



## OVERVIEW

The Comprehensive Plan includes recommended objectives and action items that Lewis County should undertake over the next 10 to 15 years to address each of the seven identified policy areas. These objectives and action items work in concert with the County Character Area Plan to determine the overall direction of activity, development and investment within the county.

While the Comprehensive Plan creates the framework for the future of Lewis County, it will not be a successful endeavor without a methodology for its implementation. The implementation plans associated with each policy area summarize the primary steps necessary to capitalize on opportunities discovered during this process, as well as additional planning and investigative activities that will be necessary for Lewis County to move forward in achieving the policies and objectives stated in the Comprehensive Plan.

The implementation tables represent 213 action items, organized by policy, and each given a potential timeframe for action. In addition to ideas generated during the Comprehensive Plan process, the tables also include key recommendations from recent planning initiatives such as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Blueway Trail Development Plan for the Black River. This approach consolidates all key activities into a single document. While seemingly an overwhelming list of things to do, a few watershed action items will get the ball rolling and provide the momentum for continued implementation and success. These pivotal action items are discussed below.

## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Several major planning and administrative projects will be necessary triggers to go after state and federal funding for projects within the Plan.

## Primary Planning Action Items

The development of a Tourism Management Plan will be necessary to direct future investments in this important industry. This plan should include sections on branding and identity creation, marketing strategies, and the outline of an organizational structure for implementation. The County should continue to support the emergence of the alternative energy industry by conducting a county-wide assessment of potential supply and production capacity, including the identification of a comprehensive database of feedstocks and waste products for all industries.

The County should focus on expanding their partnership with the Tug Hill Commission to create a set of design guidelines for use by municipalities during the site plan review process. The County should also seek a partnership with municipalities along the Black River to undertake the development of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, helping align these communities for future economic development funding. In addition, the County should undertake an analysis of the cost of services at the local municipal level to benchmark delivery costs and set the stage for efficiency improvements.

## Primary Administrative Action Items

The establishment of a formal tourism entity at the county level, either a department or Visitor's Bureau, will be a critical first step for the implementation of tourism and related economic development initiatives outlined in the implementation tables. The creation of a "Brain Gain Commission" will be significant to stem the tide of population loss amongst the younger generations. In support of this, a partnership with regional educational institutions to provide relevant training programs will help improve the workforce pool, and provide local options for future graduates and those in transition between jobs. This effort should focus in particular on training for emerging industries such as agri-tourism, alternative energy (all components of the process) and organic farming.

The development of a compiled listing of grant and funding opportunities for use by county municipalities will be an important step in funding specific recommendations of this Plan at the local level. An action item of significance that should be implemented in the near-term is the development of a program to facilitate discussions on the coordination and consolidation of municipal services with teams of experts. The county will need to take a leadership role by providing access to information to assist decision making at the local level.



*This graphic depicts the importance of cooperation and the collective implementation of the Plan by numerous entities in Lewis County.*

This is just a sampling of what are potentially the most critical issues to be addressed following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The County Department of Economic Development and Planning will be required to provide regular reviews and assessments of the implementation items to adjust for changing circumstances and to make relevant decisions in a timely fashion as opportunity and information arises.

## CONCLUSION

Lewis County faces numerous challenges and opportunities as it moves into the 21st Century. Strategic decisions made today will impact the journey and destination of the region over the next 20 years. The 2009 County Comprehensive Plan is a culmination of over a year of review and planning and provides the foundation for decisions that will drive community development and investment. As the county embarks on this journey, it must build upon its many assets, particularly its wealth of natural resources, while addressing conditions that adversely affect the quality of life of its citizens, such as infrastructure and housing decay.

Lewis County has a proud, rich and diverse history and is full of well-established communities and a unique rural character that must be protected and promoted. Community character could be compromised if the various challenges identified in this Plan are not addressed in a strategic and comprehensive manner.

The vision, policies, objectives, and action items set forth in the Plan should be used to guide future actions and decision making at the county level, while providing much needed guidance to local municipalities. The County Character Area Plan provides an additional level of guidance, identifying areas of existing character to be promoted and retained, while providing some general design guidelines and recommendations on how to accomplish Plan objectives. The Plan is designed to be a user-friendly, working document for key county officials and staff members, local community leaders and other involved community stakeholders.

The activities outlined in the Plan cannot be undertaken by the County governmental leaders and departments alone. Over the next several years, residents and other stakeholders will need to come together to complete the tasks included in the Plan. Successful implementation requires ongoing communication and cooperation among the leaders and residents of the entire county. Collectively, Lewis County can ensure a healthy and prosperous future for generations to come.