

MONTANA'S

STILLWATER COUNTY

OVERALL
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN
1997
UPDATE

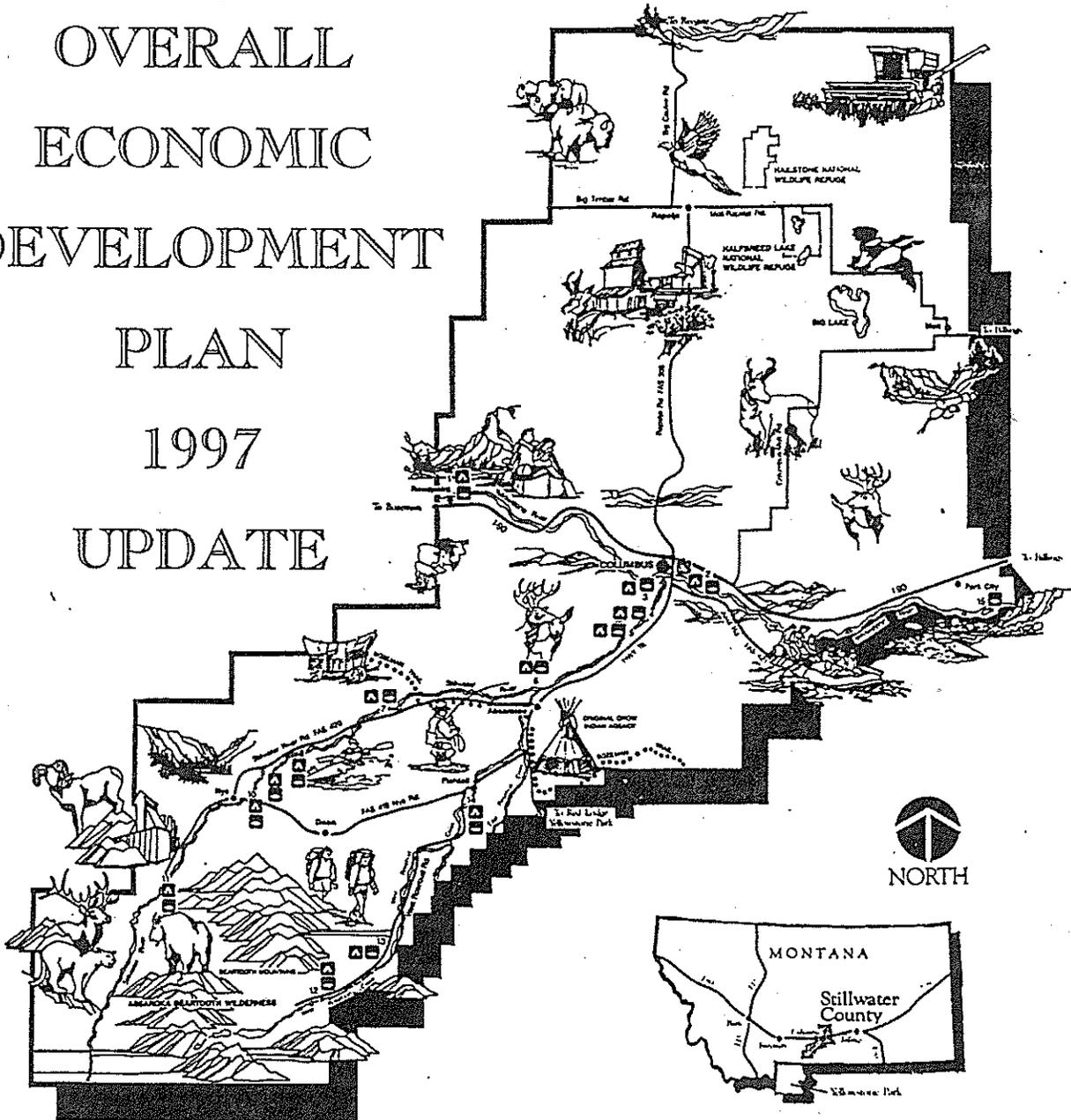


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INTRODUCTION

The Economic Development Committee completed work on an Overall Economic Development Plan for Stillwater County this past year. The plan was approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration in May 1989. The plan contains six sections on the committee, historical assessment of past development efforts, the area and its economy, potentials for economic development, a development strategy and plan for implementation. Copies of the Stillwater County, Overall Economic Development Plan are available in the Stillwater County Planning Office.

The following goal and objectives were established to guide economic development efforts.

Goal

To provide a method for guiding and coordinating the efforts of local governments and civic organizations concerned with the economic development of the County for the purpose of creating a more stable and diversified economy with new employment opportunities to increase personal income and expand the local tax base.

Long Term Objectives

1. Encourage the development and economic use of natural resources in the county especially minerals and agricultural products. Appropriate conservation measures are also endorsed for soil, water and other significant natural resources.
2. Work with existing businesses and industry having expansion plans and actively seek new businesses interested in the county. Inform prospects of advantages of locating in the county and assist with financial arrangements for infrastructure or site development whenever possible.
3. Promote the County to attract new business, industry and visitors to increase economic activity. Cooperate with civic groups in the county on all promotions and public relations efforts.

Short Term Objectives

1. Utilize an Overall Economic Development Committee with broad representation and involvement in the program. The committee will update the Overall Economic Development Plan as needed and analyze the area economy, identify potentials for economic development, decide an economic development strategy, prepare annual plans for implementation, prepare annual Overall Economic Development Reports, and keep county residents informed of program plans and accomplishments.
2. Determine additional needs for community facilities and services. Study existing road system, water supply, sewer facilities, industrial parks, health care services, fire protection, parks and

recreation, and the adequacy of housing necessary to support economic development.

3. Identify continuing education and training needs for the county work force, unemployed, underemployed, and identify organizational structure necessary to meet these needs. Involve all appropriate organizations to coordinate this effort.

Several public improvement projects and planning projects were recommended to the Stillwater County Commissioners and Columbus Town Council in a one year plan for implementation and a multi-year plan. The Overall Economic Development Committee will continue to monitor economic conditions of the county. Key indicators include labor statistics, population projections, taxable valuation, available financial resources and opportunities for economic development. The committee will report any changes annually to the Economic Development Administration. The Stillwater County Planning Office assists the Committee to prepare and implement the Economic Development Plans.

**SECTION I
THE OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The OEDP Committee members have been appointed by the Stillwater County Commissioners and serve in an advisory capacity to the Commissioners or may make recommendations to the Columbus Town Council and coordinate projects with other public officials.

OEDP COMMITTEE

Member	Position	Occupation	Race
Bruce Nathan Box 104 Columbus, MT 59019	Chairman	Banking	Caucasian.
Lupe Gonzales Box 667 Columbus, MT 59019	Vice-Chairman	Postal Service	Hispanic
Jerry Gardner Box 485 Absarokee, MT 59001	Member	Grocer	Caucasian.
John Andrews Star Route 2, Box 365 Nye, MT 59061	Member	Mine Supervisor	Caucasian.
Webb Mandeville RR. 1, Box 152 Columbus, MT 59019	Member	Real Estate/Ins.	Caucasian.
Linda Lafferty Box 325 Park City, MT 59063	Member	Public Health	Caucasian.
Grover Rickman Rt. 2 Box 47 Fishtail, MT 59028	Member	Rancher	Caucasian.
Pat Terland Box 595 Columbus, MT 59019	Member	Retired	Caucasian.

STILLWATER COUNTY

P.O. Box 970
Columbus, Mt 59019
322-4546

STILLWATER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

L. Harold Blattie, Chairman
Clifford A. Bare, Member
Charles E. Egan, Member

Other Stillwater County Officials

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Robert Edelman	County Attorney
Cliff Brophy	Sheriff
Marilyn Kober	Justice of Peace
Jean Bare	Clerk of District Court
Carol Rice	Treasurer/Assessor
Janet Parkins	Clerk and Recorder
Joy Campbell	Supt. of Schools
Jack Knorr	Road Supervisor
John Beaudry	Planning Director
Rod Fink	Sanitarian
Nancy Ambrose	Welfare Dept.
Pat Graham	Extension Office
Tom Kelly	Civil Defense
Deanna King	Librarian

TOWN OF COLUMBUS

P.O. Box 549
Columbus, MT 59019
322-5313

TOWN COUNCIL

Jack Kenyon, Mayor
Terry Nystul
Dean Gerke
Bonnie Roth
Deborah Hogan
Wayne Overhalls
Bob Blenkner

Other Town of Columbus Officials

Name - Position

Ron Barndt, Town Clerk
Dennis Holten, Public Works Director
Mori Woods, Chief of Police
Doug Howard, Town Attorney

SECTION II

HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF PAST DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

BRIEF HISTORY OF AREA ECONOMY

Stillwater County, Montana has a very interesting economic history. The early history of the area included Crow Indians until the 1890's, explorers including Lewis and Clark in 1807 and John Bozeman in 1860's, mining prospecting began in the Stillwater Complex in 1860's, Northern Pacific Railroad established a rail line through the area in the 1880's, homesteading began in the 1890's and Stillwater County economy has a history of mining and agriculture as basic industries.

Large deposits of copper and nickel were discovered in the Stillwater Complex in the 1890's and Minneapolis Mining Co. developed some claims but interest shifted to the large chrome deposits of chromite during World War II in the early 1940's by Anaconda Copper Co. and again during the Korean War II in the early 1950's and ended in the early 1960's with the loss of 250 jobs. The most recent exploration was for platinum group metals which began in the late 1960's by Johns Manville and was later joined by Chevron in 1979 to form a joint venture called Stillwater PGM Resources. Anaconda Minerals also continued exploration work on their claims in the Stillwater complex through the early 1980's. Stillwater Mining Company was formed in 1983 which currently includes Chevron USA, Inc., Mansville Sales Corporation and LAC Minerals (USA), Inc. Development of the Stillwater Mine began in 1988 and commercial production began in 1987. Stillwater Mining Company currently employs over 400 people and is projected to increase their work force up to 560 employees in the next two years. There is also renewed interest in Chrome mining in the Stillwater Complex but no definite development plans at this time.

Initial agricultural development of Stillwater County came between 1900 and 1920. This was the era of homesteading when more than 1,300 farms and ranches were established in Stillwater County. The drought of the 1920's and economic depression of the 1930's reduced the numbers of homesteaders significantly as the county's population declined by almost 2,000 people. There are currently 420 farm or ranch proprietors in Stillwater County. The number of farm or ranch proprietors has remained relatively stable over the past decade. However, there have been significant fluctuations in profitability because of low prices for agricultural product, high costs of production, and farm debt problems. Drought and grasshopper infestations have also complicated the problems for farmers and ranchers in Stillwater County during the 1980's.

The Communities of Absarokee, Columbus, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Park City, Rapelje and Reed Point developed as service centers for the agricultural and mining based economy of Stillwater County. These communities now provide a variety of goods and services which contribute to the total economy of Stillwater County and providing over 3,000 jobs for county residents.

ASSESSMENT OF PREVIOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Previous economic development efforts have been delegated to the Stillwater City-County Planning Board by the Columbus Town Council and Stillwater County Commissioners. The City-County Planning Board was formed in 1967 and a comprehensive area plan for sewer and water was completed in 1970. Subsequent Sewer Facility plans were completed for Absarokee collection system in 1975 and Absarokee treatment system in 1977 and amended in 1984, Reed Point Sewage System facility Plan was completed in 1976 and updated in 1993, Fishtail Sewage System Facility Plan in 1976, Park City Sewer Plans were completed in 1967 with changes in 1978, and Columbus sewer plans were completed in 1988.

In 1983 a needs assessment was completed for Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus. The needs assessment was updated in 1986 and again in 1992. The primary focus of the needs assessment was the need to improve the County's infrastructure including roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, solid waste collection and disposal facilities, fire protection, parking lots, courthouse, library, and museum buildings, parks and recreation sites. Since 1983 the following projects have been completed or are in progress. A 50 unit parking lot was constructed to serve the County Fairgrounds. The courthouse electrical system, roof, courtroom, offices and parking lot have been improved since 1983. A 49 unit campground was redeveloped at Itch-Kep-Pe park in Columbus. The 9 hole golf course in Columbus has been redeveloped to U.S.G.A. specifications. The Absarokee Sewer System was upgraded to meet EPA Standards. The Absarokee Swimming Pool was reconstructed. A new water supply well was added to the Columbus water system and an access road was built to the Columbus Water Tanks. Stillwater County opened a new landfill north of Columbus and improved several existing collection sites. The Fireman's Point Bridge over the Stillwater River was replaced along with the Spring Creek, Ingersoll, Rosebud Creek, East Rosebud, and Fishtail Creek bridges.

In addition, a Hard Rock Mining Economic Impact Plan was negotiated with Stillwater Mining Company in 1985 and amended in 1988. These impact plans specify impact funding for local government facilities and services up to \$5 million. A new high school in Absarokee was built. An addition to the Columbus elementary school and improvements to the Nye and Fishtail elementary schools were also completed. Funds for the Absarokee Sewer Improvement project and partial funding of the Forest Hwy. 83 reconstruction project were included in the impact plan.

Several civic groups have been active in community development efforts. Columbus Enterprises, Inc. was successful in attracting Timberweld, Mfg. to locate in Columbus in 1956. The Park City Development Council was formed in 1975 and was active in the design of the new school, study of a potential water system, remodeling the civic center, installing street signs, street lighting project and they are currently working on a street improvement plan and are hopeful for a future park project. The Reed Point Jaycees have developed a foundation program for a multi-purpose community building. Absarokee has an active Civic Club and Lions Club. There are historical societies in Columbus and Absarokee. Absarokee has an active Swimming Pool Assn. and Columbus has a Parks, Pool and Recreation Assn. There are community clubs in Beehive and

Dean. The Kiwanis, Optomist and Jaycees have active groups in the county along with VFW and American Legion Posts, 4-H and FFA Chapters have been active in the county for years in addition to the wool growers and stock growers associations. There are also garden clubs, sportsmen groups and a variety of other civic groups which have been contributing to community development efforts in Stillwater County.

Stillwater County began participation in EDA's Overall Economic Development Program in 1988 and participated in the formation of the Beartooth RC&D Economic Development District. The Area Plan and Overall Economic Development Program was approved for the five county district in 1995. The County continues work on implementation of suggested projects, monitors economic indicators, participates in regional economic development efforts, and updates economic development plans periodically. The Town of Columbus is participating in the Montana Certified Communities program. The initial certification program was completed by the Chamber of Commerce with assistance from the County Planning Office. Recertification was completed in 1991 and again in 1994.

SECTION III THE AREA AND ITS ECONOMY

A. General Description of Area

Stillwater County is located in Southcentral Montana (See Maps 1 & 2) The County consists of 1,793 square miles of land area which is 1,151,808 acres. There is a diversity of geographic and topographic features in the area from the Beartooth Mountains in the southern end of the county, to the Stillwater and Yellowstone river valleys in the central sections of the county, to the lake basins and coulees in the northern end of the county. Elevations range from over 12,000 ft. above sea level near granite peak on the southern boundary of Stillwater County to less than 3400 ft. above sea level near Park City in the east central part of the county.

Interstate 90 is the main transportation linkage through the county in both east and west directions. Montana Rail Link's main railroad line parallels Interstate 90 through the county along with old state highway 10. Other major highways include Hwy. 78 from Columbus to Red Lodge, Hwy. 306 from Columbus to Rapelje, Hwy. 419 to Nye. Hwy. 420 from Absarokee to Spring Creek and Hwy. 421 from Columbus to Joilet. The county seat of Columbus is located 40 miles from Billings, Montana's largest city. 100 miles from Bozeman, home of Montana State University. 496 miles from Spokane, WA, 501 miles from Salt Lake City, UT., 598 miles from Denver, Co., and 852 miles from Minneapolis, MN. There is a municipal airport in Columbus and the nearest commercial air service is available at Billings Logan International Airport. United Parcel Service and truck freight delivery are available in the County as well as Greyhound Bus Service.

B. Population and Labor Force

The population of Stillwater County was reported to be 6,536 people in the 1990 Federal Decennial Census and the latest official estimate reported a population of 7,653 in 1996. The following tables show the components of population change from 1980 to 1990. Exhibit 1 shows population trends from 1920 to 1990 and future projections to the year 2010.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

Population		Change		Residual Change			
1990	1980	Person	%	Birth	Death	Number	%
6,536	5,598	938	16.8	747	649	840	15.0

The median age of Stillwater County population was 36.5 years in 1990 which was up from 33.3 years in the 1980 Census. The characteristics of the population by age, race and gender are shown on exhibit 2. The distribution of population within the county and population change between 1980 and 1990 is shown on map 3 and following table. The racial composition of Stillwater County is also shown in the table below. Less than 2% of the population is non-white.

POPULATION CHANGE 1980 - 1990

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%Change</u>
Stillwater North Division	581	485	-17%
Park City Division	1,223	1,398	14%
Columbus Division	2,387	2,739	15%
Absarokee Division	1,407	1,914	36%

HOUSE CHANGE 1980 - 1990

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%Change</u>
Stillwater North Division	259	241	-7%
Park City Division	449	561	25%
Columbus Division	1,060	1,279	21%
Absarokee Division	913	1,210	33%

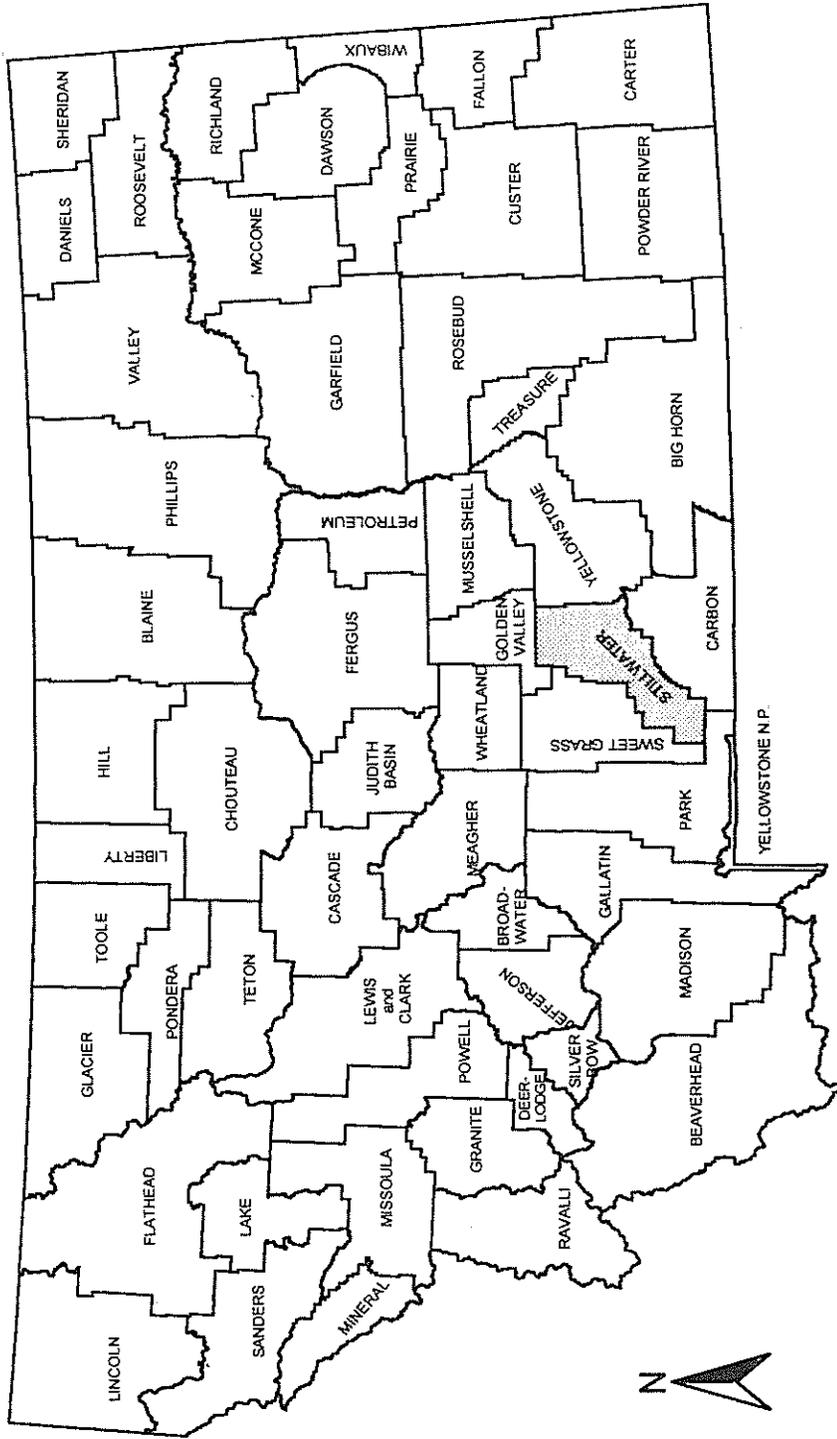
POPULATION BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN, 1970 TO 1990

	<u>1990</u>		<u>1980</u>		<u>1970</u>	
	<u>Persons</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Persons</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Persons</u>	<u>%</u>
All Races	6,536	100.0	5,598	100.0	4,632	100.0
White	6,434	98.1	5,518	98.6	4,595	99.2
Black	5	0.1	0	0.0	6	0.1
American Indian	52	0.8	80	1.4	23	0.5
Eskimo or Aleut	0	0.0	0	0.0	N/A	N/A
Asian or Pacific Islander	10	0.2	0	0.0	----	----
Asian	10	0.2	----	----	----	----
Pacific Islander	0	0.0	----	----	----	----
Other Race	35	0.5	0		0.0	80.2
Hispanic Origin	92	1.4	3	0.1	N/A	N/A

The educational level of adults 18 and 25 years and over is shown in the following table for 1990.
Educational Attainment of Persons 18 Years and Older and 25 Years and Older

	<u>Persons 18 Years and over</u>		<u>Persons 25 Years and over</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
TOTAL	4,731	100.0	4,341	100.0
Educational Attainment:				
Less Than Ninth Grade	400	8.5	395	9.1
Some High School, No Diploma	688	14.5	552	12.7
High School Diploma	1,744	36.9	1,589	36.6
Some College, No Degree	957	20.2	885	20.4
College, Associate Degree	204	4.3	185	4.3
College, Bachelor's Degree	519	11.0	516	11.9
College, Graduate Degree	219	4.6	219	5.0

MONTANA



Map 1.

STILLWATER COUNTY Montana

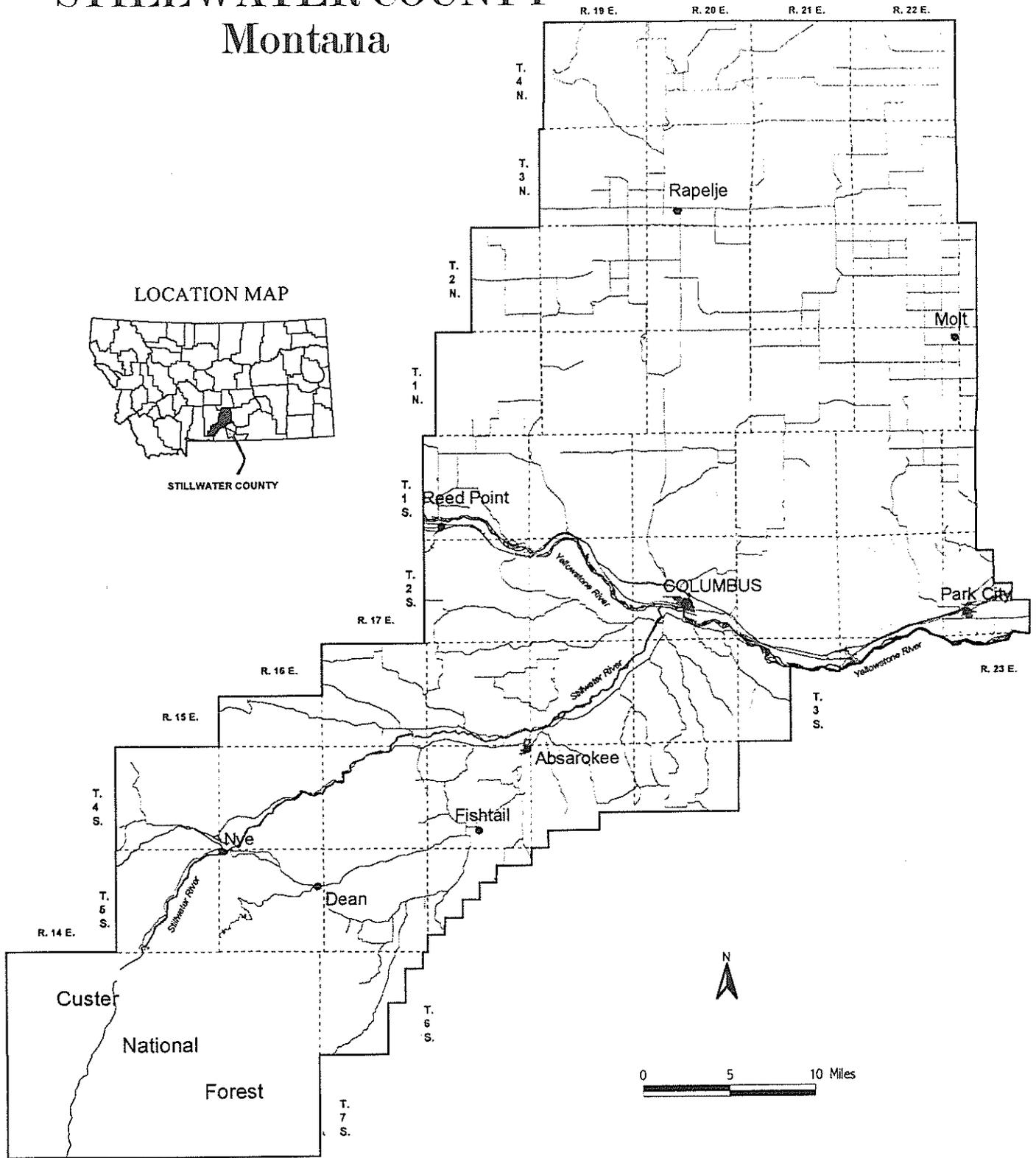
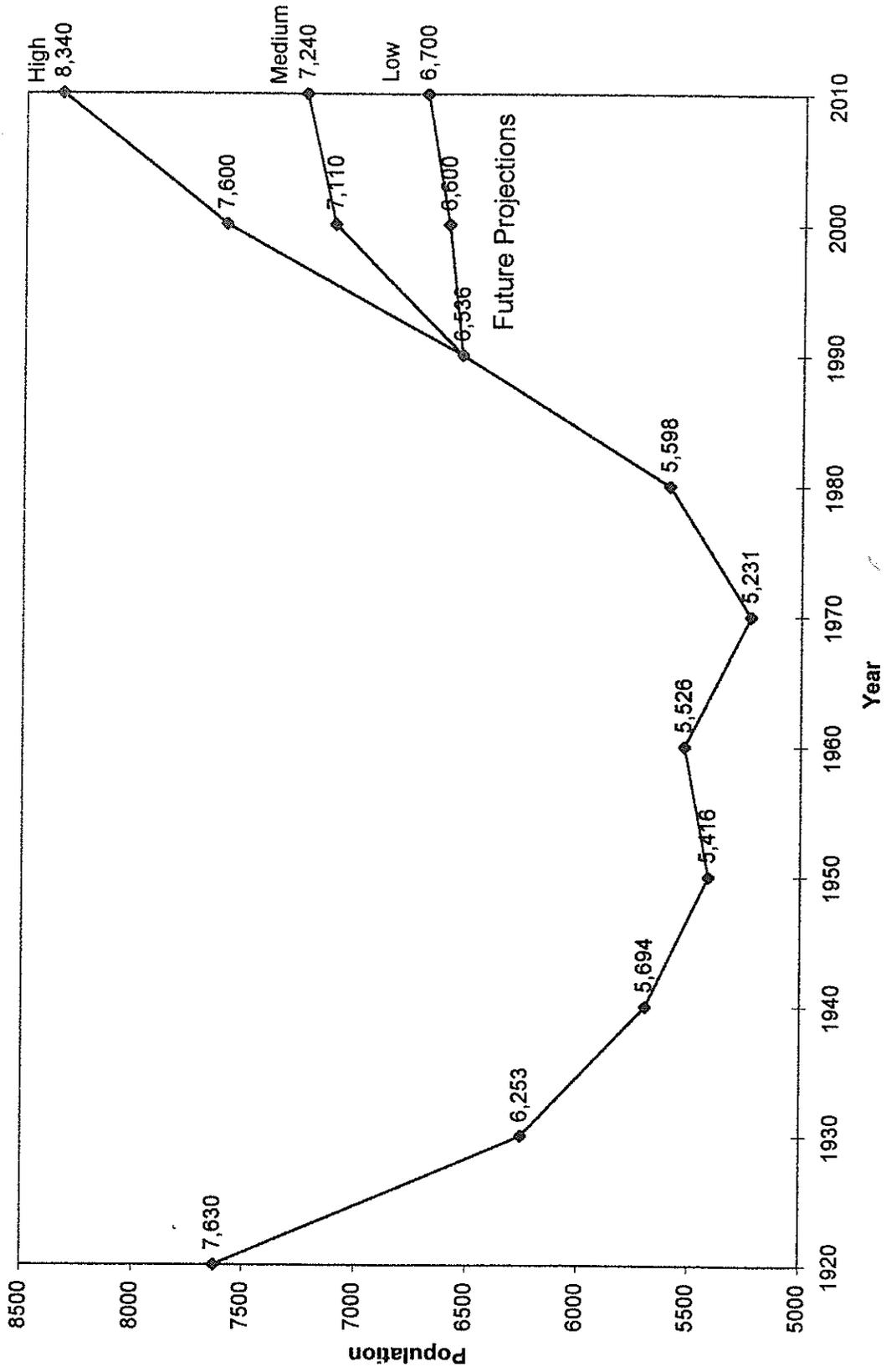


Exhibit 1

Stillwater County Population Projections



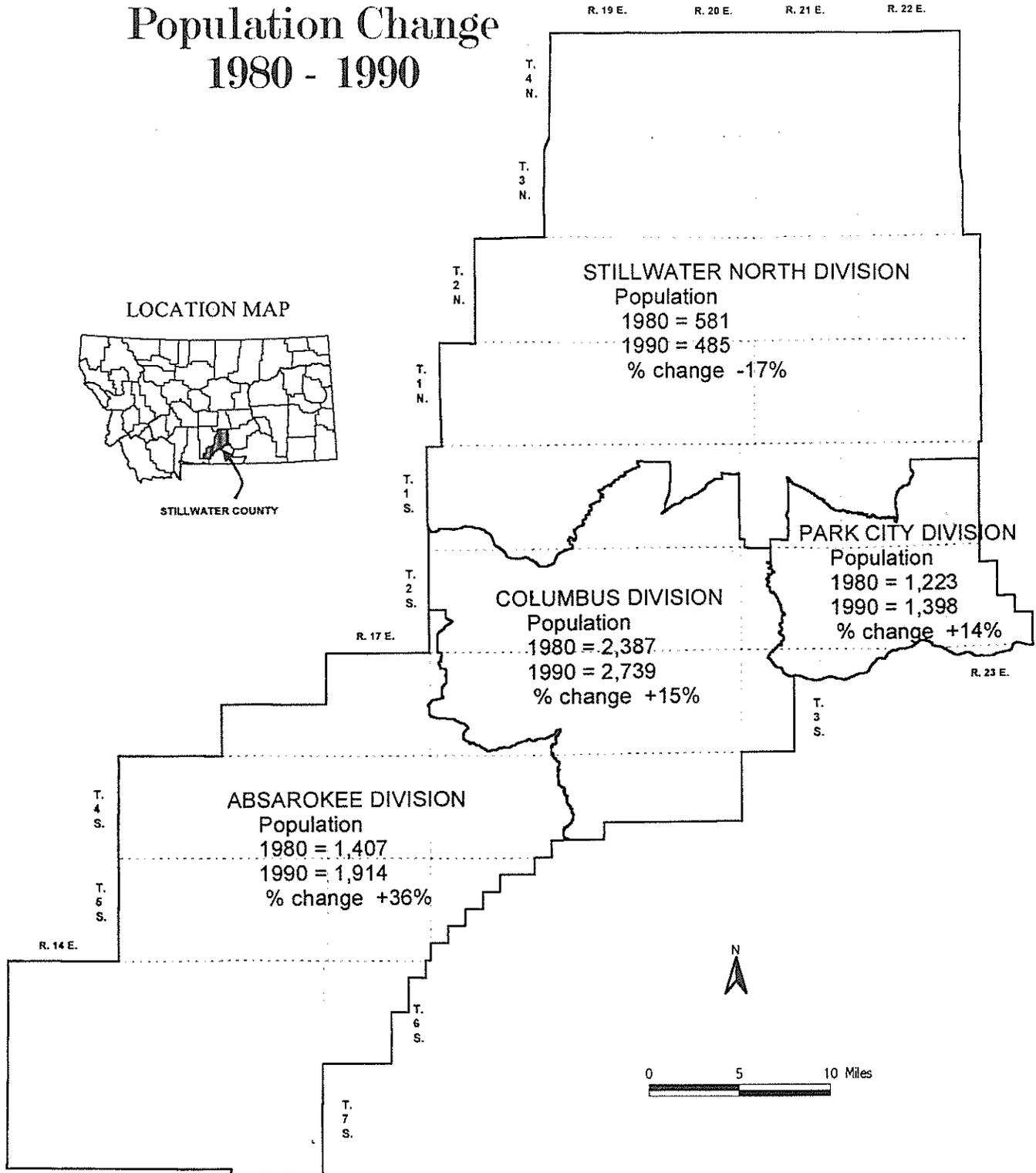
- TABLE 1.7 -
POPULATION BY AGE, RACE AND GENDER, 1990

AGE (YEARS)	TOTAL		WHITE		BLACK		AMER. INDIAN, ESKIMO, ALEUT		ASIAN OR PAC. ISLANDER		OTHER RACES	
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE
TOTAL	6,536	3,275	6,434	3,222	5	2	52	29	10	5	35	17
UNDER 1	90	50	90	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 TO 2	186	90	180	86	1	1	3	2	1	0	1	1
3 TO 4	200	91	185	84	3	1	4	3	3	2	5	1
5	97	47	93	46	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0
6	113	61	108	59	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	1
7 TO 9	307	157	305	157	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
10 TO 11	233	122	229	120	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	1
12 TO 13	202	81	201	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
14	106	56	104	49	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
15	98	50	96	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
16	89	46	87	42	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
17	102	60	98	39	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1
18	85	47	85	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	50	30	47	18	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0
20	42	18	41	23	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
21	45	21	45	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22 TO 24	150	73	148	76	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
25 TO 29	391	183	388	206	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
30 TO 34	511	258	501	248	0	0	6	3	0	0	4	2
35 TO 39	567	288	553	272	0	0	5	2	2	1	7	4
40 TO 44	491	258	484	229	0	0	7	4	0	0	0	0
45 TO 49	393	204	386	186	0	0	3	1	0	0	4	2
50 TO 54	302	165	301	136	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
55 TO 59	298	150	296	147	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
60 TO 61	126	56	125	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
62 TO 64	172	97	172	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
65 TO 69	307	137	306	169	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
70 TO 74	290	136	289	153	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
75 TO 79	216	101	215	115	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
80 TO 84	155	62	155	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85 & OLDER	122	36	121	85	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
MEDIAN*	36.5	36.0	36.6	37.1	NA	NA	31.0	NA	NA	NA	28.5	NA

*SEE APPENDIX FOR DEFINITIONS.
NA = NOT AVAILABLE. TO INSURE ACCURACY, THE MEDIAN AGE IS DISPLAYED FOR ONLY THOSE POPULATION GROUPS HAVING A TOTAL SIZE OF THIRTY OR MORE PERSONS.

STILLWATER COUNTY

Population Change 1980 - 1990



The median family income was reported to be \$29,362 in 1989. Table below compares family income in 1989 with 1979, median family income has increased \$13,999 in this time.

INCOME OF FAMILIES, 1979 AND 1989

	1989		1979	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
TOTAL FAMILIES	1,920	100.0	1,551	100.0
LESS THAN \$5,000	67	3.5	170	11.0
\$5,000 TO \$9,999	95	4.9	264	17.0
\$10,000 TO \$14,999	205	10.7	320	20.6
\$15,000 TO \$ 19,999	213	11.1	269	17.3
\$20,000 TO \$24,999	206	10.7	195	12.6
\$25,000 TO \$29,999	198	10.3	135	8.7
\$30,000 TO \$34,999	244	12.7	108	7.0
\$35,000 TO \$39,999	144	7.5	45	2.9
\$40,000 TO \$49,999	----	----	20	1.3
\$40,000 TO \$44,999	152	7.9	NA	NA
\$45,000 TO \$49,999	93	4.8	NA	NA
\$50,000 TO \$74,999	----	----	20	1.3
\$50,000 TO \$54,999	81	4.2	NA	NA
\$55,000 TO \$59,999	66	3.4	NA	NA
\$60,000 TO \$74,999	70	3.6	NA	NA
\$75,000 OR MORE	----	----	5	0.3
\$75,000 TO \$99,999	52	2.7	NA	NA
\$100,000 TO \$124,999	19	1.0	NA	NA
\$125,000 TO \$149,999	9	0.5	NA	NA
\$150,000 OR MORE	6	0.3	NA	NA
MEDIAN INCOME	\$29,362	----	\$15,363	----
MEAN INCOME	\$32,398	----	\$17,151	----
LESS THAN \$150,000	\$31,987	----	NA	----
\$150,000 OR MORE	\$166,496	----	NA	----

(1) The civilian labor force in Stillwater County was reported to be 3710 in June 1994. The table below shows employment status of persons 16 years and older, 1980 and 1990, and compares with state.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OLDER, 1980 AND 1990

	Persons 16 Years & Older	% In Labor Force	Armed Force	Employed Persons	Unemployed Persons	%	Not In Labor Force
1990							
Montana	599,765	63.7	4,920	350,723	26,217	7.0	217,905
Male	293,243	71.9	4,325	190,686	15,842	7.7	82,390
Female	306,522	55.8	595	160,037	10,375	6.1	135,515
Stillwater	4,907	63.1	0	2,982	112	3.6	1,813
Male	2,417	71.9	0	1,692	46	2.6	679
Female	2,490	54.5	0	1,290	66	4.9	1,134
1980							
Montana	585,375	62.0	4,810	328,316	29,530	8.3	222,719
Male	289,239	75.2	4,437	193,532	19,611	9.2	71,659
Female	296,136	49.0	373	134,784	9,919	6.9	151,060
Stillwater	4,234	53.4	0	2,101	159	7.0	1,974
Male	2,114	69.8	0	1,343	132	8.9	639
Female	2,120	37.0	0	758	27	3.4	1,335

(2) The unemployment rate for Stillwater County is compared with the U.S. and Montana annual average unemployment rates for the years 1980 through 1993 in the table below. The Stillwater County unemployment rate was below the federal and state unemployment rates until 1983 when the County experienced 11.2% unemployment. More recently the County's unemployment rate is below federal and state rates.

ANNUAL AVERAGE ESTIMATES OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
1980 TO 1993

Year	Total	Annual Average Civilian Labor Force		Annual Average Unemployment Rates (%)		
		Employed	Unemployed	County	Montana	U.S.
1993	3,290	3,148	142	4.3	6.0	6.8
1992	3,294	3,089	205	6.2	6.7	7.4
1991	3,197	2,931	266	8.3	6.9	6.7
1990	3,307	3,186	121	3.7	5.8	5.5
1989	3,328	3,193	135	4.1	5.9	5.3
1988	3,153	3,012	141	4.5	6.8	5.5
1987	3,063	2,869	194	6.3	7.4	6.2
1986	2,685	2,462	223	8.3	8.1	7.0
1985	2,524	2,330	194	7.7	7.7	7.2
1984	2,605	2,382	223	8.6	7.4	7.5
1983	2,161	1,918	243	11.2	8.8	9.6
1982	2,412	2,206	206	8.5	8.6	9.7
1981	2,340	2,246	94	4.0	6.9	7.6
1980	2,248	2,163	85	3.8	6.1	7.1

(3) The principal labor needs of the area are in agriculture, mining, retail trade, manufacturing and government. Increased mining activity has caused a greater demand for skilled labor in hard rock mining in Southern Stillwater County near Nye. The nearest vocational training center is in

Billings, which is 40 miles away. The Job Training Partnership Act with on the job training programs is also available in Billings through the Montana Job Service.

C. The Economy

(1) Exhibit 3 indicates the principal economic activities in Stillwater County in terms of the number employed and Total personal Income for 1993. Major employers include Montana Silversmiths, Timberweld Manufacturing, Town Pump and Affiliates, Stillwater Mining Company, Stillwater Convalescent Center, Park City Truck Stop, Stillwater County and the Public Schools.

(2) The total labor force has been increasing since 1985. Town Pump and Affiliates and Stillwater Mining Company are now the new major employers contributing to the increase. Montana Silversmiths have also been expanding their labor force. Several small retail businesses have closed in the past five years but several new ones have opened during the same time period.

(3) Stillwater County has strong economic ties with Billings, which is a major retail and service center. Many Stillwater County residents are employed in Billings or Laurel, especially Park City Residents. Stillwater County residents also find it convenient to shop in Billings due to short distances and a variety of urban amenities. Health care is available in Stillwater County but a variety of highly specialized health care and advanced medical technology is also available in Billings.

(4) Stillwater County has four banks and a Credit Union, which include 2 Yellowstone Banks (1 in Absarokee and 1 in Columbus). 2 United Banks (1 in Absarokee and 1 in Columbus) and a Valley Credit Union. United Bank of Absarokee is a certified lender for the Montana Economic Development Board, they process SBA loans and act as a lending agent for the Montana Board of Housing. The Yellowstone Banks process SBA Loans and is a processing agent for the Montana Board of Housing. Quarterly financial reports are available from United Bank of Absarokee, Yellowstone Banks and Valley Credit Union.

(5) The 1996 property taxable valuation of Stillwater County was \$25,475,011. This is an increase of \$2,983,315 in taxable valuation from 1995. The following table is a breakdown of the \$25,475 million taxable valuation.

<u>Type of Property</u>	<u>Market Value</u>	<u>Taxable Value</u>
Agriculture	124,962,555	5,192,275
Residential	125,735,375	4,793,013
Commercial	24,890,529	1,089,720
Industrial	13,155,080	800,081
Railroad	11,067,098	748,136
Mining - Gross Proceeds	49,812,393	1,494,371
Equipment, Land & Buildings	46,356,288	3,412,076
Utilities	66,642,815	7,420,827
Oil & Gas	130,531	10,443
Other Personal Property	6,439,733	514,069
	=====	=====
TOTAL	469,192,397	25,475,011

Exhibit 3

*** STILLWATER COUNTY DATABASE

EMPLOYMENT ***

- TABLE 5.10 -

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES COVERED BY MONTANA UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE LAWS*, 1993

	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS*	ANNUAL AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT	ANNUAL WAGES PAID (\$)	AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE PER WORKER (\$)
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	195	1,830	40,163,871	21,947
PRIVATE BUSINESS	167	1,463	33,163,467	22,668
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHERIES	6	36	618,233	17,173
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: CROPS	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: LIVESTOCK	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
AGRICULTURAL SERVICES	3	7	65,041	9,291
MINING	3	421	17,248,560	40,970
METAL MINING	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
NONMETALLIC MINING & QUARRYING	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
CONSTRUCTION	18	33	549,202	16,642
GENERAL BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	6	11	138,105	12,555
HEAVY CONSTRUCTION	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
SPECIAL TRADE CONSTRUCTION	9	15	270,379	18,025
MANUFACTURING	13	302	6,354,091	21,040
FOOD & KINDRED PRODUCTS	3	10	95,885	9,588
TEXTILES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
LUMBER & WOOD PRODUCTS	4	65	1,316,197	20,249
FURNITURE & FIXTURES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
PRINTING & PUBLISHING	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
LEATHER	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
STONE, CLAY, GLASS, CONCRETE	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
FABRICATED METAL PRODUCTS	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
MISC MANUFACTURING	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC UTILITIES	11	46	1,052,590	22,882
RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION	NA	NA	NA	NA
LOCAL PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
TRUCKING & WAREHOUSING	3	17	279,160	16,421
AIR TRANSPORTATION	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
COMMUNICATION	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
ELECTRIC, GAS, SANITARY SERVICES	4	22	697,333	31,696
WHOLESALE TRADE	12	24	594,662	24,778
DURABLE GOODS	5	8	225,796	28,224
NONDURABLE GOODS	7	15	368,866	24,591
RETAIL TRADE	48	290	2,885,620	9,950
BUILDING MATERIALS & GARDEN SUPPLIES	5	20	196,550	9,827
FOOD STORES	6	73	716,771	9,818
AUTO DEALERS & SERVICE STATIONS	7	70	1,079,529	15,421
APPAREL & ACCESSORY STORES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
HOME FURNITURE & FURNISHINGS STORES	3	5	89,443	17,888
EATING & DRINKING PLACES	19	105	713,274	6,793
MISC RETAIL	5	6	49,073	8,178
FINANCE, INSURANCE, REAL ESTATE	5	22	364,431	16,565
DEPOSITORY INSTITUTIONS	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
INSURANCE AGENTS & BROKERS	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
REAL ESTATE	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
SERVICES	47	287	3,496,078	12,181
HOTELS & LODGING PLACES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
PERSONAL SERVICES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
BUSINESS SERVICES	4	14	58,328	4,166
AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR & SERVICES	6	12	215,290	17,940
MISC REPAIR SERVICES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
MOTION PICTURES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
AMUSEMENT & RECREATION SERVICES	4	27	199,702	7,396
HEALTH SERVICES	7	159	2,279,268	14,335
LEGAL SERVICES	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
SOCIAL SERVICES	8	32	226,125	7,066
MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	4	9	287,285	31,920
PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS	4	4	37,117	9,279
GOVERNMENT	28	366	7,000,404	19,127
STATE	7	19	410,880	21,625
LOCAL	13	314	5,820,902	18,537
FEDERAL	8	32	768,622	24,019

Map 4 shows taxable valuation by high school districts in the county and shows the change between 1990 and 1995.

The Town of Columbus had a taxable valuation of \$3,765,853 in 1996. This is an increase of \$589,233 in taxable valuation from 1995.

<u>Type of Property</u>	<u>Market Value</u>	<u>Taxable Value</u>
Agriculture	29,640	1,729
Residential	25,591,454	966,072
Commercial	13,498,611	573,526
Industrial	12,857,870	782,432
Railroad	271,188	18,332
Mining - Gross Proceeds	9,962,479	298,874
Equipment, Land & Buildings	9,271,256	682,414
Utilities	3,368,503	392,246
Other Personal Property	628,548	50,228
	<u><u>75,479,549</u></u>	<u><u>3,765,853</u></u>
TOTAL	75,479,549	3,765,853

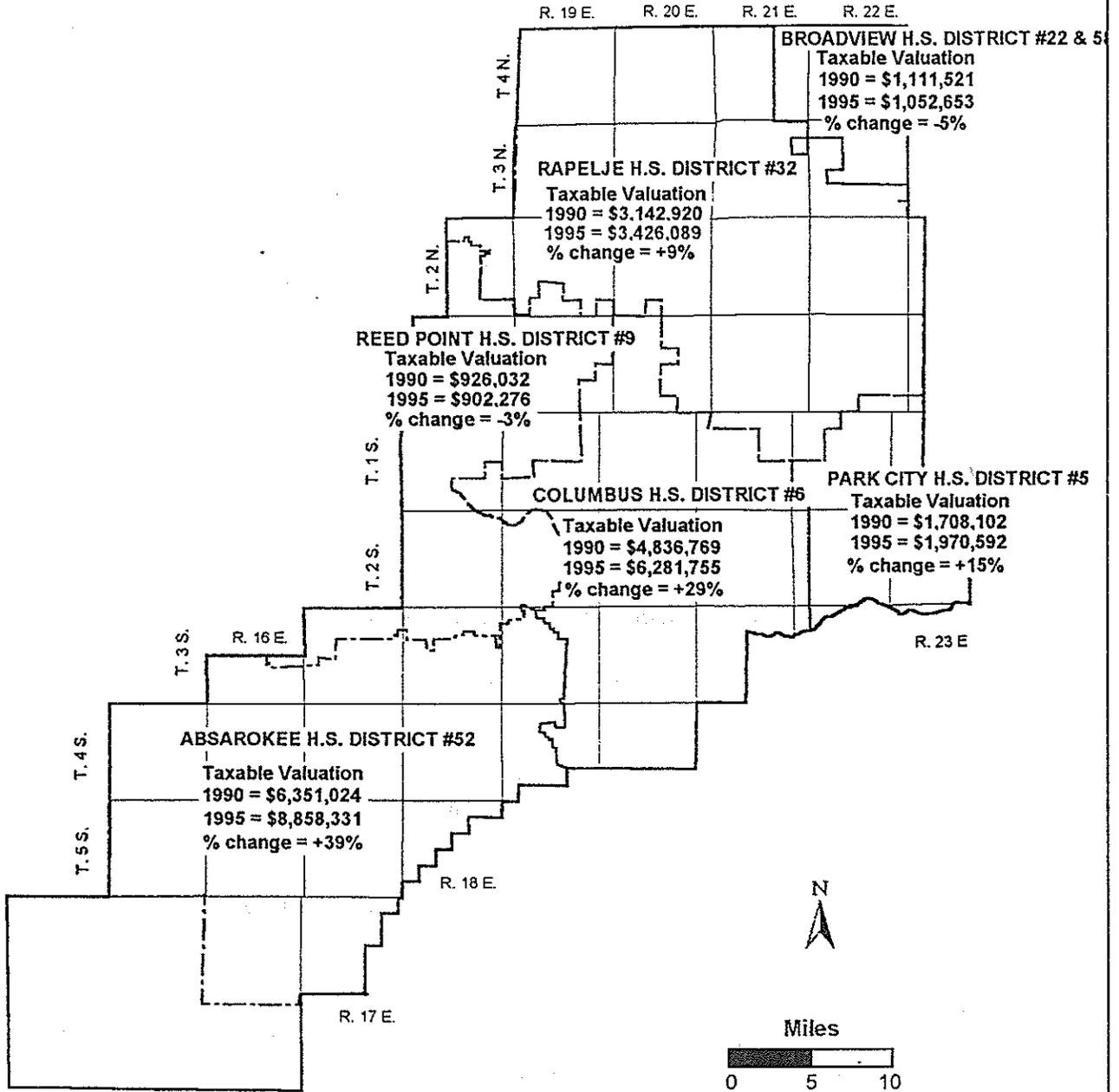
Source: Montana Dept. of Revenue

(6) Bonding Capacity - Stillwater County has a general obligation bonding capacity of \$2,865,938 which is 11.25% of the total 1996 taxable valuation. The Town of Columbus has a bonding capacity of \$1,054,438 which is 28% of taxable valuation as allowed by Montana Law.

Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus have no general obligation bonds outstanding at this time. Therefore, both the Town and County have their full legal bonding capacity available to them.

STILLWATER COUNTY

Taxable Valuation by High School District



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. Housing

Neither Stillwater County nor the Town of Columbus have completed housing assessments or adopted housing plans since the 1980 Census. Both the Town and County rely on census data for information on the supply and quality of housing. However, 9 substandard structures were identified in the Town of Columbus 1986 Land Use Study. The Montana Department of Commerce Housing point deduction was used to identify substandard structures which should be considered for removal. Exhibit 4 show structural characteristics of housing units 1980 and 1990.

Accurate data is not available for new housing starts outside the incorporated Town of Columbus. In Columbus the following new housing starts, for single family dwellings, have been reported since 1980.

1981 - 9	1988 - 3	1995 - 8
1982 - 4	1989 - 0	1996 - 11
1983 - 14	1990 - 1	1997 -
1984 - 7	1991 - 2	1998 -
1985 - 1	1992 - 3	1999 -
1986 - 1	1993 - 8	2000 -
1987 - 1	1994 - 3	2001 -

B. Water Supply

Absarokee, Columbus and Rapelje presently have central water systems. About 2600 people or around 40 percent of the County's population is being served by the community water systems. The remaining people are served by individual water systems such as wells, springs or cisterns.

Absarokee formed a water and sewer district in 1996 which replaced former private Water Users Association. Water supply and treatment has been provided since 1954. Absarokee receives its water supply from a series of five active and 3 currently inactive wells. The wells are drilled through a sandstone formation and vary in depth up to 200 feet deep. The existing system of wells is capable of pumping 340,000 gallons per day in the winter months and up to 840,000 gallons during the summer. There is a maximum of 325,000 gallons of storage for treated water in two storage tanks. The original 125,000 gallon concrete storage tank is still in service and another 200,000 gallon concrete tank was constructed in 1981. The water distribution system consists of a series of 4 and 6 inch wrapped steel water mains which are leaking and have limited capacity for fire protection purposes. The primary need is to replace the smaller water mains with larger pipe and repair the leaks in the distribution system.

The Columbus municipal water system utilizes a supply of water from a series of radially constructed infiltration galleries located on an island in the Yellowstone River and a well located in the west end of town near Keyser Creek constructed in 1986. These supply sources have a combined capacity of 1.17 million gallons per day. There is more than 2 million gallons of storage

Exhibit 4

*** STILLWATER COUNTY DATABASE

HOUSING ***

- TABLE 4.3 -
 STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING UNITS*, 1980 AND 1990

	ALL HOUSING UNITS		OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS*	
	1990	1980	1990	1980
TOTAL UNITS	3,291	2,495	2,523	2,072
UNITS IN STRUCTURE:				
1	2,409	1,870	1,853	1,541
2	43	18	27	15
3 OR 4	56	105	48	88
5 OR MORE	...	93	...	76
5 TO 9	31	NA	14	NA
10 OR MORE	39	NA	30	NA
MOBILE HOMES OR TRAILERS	695	409	541	352
PLUMBING FACILITIES:				
COMPLETE	3,175	2,374	2,519	2,032
LACKING COMPLETE	116	107	4	40
SOURCE OF WATER:				
PUBLIC SYSTEM OR PRIVATE COMPANY	1,279	991	NA	NA
INDIVIDUAL WELL	1,790	1,359	NA	NA
SOME OTHER SOURCE	222	145	NA	NA
SEWAGE DISPOSAL:				
PUBLIC SEWER	1,420	1,199	NA	NA
SEPTIC TANK OR CESSPOOL	1,727	1,163	NA	NA
OTHER MEANS	144	133	NA	NA
BEDROOMS:				
NONE	96	54	18	27
1	431	293	224	190
2	918	946	682	763
3	1,323	883	1,121	796
4 OR MORE	523	319	478	296
TELEPHONE:				
YES	NA	NA	2,362	1,889
NO	NA	NA	161	183
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT:				
1980 OR LATER	734	...	565	...
1970 OR LATER	...	765	...	696
1970 TO 1979	813	...	620	...
1960 TO 1969	269	214	199	152
1940 TO 1959	603	440	446	366
1939 OR EARLIER	872	1,076	693	858

SAMPLE-COUNT DATA.

*SEE APPENDIX FOR DEFINITIONS.

... = NOT APPLICABLE.

NA = NOT AVAILABLE.

SOURCES: U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS. 1990 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING, SUMMARY TAPE FILE 3 (COMPUTER TAPE).
 U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS. 1980 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING, SUMMARY TAPE FILE 1 (COMPUTER TAPE).
 U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS. 1980 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING, SUMMARY TAPE FILE 3 (COMPUTER TAPE).

capacity in three tanks, a large 1 million gallon steel tank constructed in 1973 and the original two smaller tanks. All 3 storage tanks are located on the higher ground north of I-90. The water distribution system consists of a variety of water mains up to 12 inches in diameter. The original mains were cast iron installed in the 1960's, 1970's were Asbestos Cement, and mains installed after 1973 are polyvinyl chloride (pvc). The primary need is the replacement of the older distribution lines which are leaking.

Rapelje obtains its water supply from a developed spring south of town. One pump currently furnishes water into an 8,000 gallon cistern and must provide constant pressure since elevated storage is not currently available. The water in the Rapelje area is very hard primarily due to the presence of calcium carbonates. The distribution system of 4 and 6 inch diameter lines seems to be adequate for the town at this time. The Rapelje Water System is controlled by a private Water Users Association. The recent upgrade their water system included improving the pumping capacity. Two submersible pumps along with a series of 5 pressure tanks to provide "on demand" pressure in the water system were installed.

About 60 percent of the county population is not on the three community water systems. Their water supply is obtained primarily from ground water sources. Adequate supplies of ground water can be obtained from the alluvial deposits along the river valley of the Rosebud, Stillwater, and Yellowstone rivers in the southern half of Stillwater County. The depth and flow volume in these wells vary significantly. The ground water supply in northern Stillwater County can be a problem. Water bearing deposits such as the Bearpaw shales and Eagle sandstones produce small quantities of water. Reports on wells in the Rapelje area show an average depth of well around 80 feet with average flows under 10 gallons per minute. The average depth of well in the Molt area is about 135 feet with average flows under 10 gallons per minute.

C. Sewer Systems

Absarokee, Columbus, Reed Point and Park City currently have public sewer systems. Over 3600 people or about 50 percent of the County's population is being served by these community sewer systems. The remaining people are served by individual septic systems.

The Absarokee sewer system is managed by Stillwater County through two rural special improvement districts (RSID #5 and #7). The existing system is an aerated 3 cell lagoon system of only 1.46 acres. Secondary treatment is also provided at this facility through an ultra-violet light system and seven aerators. This treatment system was recently upgraded in 1986-1988 and is designed to serve a population of up to 1200 people. The sewage collection system was constructed in 1954 with additions in 1964 and major improvements in 1978. Asbestos cement, clay tile and pvc pipe are all found in the collection system. The primary need at this time is to replace old sewer mains as needed and to acquire additional land for future expansion of the sewage treatment system.

The Columbus municipal sewer system consists of a collection system constructed around 1940 and a four cell facultative lagoon treatment system constructed around 1970. The collection system consists of 6-12 inch sewer mains and a 15 inch outfall line. Sewer lines are concrete, clay or pvc pipe depending on when they were installed. The treatment system consists of four cells with a total area of 18 acres. Two larger cells of 8 acres each and two smaller cells around 1 acre each. This sewer system is considered to be at capacity now for a current population of 1600. Piping modifications for the lagoon treatment facility were completed in 1989. A facility plan was completed in 1996. Major improvements to the sewage treatment system are recommended, including modification to the cells, aeration and land application. Other needs for improvement of the sewage system include repair or replacement of old sewer mains with serious infiltration problems.

The Park City sewage collection and treatment system was constructed in 1968. This sewer system is managed by Stillwater County through a rural special improvement district (RSID #8). The system provides service for all areas of town with a network of 8 inch sewer mains with one lift station. The collection system in Park City also contains a variety of pipe including clay, asbestos cement and pvc. The sewage treatment system consists of two cell, five acre lagoon. The RSID owns sufficient land to develop a third cell. This sewer system is considered to be at capacity. A facility plan was completed in 1996. Major improvements to the sewage treatment system are recommended, including constructing a third cell, increasing depth of all cells, aeration, and possible land application. The option of forming a water and sewer district for Park City is currently being explored.

The Reed Point Water and Sewer District was formed in late 1992. The district constructed a sewer system in 1995 with federal and state grants and loans. Sewer facilities include 8 inch, gravity flow collection system of pvc pipe, which flows into a dual pump lift station. Effluent is pumped to a two cell facultative treatment pond equipped with aerators. The two lagoon cells are three acres in size, poly lined, and non discharging. Treated effluent is discharged by center pivot spray irrigation on an adjacent hay field. The hay field is privately owned, but the district has an 18 acre irrigation easement.

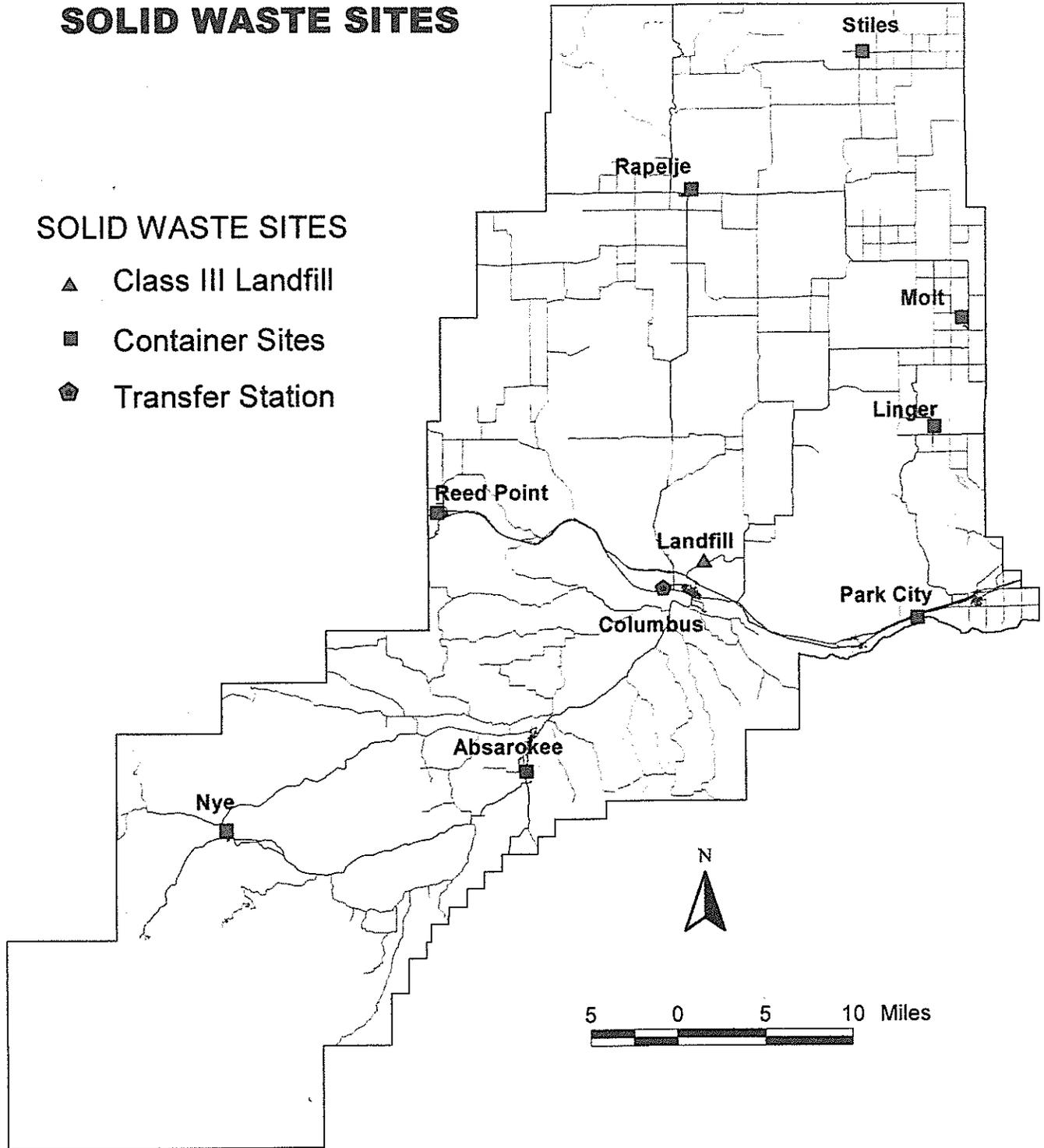
D. Solid Waste

Stillwater County formed a refuse disposal district in 1975. The district is governed by an appointed board of directors. Board members are appointed to three year terms by the Board of County Commissioners. The district changed from 64 unattended collection sites throughout the county to nine collection sites (see map 5) located south of Absarokee, north of Nye, west of Park City, west of Reed Point, west of Columbus, Rapelje, west of Broadview, Molt, and south of Molt. The district operates two collection systems. One system utilizes 28 and 40 yard roll-off boxes which are picked up by two tilt frame assembly trucks. The other utilizes two 32 yard front loading compactor trucks which transport solid waste collected in smaller 4-6 yard boxes. The solid waste collected is transported to Columbus where the district operates a transfer station, which is scheduled for major renovations in 1997. The refuse is dumped on a concrete pad then

STILLWATER COUNTY SOLID WASTE SITES

SOLID WASTE SITES

- ▲ Class III Landfill
- Container Sites
- ⬠ Transfer Station



transferred into a 110 yard walking floor trailer which then hauls the refuse to the regional landfill south of Billings. This landfill is operated by the City of Billings. The district currently pays \$1.10 per cubic yard for tipping fees at the landfill. Approximately 36,000 cubic yards are transported to Billings annually. The county currently operates a Class III landfill 3 miles north of Columbus which is used for burning scrap wood, trees and branches and other non-hazardous combustibles. Class III landfills at Absarokee, Park City, Rapelje and Reed Point were closed out in the 1980's. Recycling bins are currently available in Park City, Absarokee and Nye with plans to have these bins available at all attended sites. Cardboard is collected in separate bins, transported to Columbus where it is baled for recycling. The district employs a Solid Waste Supervisor, three full time drivers, six part-time attendants, one roving site attendant and one part-time laborer.

E. Transportation Facilities and Services

(1) Highways and Roads

Interstate 90 is the main east-west route through Stillwater County. This four lane divided highway was completed in 1973. The towns of Columbus, Park City and Reed Point are located along I-90. Each of these communities is served by an interchange. There is also another interchange 8 miles west of Columbus, which is called the Springtime Interchange and a Ranch access between Springtime and Reed Point. These interchange locations provide opportunities for commercial development.

Highway No. 10 is also an east-west route between Park City and the Springtime Interchange. This highway now serves as a frontage road to I-90 and a minor collector to central Stillwater County. Highway 10 is maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation and is the main street (Pike Avenue) for the Columbus Business District. This route parallels the Yellowstone River and has historical and scenic features as the original Yellowstone route. Highway 10 is a two lane paved road.

Highway 78, between Columbus and Red Lodge, is a primary highway maintained by Montana Department of Transportation. This is a paved two lane road which serves as the arterial north-south route in southern Stillwater County. This highway serves as the main street for the Absarokee business district. This route is scheduled for major reconstruction in the early 2000's.

Highway 302, between Billings and Molt, is a federal aid secondary maintained by the County. This is a paved two lane road which serves as a major collector for the Molt area.

Highway 306, between Columbus and Rapelje, is a federal aid secondary maintained by the County. This is a paved two lane road. Highway 306 serves as a major north-south collector for northern Stillwater County. The section from Columbus to I-90 needs to be reconstructed/paved.

Highway 419, between the junction with Highway 78 south of Absarokee and Nye is a federal aid secondary route. This section of highway extends beyond the Stillwater Mine and is approximately 28 miles long. This is a paved two lane road in a deteriorated condition. This is one of two east-west major collectors in Southern Stillwater County which accesses the mining region. This route also serves as main street for Fishtail, Dean and Nye. Reconstruction of this route has been completed through Fishtail to Dean. Construction funding for the 5.82 mile section from Dean to Nye is needed.

Highway 420 is the other east-west major collector in Southern Stillwater County. The first seven miles of this route west of Absarokee are paved two lane and the remaining twelve miles have a gravel surface. This route is becoming increasingly important as access to the mining region is southern Stillwater County.

Highway 421, between Columbus and Joliet, is a secondary road which the county maintains. This is a major collector in east-central Stillwater County. Highway 421 is a paved two lane road except for a two and a half mile section near the County line. Stillwater County intends to surface the gravel section in the future. Erosion from flooding on the Yellowstone River caused a temporary closure/detour on this route in 1997. Major repairs are needed.

In addition to Interstate 90 and State Highway 78 (a arterial route), there are several routes classified as collectors and numerous local roads (See map 6). Stillwater County maintains a total of 996 miles of public road. 110 miles are paved and the remaining 886 miles are gravel or dirt. In addition, there are 30 major bridge structures in the county and numerous smaller structures maintained by the county. The county road budget is over \$500,000 and the bridge budget is around \$200,000. This funding level allows for a basic maintenance program only and is insufficient to undertake any major reconstruction projects without federal, state, or private assistance. The limitations of the transportation system are an impediment to growth and commerce.

(2) Town Streets

The Town of Columbus has over 16 miles of streets. 14 miles are paved and 2 miles are a gravel surface. There are also almost 6 miles of alleys in Columbus. The Town is in a similar situation as the county with limited funds for maintenance only. Therefore, major street improvement projects are only possible if additional funding becomes available. (See map 7).

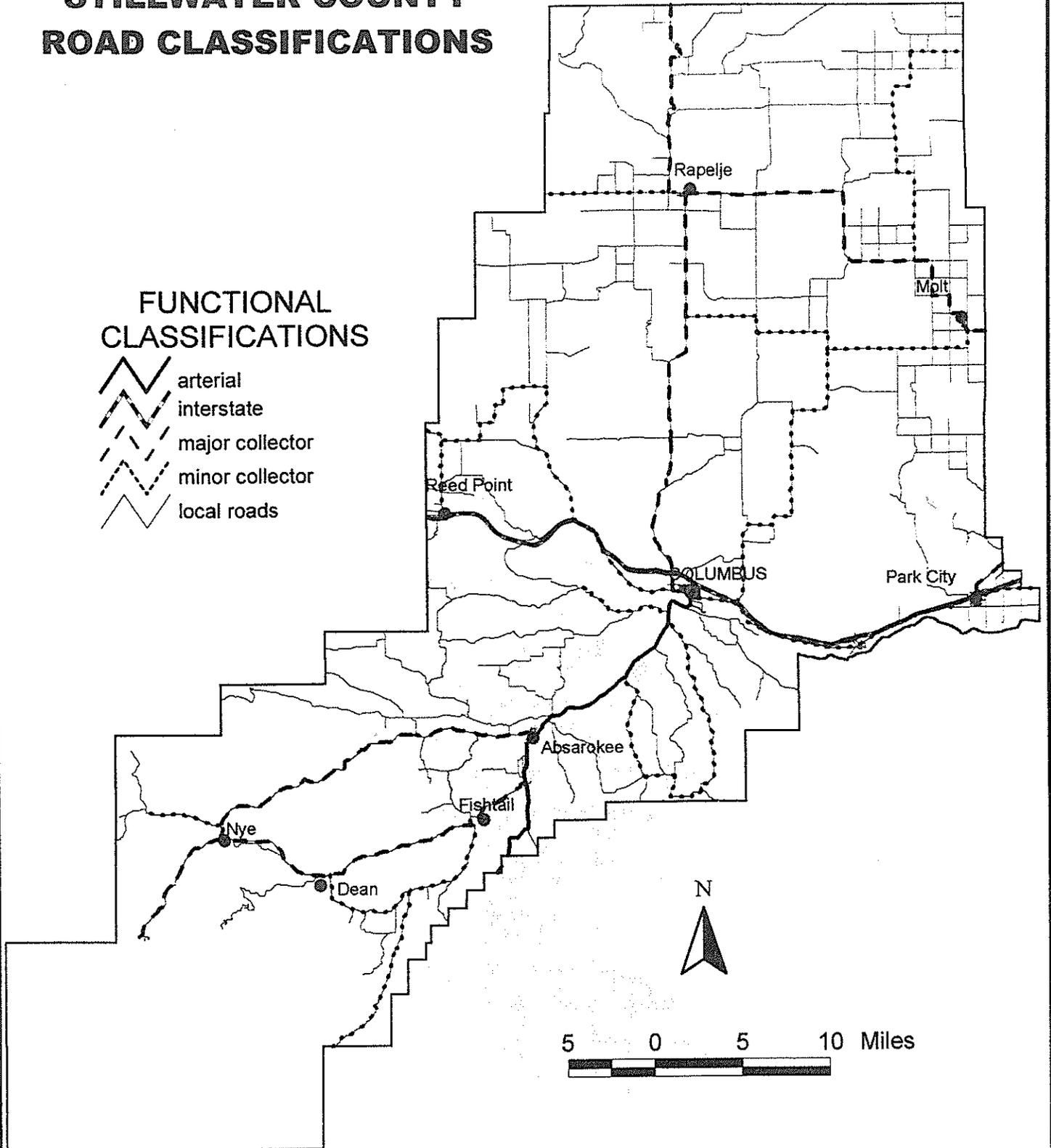
(3) Rail Service

Montana Rail Link and Burlington Northern serve Stillwater County. The main rail line parallels the Yellowstone River east-west through the county and communities of Columbus, Park City and Reed Point. There is a loading facility in Columbus and piggy back ramp facilities available in Billings. There are an average of 10 freight trains passing through the county daily.

STILLWATER COUNTY ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

-  arterial
-  interstate
-  major collector
-  minor collector
-  local roads

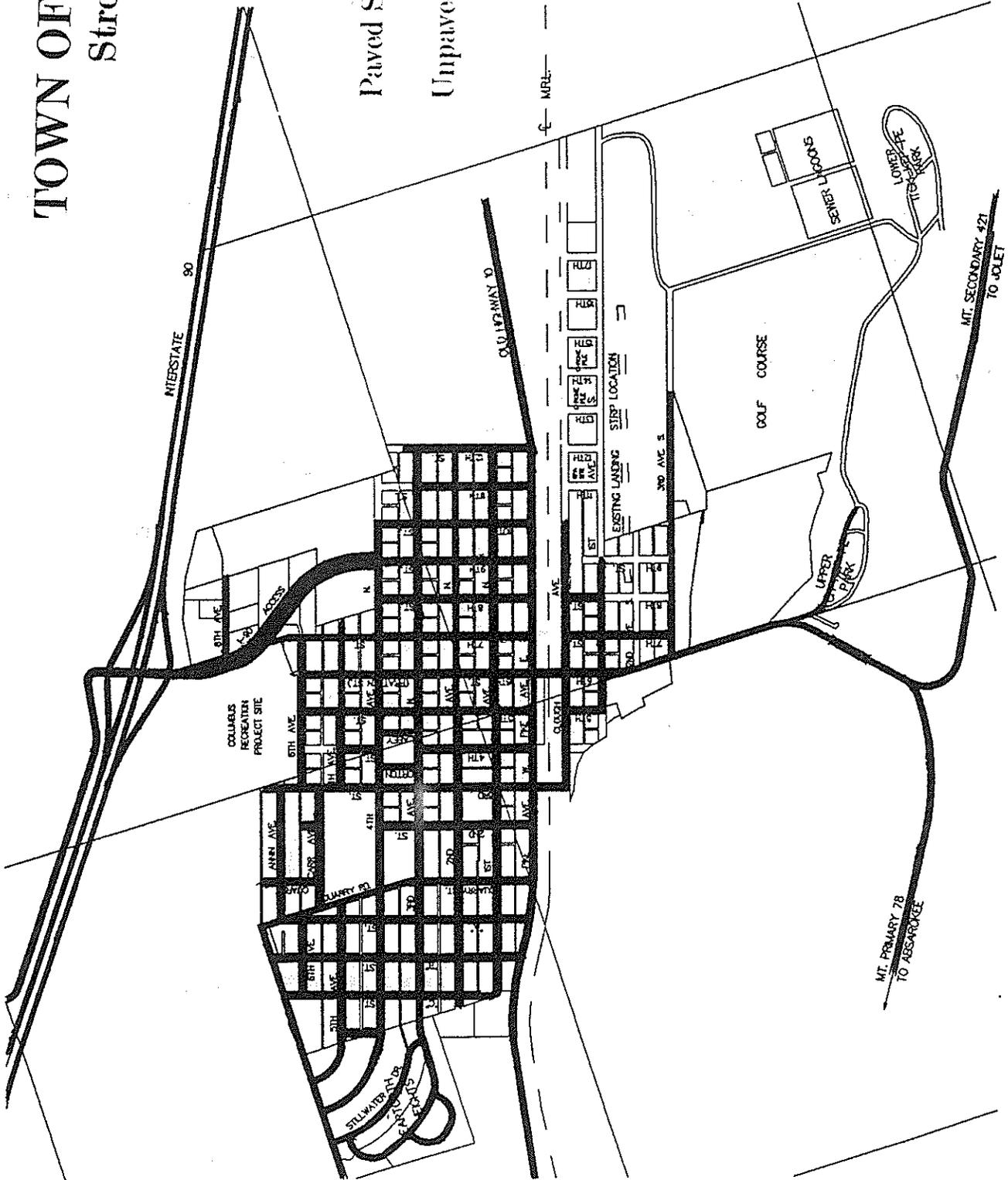


TOWN OF COLUMBUS Street Map

Legend

Paved Streets

Unpaved Streets



(4) Bus Service

The Greyhound Bus Company is the only bus line serving Stillwater County. They provide 3 westbound buses and 3 eastbound buses each day. Their route is over Interstate 90 and Highway 10 with scheduled stops at Columbus and Park City and a flagstop at Reed Point.

(5) Motor Freight Carriers

There are two freight agencies listed in the Billings phone directory, Freight Agency Inc. and Messmer and Associates. These agencies can make arrangements with numerous commercial motor freight operators serving this area. United Parcel Service also serves Stillwater County.

(6) Airport Facilities

The only public airport facility in Stillwater County is located in Columbus. The Columbus airport is classified as a secondary facility. There is one 2,600 foot long runway which is sixty feet wide and is paved. Preliminary plans are being prepared to extend the runway by 1200 feet and resurface the existing runway. Taxiways and parking areas would also be paved and the lighting system would be upgraded. The existing airport is basically limited to single engine aircraft.

F. Educational Institution

Stillwater County has five high school districts and eight elementary school districts plus a portion of the Broadview district. There are currently 416 high school students enrolled for the 1988-89 school year and 972 elementary school students enrolled this year for a total enrollment of 1,388 students.

The curriculum for elementary schools includes math, reading, health, writing, language, spelling, social science, physical education, art, music, library and some schools are beginning to offer computer classes. High schools are required to offer a minimum of 20 units consisting of 4 units English language arts, 2 units of mathematics, 2 units of social studies, 2 units of science, 1 unit of health enhancement, 1 unit of fine arts, 1 unit of vocational/practical arts, and other elective classes. Absarokee, Columbus, Park City, and Rapelje high schools offer numerous elective classes. Special educational services are available to all schools through a county cooperative program.

Absarokee built a new high school in 1990. Columbus added a science facility onto their high school in 1989 plus six new class rooms and a multipurpose room onto the elementary school. The Columbus school district is currently evaluating their building needs and options.

Information on Area Schools

H.S.'s	Yr. Built	Classrooms	Bonds	Students	Teacher
Absarokee	1990	10	\$995,000	126	8.5
Columbus	1968, 1989	23	\$330,000	156	21
Park City	1977	12	-0-	92	10.5
Rapelje	1920	13	-0-	41	12
Reed Point	1919	9	\$422,500	21	5

Elementary Schools

Absarokee	1910, 1921	10	\$140,000	202	14.5
Columbus	1918, 26,60,70,89	13	\$575,000	376	17
Fishtail	1946	3	-0-	47	3
Molt	1960	2	-0-	15	2
Nye	1932, 1988	2	-0-	26	2
Park City	1968	8	-0-	217	15.5
Rapelje	1920 combined w/ /HS		-0-	42	combined w/HS
Reed Point	1917, 1992	3	\$387,500	39	4.5

Most of the School Districts also provide bus service as described in the table below.

<u>School Districts</u>	<u>Mi. of Bus Route</u>	<u>No. Of Bus Students</u>
Absarokee	258	104
Columbus	331	179
Fishtail	53	34
Park City	107	120
Reed Point	302	36

G. Industrial Parks and Major Sites

The Town of Columbus owns industrial sites along the Montana Rail Link Railroad. There are nine blocks over 2 acres each in size. Two of these blocks are currently leased for the chrome stockpile. Natural gas and electrical, plus water, sewer, and street improvements were extended to the industrial sites in 1990. Railroad siding is a definite asset and there is also an airstrip immediately south of the industrial sites. The Mouat EPA superfund site was an impediment to development in this area, but has been substantially cleaned up. Ground water monitoring is ongoing.

The unincorporated areas of Stillwater County are not zoned, with the exception of the West Fork Stillwater Zone. Therefore, the opportunity for industrial development is not currently restricted the County. The most desirable locations would be along the paved highways and the Montana Rail Link Rail Road. This rail line passes through Park City, Reed Point, and Columbus.

H. Hospitals and Clinics

The Stillwater Community Hospital building is owned by the County and is leased to the Stillwater Hospital Association, Inc. The main wing fronting on 4th Avenue North was built in 1952, with the east wing being added in 1970. The hospital contains 14 short term and 9 long term beds, an emergency room, laboratory, physical therapy, nursery facilities and expanded outpatient services. Remodelling completed in 1992 included large scale fire alarm and sprinkling system improvements as well as other room improvements. A 7 unit limited care retirement home was added to the hospital in 1986, an ambulance garage was added in 1994 and a day care facility was started in 1995. Additional public health services available through the hospital include public nursing service for the school nursing program, plus immunizations, nutrition supplement and education for women, infants and children (WIC).

The hospital currently has 72 full and part time employees including 7 registered nurses, 3 LPN's, 3 lab technicians and 1 radiology technician. Hospital payroll for 1995 was \$1,100,000. There are currently 4 local family practice physicians serving the community. The physicians are independent of the hospital, however, all have staff privileges at the hospital. An additional 15 specialists also visit the hospital as needed. The sources of revenue for the hospital consist of fees for the services provided, 1 mil levied on Stillwater County's taxable valuation and the Copulos Trust. That 1 mil generated \$22,492.00 in FY 95-96. The trust consists of \$1,000,000, the terms of which allow the hospital to use interest earned for capital expenses. The Copulos Trust has played a significant role in allowing the hospital to obtain new medical technologies.

The Columbus Branch of the Billings Clinic is located directly across the street from the hospital. The Stillwater Hospital Association owns the clinic building and also an adjacent building which houses Family Services. The clinic offers independent medical care from that provided by the hospital. The clinic employs 3 of the 4 local physicians. Additional staff includes 2 LPN's and 2 office workers.

The Absarokee Medical Clinic provides urgent care, outpatient medicine, x-ray and lab services. The clinic is currently served by one physician, one RN, a technician, and office help. Long term plans include expansion into a new building, possible association with St. Vincent Hospital of Billings with medical specialist visits as needed.

In 1973, an 82 bed convalescent center was constructed. The Stillwater Convalescent Center is located in Columbus but serves the entire county. This facility is privately owned and offers care for all ages. As of 1992, there were 72 people employed including 7 RN's and 6 LPN's. The remaining employees consist of administration, nurses aides, kitchen help, housekeepers, workers helping the developmentally disabled and activity directors. Physical therapy and home health care services are also provided through this business.

One dentist has an office in Columbus and one in Absarokee. These offices are assisted by hygienists and dental assistants. There is also an optometrist in Columbus and another one serving the Absarokee area. One chiropractor resides in Columbus and another one serves Absarokee.

Other emergency medical services include three ambulance services located in Absarokee, Columbus, and Park City. These are volunteer ambulance services with EMT's on each crew. Ambulance service is dispatched through the Sheriff's Department or directly when possible and the ambulance crews also carry page beepers with them.

South Central Montana Regional Mental Health Center also has a satellite office in Columbus. Out patient services include home visits, emergency services, consultation and education, services to alcoholics and drug abusers, screening and diagnosis, aftercare, services to children and elderly clients are also provided. The staff includes a psychologist and a drug/alcohol counselor.

I. Fire Protection

Fire control in Stillwater County is handled through a combination of rural fire districts and fire departments. All the departments and districts operate with volunteer firefighters.

According to state law, the county commissioners in each county must provide for the organization of volunteer rural fire control crews; appoint a county rural fire chief and district rural fire chiefs as necessary and cooperate with federal and state fire protection agencies. In Stillwater County, there are four rural fire districts and three volunteer fire departments. The Town of Columbus also has a volunteer fire department. The volunteers from each area meet for rural fire council meetings as needed, but at least quarterly. Mutual aid agreements have been signed among and between all fire districts or departments in the county, and similar agreements have been reached with state and federal fire control agencies.

A rural fire district is a legally-recognized entity formed by the county commissioners following a petition, hearing and resolution process outlined in 7-33-2101-3, MCA. Once a fire district is formed, property within the district boundary is taxed to raise funds for fire control. In areas of the county where volunteer fire departments operate, no direct tax assessment is levied on property owners, but these departments do receive a proportionate share of a countywide levy established for fire control purposes. The areas with fire departments rely largely on donations for funding.

The four fire districts in the county are Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus, and Park City. The Broadview district includes an area in four counties. In addition there are four volunteer fire departments at Molt, Nye, Rapelje, and Reed Point. Buildings and equipment is listed below for each district or fire department. The following is a brief sketch of each fire district and department.

Absarokee Rural Fire District

The Absarokee Rural Fire District was formed in 1954 or 1955. The Absarokee fire hall is located on leased land. One lot behind the existing fire hall is owned by the district. The following equipment is listed as assets of the Fire District:

1961 Ford Structure truck	1974 Dodge 4 x 4 first out truck
1984 Dodge 4 x 4 grass fire truck	1979 International tanker truck
1977 Seagraves structure truck	

The district responds to approximately 20-30 calls each year, and has a total annual budget of approximately \$60,000.

Nye Company

The Nye Company of the Absarokee Rural Fire District was formed in the early 1970's. The Fire Hall in Nye is located on land donated to the county under the condition that it be exclusively used for fire control. Nye Company assets include:

6 x 6 Dodge tanker	1964 4 x 4 Ford
1980 4 x 4 Dodge	1962 International fire truck

The capital needs listed by the Absarokee Rural Fire District included a 1 ½ ton 4 x 4 all terrain truck and a structure truck to be housed at the Nye hall and a transport vehicle, pavement for the parking lot and foam equipment for the Absarokee site.

Columbus Rural Fire District

The Columbus Rural Fire District was formed in August, 1990. The district owns no land or building and currently operates out of leased facilities in Columbus. The following equipment is listed as assets:

1981 Chevy 2,000 gallon tender	1981 Ford Bronco command R19
1981 Chevy 2,000 gallon tender pumper	1968 Ford 3/4 ton grass truck
1993 Ford 1 ton 300 gallon compressed air foam	State Lands Jeep grass truck
1968 Kaiser multi-fuel 1200 gallon	
1979 Ford 1 ton Ambulance command and quick response	

The volunteers respond to between 90 and 115 calls a year and the district budget is approximately \$47,000 a year. District needs include a building to house vehicles adequately and hold training classes and meetings as well as a structure truck to decrease the district's insurance rating.

Molt Volunteer Fire Department

The Molt Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1980 and has a 40 x 50 concrete wall building with a 20 x 50 addition under construction. The fire hall sits on four lots in the Molt community. The following equipment is listed as department assets:

1967 International tanker - 2,500 gallon	10,000 gallon water tank at wellsite
1987 Dodge 1 ton 300 gallon grass truck	1974 International 1 ton mini-pumper
1968 6 x 6 1000 gallon tank	1987 Chevy Suburban 4 x 4
1987 Chevy crew cab 4 x 4 - 225 gal. tank	1969 Jeep 1 1/4 ton, 250 gal. 4x4 (State)

The Molt Volunteer Fire Department has an annual budget of approximately \$9,000 and responds to approximately 10-15 calls in a typical year. The most pressing need of the department was listed as a structure fire truck with accompanying training in fighting structure fires.

Park City Rural Fire District

The Park City Rural Fire District was formed in 1956 and has a fire hall on three Park City lots. The following assets are owned by the district:

1969 Ford 500 gallon pumper	1957 GMC 500 gallon pumper
1983 Chevy 4 x 4 command & light truck	1974 Ford 2,200 gallon water tender
1968 GMC 1,600 gallon water tender	1953 GMC 6 x 6 grass truck (1000 gal.)
1981 Chevy 4 x 4 grass truck (350 gal.)	

The Park City Rural Fire District responds to around 65 calls a year and has an annual budget of \$28,000.

Rapelje Fire Department

The Rapelje fire hall is located on two lots in Rapelje. The following assets are owned by the department:

1976 Ford fire truck	1977 Dodge state-owned fire truck
1978 Surburban personnel truck	

The department responds to between five and ten calls annually and has a budget of about \$3,000. The goals of the department are to own all the trucks they operate and update the Ford fire truck.

Reed Point Volunteer Fire Department

The Reed Point Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1986 and owns a building in Reed Point. The Department lists the following assets:

1967 Jeep 1 1/4 ton 4 x 4 (state owned)
1966 International 1000 gallon water truck

1968 Jeep 1 1/4 ton 4 x 4 (state owned)

The annual budget for the Reed Point Volunteer Fire Department is \$1,500 to \$2,500, and volunteers respond to around 30 calls a year, most of which are grass fires. The Department would like to add onto the existing building so that all trucks can be under cover and needs another water tanker to put on a truck.

There are Mutual Aid agreements among the departments and districts. Stillwater County and the Montana Division of Forestry also have a cooperative equipment agreement. Local fire protection resources are adequate to handle most fires. In the event of major fires, state and federal assistance may be requested.

J. Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

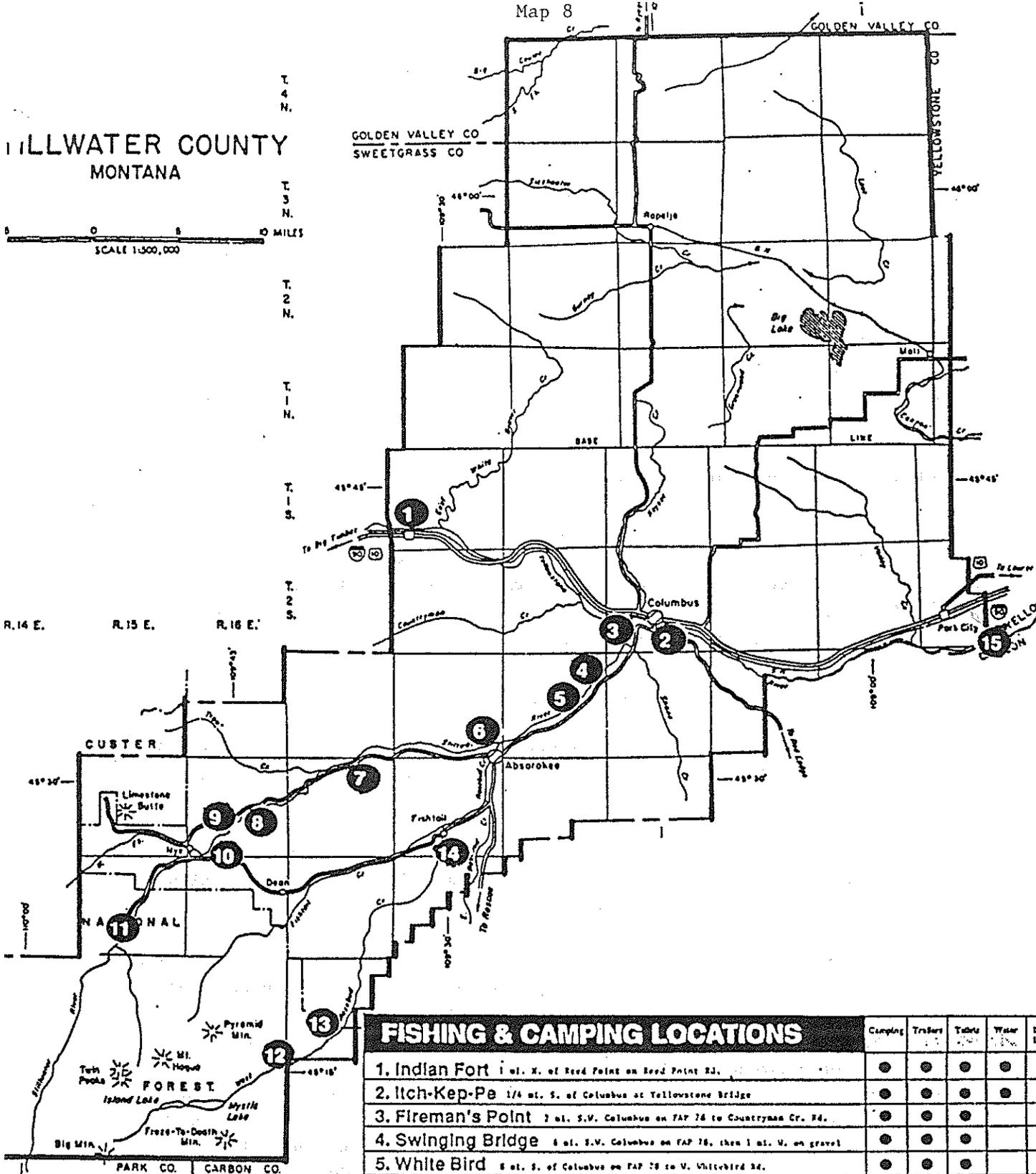
The High Schools in Stillwater County provide a variety of cultural activities including athletics, music, speech and drama. Local civic groups also provide a variety of cultural and recreational activities. The Stillwater Historical Society has developed a museum in Columbus. There are three annual rodeos, the Broken Horn Stampede is held in Absarokee in mid June. The Old Timers Rodeo is also in Absarokee in mid July and Rapelje has an amateur rodeo on the 4th of July. There are Stillwater River races for Kayak's in mid-June and the Yellowstone River Boat Float is the second week of July. The 4H and FFA Fair is held in Columbus at the fairgrounds in August. Reed Point civic groups host a Sheep Drive each labor day. Absarokee has a Farmer's Market on Labor Day weekend. An arts and crafts fair is held in Columbus at the Fairgrounds. In addition to these annual events, many other cultural activities are sponsored by civic and church groups in Stillwater County.

There is also a variety of recreational opportunities in Stillwater County. The Custer National Forest includes property in southern Stillwater County which offers recreational opportunities ranging from primitive to motorized. Primitive recreational opportunities are available in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area. There are two major wilderness portals in Stillwater County, the West Rosebud trail and Main Stillwater trail. Over 10,000 visitors have been counted in one year at these portals. There are three developed Forest Service campgrounds within Stillwater County, Woodbine, Emerald Lake and Pine Grove Campgrounds. These campgrounds have a combined capacity of 123 units which are accessible by car. A variety of dispersed recreational opportunities are available on the Custer National Forest including hunting, hiking, fishing, backpacking, x-country skiing, mountain climbing, horseback riding, etc. In addition to national forest lands in Stillwater County, there are several tracts of Bureau of Land Management Land, State owned property scattered through the County and two National Wildlife refuges in Norther Stillwater County. Halfbreed Lake and Hailstone national wildlife refuges are managed by the National Fish and wildlife service. There are also eleven fishing access sites managed by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks within the County. (See Map 8).

Map 8

**HILLWATER COUNTY
MONTANA**

SCALE 1:500,000



FISHING & CAMPING LOCATIONS

	Camping	Troops	Tables	Water	Boat Launch	Fishery
1. Indian Fort 1 mi. N. of Reed Point on Reed Point Rd.	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. Itch-Kep-Pe 1/4 mi. S. of Columbus at Yellowstone Bridge	●	●	●	●	●	●
3. Fireman's Point 3 mi. S.W. Columbus on FAP 76 to Countryman Cr. Rd.	●	●	●	●	●	●
4. Swinging Bridge 8 mi. S.W. Columbus on FAP 76, then 1 mi. W. on gravel	●	●	●	●	●	●
5. White Bird 8 mi. S. of Columbus on FAP 76 to W. Whitebird Rd.	●	●	●	●	●	●
6. Absaroka 1.5 mi. from Abs. on N. Stillwater Rd. via FAS 470 and Johnson Br. Ln.	●	●	●	●	●	●
7. Cliff Swallow 10 mi. N. of Absarokee on FAS 470	●	●	●	●	●	●
8. Castle Rock 23 mi. N. of Absarokee on FAS 470	●	●	●	●	●	●
9. Moraine 24 mi. N. of Absarokee on FAS 470	●	●	●	●	●	●
10. Buffalo Jump 23 mi. S.W. of Absarokee on FAS 479 via FAP 78	●	●	●	●	●	●
11. Woodbine (USFS) 8 mi. S. of Hye on FAS 419	46	●	●	●	●	●
12. Emerald Lake (USFS) 19 mi. S.W. of Fishtail on W. Rosebud Rd. via FAS 419	31	●	●	●	●	●
13. Pine Grove (USFS) 15 mi. S.W. of Fishtail on W. Rosebud Rd. via FAS 419	46	●	●	●	●	●
14. Rosebud Isle At Fishtail, 177 mi. S.	●	●	●	●	●	●
15. Sportsman Park 4 mi. S.E. of Park City on Sportsman Park Rd.	●	●	●	●	●	●

Additional recreational opportunities are available in local community parks. Absarokee has two community parks. Hawkins Park is two blocks from State Highway 78 and contains two tennis courts, picnic facilities and access to Rosebud Creek. Absarokee Pool site has the recently reconstructed swimming pool, two horseshoe courts and picnic facilities. Columbus has four community parks and a golf course. The golf course is a nine hole course with grass greens, clubhouse, fairways, hazards, cart and club rentals. Itch-Kep-Pe Park is located in Columbus along the Yellowstone River and currently has 49 campsites, public restrooms, and trash containers.

Columbus City park has a swimming pool, two tennis courts, playground equipment, basketball court, and picnic tables; Pike Avenue Park located in the business district has picnic tables, benches and flower beds; Beartooth Park located along Keyser Creek has 1.6 acres of open space; and Granite Peak Park located just north of Columbus has a walking/jogging path, two baseball fields and two more planned. Park City has a park located north of the interstate exit with large shade trees and picnic tables. Rapelje has 5 dedicated parks in town but only one has been developed with a picnic shelter and horseshoe court.

K. Services for Low-To-Low Moderate Income and Aging

An 81 bed Convalescent Center, 7 unit limited care retirement home and 8 unit FmHA subsidized rental units built in 1985 for senior citizens are located in Columbus. A 32 unit Homestead Lodge apartment facility built in the mid 1970's for senior citizens is located in Absarokee. Stillwater County has also received a HUD grant in the early 1970's for rehabilitation of low income housing units. HRDC furnishes heat assistance, commodities, weatherization grants and food bank assistance.

Stillwater County has a welfare office which provides economic assistance and social services to low income people in cooperation with state and federal programs. The public school system in Stillwater County provides educational opportunities for low and moderate income families and participates in the subsidized lunch program.

Stillwater Community Hospital, Stillwater Convalescent Center and other health care providers in the county participate in the federal Medicare and Medicaid programs. Senior Citizens are also served by a council on aging. There are Senior Citizen Centers in Absarokee, Columbus and Park City.

L. Central Business District

All eight townsites in Stillwater County have business districts of varying size and condition. The following table indicates the diversity of business activity in each town. The condition of these districts vary. There are old buildings and newer buildings in various levels of repair. Columbus has a main business district and highway commercial developments within the Town Limits along State Hwy. No. 10 (Pike Ave) and Highway No. 78. (portions of 6th and 9th Streets). The

Absarokee Business District is situated along both sides of State Highway No. 78. The Nye and Fishtail business districts are along Highway 419. Park City business district is located south of the railroad tracks and extends to Interstate 90. The Reed Point business district is along Park Street and extends to the I-90 interchange. Rapelje business district is at the western end of Highway 306. The financial condition of these small town businesses has fluctuated with the economy. The Towns entirely dependent on agricultural trade have had difficulties in the past five years. The towns closer to the mining activity and the I-90 corridor have been more prosperous.

	NYE		ABSAROCKE		PARK CITY		RAPELJE	
	FISHTAIL		COLUMBUS		MOLT		REED POINT	
CAFE	1	1	4	9	2			2
GROCERIES		1	2	3	2	1		1
MOTEL		1	1	3	1			1
DRY GOODS			1	1				
GAS	1	1	2	4	2	1	1	1
DRUG STORE			1	2				
POST OFFICE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
HARDWARE			2	2				
FARM SUPPLY			1	1			1	
FLORAL			1	2				
ELEVATOR				1			2	
BARBER			1	1				
BEAUTY			2	4	1			
BARS	1	1	2	6	2			1
CHURCH			7	8	3	1	1	1
APPLIANCE			1	1				
MACHINERY				1				
AUTO-TRUCK				2				
AUTO REPAIR	1		2	5	2	1	1	1
BLACKSMITH			1	2	1			
ATTORNEY				3				
ACCOUNTANT		1	2	3				
INSURANCE			3	4				
REAL ESTATE			8	5				
MEAT PROCESSING				1	1			

M. Other Planning and Development Activities

The Stillwater City-County Planning Board has an ongoing planning program in the Town of Columbus and mile jurisdictional area. This program consists of subdivision review, public facility projects, hard-rock mining economic impact planning, economic development effort, community planning and assistance with the Towns Zoning Ordinance.

The Greater Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce participated in the Montana Certified Communities Program. They are currently involved with business retention and expansion, tourism promotion and new business recruitment county wide.

The U.S. Forest Service and Montana Department of Natural Resources are involved with the permitting of the east side development and expansion of the Stillwater Mine. They will also be involved with American Chrome Corporation mine if they decide to develop a chrome mine in Stillwater County. The Forest Service is also involved in planning activities for the land area within Stillwater County which is on the Custer National Forest. The Soil Conservation Service works with area farmers and ranchers on individual management plans. The federal Fish and Wildlife Service is involved with plans for the two wildlife refuges in northern Stillwater County.

Stillwater County is currently participating in the Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development Area Economic Development District. An area plan and overall economic development program was approved in 1995 for a five county area including Stillwater County.

SECTION IV

POTENTIALS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Mineral Development

The Stillwater Complex is located in the Southern part of the county on the north slopes of the Beartooth Mountains. This layered igneous formation contains the largest known platinum and palladium reserves in the United States. There are numerous mineral claims the Stillwater Complex and Stillwater Mining Company, a joint venture of Chevron and John-Manville Corp., are currently mining platinum group metals. They are currently mining 1000 tons per day and employ over 400 people. SMC has proposed to expand their production up to 2000 tons per day and employ up to 600 people. SMC is also considering constructing a refining process to the precious metals smelter in Columbus which would add value.

Sizeable chromite deposits also exist in the Stillwater Complex. The Mouat mine at Mountain View above the SMC operation and the Benbow mine southwest of Dean were developed in the early 1940's. However, mining activity ended after World War II, started up again during the Korean War ended again in 1961. There are no current proposals to reopen the chrome mines.

2. Construction

Housing, school, highway, bridge, sewer and other construction projects will contribute to the economic activity of the County. There is potential for significant construction activity as a result of housing needs and associated infrastructure necessary to serve an increasing population and additional mining activity. Local contractors and building supply businesses will likely benefit from increased construction activity. Additional employment opportunities should also be created during construction.

3. Oil and Gas Production

Stillwater County contains several oil and gas fields. There are producing oil wells in the Dean dome between Nye and Fishtail. There are also producing gas wells in the Big Coulee field, Rapelje field and Lake Basin field in Northern Stillwater County. Potential development of these reserves depend on supply and demand, prices, national and international markets. There currently are no proposals to increase production of the oil and gas reserves in the County.

4. Agricultural Products

There is some limited potential for seed production, developing certified weed free hay, specialty crops, making feed preparations ready for transport, Ag related entrepreneurship on farms and ranches, establish working guest ranches or game farms, fee hunting, x-mas trees, and developing value added products such as pancake mix, cream of the west cereal, etc. The pure breed cattle industry also shows some promise.

5. Tourism Promotion

Stillwater County has a variety of recreational opportunities, historical, cultural and natural resources which provide potential for further economic development in the recreation/tourism industry. The level of employment and economic activity associated with tourism has not been quantified but plays a role in the County's economy.

Interstate 90 plus the primary and secondary highway network in Stillwater County serve the main street businesses in each of the small communities around the county. The County's proximity to Yellowstone Park and Custer National Forest creates opportunities to promote the area's amenities. There is a potential for entrepreneurs to further develop or expand recreation/tourism related business in the County. The auto/truck plazas along I-90 at the Columbus and Park City interchanges offer fuel, restaurants, convenient stores and a motel for the travelling public. These services can be expanded. Reed Point is a potential site for a similar type auto/truck plaza. There is also a potential for RV campgrounds near interstate interchanges.

Additional potential exists in guided tours, hunting, fishing, horseback or float trips. The Yellowstone and Stillwater Rivers are scenic and challenging float trips. The Beartooth Mountains provide opportunities for fishing, hunting and horseback trips. There may also be potential to develop sports complexes, such as archery, pistol and rifle ranges or Little League and Softball facilities to attract league or tournament play. Additional potential exists in the Columbus area to host smaller workshops or conferences. There are three meeting rooms in the area capable of accommodating up to 50-60 people and over 60 motel rooms in the area.

6. Manufacturing

The Town of Columbus owns a 20 acre industrial park with water, sewer, gas, electric, telecommunication lines, and a graveled street. If street improvements were made and the chrome pile was moved, these industrial sites would be more marketable to private business interests. These sites have railroad frontage and are less than one mile from Interstate 90. There is the potential to sell or lease these sites individually or any combination of the nine blocks. However, four of the blocks are currently leased for the chrome stockpile.

7. Solid Waste Recycling

There may be limited potential for a small recycling business to utilize some of the solid waste collected in Stillwater County. A recycling business could be operated in cooperation with the Columbus Collection/Transfer site County collection site west of Columbus.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

1. Natural Hazards

Numerous areas in Stillwater County are unsuitable for development because of flooding, landslides or rockfalls, unstable soils, steep slopes in excess of 25% grade, high water table conditions or lack of potable water supply.

2. Transportation System

Several bridges in Stillwater County have restrictive load limits, are single lane or have difficult approaches to them. Two bridges have failed in the past. With the size of modern farm machinery and increasing truck traffic associated with mineral development, these older bridges present problems and constraints for future development.

The road system also has numerous problems and constraints. Only about 10% of the County roads are paved. Those that are paved are aging and beginning to show signs of serious deterioration in some cases. Some of the main routes are narrow, have dangerous curves and are without shoulders. Many sections of County roads do not have recorded rights-of-way or easements to further complicate the situation. Local funds are insufficient to correct the problems. It will require federal, state or private funds.

3. Lack of Improved Industrial Sites

It is difficult to attract a prospective business to an industrial area which does not have the necessary infrastructure. The Columbus industrial sites have railroad frontage and are located less than a mile from Interstate 90, gas, electricity, telephone, water and sewer are at the sites, but the streets are gravel. There are no other designated industrial sites in the County.

4. Water and Sewer Systems

Each of the community water and sewer systems in Stillwater County have capacity constraints and problems. The Absarokee and Columbus water systems have problems with older distribution lines which need to be replaced. Rapelje Water Users Association have recently improved the pumping capacity and pressure tanks. The Columbus and Park City sewer systems are at capacity, while the Absarokee sewer system is nearing capacity. The cost of expanding, repairing or upgrading these water and sewer systems is a constraint on future development.

5. External Constraints

In a survey of the Columbus business community the businessmen in the area listed the difficulty of obtaining investment capital, high cost of liability insurance, workers compensation rates and the State's tax structure as constraints to further economic development in the area. Stillwater Mining Company has also experienced significant delays in the permitting process. These are national and state wide problems from legislative or policy decisions beyond local influence.

SECTION V

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Our multi-year economic development and investment strategy includes continued public-private cooperation among local governments, civic organizations and private enterprises. We will use the organizational structure of the Overall Economic Development Committee for the program. Development programs, activities, and projects will be assessed with identified assumptions regarding trends in the area economy, economic development goals and objectives, and general criteria.

Assumptions

The economic outlook for the Stillwater County economy is mixed. The agricultural sector is expected to remain variable according to supply and demand. Cattle numbers are leveling off from a peak of 57,400. However, cattle prices are down this year. Sheep numbers are down to around 9,300 head. Sheep and wool prices are expected to remain low in the short term. Wheat prices are also down and are expected to remain around three dollars per bushel. The wheat harvest has been up in recent years. This condition will remain variable with the weather. Other crop harvests will be variable with the weather and prices are expected to be variable with supply and demand.

Trends in the Tourism industry indicate tourism has increased state wide. Tourism within Stillwater County is expected to continue to increase along with state promotional efforts.

The mining sector is expected to continue to increase in production, employment and income. This is expected to be the fastest growing sector in the county economy over the next five years as production at the SMC platinum/palladium mine increases to 2,000 tons per day.

Construction, retail trade, services, finance, insurance and real estate are all expected to improve in the southern half of Stillwater County along with the mining activity. Additional pipeline construction in the northern part of the county is expected in the next five years. An increase in residential construction is expected to continue in the Park City area.

Manufacturing, wholesale trade and government services are expected to remain about the same. Federal and state transfer payments play a significant role in the county economy. These payments have been increasing each year and this trend is expected to continue but at a lower annual rate.

Some economic problems continue as the profitability of the agricultural sector remains low. This has also led to problems in main street businesses in most townsites around the county. Increasing competition from Billings, a major metropolitan center, also causes economic problems for main street businesses. The oil and gas industry has also been in decline or inactive in the county and there are no indications of a turn around soon.

Mining and Service Sectors of the economy have the greatest potential for generating additional employment and income. Construction, retail trade and manufacturing also have some potential for generating additional employment and income. Southern Stillwater County is expected to have the greatest potential for growth with the expansion of the Stillwater Mine. Additional commercial and residential development is expected along the Interstate 90 communities of Columbus, Park City and Reed Point.

Goal and Objectives

Goal

To provide a method for guiding and coordinating the efforts of local governments, business, industry and civic organizations concerned with the economic development of the County for the purpose of creating a more stable and diversified economy with new employment opportunities to increase personal income and expand the local tax base.

Long Term Objectives

1. Encourage the development and economic use of natural resources in the county especially minerals and agricultural products. Appropriate conservation measures are also endorsed for soil, water, air and other significant natural resources.
2. Work with existing businesses and industry having expansion plans and actively seek new businesses interested in the county. Inform prospects of advantages of locating in the county and assist with financial arrangements for infrastructure or site development whenever possible.
3. Promote the County to attract new business, industry and visitors to increase economic activity. Cooperate with civic groups in the county on tourism promotions and public relation efforts.

Short Term Objectives

1. Utilize an Overall Economic Development Committee with diverse representation and involvement in the program. The committee will summarize and analyze the area and its economy, identify potentials for economic development, recommend an economic development and investment strategy, prepare annual plans for implementation, prepare annual Overall Economic Development Reports, and inform county residents of program plans and accomplishments.
2. Determine additional needs for community facilities and services. Study existing road system, water supply, sewer facilities, industrial parks, health care services, fire protection, parks and recreation, and the adequacy of housing necessary to support economic development.
3. Identify continuing education and training needs for the county work force, unemployed, underemployed, and identify organizational structure necessary to meet these needs. Special emphasis will be placed on telecommunications, computer literacy, and automation. Involve appropriate organizations to coordinate this effort as needed.

Criteria to guide resource utilization

1. Projects which support basic industries such as mining, agriculture and other exporting industries will be given the highest priority. The unemployed or underemployed will benefit from new job opportunities. Agriculture is county wide and not limited to a specific geographic location. Mining is located in southern Stillwater County. Major manufacturing enterprises are located in Columbus. Economic development projects will be sponsored by Stillwater County, Town of Columbus, or private enterprises.
2. Projects which improve the county transportation system will be given high priority. The unemployed or underemployed could benefit from construction jobs or secondary employment opportunities. The geographic location of these projects would be on the arterial and collector routes serving the county and other major transportation routes.
3. Projects which offer training or retraining for unemployed or underemployed residents of the county will be given a moderate priority. Special emphasis will be given to programs that offer continuing education/career training in the use of computers and telecommunications. These projects may be for any type of business and in any part of the county. Stillwater County or Federal/State Job Training programs would be the likely sponsors for the projects.
4. Projects which provide solutions to our infrastructure problems will be given high priority. Construction job opportunities will benefit unemployed or underemployed. Most businesses could potentially benefit from these projects. Infrastructure projects would primarily be located within townsites. Infrastructure projects will be sponsored by Stillwater County or the Town of Columbus.
5. Value added projects which enhance locally produced commodities will be given a high priority. The unemployed or underemployed would benefit from new job opportunities. These projects may be located in any part of the county and would likely be focused on agricultural commodities, timber products, or processing of mineral concentrates.
6. Projects which promote the county to increase tourism or attract new industry to the area will be given a moderate priority. The unemployed or underemployed could benefit from added job opportunities. Most service sector and retail businesses would potentially benefit. Projects of this type will likely be located along the interstate or in Columbus and Absarokee area. Stillwater County, Town of Columbus, civic groups, or private enterprise would be the sponsors of these projects.
7. Affordable housing projects which provide low income/assisted living facilities will be given a moderate priority. The unemployed or underemployed will benefit from affordable housing. These projects will likely be located in or adjacent to existing town sites.

**STILLWATER COUNTY OEDP COURSE OF ACTION
Projection of Programs, Activities and Projects**

**STILLWATER COUNTY
First Year Program (1997-1998)**

1. Program Description: Prepare a Capitol Improvements Plan

Several infrastructure features were identified as constraints to economic development around the County. The County does not have a formal Capital Improvements Plan to establish goals, objectives, priorities or identify funding options. The County is experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting the needs for operating, maintaining, and/or expanding infrastructure to serve the unincorporated towns and rural areas of the county (roads, bridges, solid waste, public buildings, sewers, water systems, town streets, sidewalks, and community parks)

Given the scope of this program and expense of meeting all the needs for the County's infrastructure, it is recommended that a Capital Improvements Plan be prepared to sort out the problems, evaluate alternatives, identify funding options and provide more specific recommendations. It is further recommended that this be a cooperative effort with the Planning Office and other county offices.

Estimated Cost:	\$ 8,000
Funding Sources:	County Planning Office
Relevant Goals:	Short Term Objective No. 2

2. Project Description: Repair Joliet Road (Hwy 421)

A segment of the Joliet Road right-of-way was damaged by flooding in 1996. Montana Department of Transportation is currently working on a design to repair the damage. Emergency funds have been allocated for this project. However, a reconstruction project has not been scheduled. The State owns the right-of-way for this section of road. This project will benefit the local residents along the route as well as other traffic passing through the county. Traffic safety will be greatly improved.

Estimated Cost:	\$430,000
Funding Sources:	Federal Disaster Funds, MDT
Relevant Goals:	Short Term Objective No. 2

3. Activity Description: Impact Plan Amendment for Expansion of SMC Mine

The Stillwater Mining Company is in the process of expanding to 2000 tons per day. Coordination and cooperation with affected units of local governments is required to provide necessary public facilities and services to accommodate the increasing population. Implementation of approved plans is required and potential amendments to the Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan. The increased mining activity will benefit the Columbus area and southern Stillwater County.

Estimated Cost: \$29,000
Funding Source: SMC impact revenues and/or SMC Mine impact funds.
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objectives No. 1 and 2

4. Project Description: Develop Community Transportation Enhancement Projects

Three Community Transportation Enhancement Projects have been proposed and approved. These are a sidewalk project in Park City, a landscaping project around the County Courthouse, and a landscaping project at Granite Peak park.

Estimated Costs: Park City sidewalks \$44,091
Norton House Renovation \$60,375
Funding sources: MDOT/CTEP funds, Civic Groups, and County Capital Improvement Funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 1
Short Term Objective No. 2

5. Project Description: Develop Solid Waste transfer/collection/recycling site

A transition plan was prepared for the Solid Waste Board in 1994 and implementation continued in 1995. Collection sites were identified for each community around the County. Development of these sites are now in progress. The class II county landfill was closed to comply with federal and state regulations. Solid waste is now hauled to the Billings landfill. Work will continue to develop a centrally located solid waste transfer/collection/recycling site at the county shop location west of Columbus.

Estimated Cost: \$150,000
Funding Sources: Solid Waste fees, RDA or TSEP grants, Intercap Loans
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2, Short Term Objective No. 2

STILLWATER COUNTY
Multi - Year Program (1998-2005)

1. Project Description: Replace Reed Point Bridge over Yellowstone River

The Reed Point Bridge over Yellowstone River is located less than a mile north of Reed Point. This bridge is less than 16 feet wide, is 470 feet long and is over 80 years old. This one lane bridge can no longer handle increased volumes of traffic and oversized/overweight vehicles. The bridge is posted with a 10 ton limit and is considered a safety hazard.

This bridge needs to be replaced and will benefit agricultural and tourist traffic in the Reed Point area.

Estimated Cost:	\$1,300,000
Funding Sources:	Off System Bridge Funds 80% federal 20% state
Relevant Goals:	Short Term Objective No. 2

2. Project Description: Complete paving of Joliet Road FAS 421

The Joliet road is a minor arterial between Columbus and Joliet. This route is receiving an increasing amount of traffic and there have been numerous accidents on the unpaved section. The unpaved section is about 2 miles long and is located at the Stillwater County/Carbon County line.

Paving this section of road will benefit agricultural, truck, and tourist traffic in this area.

Estimated Cost:	\$400,000
Funding Sources:	County Road Funds, Gas Tax, PILT
Relevant Goals:	Short Term Objective No. 2

3. Project Description: Reconstruction of Columbus-Absarokee Hwy., Primary 78

Approximately 19 miles of primary highway 78 between Columbus and the intersection with Nye Road needs to be reconstructed. This is a two lane paved road which is narrow with numerous hills, dangerous curves and relatively high accident rates and severity of accidents. This route is the north-south arterial for southern Stillwater County. Primary 78 serves mine related traffic along with agricultural traffic, local residents, commuters, and tourist/recreational traffic.

Environmental assessment work on this project and public hearings should be completed in 1995. After all review and approvals, utilities relocated, and rights-of-way are acquired, the first section of this project is expected to be ready for bidding by the year 2000. It will be in Stillwater County's interest to cooperate with the Department of Highways, their engineering consultants and contractors to facilitate this project and minimize impacts during construction.

Estimated Cost: \$20,000,000
Funding Sources: Federal and State Highway Funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term No. 1 and No. 2, Short Term No. 2

4. Project Description: Replace Riverside Inn Bridge over Stillwater River by 1998

The Riverside Inn Bridge over the Stillwater River is located about a mile northeast of Absarokee. This bridge is less than 16 feet wide, is 177 feet long and is almost 90 years old. This one lane bridge can no longer handle increased volumes of traffic and oversized/overweight vehicles. The bridge is posted with a 10 ton limit and is considered a safety hazard. This bridge needs to be replaced and will benefit agricultural and tourist traffic in the Absarokee area.

Estimated Cost: \$375,000
Funding Sources: Off system bridge funds
Relative Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

5. Project Description: Upgrade the Molt-Rapelje Road

The Molt-Rapelje road is a major collector between Molt and Rapelje. This route is receiving an increasing amount of truck traffic as a result of the railroad abandonment. The route is mostly unpaved with a paved section about 3 miles long east of Rapelje. This paved section is in disrepair. Improving this road will benefit agricultural truck traffic in northern Stillwater County.

Estimated Cost: \$400,000+
Funding Sources: State/Federal hwy. funds, County Road Funds, Gas Tax
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

6. Project Description: Park City sewer facility

A Wastewater Facility Plan was completed for Park City RSID #8 in 1996. Recent inspections have identified problems with the facility and development pressures have raised questions about the capacity of the sewer facility. An aerated lagoon system has been proposed to meet the needs of Park City beyond 2015. The process to form a water and sewer district began in 1997.

Estimated Cost: \$1,410,000
Funding Sources: EPA/DHES grant, RSID # 8 funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2, Short Term Objective No. 2

7. Program Description: Improvements to Absarokee Water System

The Absarokee water and sewer district was formed in 1996 and have completed a long range plan to improve the water system. There is a need for major improvements to the Absarokee water system, especially the wells and distribution lines.

Estimated Cost: \$75,000 - \$1,000,000 +
Funding Sources: RDA Grants, TSEP Grants, Revenue Bonds, User Fees
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

8. Project Description: Complete Reconstruction of PFH 83 (Nye Road 419)

This segment is 5.82 miles long and is part of a major east-west collector in southern Stillwater County serving the Custer National forest in addition to ranching and mining regions in the county. This road is narrow with dangerous curves and deteriorated asphalt surface. The traffic on this route has been increasing with the expansion of mineral development. Reconstruction has recently been completed on five bridges and fourteen miles of this route. The remainder of the route is not scheduled for reconstruction at this time. The County has acquired Right-of-Way and identified a the source of gravel for this project. Environmental clearance has been acquired for the entire project. This project will benefit the local residents along the route as well as recreationalists visiting the area and mine employees working in the Stillwater Complex. Traffic safety will be greatly improved.

Estimated Cost: \$4,304,887
Funding Sources: Forest Highway Funds, State Secondary Project Funds, Mine Impact Funds, and County Road Funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2
Short Term Objective No. 2

9. Project Description: Replace Sheep Creek Bridge

The Sheep Creek Bridge over Sheep Creek is located in Absarokee. This bridge was built in 1915, it is 24 feet long and narrow. This bridge can no longer handle increased volumes of traffic and oversized/overweight vehicles. The bridge has a sufficiency rating of less than 25. This bridge needs to be replaced and will benefit traffic in the Absarokee area.

Estimated Cost: \$60,000
Funding Sources: Off system bridge funds, MDT
Relative Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

10. Project Description: Replace two bridges on Secondary Route 419

The two bridges on Secondary Route 419 over the West Fork of Stillwater River are located one mile north of Nye. These bridges are narrow, one is 32 feet long and the other is 44 feet long. The longer bridge was built in 1915 and has steel girders. The other bridge was built in 1972 and has timber stringers. This bridge can no longer handle increased volumes of traffic and oversized/overweight vehicles. The bridge are posted with load limits. These bridges need to be replaced and will benefit traffic in the Nye area.

Estimated Cost: \$200,000
Funding Sources: Off system bridge funds, MDT
Relative Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

11. Project Description: Repair and Resurface Sections of Rapelje Road, Highway 306

Sections of the Rapelje Road are in need of repair, reconstruction, and resurfacing. The first section is 2.4 miles in length from Pike Avenue in Columbus, along old Highway 10 and then north on the Rapelje Road to the I-90 overpass is the most immediate need. The second section is from mile post 6.3 to mile post 11. Improving this road will benefit agricultural truck traffic in northern Stillwater County.

Estimated Cost: \$500,000
Funding Sources: State Secondary Road Funds, MDT
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

12. Project Description: Repair and Resurface West Rosebud Road

The West Rosebud Road is paved and in need of repair, reconstruction, and resurfacing. The paved section is the intersection with Highway 419 to Fiddler Creek Road south of Fishtail. Improving this road will benefit ranch and recreational traffic in southern Stillwater County.

Estimated Cost: \$450,000
Funding Sources: County Road Funds, Gas Tax, PILT
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

13. Program Description: Support automation and improve telecommunications

There is a need in both the public and private sectors for additional automation and improved telecommunications capabilities.

Estimated Cost: Unknown at this time
Funding Sources: Public and Private funds, Capital Improvement funds.
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2

14. Program Description: Support and participate in continuing education/career training

There is a need in both the public and private sectors for additional continuing education/career training for employees.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000 - \$3,000 per year
Funding Sources: Public and Private operating budgets.
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 3

15. Program Description: Support private development of low income/assisted housing

There is a need for additional low income/assisted housing units in Stillwater County. Rental housing vacancy rates are low and affordable housing is limited at this time. Stillwater County does not have a housing authority or public housing program. There is an opportunity for private housing developers to meet the housing demand in the County.

Estimated Cost: Unknown at this time
Funding Sources: Private housing developers, local and regional lending institutions.
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2
Short Term Objective No. 2

16. Project Description: Support Park/Recreation projects

Town parks and recreation facilities are important amenities for residents and visitors to Stillwater County. There is also economic activity associated with recreational activities. There is a swimming pool and tennis courts in Absarokee, some parkland in Rapelje, and a community park in Park City north of the Interstate. There is a need for additional park/recreational facilities in Park City and possibly Reed Point. This project intended to identify park and recreation facilities needs.

Estimated Cost: \$7,500
Funding Sources: LWCF Grant, Park Funds, Donations
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 3, Short Term Objective No. 2

17. Activity Description: Evaluate alternative disposal methods for sewage sludge/waste water

There is a need for alternative disposal methods for sewage sludge/waste water. There are numerous septic tanks in the county and public sewer systems in Absarokee, Columbus, Park City and a new system is proposed for Reed Point. Sludge builds up over time in each of these sewer systems and every septic tank. They need to be cleaned out eventually. There are no alternative methods to dispose of the sewage sludge available at this time

Estimated Cost: 2,000
Funding Sources: Beartooth RC&D
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 2

TOWN OF COLUMBUS
First Year Program (1997-1998)

1. Program Description: Prepare a Capitol Improvements Plan

Several infrastructure features were identified as constraints to economic development in Columbus. The Town does not have a Capital Improvements Plan to establish goals, objectives, priorities or identify funding options. The Town is experiencing increasing difficulty in meeting the needs for operating, maintaining, and/or expanding the Town's Infrastructure (water, sewer, streets, sidewalks, curb and gutter, parks and solid waste.)

Given the scope of this program and expense of meeting all the needs for the Town's infrastructure, it is recommended that a Capital Improvements Plan be prepared to sort out the problems, evaluate alternatives, identify funding options and provide more specific recommendations.

Estimated Cost:	\$8,000
Funding Sources:	Town Capital Improvement funds, Public Works Dept., Planning Board
Relevant Goals:	Short Term No. 2

2. Project Description: Update and implement Columbus Area Master Plan

The Columbus Area Master Plan was completed in 1993 and implementation is in progress. The jurisdictional area for the Master Plan was changed in 1995 when the Stillwater County Planning Board was created. The Columbus Area Master Plan needs to be updated to reflect this change in jurisdictional area.

Estimated Cost:	\$5,000
Funding Source:	City-County Planning Funds
Relevant Goals:	Short Term Objective No. 2

3. Project Description: Columbus Airport Improvements

The existing runway is only 2600 feet long which is inadequate for twin engine aircraft. The asphalt on the runway is aging, paved taxiway and parking areas is needed along with an improved lighting system to accommodate twin engine aircraft. A master plan and environmental assessment have been completed for the Columbus airport project. Land acquisition, engineering design, and construction remain to be completed. This project is currently scheduled to be completed by the end of 1996.

Estimated Cost: \$1,824,439
Funding Sources: FAA grant, MT Aeronautics Board grant, Local funds and donations
Relevant Goals: Long Term No. 2, Short Term No. 2

4. Project Description: Complete First Ave. South and Industrial Site improvements

First Ave. South has been developed to a gravel standard and all other infrastructure is in place to serve the SMC Precious Metals Smelter in the Columbus Industrial Area. There is a need now to pave First Ave. South. There may be potential for additional development in the industrial sites for new and expanding industries.

Paving First Ave. South will complete previously proposed improvements to the Columbus Industrial Sites and would provide an incentive for industries to locate in Columbus, potentially increase employment opportunities and promote diversification of the local economy.

Estimated Cost: \$200,000
Funding Sources: SMC, Columbus Industrial Park Funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term No. 2, Short Term No. 2

TOWN OF COLUMBUS
Multi Year Program (1998-2005)

1. Project Description: Replace cast iron waterlines

There are approximately 42 blocks of old cast iron water lines in Columbus. There has been a recurring problem with water line breaks. This is an indication of continued deterioration in the system. There is a definite need to replace deteriorated cost iron water lines, install additional valves and grid the system to insure more dependable service. The entire town including residential, commercial, industrial and public property depends on a reliable water supply. It is an essential service and the economic well being of the community depends on it.

Estimated Cost: \$628,700
Funding Sources: EDA, CDBG, DNRC, SID, INTERCAP Loans, Revenue Bonds and/or Water Replacement funds.
Relevant Goals: Short Term No. 2

2. Project Description: Continue support of improvements to Park/Recreational projects

Town parks and recreation facilities are important amenities for residents and visitors to Columbus. There is also economic activity associated with recreational activities. The swimming pool in City Park, camping and special events at Itch-Kep-Pe Park, plus baseball league and tournament play at Granite Peak Park all result in economic activity for the Columbus area.

This program is intended to continue improvement of park and recreation facilities in Columbus

Estimated Cost: \$2,000 - \$15,000/year
Funding Sources: Private Donations, Local Park Funds, BoBo Days Grant
Relevant Goals: Long Term No. 3, Short Term No. 2

3. Program Description: Support and participate in continuing education/career training

There is a need in both the public and private sectors for additional continuing education/career training for employees.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000 - \$3,000 per year
Funding Sources: Public and Private operating budgets.
Relevant Goals: Short Term Objective No. 3

4. Program Description: Support private development of low income/assisted housing

There is a need for additional low income/assisted housing units in Columbus. Rental housing vacancy rates are low and affordable housing is limited at this time. The Town of Columbus does not have a housing authority or public housing program. There is an opportunity for private housing developers to meet the housing demand in Columbus.

Estimated Cost: Unknown at this time
Funding Sources: Private housing developers, local and regional lending institutions.
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2
Short Term Objective No. 2

5. Project Description: Columbus wastewater facility

A Wastewater Facility Plan was completed for Columbus in 1996. Problems with the sewage treatment facility have been identified. The sewer facility is at capacity. Improvements need to be made to accommodate projected population growth and development proposed for the Columbus area. An aerated lagoon system with land application option has been proposed to meet the needs of Columbus beyond 2015.

Estimated Cost: \$2,100,000
Funding Sources: USDA/RD grants/loans, mine impact funds, sewer fees
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2, Short Term Objective No. 2

6. Program Description: Continue support of local economic development efforts

The local economic development groups have contributed to economic development efforts for the Town of Columbus for since 1990. There is a need to continue support of local economic development efforts.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000/year
Funding Sources: Columbus Industrial Park Funds
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objectives No. 2 and No. 3

7. Project Description: Apply for Grants to extend water and sewer lines

The Goode's Subdivision is wholly surrounded by the incorporated Town of Columbus. This area continues to development and septic tanks are being installed near the town boundaries. Annexation has been recommended for this area. No annexation action has been taken for years. The cost of extending water and sewer lines is a major deterrent.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000 for grant application \$200,000 for improvements
Funding Sources: EPA/DHES grant, TSEP, RD, Sewer Funds and Revenue Bond
Relevant Goals: Long Term Objective No. 2 and Short Term Objective No. 2