



2018

**Event Summary**

February 2, 2018

**Event Location**

Charles Robinson, State Director

Montana State Office

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development

2229 West Hill Court

Bozeman, MT 59715

**Event Date**

**Event Time**

**Event Contact**

**Subject: Retaining Kalispell's rural designation**

**Event Organized By**

**Event Sponsor**

**Event Chair**

**Event Committee**

**Event Staff**

**Event Agenda**

**Event Description**

**Event Objectives**

**Event Evaluation**

**Event Budget**

**Event Marketing**

**Event Logistics**

**Event Summary**

Dear Mr. Robinson:

I have recently learned that Kalispell is at risk for losing its status as a "rural" area under the definition of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which would adversely impact our ability to access rural development loan programs. I would like to offer some points for your consideration for why Kalispell should retain this rural designation for this next 5-year approval period.

**Kalispell has rural density.** Kalispell resides in Flathead County, Montana, a sparsely populated county of 5,087 square miles estimated at 99,382 residents (U.S. Census, 2008). We works out to 17.9 people per square mile or 2 person for every 10.75 acres. Furthermore, Kalispell represents just 2% percent of the county population despite the fact that it serves as the regional trade center, county seat, and regional health care center. Together these two facts illustrate the widely dispersed nature of the population of Kalispell and the Flathead Valley. It is important to note that just a little over one third (36%) of the county's population lives in incorporated areas of Flathead County.

**Non-resident visitors are attracted to Kalispell for its rural and unincorporated characteristics.** Non-resident tourism is a major contributor to the Kalispell economy. As the official non-profit tourism agency that represents the City of Kalispell, we are keenly focused on visitor attitudes and perception about our market. Research by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana (2016) indicates the reasons that visitors come to Kalispell. The first reason is Glacier National Park (82%), that reasons two and three are distinctly rural in nature: mountains and forests (78%) and open

