land use.

Projected Land Uses based on new mine

If the mine is permitted, there will be an increase of jobs, population, and income; these increases will create a demand for new land use developments including residential, commercial, institutional, and possibly green space (parks). Consequently, land use demand is projected based on full operation of a new mine. Figure 20 is a map of the parcel information for the City of White Sulphur Springs. Many empty parcels will allow for building residential and commercial buildings within the city limits.

Retail Demand with New Mine

The total building area of commercial properties in the city of White Sulphur Springs for the year 2014 is 175,811 square feet (Montana Cadastral 2014). After conducting a field study to determine if each parcel is currently occupied or vacant in March 2014, the total area of occupied commercial properties in White Sulphur Springs is 117,248±48,626 square feet (MBAC Field Study 2014).

Table 11 and Table 12 show the retail demand and projections for Meagher County in 2010 and 2020:

Table 11

Retail Demand (2010)		
Per capita income in the past 12 months	\$	17,318.00
Population		1891
Total County Income	\$	32,748,338.00
Total County Sales	\$	16,374,000.00
Total Sales per Capita	\$	8,541.00
Total Sales/Total Income		50.00%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2006-2010, & Economic Census 2007

Table 12

Retail Demand Projections (2020)		
	Without Mine	With Mine*
Projected Population	1846	2242
Total County Income	\$31,969,028	\$38,826,954
Total County Sales	\$15,984,349.02	\$19,413,277.36

*The mineworkers will have a higher income than current levels in the county, causing an increase in the per capita income for 2020. This increase was not assumed for the projection; therefore, the with-mine projection is a conservative estimate of future retail sales.

Table 13 compares the expected retail sales of the Western United States to that of White Sulphur Springs.

Table 13

Commercial Property Retail Sales		
White Sulphur Springs	Value	Units
Total Floor Space	147,837	sq. ft.
Total Occupied Floor Space	132,627	sq. ft.
Total Vacant Floor Space	15,210	sq. ft.
Total County Retail Sales	16,374,000	\$
Center Sales	123.46	\$/sq. ft.
Western United States	Average	Units
Total Floor Space	233,073	sq. ft.
Total Operating Receipts	20.20	\$/sq. ft.
Total Operating Expenses	5.02	\$/sq. ft.
Net Operating Balance	15.20	\$/sq. ft.
Center Sales	363.98	\$/sq. ft.
Comparison		
Western US-White Sulphur Springs Center Sales	240.52	\$/sq. ft.

Sources: International Council of Shopping Centers; Montana Cadastral; U.S. Census Bureau—Economic Census 2007; MBAC Field Study

Businesses in White Sulphur Springs make an estimated \$123.46/sf this figure is \$240.52 less than what is expected for the Western United States (see Table 13’s “Comparison” section).

If the mine develops, retail sales are estimated to increase by 2020 to \$19,413,278. Given current retail sales per square foot are \$123.46, the projected demand for total commercial space will be 157,245sf. The current supply of commercial space is 147,837sf which is less than the projected demand. Also, much of the existing commercial space is in poor condition. Consequently, because new businesses prefer better quality space, some new commercial space development should be expected.

New commercial space use relative to the new mine’s economic activity implies two development alternatives.

1. Develop new commercial space.
2. Use and rehabilitate existing commercial space.

Residential Land Use Demand with New Mine

With the new mine, the 2020 population of Meagher County is estimated to be 2,242. The net increase is 396 persons. The average household size in Meagher County is 2.69. Consequently, the demand for new housing units should be approximately 147 housing units.

White Sulphur Springs is the primary trade and residential area in Meagher County, and is anticipated to attract almost all new residents to the county. According to the 2010 Census, there were 130 vacant housing units in White Sulphur Springs. However, by 2020 73% of the housing units will be over 50 years old and in poor condition leaving approximately 35 housing units available. Based on a 2020 estimated demand of 147 housing units with approximately 35 available, the estimated 2020 net demand for new housing units is approximately 112 housing units in White Sulphur Springs.

Citizen Land Use Preferences

The following are the land use preferences expressed in citizen focus groups, citizen surveys, and by local government officials and possible economic trends.

- Improve the job market
- Improve city housing
- Support and promote sustainable development

GROWTH POLICIES

Meagher County growth policies are founded on a review of national best practices concepts, an assessment of economic conditions, and most importantly Meagher County’s citizen preferences. The following national best practices and trends were reviewed by Meagher County citizens and officials for applicability to Meagher County. Due to the ups and downs of economic activity, an important concept for Meagher County citizens is sustainable development, therefore, Meagher County growth policies should encourage sustainable development regardless of population and economic decreases or increases. This policy will minimize infrastructure costs and taxes.

*Due to the ups and downs of economic activity, an important **Growth Policy** concept for Meagher County citizens is **sustainable development**. Sustainable economy, environment, infrastructure, and lifestyle.*

Current Growth Policies

As of 2013, Meagher County had Subdivision Regulations in accordance with the “Montana Subdivision and Platting Act” (Title 76, Chapter 3, MCA). The Subdivision Regulations were revised as of 2013.

As of 2013, the county does not have zoning, building codes or other land use policies.

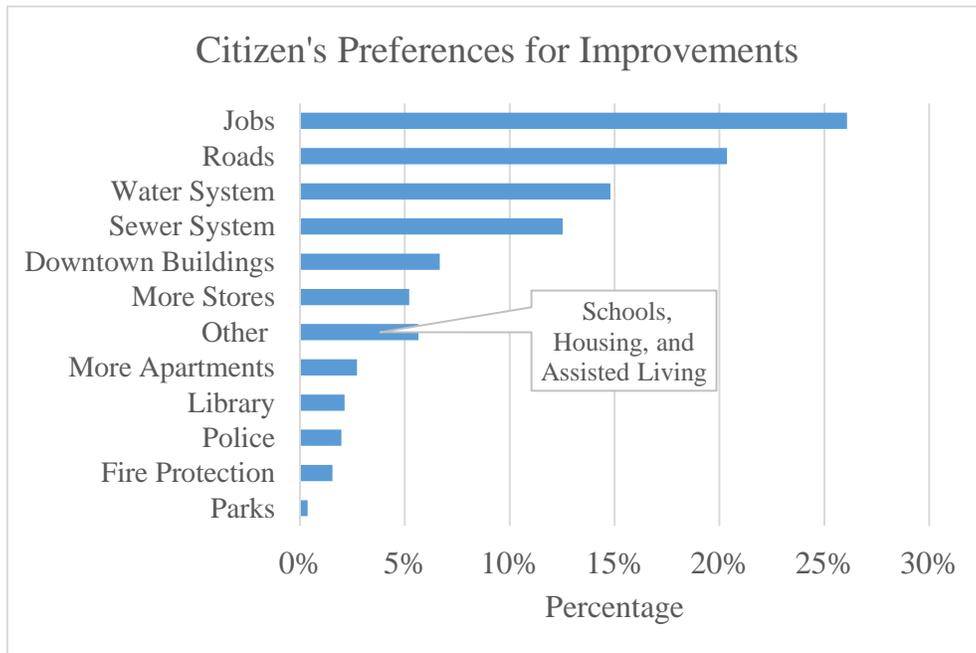
Economic Conditions Affecting Growth Policies

For the past twenty years, Meagher County’s economy has experienced a slow decline. The economic decline also resulted in the loss of population, especially of young workers, which reduced the demand for housing and further caused the decline in housing quality. The county must adapt to this long-term trend with its growth policies. The economic decline has impaired housing, community infrastructure and the tax base for assisting the community.

Citizen Preferences for Growth Policies

A survey of citizens was conducted in April 2014 to identify the community priorities for making improvements in White Sulphur Springs. A total of 511 surveys were sent and 229 surveys were filled out. Figure 22 shows how the community voted on the improvements; a higher number implies a higher priority.

Figure 22



The survey shows that the main items the citizens of White Sulphur Springs want to improve are the job market and roads followed by the water and sewer systems.

In a public meeting, the top 3 preferences that were voted regarding growth policies are (1) promoting new wealth by having different jobs and businesses, (2) create and/or update amenities to attract tourism and new residents, and (3) improve the city's infrastructure and housing (see APPENDIX A: Growth Policy Public Meeting (May 13, 2014))

In the same public meeting, the citizens mentioned the following as growth policy priorities:

- New wealth through different jobs and businesses.
- Housing improved.
- Sustainable development with or without the mine.
- Support for the new mine.
- Implement land use policies
 - Zoning, building codes, design standards for commercial buildings, and code enforcement.

In city and county commission meetings, Elected Officials stated very strong support for the new mine. Several also indicated the need for land use policies

Growth Policy Goals

Based on the current built environment, potential trends, a survey of and meetings with citizens, consultation with Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs elected leaders, the White Sulphur Springs Chamber of Commerce, and recommendations of professional civil engineers, suggests the following Meagher County 2014-2019 Growth Policies.

1. Economic Development

The primary growth policy desired by the citizens of the county and city is economic development. The local economy has been declining causing depopulation, unemployment, poverty, closing of businesses and due to lack of funds deteriorating buildings and infrastructure. The economic development policy goal is to create jobs and increase personal wealth. Citizens encourage and suggest economic development actions such as recruiting businesses to the county, improving buildings in the downtown to attract visitors, and to advertise to retirees to relocate in the county. Especially military retirees from the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls. Military retirees have a good pension at mid-life and are a source of entrepreneurs for new businesses. Also retirees from the fire or police are similar opportunities.

Support Opening New Mine

A widely supported economic development policy objective is to support the opening of the TinTina Resources, Inc. copper mine. Citizens know the history of mining in the county and the plans of Tintina Resources' mine and strongly support it. Citizens voiced their opinion and knowledge about the mine's impact on Smith River and Sheep Creek as being well mitigated and protected. There will be no adverse impacts on the environment or on the few state approved river guides that charge \$3,000 plus for a river float. Citizens also stated the federal and state natural resource regulations have caused the most environmental damage in the county in forests and Smith River.

Promote Tourism

Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs have a rich history and many natural resources that should be used to promote tourism in the area:

The natural hot springs, now the *Spa Hot Springs Motel and Clinic*, has provided White Sulphur Springs with much of its famous history. The earliest history associated with the area dates back to when Native American tribes were traveling through the valley; the mineral water in the hot springs was said to have great medicinal effects. Many native tribes, some at war, wanted to reap the benefits of the springs, thus, a truce was made so the valley became a place of peace that everyone could enjoy. Later on, around 1900, John Ringling of the Ringling Brother's Circus purchased the property and had dreams of building a grand resort until the great depression hit. Ringling also owned the railroad that linked White Sulphur Springs to Ringling, MT. Another notable historical figure from White Sulphur Springs was Taylor Gordon, who not only worked as the personal porter for Ringling on his railway car, but also was a major contributor to African American and folk music. Gordon, a White Sulphur Springs native, sang and performed at Carnegie Hall and toured Europe during the Harlem Renaissance until retiring and moving back to White Sulphur Springs in 1959.

Potential Projects to Increase Tourism

- Refurbish the train car as a Ringling Train Car and White Sulphur Springs' old train depot. Open it as a static display museum about the circus and its history in Meagher County, and the circus' unique relationship with railroad transportation. Grant funding for this can be applied for from the MT Department of Transportation *Community Transportation Enhancement Program* (CTEP) that funds historical transportation facilities. Display items could be borrowed from the Ringling Museum in Florida.



- Improve tourism signage along the main roads and streets; this can be partially funded by a CTEP grant. Way-faring signage is critical to drive out-of-town tourists to places of interest such as parks, shopping, tourism attractions, restaurants, and entertainment places.



- Promote more festivals such as the *Red Ants Pants Music Festival*. The *Red Ants Pants* Festival attracts thousands of tourists from across the state, nation and the world.



2. Sustainable Development

Whether the new copper mine is permitted to operate or not, the population trends of White Sulphur Springs and Meagher County require a strategy to cope with change. There will be change: either the population will continue to decrease or, with the new mine, rapidly increase 40% to the year 2020. Population changes cause other changes in need for infrastructure, the cost of infrastructure, the need for housing, the need for commerce, the needs for public safety, and the need for community facilities such as schools or senior citizen services.

These trends must be balanced with the community's capacity in terms of infrastructure, tax revenues, and citizens' preferences. In general, this is the theme of sustainable development.

Sustainable development involves balancing trends with community capacity. Also, to encourage concentrated growth to minimize infrastructure cost and geographically maximize consumer demand. Specific policies can be used to encourage the balance. For example, discouraging sprawl growth along transportation corridors that increases infrastructure costs and dilutes consumer demand and subsequently the economy. Concentrated growth simultaneously reduces taxes to fund infrastructure and increases the economy and tax revenues by improving the commercial market.

National Sustainable Development Goals

- Promote equitable and affordable housing by expanding energy-efficient housing choices or all ages, incomes, races, etc. and lowering combined costs of housing and transportation (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2010)
- Rural towns must determine specific areas for intended growth and areas to be preserved for the best chances at sustainable development (United States 2012).
- To grow, local government typically needs to revise their land use plans, development codes and capital improvement plans to reinforce community decisions about development (United States 2012).
- A sustainability model is sustainable if and only if it travels a path that is beneficial for an infinite span of time (Zatzman 2012).
- The amount of waste produced in any processes using technology should fall within the assimilative capacity of the ecosystem (Zatzman 2012).

3. Improve Built Environment and Land Use

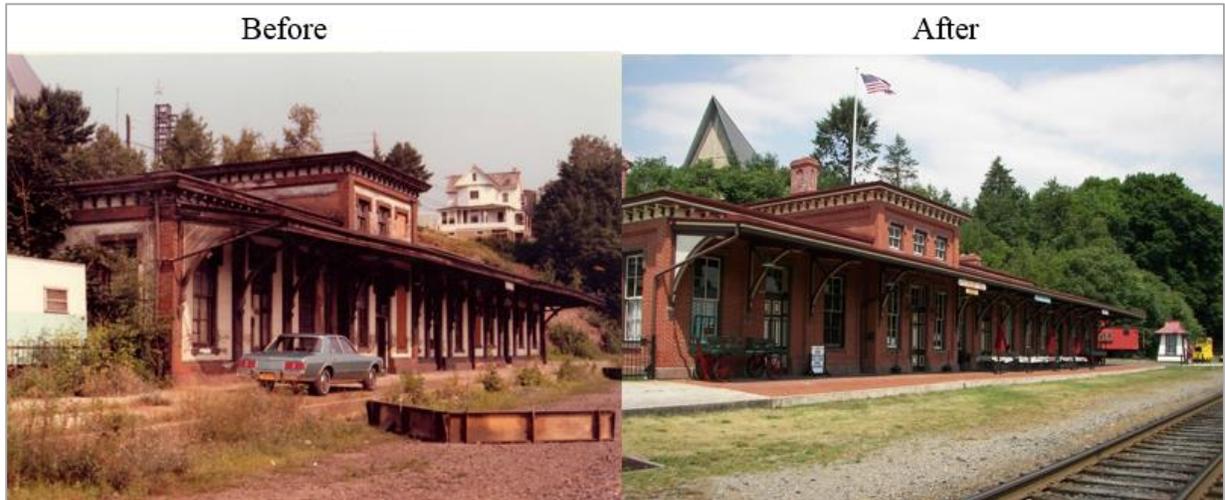
A citizen preference survey determined needed improvements in White Sulphur Springs consist of downtown buildings and also housing structures (see Figure 22). In public hearings of county citizens, they expressed the same concerns. A financially feasible way to address this citizen concern for downtown buildings is through the Montana *Main Street* Program that is run by the Montana Department of Commerce; it is a branch of the National Trust Main Street Center, developed in 1980, that has helped over 2000 communities nationwide.

“The Montana Main Street Program helps communities strengthen and preserve their historic downtown commercial districts by focusing on economic development, urban revitalization, and historic preservation through long-range planning, organization, design, and promotion... The program provides services and assistance to communities striving to enhance economic and business vitality while maintaining local historic integrity, quality of life, and a sense of

place...The program also offers technical assistance and competitive grant funding to communities actively working on downtown revitalization, economic development, and historic preservation.” (Montana Main Street 2014)

Figure 23 below shows a before-and-after example of one of the Main Street Program’s projects. In this example, the program helped refurbish an old train station in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania.

Figure 23



To improve housing structures, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality offers low interest loans to improve the energy efficiency of homes. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers in its 213 program to guarantee loans for rural housing developments. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also offers loan programs for rural housing.

Adopt Building Codes

In White Sulphur Springs, there are a large number of dilapidated houses and commercial buildings. It is possible that part of the cause of structural dilapidation was poor quality construction materials and construction.

If the new mine operates and creates a demand for new housing units, there will be a rush to build. Prior examples from disasters to rebuild homes show that unqualified builders will come in and build poor quality construction. Adopting nationally recognized building codes will help to prevent poor construction. Furthermore, quality builders will be familiar with nationally recognized codes and will build better, faster and less expensively. With unique local codes, builders have to learn and understand the codes that could cause misinterpretations as well as disrupting construction methods normally used with nationally known codes.

Recommendation about building codes: International Building Code 2012
<https://archive.org/stream/gov.law.icc.ibc.2012/icc.ibc.2012#page/n26/mode/1up>

Implement Land Use Codes

Citizen surveys and meetings highlighted the need to improve the city and county built environment of infrastructure, roads and buildings both residential and commercial. Many citizens support the implementation of land use codes to improve the built environment. There was consensus to encourage sustainable growth with subdivision regulations and a simple zoning

code. The goals are to improve the appearance of buildings/town and to cluster development to minimize infrastructure and road costs, and improve the economy.

A simple zoning code is desired to not over proscribe regulated land uses and to facilitate good development. Over proscribed land use regulations discourage investments in land and buildings, and require additional county/city staff expertise and time to manage. The county and city do not have the funds nor is there sufficient activity to generate fees to pay for a significant increase in zoning code work.

4. Cluster Development

Clustering development reduces infrastructure needs, costs and user fees. Sprawled linear development increases infrastructure needs and unit costs requiring higher user fees and taxes.

Given Meagher County's and White Sulphur Springs's need for infrastructure improvements and the certainty of population growth changes either trending less or possibly more with a new mine, clustering development will minimize infrastructure need and costs. Currently, Meagher County population and buildings are relatively clustered in White Sulphur Springs. The county through its infrastructure investments can reinforce clustering in White Sulphur Springs. White Sulphur Springs has unintentional and intentional clustering with most commercial buildings in the downtown and one newer, clustered subdivision in the southeast of town. These clustering trends can be reinforced by the city's infrastructure investments only to clustered areas and the infrastructure main systems converging to treatment facilities. Furthermore, the city can adopt a building permit requirement that new buildings can only be permitted in areas with existing, and high capacity of infrastructure.

Residential Clusters

Residential land uses can be clustered in different ways. One method for large lots (10+ acres) is to have the lots in "pie-slice" shapes with one main entrance to the center of the pie. Housing units are located close to the center cul-de-sac for hook-up to infrastructure. The housing units have the large area of their pie-slice as the personal open space.

Residential can also be clustered into urban center areas on second floor of commercial establishments or as stand-alone in the urban center. This urban design is often referred to as an *Urban Village* described in the next section. In addition to minimizing infrastructures, the mix of residential and commercial in the urban center will improve the downtown economy as shoppers can easily walk and browse in the downtown shops. Another benefit is for elderly housing. Clustering senior housing in a downtown with commercial and institutional uses makes it easier for the elderly to buy groceries and improve access various social services.

Commercial Clusters

An ideal example of commercial cluster development is the notion of an *urban village*. *Urban villages* typically have mixed-use and put an emphasis on public space and pedestrian transportation. Generally, urban villages help facilitate community interaction, provide a great amount of a self-contained economy (people working, recreating, and living in the same area), and reduce reliance on cars by promoting cycling and walking. There clustered development reduces infrastructure costs.

Figure 24 is a proposed urban village that will occupy 4 blocks in downtown Auburn, Washington. The village will include a variety of commercial and multifamily residential spaces near public transit stations upon its expected completion in 2015.

Figure 24



Growth Policy Objectives

With current trends continuing, the county and city will consider the following growth objectives to improve sustainability.

1. Stop the expansion of infrastructure. Stopping the expansion of infrastructure will limit maintenance costs that are already unsustainable.
2. Adopt nationally recognized building codes such as the International Building Code 2012 version (as amended), International Residential Code 2012 version (as amended), International Plumbing Code 2012 version (as amended), and International Mechanical Code 2012 version (as amended). This will ensure the quality of new construction.
3. Encourage new developments of housing or businesses to build where there is adequate infrastructure. This could be implemented with zoning or urban design that facilitates the desired development.
4. Inform citizens of Department of Environmental Quality financing for home energy improvements such as weather stripping and insulation.
5. Apply for *Main Street* downtown revitalization assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce.
6. Apply for US Department of Housing & Urban Development HOPE grants to repair housing. US Department of Agriculture has drastically reduced grants for rural housing and development and is not a worthwhile source to apply to.
7. Use eminent domain to acquire and demolish dilapidated structures that are public health and safety hazards. Doing so will also reduce use of infrastructure.

8. As funds are available such as a grant from the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) of the Montana Department of Transportation, improve tourism attractions to help current businesses sustain operations and provide jobs.

A unique opportunity for Meagher County is the development of a new copper mine that can stimulate and improve the economy for a decade. The copper mine development gives the county a chance to fund and implement growth policies to guide new, sustainable growth. Relative to the development of the mine, the county and city will consider the following growth policy objectives and regulations.

1. Due to the increased demand for housing and the potential problem of unqualified construction contractors building haphazardly, the county/city should adopt nationally recognized building codes such as the International Building Code 2012 version (as amended), International Residential Code 2012 version (as amended), International Plumbing Code 2012 version (as amended), and International Mechanical Code 2012 version (as amended). This will ensure the quality of new construction. Inept and unscrupulous construction contractors have been a serious problem for local governments and homeowners rebuilding after a disaster or due to fast growth.
2. Encourage new developments of housing or businesses to build where there is adequate infrastructure. This could be implemented with zoning, building permit requirement or urban design that facilitates desired commercial development. Due to the mine being 17-20 miles north of White Sulphur Springs, residential development will most likely occur east and north of the city. Residential development will attract more commercial development that will spread to the east along Highway 12. Such commercial strip development creates demand for “strip” infrastructure development that is costly and requires higher fees/taxes to pay for. In addition, commercial strip development dilutes economic demand over geography making overall commercial businesses to suffer. Using urban design, building permits, or zoning of a commercial center can minimize infrastructure costs and concentrate commercial activity to a healthy economic level.
3. Apply for *Main Street* downtown revitalization assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce.
4. Apply for an infrastructure grant from the US Economic Development Administration that requires a 40% match. The match could come from *Hard Rock* Impact funding.

WILD LAND FIRE PROVISIONS

According to Rick Seidlitz of Meagher County Fire, Meagher County has not had any significant wildfires since 2003 and the town of White Sulphur Springs has no specific wildfire hazards. There are not any defensible space rules or regulations in place in the county.

INTERJURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

Meagher County and White Sulphur Springs both have their own Growth Policy Plans. The plans are made similarly to allow for coordination and cooperating on matters regarding growth policy. Collaboration needs to be improved with the federal government pertaining to natural resource uses for timber and environmental regulations that affect the county and city economy and population. Federal regulations already caused a major economic decline, unemployment and poverty in the county and city.

UPDATES AND REVISIONS

This document was prepared in 2014 with the latest official information available. Also surveys and meetings of citizens were done in spring 2014 specifically for this plan. This plan should be updated in five years, around 2019. However, this plan should be updated if there is a significant change in the assumptions of this plan. Following are events that require an update of this plan.

- There is a major natural disaster or economic or financial change in the county not included in this plan.
- The national economy experiences a change of gross domestic product of 2% points.
- The new mine goes into operation and the number of jobs is significantly different (25%) than projected herein.
- The population changes 25% more than projected herein.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Table 14 is the 2014 Growth Policy Plan implementation schedule.

Table 14

TASK	RESPONSIBLE UNIT	WHEN
Completion of sewer system improvements	City of White Sulphur Springs	2014
Resurfacing Main St. White Sulphur Springs	MT DoT	2014-16
Review of new building codes for adoption.	Meagher County & City of White Sulphur Springs	2014-15
Study Downtown Revitalization.	City of White Sulphur Springs & Montana Department of Commerce <i>Main Street Program</i> .	2014-15
Apply for grant for historical transportation facility for depot and train.	Meagher County Historical Society with MBAC assisting.	2014
If copper mine permitted, review community impacts for <i>Hard Rock</i> funding.	Meagher County & City of White Sulphur Springs	2016
If copper mine permitted, prepare strategies and grant applications for housing development and economic development.	Meagher County & City of White Sulphur Springs with MBAC assisting.	2016
If copper mine permitted and prior to close down of operations, review and prepare for economic dislocation and assistance from US Economic Development Administration.	Meagher County & City of White Sulphur Springs	2025-30

PROGRESS ON DEVELOPMENT POLICIES SINCE 2003

Following are the Growth Policies stated in the 2003 Meagher County Growth Policy Plan and the current status.

A. Developments may not interfere with agricultural operations.

- a. Policy has been implemented. This policy may be expanded on in 2014 with land use policy in this 2014 plan to protect agricultural operations or create a buffer with other developed land uses such as residential or commercial.

- B. New development must be designed to minimize the public costs of providing services.**
 - a. The county has updated subdivision regulations in order to implement the policy. And, it is recommended as a 2014 policy.
- C. Developments must minimize or prevent public health or safety hazards.**
 - a. Policy has been implemented.
- D. Encourage new growth to be compatible with Meagher County's agricultural and rural character.**
 - a. Policy has been implemented.
- E. New growth is encouraged to locate near existing communities, and discouraged on the productive agriculture lands in Meagher County.**
 - a. The county is continuing to implement this policy.
- F. Protect the rivers and streams, floodplains, riparian areas and wetlands in the county.**
 - a. Policy has been implemented and continues.

APPENDIX A: Growth Policy Public Meeting (May 13, 2014)

Attendance

Name:	From:
Mike Eby	White Sulphur Springs, City Commissioner
Pat McCoy	13 Miles N of White Sulphur Springs
Mike Leonard	Grassy Mt. (Meagher County)
Ken Nelson	White Sulphur Springs
John Nelson	White Sulphur Springs
Julie Hanrahan	White Sulphur Springs
Buddy Hanrahan	White Sulphur Springs, Chamber of Commerce President
Dick Roma	White Sulphur Springs
Beth Hunt	White Sulphur Springs
Julian Theriault	White Sulphur Springs, Mayor
Sharla Moore	White Sulphur Springs
Calvin Moore	White Sulphur Springs
Gorge Dory	White Sulphur Springs
John Blumer	White Sulphur Springs
Steve Hicks	White Sulphur Springs
Jerry Zieg	Part Time in White Sulphur Springs
Susan Zieg	Spokane, WA (owns a home in WSS)
Nancy Schlepp	Ringling (Meagher County)
Herb Townsend	White Sulphur Springs, County Commissioner

Meeting Comments about Meagher County and/or White Sulphur Springs:

- Need more types of jobs than agriculture
- Want a dance hall/mini convention center
- The last downtown cleanup was 30 years ago
- There are jobs for men, but wives don't want to move to White Sulphur Springs
 - No social space available
 - No good shopping is available
 - The buildings are of poor quality
- Need a grant writer for housing, CDBG, RLF, etc.
- Need sidewalk improvements
- Want to make White Sulphur Springs more attractive
 - New town murals

- Demolish buildings of poor quality, but be aware of problems that may arise due to common walls
- Community organizing needs to be done in order to make improvements
- There are jobs, but no housing for potential employees
- Schools have decreasing enrollment
- Need to implement land use policies
 - Zoning, building codes, design standards for commercial buildings, and code enforcement.
- Need to engage absentee owners of properties
- Recruit and attract retirees from military, police, and fire to create new businesses
- Need sustainable development with or without the mine
- Need support for the new mine

Citizen's Top Priorities

In a vote for the attendees of the meeting, the first priorities matched similarly to the citizen survey with the addition of amenities to attract tourism and new residents:

Issue	Votes
Zoning	0
New wealth through jobs	7
Amenities to attract tourism and new residents	4
Clean up the town	0
Infrastructure	3
Housing	3

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METHODOLOGIES

Population Projections

The cohort-survival method, while assuming historical migration, was used to project the populations for 2015 and 2020.

In order to project the population for 2020, a growth rate was calculated for each cohort from census data. Each 2010 cohort was divided by their respective 2000 cohort to calculate the ten year growth rates. The rates were then applied to the 2010 population cohorts to project the population cohorts for 2020.

To project the population for 2015, the square root of the growth rates were applied to the projected 2020 population.

To project the 0-4 and 5-9 cohorts for 2020, a fertility rate was calculated by dividing the total number of 0-9 year olds in 2010 by the total number of 20-39 year-old women in 2000. This fertility rate was applied to the total number 20-39 year-old women in 2010 to project the total number of 0-9 year olds in 2020. To determine the total population in the specific 0-4 and 5-9 cohorts, the number of 0-4 year olds in 2010 was divided by the total number of 0-9 year olds in 2010 to find the percentage that exists in the 0-4 cohort. The same was done for the 5-9 cohort.

To project the 0-4 and 5-9 cohorts for 2015, the square root of the fertility rate was applied to the projected 2020 cohorts.

Retail Demand

To calculate that retail demand in 2010, the per capita income was multiplied by the population in order to determine the total county income. Next, the total dollar amount of sales in the county was divided by the total county income to calculate the percentage of income that the Meagher County population spends on retail.

To project the retail demand for 2020 (with and without the mine), the projected populations were multiplied by the 2010 per capita income to estimate the total county income. The total county income was then multiplied by the retail sales percent rate found for the 2010 retail demand in order to estimate the total county sales for 2020. The mineworkers will have an income that is greater than the average income in Meagher County, this detail was not factored into the projection, and therefore the with-mine projection is conservative.

Taxable Value Projection

To project the taxable value without the mine to the year 2020, an Excel regression analysis was done using the *Data Analysis ToolPak*; however, the slope and intercept that were calculated are not statistically significant due to the small number of data points available.

To project the taxable value with the mine, the estimated cost of the mine's surface facilities and buildings was added to the projected taxable value without the mine.

Citizen's Preferences Survey

The survey was mailed out to each of White Sulphur Springs' water utility customers. A total of 511 surveys were distributed and 229 were returned and filled out correctly. Figure 25 is a copy of the survey that was sent out.

Figure 25

MBAC is assisting the county to plan for TinTina Resources new mine, we want to know your opinion on what are the needs for White Sulphur Springs.

**TOP THREE TO IMPROVE IN
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS
ONLY RANK 3 ITEMS TOTAL**

Rank Priority 1, 2, 3	Improve
	Water system
	Sewer system
	Library
	Jobs
	Downtown buildings
	Police
	Fire Protection
	Roads
	More Stores
	Parks
	More apartments
	Other:

When the surveys were returned, the results were added to a new row in an Excel table. If the citizen ranked an issue with a 1, 3 points were assigned to that issue on the spreadsheet. If an issue was ranked with a 2, 2 points were awarded. If an issue was ranked with a 3, 1 point was awarded. To create Figure 22, the sum of points was taken for each issue.

With a population in White Sulphur Springs of 939 and 229 surveys returned, we have a 5.63% margin of error with a 95% confidence interval.

Residential Land Use Demand with New Mine

Table 15 shows how the number of housing units demanded were calculated:

Table 15

Residential Land Use Demand (with mine)		
Net Population Increase	396	
Average Household Size (Meagher County)	<u>÷2.69</u>	
Housing Unit Demand in 2020		147
Available (vacant) Units 2010	130	
% of Housing Less than 50 years old in 2020	<u>*27%</u>	
Available and Livable Units in 2020		<u>(35)</u>
Net Units Demanded in 2020		112

Net Government Administration Costs

According to the US Census Bureau, County and City Data Book: 2007, Meagher County budgets \$204,000 for annual spending on government administration. Thus per capita spending

amounts to \$107.88 for the county. With the mine, the population is expected to increase by 396 persons. Multiply the new population by the per capita budgeted spending for the net increase in government administration costs of \$42,720.