

# INTRODUCTION

## PART 1: OVERVIEW

### A. Background

On Monday, September 29, 1980, Anaconda changed forever. It was on that day, “Black Monday”, that officials from Atlantic Richfield Company announced the immediate suspension of smelting and refining operations in Anaconda, Butte, and Great Falls. With that announcement, some \$40 million in wages and benefits disappeared.

While it was devastating enough that the economic lifeblood of the Anaconda area vanished in an instant, the community was left a legacy of contamination that would cripple its attempts at building a new base economy for a generation. Obsolete industrial facilities stood idle, and while these were later dismantled and removed by the company, a century of air borne contaminants such as lead and arsenic left thousands of acres of vacant land unsuitable for any economically beneficial use. Today Anaconda is part of the Clark Fork River Superfund Site, the nation’s largest. Thirty years after the smelters fell silent for the last time, much of the former industrial land in and around Anaconda has been remediated to some extent, but the community is still struggling with its identity and its economic future.

Although the area was placed on the Superfund National Priorities List by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1983, progress on the economic recovery has been slow. In 1994 much of the old industrial property was deeded to the County subject to covenants that restrict its future use. But much of the contaminated land is still owned by the Atlantic Richfield Company, and is being remediated and developed over time. The primary goal of this Growth Policy update process is to get the former industrial properties remediated, redeveloped, and in so doing, chart a bold new economic future for Anaconda-Deer Lodge County.

Figure 1: Anaconda Copper Smelter Smokestack



Since the beginning of 2008, the Anaconda – Deer Lodge County (ADLC) administration began to aggressively pursue grants and loans for infrastructure upgrades and replacement, as well as other capital improvement projects. This has been a very important step for the County as it lays the foundation for future economic development. Between these projects and private development initiatives that have gone ahead in spite of the current recession, **significant** development activity is now occurring in the County. Specific projects funded and/or in progress for 2009 and 2010 include:

- Tennis courts at Washoe Park rebuilt; \$107,000
- Northwest Energy gas-fired generating plant; \$200 million est. investment
- Compressor station for generating plant
- Sewer line extension for Mill Creek industrial area (TIFID); \$1 million County investment
- Natural Resource Damage (NRD) grant for water main replacement; \$1 million. Total project cost: \$10 million
- Grant for resurfacing runways at Bowman Field; \$1.3 million over two years
- New CCCS facility; \$12.3 million estimated investment
- Omnibus transportation bill funding for Beaver Dam park & trail development; \$2.1 million
- SW Montana Community Federal Credit Union building; private investment unknown
- Public parking at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Oak St.; \$120,000
- Anaconda street lighting project; \$838,000
- Mill Creek Highway; \$500,000
- Restoration of historic ADLC Courthouse; \$780,000 in grants, \$420,000 financed
- STAG Grant for preliminary engineering report on West Valley sewer
- Neighborhood Stabilization grant; \$1.2 million

Like all growth policies, this one contains inventories and descriptions of the current situation, analyses of trends and projections, and goals and policies to guide future actions. However, it is the County's intent that this Growth Policy contain sufficient documentation of the issues and specificity of its recommended actions that the Growth Policy can be a viable decision making tool--- both to achieve the vision of the County's citizens and to provide a high degree of surety to those who would develop and invest in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County.

But the true value of planning goes far beyond supporting grant applications or helping to make land use decisions. Planning provides an opportunity for civic leaders, business persons, and citizens to work together to chart the future course of their community. And while all successful communities have vibrant economies, they also have great streets and public places, accessibility and choices of travel modes, and safe, decent, and attractive housing. Above all, they have a strong sense of identity and of place.

### B. Authority

The authority for Montana cities and counties to adopt growth policies is set forth in Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6, MCA. This Growth Policy replaces the 2005 Growth Policy.

### C. Jurisdiction

This Growth Policy shall apply to all lands within Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana.

## PART 2: PLANNING PROCESS

The process used to develop the 2010 update was centered on a series of visioning sessions held throughout the County from mid-2008 through 2010. These sessions were held in the following locations:

- Anaconda (2)
- Georgetown Lake (2)
- Lost Creek
- East Valley
- Opportunity
- Big Hole
- Aspen Hills/Clear Creek
- West Valley

Each visioning session was publicized with an article in the County's official newspaper and/or a display ad in the same paper.

Questions and issues posed varied some from one session to the next, but generally those in attendance were asked:

- *What do you value about your community (or the County as a whole) to the extent that you want what you value to be preserved and protected (or even enhanced) even as the community grows and changes?*  
Frequent responses to this question were values such as small town character and feel, feeling of security, access to open spaces/public lands, clean air and water, scenic vistas, easy access to outdoor recreation, heritage and culture.
- *What do you NOT like about your community or about the County in general? More specifically, what kinds of issues could additional growth address in a positive manner?*  
The most frequent response was lack of jobs/low wages and economic development. Also mentioned was more and better shopping, more youth recreation programs, industrial decay and blight, road maintenance, and alcohol and drug abuse.
- *What should new development in your community look like?*  
The responses here varied widely by neighborhood. Lost Creek residents wanted to see newer homes, properties kept better (eyesores), and more open space in subdivisions. Georgetown Lake residents wanted a gas station/convenience store in their area, but otherwise are very satisfied with the community as it is. People in Opportunity said that new development should be served by central water and sewer.
- *What would you like to see changed in your community (or in the County as a whole)?*  
Predictably, the most prevalent response to this question was improvement in the local economy. There was the usual desire for better paying jobs, of course, but there was also the feeling expressed that improvements in the local economy would help fill vacant homes and businesses--especially downtown--and reduce blight.

In addition to the visioning sessions, the County conducted focus groups with social service providers, land managers, and the County's top employers. Not surprisingly, the values to be preserved and the issues and problems to be addressed by the Growth Policy were very similar to those mentioned in the visioning sessions. As expected, these groups were more directly concerned about business and

economic development issues such as the stigma associated with being a Superfund site, incentives to remediate and redevelop contaminated commercial and industrial properties, and job growth.

The focus groups were also concerned that future growth should be balanced in terms of housing built, jobs created, and commercial services provided. The emphasis seemed to be on recapturing retail dollars that are now lost to other communities, and to ensure that Anaconda is neither a large importer nor exporter of labor. Job training and workforce housing were identified as issues key to Anaconda's economic development success. There was great concern that any company investing in Anaconda today would have to supply their own labor, but no workforce housing is currently available.

Long range planning issues were also raised through public involvement in development review. For example, a large lot subdivision above English Gulch involved issues of wildlife habitat, groundwater, and drainage/flooding. An application for a permit pursuant to the Big Hole River Conservation Development Standards and Permitting Process to construct a bridge spanning the Big Hole River raised issues of flood plains, consideration of ice damming in flood plain management, what constitutes a 'structure' for purposes of the Standards, and protection of aquatic resources.

Throughout the process, the Planning Board held a series of workshops to discuss various elements of the Growth Policy and to draft the Goals, Policies and Actions that are key to implementing the document.

Following completion of the first draft of this Growth Policy (working draft), the Growth Policy will be placed on the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County web site for public review, and a 30-day review period will be declared. During this review period, copies of the working draft will be made available at public places such as the ADCL Planning Department, ADLC Chief Executive office, and the Hearst Free Library.

Following that comment period, a public hearing will be advertised and conducted by the ADLC Planning Board following the procedures set forth in Sec. 76-1-602 to 604, MCA.

Figure 2: Growth Policy Planning Process



**PART 3: VISION**

The following vision statement was developed as part of the 2005 Growth Policy. The ADL C Planning Board reviewed the statement and is readopting it for the 2010 update.

**VISION STATEMENT**

“Anaconda-Deer Lodge County will, as a Community, preserve our rich heritage and common values while retaining and enhancing our turn-of-the century image. With long-range planning to direct growth and development, our community will continue to be a safe place where individuals and families can work, play, and learn based on a strong commitment to basic values, sound education, and mutual respect. The preservation and development of our resources will be for the betterment of all citizens, now and in the future.”