PART THREE: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This part introduces the vision statement and planning goals, which describe what Valier should strive to be in the future. Supplementing these goals are detailed "planning strategies" that outline specific policies to adopt and actions to undertake to accomplish the goals. In addition, a future land use plan provides a geographic perspective of the desired future of Valier.

VISION AND PRIMARY GOALS

Vision for Valier's Future

A vision statement is a concise description of what a community desires for its future. It is the long-term foundation for actions to be taken as part of the 20-year plan.

The Valier vision statement is the result of discussions at growth policy committee meetings and public open houses regarding what people value most about Valier, what they would most like to retain for the future, and what most needs to be changed.

Valier Vision Statement:

Valier is a small town with quality features, including mountain vistas and lakefront. Members of the community take pride in a downtown that is an energetic place with a library, shops, service businesses, and quality schools. Family-oriented neighborhoods feature tree-lined streets with a "welcome home feeling." Trails and greenways allow people the opportunity to bicycle and walk from the town to the Lake Francis recreation area. A modern camping area invites you to spend time on Lake Francis fishing and playing.

Primary Goals

The primary goals are short statements clarifying direction and addressing key issues needed to achieve the vision.

The Valier Growth Policy is based on the following primary goals, Goals A through G. The goals interrelate and overlap with each other. It is important to consider each goal within the overall context of the Vision Statement and the other goals. Because the goals are so connected, they have not been assigned any priority order in the following list.

GOAL A: ECONOMY

Diversify and expand the economy of Valier while retaining the small town character and unique recreational and aesthetic features of the town's Lake Frances shoreline.

GOAL B: TOWN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Focus new development and town renewal on the town's historic compact land use pattern that provides for cost efficiencies in infrastructure and services, walkable distances, and open space at the town's edges.

GOAL C: TOWN APPEARANCE

Enhance town appearance to make it a more desirable place to live and work for residents and a destination for visitors.

GOAL D: HOUSING

Encourage housing and services to accommodate working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.

GOAL E: INFRASTRUCTURE – STREETS, SIDEWALKS, WATER, SEWER, LIGHTING Provide cost efficient and effective public infrastructure for the long-term.

GOAL F: PUBLIC SAFETY

Provide for safety from natural disasters and for adequate emergency response for fire and medical care.

GOAL G: COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Build on the town's attractiveness as a recreation destination and location for part-time residents while strengthening a full-time, year-round community.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

The Valier Growth Policy is a comprehensive, long-range plan intended to guide growth and development in and around Valier. The Vision Statement is a short declaration of what Valier will strive to be. The Primary Goals further define how to achieve the vision, but are still fairly general. More detail is needed to explain how to achieve the goals and vision. The Planning Strategies of this section provide that detail.

The Planning Strategies and the Future Land Use Plan (in the next section) are the main action steps and policies for the Valier Growth Policy. The Future Land Use Plan provides specific guidance for future zoning and incorporates elements of the goals and planning strategies.

This section on Planning Strategies provides a re-statement of each goal. Following each goal, a context is provided in the form of a brief discussion of the rationale or background for the goal and identification of issues leading to the specific planning strategies. The context reflects comments from the Valier Growth Policy Committee and from public comments, resident opinion survey results, and the inventory analysis conducted by the Cossitt Consulting team. Following the discussion of context, are the objectives (desired results for each goal), and the specific Planning Strategies.

Implementation of goals and objectives is predicated on the following guiding policies:

Guiding Policies:

Policy #1:	Identify and use applicable grant and outside funding sources to the greatest extent possible.
Policy #2:	Consider new or additional taxing only as needed, and tied to specific objectives and outcomes.
Policy #3:	Projects will be managed openly, with information available to the public and public involvement encouraged.
Policy #4:	Encourage a can-do and positive attitude about the community.
Policy #5:	Before taking actions requiring significant local investment, the Town will conduct feasibility analyses, including:
	• Research on how other communities are handling similar issues.
	 Preliminary cost-benefit analysis that considers long-term costs (such as maintenance, repair, etc.) as well as initial

construction/development costs.

ECONOMY

GOAL A: Diversify and expand the economy of Valier while retaining the small town character and unique recreational and aesthetic features of the town's Lake Frances shoreline.

CONTEXT

Improving the long-term economy for Valier will mean increasing the number of jobs in Valier that pay a living wage and expanding the population with workforce age individuals and families.

In 2009, persons who attended a growth policy meeting in Valier identified the following economic sectors with potential to grow in or around Valier: energy development, spin-off businesses related to energy development, importance of agriculture and possibility of agriculture value-added enterprises, clean industries, and tourism. These themes were echoed in open houses and growth policy committee meetings held in 2010-2011, and participants also added that new businesses with 25-50 employees would be a good target.

The town has some unique advantages compared to other towns of similar size in Montana it's lake-front location, only 20 minutes from Interstate Highway, freight-rail service, and an airport. This growth policy recommends that when the population of Valier expands in the long-term that the airport be relocated outside of town limits. This would make room for new housing within the town and avoid potential conflicts between air traffic and residential uses.

Building a strong economy connects very directly to the other goals in this growth policy. Good infrastructure systems for water, sewer, streets, etc. are essential, as are health care, schools, and quality housing to accommodate a variety of income levels.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ New businesses in Valier providing new jobs with living wages
- ✓ Increase in population and younger, workforce age families

✓ Town has a tax base that can support needed infrastructure improvements and expansions

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy A-1: Develop and implement a long-range economic plan for Valier that builds on the town's strengths, including access to rail, water, and recreational opportunities of Lake Frances.

Strategy A-2: Coordinate county-wide economic plan for Conrad, Valier, and unincorporated areas of the county through the Pondera Port Authority.

Strategy A-3: Participate in multi-county Community Economic Development Strategy planning efforts to qualify for U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding.

Strategy A-4: Work with Pondera Port Authority to identify a grant-writer/researcher to assist with project feasibility.

TOWN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

GOAL B: Focus new development and town renewal on the town's historic compact land use pattern that provides for cost efficiencies in infrastructure and services, walkable distances, and open space at the town's edges.

CONTEXT

Nationwide, people are moving toward traditional town development with lots and blocks, with destinations such as grocery stores, schools, parks, and businesses within walking or biking distance. As people look to more healthy lifestyles, communities are expanding non-motorized recreational trail systems and urban parks. Valier's traditional town development pattern has all of these features, and the exceptional recreation opportunities of Lake Frances as well.

Providing infrastructure in a more densely developed area, such as the traditional town lotblock grid of Valier, is cheaper than providing the same services in areas where development is more spread out.

Valier has considerable undeveloped areas and vacant lots within the town limits. By working to develop these areas, the town will make existing infrastructure more cost-effective.

Some basic functions need to be addressed. The town's municipal boundary needs to be filed with the county clerk and recorder. Valier needs to adopt subdivision regulations, as required by Montana law, and will also need to revise its zoning ordinance to reflect this growth policy.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier retains its small town character and has little or no residential sprawl
- ✓ Town-type densities result in more cost-efficient provision of infrastructure
- ✓ Families move to Valier

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy B-1: Focus on infill development before annexation and develop policies for annexation and infrastructure extensions that provide for logical extension of traditional city block-grid patterns and densities.

Strategy B-2: As a long-range strategy, move the airport facility to provide more infill options when the supply of vacant home sites in town becomes used up.

Strategy B-3: Adopt subdivision regulations.

Strategy B-4: Update the town zoning ordinance.

Strategy B-5: Record the town's municipal boundary with the county clerk and recorder.

Strategy B-6: Retain greenway areas around Lake Frances and consider potential for extending trails beyond town boundary.

Strategy B-7: Use the future land use map as the guide for decision-making for future development.

TOWN APPEARANCE

GOAL C: Enhance town appearance to make it a more desirable place to live and work for residents and a destination for visitors.

CONTEXT

Valier has some buildings that are dilapidated, a few of which are not usable in their current condition. There are also undeveloped areas that are not maintained (e.g., weeds, etc.). These detract from the overall qualities of Valier. Working with landowners to identify solutions, assessing feasibility of rehabilitation or demolition, assisting where possible in identifying funding sources to improve properties, and enforcing ordinances addressing decay will improve the town appearance.

The "Future Land Use" section of this growth policy includes a number of recommendations for form and design of structures and facilities in Valier – for things like pedestrian-friendly sidewalks in the downtown areas, building setback distances, and parking.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Valier has a pleasant appearance for residents and visitors.
- ✓ People want to move to Valier because they like its look and atmosphere.
- ✓ More people come to Valier to recreate and visit.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy C-1: Improve the condition of commercial and residential structures and areas that are deteriorated, vacant or need repair.

Strategy C-2: Develop design guidelines or standards to improve the appearance of the town. (Refer to "Future Land Use" section.)

HOUSING

GOAL D: Encourage housing and services to accommodate working families, seniors, and those with disabilities.

CONTEXT

Housing will be needed in Valier to accommodate working families and to grow and sustain the Town. In 2005, 40% of the housing stock was markedly deteriorated and needs much repair, or is barely usable, or in worse condition.

There is a legitimate public interest in facilitating removal of older mobile homes that do not meet safety standards and replacing them with affordable site-built homes or with manufactured housing that meets the HUD code. Other older site-built homes may also be in need of major repairs, or may be uninhabitable, and these also need to be addressed.

Valier has a high proportion of elderly and the trend for the future is that this will increase. There is no senior living facility in Valier, so older persons live in their homes as long as possible and then are faced with moving to another community for more advanced care. Approximately half of all the respondents to the survey conducted in 2008 indicated a need for a senior assisted living facility in Valier. This also came up in growth policy meetings in 2009 and 2010.

In 2010 growth policy meetings, participants mentioned that people who work in Shelby, Cutbank, and Browning are interested in moving to Valier but not ready to purchase a home, and there are virtually no rentals available. There are proportionately fewer housing rental units in Valier than in Pondera County or statewide.

OBJECTIVES

✓ Condition of housing stock is improved

✓ Families move to Valier

✓ Seniors and those with disabilities are able to stay in their own homes longer and have options for quality affordable housing and assisted/senior living

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy D-1: Ensure safe, affordable housing in new construction and rehabilitation or replacement alternatives to non-compliant mobile homes and substandard housing.

Strategy D-2: Develop senior housing/assisted living options.

Strategy D-3: Encourage services to seniors and those with disabilities in their own homes.

Strategy D-4: Encourage transportation for seniors and those with disabilities (e.g., connections to Conrad; Conrad-Great Falls bus).

Strategy D-5: Facilitate development of quality rental housing for working families.

INFRASTRUCTURE – STREETS, SIDEWALKS, WATER, SEWER, LIGHTING

GOAL E: Provide cost efficient and effective public infrastructure for the long-term.

CONTEXT

Streets, water, sewer, and other infrastructure designed for cost-efficient delivery over the long-term result in lower taxes to support that infrastructure. The town of Valier is implementing the Capital Improvements Plan it adopted in 2008. Planning ahead in five-year increments is recommended to ensure comprehensive review of needs and proposed projects. Some areas of town are not served with water and sewer, and as the town grows these will need to be addressed.

OBJECTIVES

✓ Valier has sound, cost-efficient infrastructure that is maintained, repaired, and updated as needed.

✓ Infrastructure is extended as needed to growth areas within town limits.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy E-1: Continue to annually update and utilize the Valier Capital Improvements Program Plan and budgeting process.

Strategy E-2: Develop a 5-year Capital Improvements Plan so that infrastructure needs can be more comprehensively and publicly reviewed than likely through annual updates.

Strategy E-3: Improve cell phone and internet service to stay competitive with what is needed by residents and businesses.

Strategy E-4: Create a program that combines grants, local tax revenues, user fees, and loans to equitably fund the extension of town utilities to un-served parts of town.

PUBLIC SAFETY

GOAL F: Provide for safety from natural disasters and for adequate emergency response for fire and medical health care.

CONTEXT

Valier has a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Those plans have specific recommendations for actions to address public safety in Valier. The fire department and emergency medical units rely on volunteers. The emergency medical unit is about to shrink by two persons (who are retiring). The fire department is well-staffed. Attracting and retaining volunteers for both fire and medical units is an on-going challenge which could become even more difficult with an increasingly older population.

OBJECTIVES

✓ Valier continues to have well-trained emergency response units for fires and medical emergencies.

✓ Valier is prepared for orderly response to disasters and reduces situations that can make disasters worse.

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy F-1: Implement strategies from the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildlfire Protection Plan as they apply to Valier, including recommendations for building permits

Strategy F-2: Work to ensure fire department and emergency medical response units have personnel, equipment, and facilities to provide continued service. Actively recruit volunteers as needed.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

GOAL G: Build on the town's attractiveness as a recreation destination and location for part-time residents while strengthening a full-time, year-round community.

CONTEXT

Valier began as a working town to build Lake Frances and to serve the surrounding agricultural producers. Valier still has roots in that history and still serves that function, but increasingly over the years Valier has been shifting in part to a recreation-based economy. Visitors and residents who moved away to find work are attracted to the site, and purchase homes or lots to build later. The town is increasingly becoming a mix of persons who live and work in Valier and those who work elsewhere or who have come to retire, to vacation, or live here only part-time. It is important to weave the various life-styles together to develop and maintain the social fabric that pulls communities together and builds them for the future. Getting all residents, even those who are part-time, to contribute to the community is important for community well-being and critical for staffing volunteer functions.

OBJECTIVES

 \checkmark Full-time and part-time residents feel a part of the Valier community and work together for its future

 \checkmark Valier becomes known as a fun and friendly place to visit and to live

PLANNING STRATEGIES

Strategy G-1: Encourage volunteerism (esp. for volunteer fire department and emergency response).

Strategy G-2: Continue existing events (such as Homesteader Days and Fishing Days) and develop new events that build community spirit and attract visitors.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan section of the Growth Policy provides a general view of future land use for Valier over the next 20 years. The Land Use Plan organizes all the expected future growth, development, and redevelopment into a pattern that is consistent with the Town's Vision Statement and Goals. The plan represents how Valier should develop over the next 20 years by showing the locations and characteristics of major land use types, such as commercial, industrial, residential, and so forth.

The Land Use Plan consists of the Future Land Use map and the Land Use Designations. This section contains the Land Use Designations which describe the Land Use Areas depicted on the Future Land Use Map. Each area depicted on the map is individually discussed. Development specifications for each area are also presented.

The Town should use the Land Use Plan as a guide for all land use decisions including all zoning decisions. The Land Use Plan should also be consulted in the planning of public improvements. In addition, the private-sector is encouraged to follow the Land Use Plan in the planning of real estate developments.

It should be noted that the Land Use Plan is intended to be fairly general. The boundaries between different types of areas are not distinct and the specifications for development in each area are general, as well. The Future Land Use Map will provide guidance for zoning decisions but it is not as precise as a zoning ordinance. Many details about land use characteristics in each type of area and the exact boundaries of areas will be worked out when revising the zoning ordinance.

As part of the planning process, two alternative Land Use Plans were initially considered – the Compact Community Alternative and the Expansive Community Alternative. Both alternatives were described in detail in previous versions of the growth policy (refer to February 2011 draft that was posted on the Pondera Port Authority website). There were two major differences between the two alternatives – future uses of the airport and lands outside the current municipal boundary.

In the Compact Community Alternative, development outside of town would occur in a way that would have less sprawling uses at the edges of town. The objective was to develop within existing municipal limits first. New development would occur at town-type densities on empty lots (or lots with dilapidated buildings), referred to as "in-fill" development. Developing at town densities increases efficiencies for water, sewer and other infrastructure. A holding zone area outside the town limits would be kept as open as possible for future potential expansion and for the logical extension of streets, water, and sewer. When vacant land in town is filled up in the long term future, the town would work with the county to relocate the airport so those lands could be used for new in-town development. When those lands were fully developed, the town could expand as necessary into the areas outside of municipal limits. In the Expansive Community Alternative, Valier would have more sprawling land uses. Development outside of town would likely occur on small acreages or very large lots especially if the town extended water to those locations. It would be more costly to extend and maintain infrastructure because of large lot sizes. The airport would stay in place which would push new development to outside of existing town boundaries sooner than under the Compact Community Alternative.

Many persons commented on the alternatives in response to the growth policy drafts posted on the Pondera Port Authority website in January and February, at the February open house and "Listening Sessions" held in Valier. It was clear from these comments that the airport was the most problematic concern. Some people thought that eventually moving the airport and opening up that land for residential development would be good for Valier. Others felt very strongly that the airport should not be relocated in any circumstance. There was some concern that if the traffic at the airport increased much, it could create noise problems for neighbors. Those concerns were expressed by those who wanted to keep the airport as well as those who thought it should be moved when more space is needed for more development in town.

The Valier Planning Board considered these comments and recommended a third alternative, the Compact Community with Airport Option. This alternative was the same as the Compact Community Alternative except for the airport. Under this option, at least once every five years the planning board would examine availability of land in town for new development. When information indicates that no more land would be available within 3 to 5 years, the town council would begin steps to assess feasibility of transitioning use of the airport land to other uses. This would necessitate coordination with the county, which owns the land. It would likely begin with a feasibility study of converting un-used portions of the airport to residential use (such as the western portion currently being considered for the Babe Ruth baseball fields). In the very long term, a feasibility study of total relocation may become necessary. Any feasibility study should involve the Montana Department of Transportation – Aviation Division, those who use the airport, Pondera County, and surrounding landowners. Depending on results of the feasibility study, Valier and Pondera County would need to work together to transition any airport relocation or reduction in airport land area.

The Town Council considered the Planning Board's recommendation and public comment. The Town Council is adopting the "Expansive Community Alternative" future land use with flexibility to work with the county on options for the airport.

The following describes the Future Land Use Plan as adopted by the Town Council.

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

The Land Use Designations depicted on the Future Land Use Map are:

- 1. Downtown
- 2. Residential Town Pattern
- 3. Airport
- 4. Transitional
- 5. Industrial
- 6. Business Development
- 7. Open Space & Recreation

8. Holding Zone

Each of these is discussed in detail on the following pages.

Downtown: The downtown area in Valier is the old commercial core of the town. The area includes land on the Valier Highway between 4th and 8th Streets and extends along Montana Avenue between Marias and Pondera Avenues.

The area has several older, possibly historic, commercial buildings and should continue as the retail commercial center of the town. Appropriate land uses for this area include commercial, office, and public uses.

Building form is important to the character of this area. Buildings with little or no setback are common, in the traditional downtown style. Two-story commercial buildings would be appropriate here in the future. No on-site parking should be required here so that buildings can retain the downtown pattern and not be surrounded by parking lots. As need arises, community parking lot at margins of the area should be considered.

To make the area more inviting, the town should strive for a highest level of pedestrian accommodation -- wide sidewalks, curb extensions, cross walks, street furniture and landscaping.

<u>Residential - Town Pattern</u>: This area encompasses many of the residential blocks in Valier. The area also includes many vacant lots that could potentially accommodate more residential development. The "Residential – Town Pattern" area is intended to be primarily residential, although some non-residential uses could also be allowed if they fit into the context and character of the neighborhood. Such non-residential uses might include day care facilities or churches, which would be allowed as permitted uses. Other uses such as neighborhood restaurants or recreation-oriented activities could be considered as conditional uses, but would have to meet certain compatibility criteria (such as for parking, etc.) before being approved as a use in the "Residential – Town Pattern." The zoning regulations would further define parameters for permitted uses and conditional uses.

The concept of "Town Pattern" is that new development would occur in a pattern of streets, blocks, lots, and buildings that is similar to that of the existing town. Since all of the town is platted, new residential development could mostly be infill development. (Infill development is the development of new housing or other buildings on scattered vacant sites within a built-up area.) Overall housing densities would be similar to the current pattern in the more fully developed areas--about 3 housing units per gross acre.

The residential area should accommodate a range of housing types, from single-family units to multi-family units. Small multi-family buildings of four or fewer units can be successfully interspersed with single family units in the area.

Manufactured housing¹ should be allowed in all residential areas. The town can enact basic residential design standards (covering such things as roof pitch, eves, siding, etc.) if there are

¹ The National Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Act of 1976 required significant improvement in the safety and quality of mobile homes. Homes that comply with the act are said to meet the "HUD

issues about compatibility with site built homes. Presently, town zoning ordinance uses outdated terminology in reference to manufactured housing and mobile homes. The town's zoning standards should encourage good siting and design without unnecessarily limiting the use of manufactured housing.

Under the current zoning ordinance, most residential land is in the A zone. In the A zone, building setbacks, minimum lot sizes, and minimum lot widths are fairly large. These could be reduced without impairing the residential character of the area. Reducing the setbacks, lot widths, and lot sizes could make it easier to build in town and might help reduce the cost of producing new housing.

Airport: The airport would remain at its present location and would be considered for potential "Residential - Town Pattern" use when other residential building locations in municipal limits were filled in. Valier would like the opportunity to use portions of or relocate the county-owned airport at some time in the future if needed for residential growth. Valier will work closely with Pondera County and the Pondera County airport board to identify needs of the airport, siting criteria, and funding sources for relocation.

At least every five years, the planning board will examine availability of land in town for new development. When information indicates that no more land would be available within 3 to 5 years or so, the town council would begin steps to assess feasibility of transitioning use of the airport land to other uses. Valier will coordinate with the county, which owns the land. This could occur in phases--the western-most part of the airport, which is not used for airport operations, could be the first place to transition from airport to residential use. This western portion is currently being considered for the Babe Ruth baseball fields. In the very long term, a feasibility study of total relocation may become necessary. Any feasibility study should involve the Montana Department of Transportation – Aviation Division, those who use the airport, Pondera County, and surrounding landowners. Depending on results of any feasibility study, Valier and Pondera County would need to work together to transition any airport relocation or reduction in airport land area.

Industrial: The Industrial area includes the existing businesses along the railroad tracks on the northern edge of town. These uses would be encouraged to continue in the future and the addition of new business of a similar nature would also be encouraged.

Transitional: These are areas along the Valier Highway that have more spread out commercial development than the downtown and have more variety of uses interspersed with the commercial uses. The mixture of land uses can make these areas difficult to plan and

code". The HUD Code is a uniform construction code that ensures that a manufactured home, regardless of where it is built in the U.S., will meet certain publicly adopted standards related to health, safety, and welfare. Some existing mobile homes in Valier were constructed prior to 1976. These older units are referred to as "mobile homes" while the newer units should be called "manufactured housing. These older mobile homes do not meet health and safety standards and should be a focus of the Town's efforts to improve the housing stock. There is a legitimate public interest in facilitating the removal of these older mobile home or their replacement with manufactured housing that meets the HUD code.

manage. For the future, the variety of uses should remain--including retail commercial, offices, public uses, and a wide variety of residential uses. New or expanded commercial uses should be carefully designed and managed to minimize impacts to area residences. All buildings in this area will be more spread out than in the downtown--this means larger setbacks, larger lots, and on-site parking are all appropriate. Buildings would generally be no taller than two stories high.

Business Development: This area is intended as a long-term reserve for future business development. If Valier ever sought to create a business or industrial park, this would be the place to locate it. Due to demand realities, it is not likely that this area would be developed for many years. However, by identifying it now, the town can take steps to protect it from incompatible development, such as residential development. The Town can also take steps toward facilitating eventual business development on at least part of this area.

Open Space and Recreation: This area is the shore of Lake Frances and includes the Town's Recreation Area and Campground. It is intended that these uses continue in this area. Further development of recreational opportunities in this area should also be encouraged. For instance, the area could be a key component of a future walking/biking trail system in Valier.

Residential - Rural Pattern: This area is outside the present town limits. Until such areas are annexed into town, they will likely remain unzoned in the county, allowing for a variety of lot sizes and configurations. Town water service and possibly town sewer service would be provided based on feasibility. The Town of Valier will encourage town type densities and logical extension of streets and utilities, wherever water service is extended outside existing municipal limits. A fairly large land area is identified for this land use. Lakeside areas on both sides of town, which are equally well suited for this type of development, are included in this land use area.

