



Citizens for a Better Flathead
Working to Keep the Flathead Special Forever



2013 Annual Report

Total Up the Difference

Land Use Planning



In 2011 a small group of highway-fronting property owners proposed a new county zone that would overlay all major roads in the county, allowing for **69 different uses** including the anything-goes category of general retail. CBF felt such a zone would allow for unacceptable strip commercial development throughout the county. However, when only 7 community members spoke in favor, and **almost 900 community members spoke up in opposition** and many provided

research (as did CBF) to support their position—3 County Commissioners still voted in favor of the new zoning. Fortunately there are state laws that the commissioners must comply with in making such decisions, and we felt they had failed to follow these. In July of this year the district court ruled in our favor upholding all 4 counts we had raised and nullifying the new zone! That's **1 huge victory** that took years of hard work—a victory we would not have had without your support. While we've chosen to spotlight this effort here, a number of other matters claimed our attention as well. With your support we were able to work on issues such as the Whitefish Downtown Master Plan, highway corridor zoning, and sign code, and we spoke up along with more than 800 citizens against proposed changes to the County Growth Policy.

For only the **3rd time in our 21 year history**, Citizens for a Better Flathead **decided to file suit against the county**, asking the court to rule on the legality of the commissioners' action.

The 2013 MT Legislature

Analyzing, tracking, and lobbying for or against **almost 175 different land use related bills** as well as some energy bills at the legislature is an intense and challenging job for the one lobbyist that CBF, as part of the Montana Smart Growth Coalition for almost 20 years, hires each session. It's noteworthy that none of the bills we worked to oppose became law. Unfortunately, most progressive legislative efforts, including bills requiring septic system inspections and prioritizing "complete streets" transportation planning, failed to move ahead.

Your Support Made

Waste Reduction and Recycling

We celebrated 20 years of collaboration in the WasteNot Project in 2013. This is a joint project of the Flathead County Solid Waste District, Flathead Valley Community College Service Learning Program, and Citizens for a Better Flathead. **We taught 2465 Flathead County students** about recycling, composting, reducing waste, and our county landfill in 2013. And **400 pounds of unwanted medicines** were collected over the last six months (up from 131 pounds in the prior six months) at 3 new drop-off boxes the WasteNot Project secured for Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls. 13 of 14 shallow groundwater wells



sampled in the lower Flathead in the fall of 2010 detected pharmaceutical chemicals so providing safe disposal for meds is an important water quality issue. For 8 years the WasteNot Project organized annual Electronic Waste collection events before a number of local businesses, pledging to meet environmental best practices for E-Waste recycling, stepped up to offer year-around drop-off collection this year. **50 new recycling bins** are now available for free check-out and use at community events large and small. Call us at 756-8993

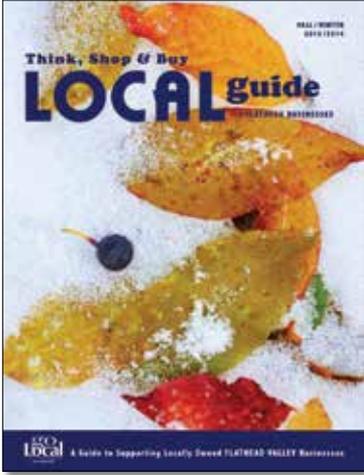
for details. Thank you! to **over 200 residents who sent comments** urging the county to keep its recycling program (only a few comments supported reduced recycling options). It will take lots more public input to support the need to expand, not shrink, the county recycling program over the next few months—watch for our alerts on this.

Energy Conservation/Water Quality

Last year, like most years, **2.5 million gallons of septage**, collected from some of the 22,133 permitted septic systems in the county, were **land-applied to more than 2,000 acres** here. Recognizing that this practice raises public health and water quality issues, we researched alternatives. We found an intriguing connection to the county landfill, which already boasts the **first electric generator** of this kind in the state, run on landfill gas, with a capacity of **1.6 megawatts** of electricity, or enough **energy to power 1,600 homes**. Later this winter we will bring together experts for a workshop to explore injecting septage waste into our county landfill, a practice being used successfully elsewhere. This practice can double gas production, conserve landfill space, and biologically treat septage in a compost-like environment that diminishes water quality impacts as well.

in 2013. It's BIG!

Supporting a Strong Local Economy



We recently published the **9th semiannual issue** of the Go Local Flathead Shopping Guide distributed throughout the county in collaboration with **over 214 locally owned businesses**. This free guide offers premium and rock-bottom low-cost ad space thanks to **over 20 volunteers** who donate graphic layout, ad sales, distribution, writing and editing skills, all of which CBF coordinates. More than a dozen studies show locally-owned independent restaurants re-spend 2X more per dollar of revenue in our local economy as chain restaurants do. And **independent retailers re-spend more than 3X** more of each sales dollar

locally compared to their chain competitors. Studies also show that communities with programs that promote locally owned businesses see more economic growth than those who don't. That adds up to a huge difference in creating local jobs and local wealth!

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Sharing Ideas. Identifying Solutions.

If you are one of the **2500+ folks who receive our regular email alerts and good news updates**, you know that we provide you the quick overview on important issues for you to comment on, with links to more in-depth research. "Snail mail" is more expensive, so you receive CBF news that way less often. But no matter how, we make it a priority to connect directly with you and others working to keep the Flathead special. So once again this year, we hope you will **join us January to April on the 4th Thursday** of each month for our popular movie nights and networking discussions on ideas and solutions for a sustainable future. Give us a call at 756-8993 to join our email list for these and other events. Learn more about our work at www.flatheadcitizens.org.

Radical Acts of GOOD

You might have never thought of yourself as a radical, but we want to suggest, in the most honorable and esteemed sense, that you are. For in these times, it is a radical act to believe that the role of government is, and must be, to do good. And to act on this belief by participating in the public processes shaping the Flathead's future is to send ripples of positivity, which will, in ways we will never really know, change our community, ourselves, and the world!



For two decades Citizens for a Better Flathead has worked to foster informed and active citizen participation in the decisions shaping the Flathead's future, and to champion the democratic principles, sustainable solutions, and shared vision necessary to keep the Flathead Special Forever.





Your support and input is helping to literally shape the Flathead's future. Because of your support in both time and money, Citizens for a Better Flathead can fill a vital leadership role, unmatched by others, advocating for sound planning and sustainable solutions at the forefront of daily city and county decision-making processes.

Working to Keep the Flathead Special Forever! *Special forever!* is a long time and a lofty goal, but one we are totally serious about. We only have one chance to get this right, so we choose to aim high, working on a daily basis to raise awareness about options and best practices to achieve this goal. We support planning that respects the character of our communities and the quality of our environment as our greatest economic asset.

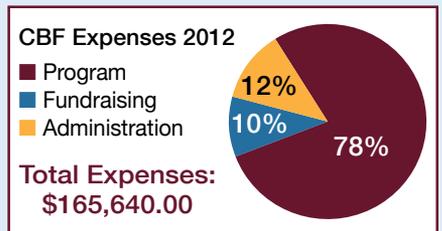
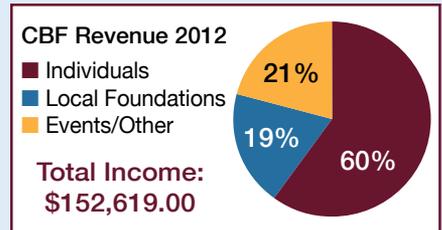
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 Brooke Jeffrey • Office Intern
 Arden Fortenberry • Research Intern
 Don Bauder • Ace Volunteer Bookkeeper

Where our Support Comes From



Citizens for a Better Flathead

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