

# POPLAR, MONTANA COMMUNITY REVIEW

## Phase 2

*July 16 – 17, 2018*



A service of the Montana Economic Developers Association in partnership with Montana Department of Commerce, Montana State University Extension, the University of Idaho and the University of Wyoming.

This project is supported by USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant #2016-10945. It is part of the AFRI Foundational program.

## **POPLAR PHASE 2 OVERVIEW**

The Montana Community Review process has three phases. We call these three phases Listen, Learn, and Launch. The Listen and Learn phases were successfully implemented with Poplar and the Ft. Peck Tribes; all of the people of Poplar rose to the action plan challenge, worked with the Visiting Team, and is now into the Launch phase in which the Coach and Steering Committee begin to work.

This part of the Poplar Community Review Report will cover Phase 2, the “learn” phase. Following the Advance Team visit and the compiling of the Phase 1 Report, shoulders were tapped of specialists around the state who could address the issues the people of Poplar wanted to address.

On July 16th, the Visiting Team arrived in Poplar and toured the area, similar to the Advance Team’s visit in May. Next, a working lunch was held with the Home Team, local leadership, and the Visiting Team to review the Phase 1 Report, briefly review the main topics and issues identified by the Advance Team, and to review the agenda for the rest of the team’s visit. Next, a two-hour session was held with the people of Poplar; those in attendance broke into small groups based on the topic of most interest to them. Each group narrowed down issues under each topic to three and clearly defined the problem or project, named resources that would be needed, and listed people who could assist. Those in attendance gathered back together and one person from each group reported on the ideas discussed in their group.

That evening, a BBQ and town meeting was held to review Phase 1, share highlights from the Phase 1 Report, and update the community on the projects and priorities identified that afternoon. Those in attendance broke into Working Groups based on the projects they wanted to see move forward.

Each group completed an Action Plan for their projects and tasks and reported out to the full group. One person from each Working Group was asked to serve as a leader on the Steering Committee.

A working breakfast was held the next morning with the Home Team, Visiting Team and newly formed Steering Committee to determine next steps. Phase 3 was born! A Coach was selected and next steps for the Launch phase was discussed.

The following information will provide details on all that took place and provide resources from the Visiting Team to assist each Working Group as Poplar begins Phase 3: Launch!

## POPLAR “ LEARN” PHASE VISITING TEAM

The following team was formed to assist Poplar and the Ft. Peck Tribes in delving deep into issues and providing information to help Poplar move forward. The team members matched the topic areas the people of Poplar identified during the Listen phase, including **Economic and Workforce Development; Community and Downtown Revitalization; Education, Culture and Health; Infrastructure and Housing.**



Left to Right: Gus Byrom, Paul Lachapelle, Debra Madison, Ashleigh Dupree Weeks, Tori Matejovsky, Wilfred Lambert, Sue Taylor, Martin DeWitt, Kev Campbell, Liz Ching, Gloria O'Rourke, and Ryan Kopp.

### Team Contact Information:

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★ Debra Madison, Environmental Programs Manager, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Email: [2horses@nemont.net](mailto:2horses@nemont.net)

★ Sue Taylor, Beartooth RC&D, Economic Development Director, P.O. Box 180, Joliet, MT 59041 Ph: 406-962-3914 Email: [staylor@beartooth.org](mailto:staylor@beartooth.org)

★ Wilfred Lambert, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Office of Environmental Protection, Brownfields Coordinator, 501 Medicine Bear Road, Poplar, MT 59255 Ph: 768-2322 Email: [w Lambert@fortpecktribes.net](mailto:w Lambert@fortpecktribes.net)

★ Team Coordinator: Gloria O'Rourke, Montana Economic Developers Association, 118 E. Seventh St; Suite 3F, Anaconda, MT 59711 Ph: 406-563-5259 Email: [gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)



Ryan and Gus taking street measurements.

## Tour Time

Similar to the Listen phase, a tour was provided the Visiting Team so that each person could learn about the Poplar area and better understand its challenges and assets.



## CONCURRENT TOPIC SESSIONS

Following a working lunch, the Home Team and Visiting Team gathered with the people in the Poplar area in the Tribal Building Phase 3 Conference Room to identify projects under each topic and list people and resources that may be able to assist. Visiting Team members sat at the table of their specialty and assisted in planning next steps.

Within each small group, using a worksheet as guidance, the following was reported:

## SETTING PRIORITIES AND DEFINING ISSUES

### MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

#### Possibility #1: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – Public Sector (currently) Formation of a Taskforce

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Academic institutions
- Federal, State, Tribal Governments
- Existing Employers
- HPDP

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- A taskforce will be formed.

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 6 – 12 months

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Gary MacDonald [commissioner@rooseveltcountry.org](mailto:commissioner@rooseveltcountry.org), Felix McGowan [mcgowan@nemont.net](mailto:mcgowan@nemont.net), Haven Gourneau will serve on the Steering Committee.

**Possibility #2: PRIVATE JOB CREATION - ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Great Northern Development Corp/SBDC
- Fort Peck Community College
- Shakopee
- BNSF
- HPDP
- GAP Analysis
- Tribe
- Local entities

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:



- Brownfields Cleanup
- Investment Co-op
- Business incubator
- Telework
- Marketing
- BB Capacity
- Ledger Art
- Star Quilts

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 6 months

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email); see Sign Me Up Card database.

**Possibility #3: JOB CREATION BASED ON EXISTING ASSETS**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Great Northern Development Corp/SBDC
- Technical Assistance at State, Tribal, and Federal levels

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email); see Sign Me Up Card database.

## MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY AND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

### Possibility #1: DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL SITES

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Cooperation of existing land and building owners
- Clean-up Funding
- Cooperation of City, Local, Tribal Governments

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Existing business owners
- Property owners
- Local, state tribal funders
- Brownfields

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Ashleigh Weeks, Wilfred Lambert

### Possibility #2: COMMUNITY PARK

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- City, State, Tribal Government Support
- MSU Program

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Fort Peck Tribes/EPO
- Community volunteers
- Law Enforcement (prevent loitering, littering, etc.)



Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Ashleigh Weeks has already begun work on this project.

**Possibility #3: COMMON VISION FOR POPLAR DOWNTOWN**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Existing businesses
- People of Poplar
- MT Dept. of Commerce – Technical Assistance

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Form a Downtown Association
- Great Northern Development Corp.

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email); see Sign Me Up database.

**MAIN TOPIC: EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND HEALTH**  
**“Community Heartstrings”**

**Possibility #1: PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Parents
- Alternative Education Tools

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Fort Peck Community College
- Public School District





- Tribal support

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Suzanne Turnbull will serve on the Steering Committee. Also in this working group: Dr. Kenneth Ryan, Mike Leiner, Deb McGowan, Dennis Four Bear, Abbie Oak.

**Possibility #2: EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Incarceration capacity
- Judicial reform
- Grant funds

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Tribal Law, BIA, Multi-jurisdictional Law Enforcement must all be on the same page. For example, identifying a certain behavior is wrong and deciding together what will be done when such behavior takes place.

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email); see Sign Me Up database.

**Possibility #3: CAPITALIZE ON TOURISM**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Leverage cultural assets
- USDA
- EDA
- SBA
- MT Dept. of Commerce

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Western Heritage
- Those involved in Agriculture
- Great Northern Development Corp.



- People of Poplar

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months):

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email); see Sign Me Up database.

## MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

### Possibility #1: SWIMMING POOL/SPLASH PARK

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Working with local construction crews and suppliers to build
- BNSF Foundation
- Trans Canada

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- City and County
- Women’s Clubs
- Tribal Elves

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): Within 2 years

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Frank 650-3004, Shane Haverson 895-7953. Frank will serve on the Steering Committee as well as Deb Madison.



### Possibility #2: SOLID WASTE CLEAN UP – ROLL OFF SITE CLASS III

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- Roosevelt County – County Landfill
- Recycler machine

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- City, County, Tribes must all work together and make a commitment to the project.

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 2 years

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Deb Madison

### **Possibility #3: SIDEWALKS AND STREETLIGHTS**

Resources necessary to achieve this goal (financial and other):

- MDU
- City TA Grant to build Transportation Plan to access funds

Identify who the lead agency, organization or individual should be in this process, and other partners who should be involved:

- Local leadership

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 1 year

Are you willing to make a time commitment to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Contact Ryan Kopp, Interstate Engineering

### **REPORT OUT and PREP**

Each of these groups reported out their findings; the Visiting Team met to summarize the information for the Prioritizing Town Meeting and Working Groups.



## TOWN MEETING AND WORKING GROUP FORMATION

A town meeting was held with the people in the Poplar area to update everyone on the work that was accomplished earlier in the day and to come to consensus with the issues and projects on the table. [Slideshow Presentation](#). Group leaders reported out to those in attendance.



## ACTION PLANS!

An Action Plan worksheet was used to guide the groups through each step. The results are on the following pages.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: THE PHASE 1 REPORT (See Appendix) HAS RESOURCES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS WELL AS THE RESOURCES LISTED IN THE FOLLOWING REPORTS.**

# POPLAR WORKING GROUPS ACTION PLAN

## ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### ISSUE: Workforce Development

Goal: Establish a taskforce to address workforce needs in the Poplar Area.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Hold an organizational meeting to address workforce needs in Poplar.</b>  Gary MacDonald to invite	<b>One person from each primary industry sector:</b> Schools – Poplar Super. Health Services – Peg County – Gary Mac Poplar Mayor FPCC – Haven Tribe – Rodney Miller Industry – Felix Banks – Mike Lienen Fish/Wildlife – Robby Facilitator: GNDC	<b>FPCC Host</b>  Combine Phase 1 Survey with 2017 Report	<b>Meeting is organized, everyone contacted.</b>	

## COMMUNITY AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

### ISSUE: Downtown Revitalization

**Goal:** Create and build an active Poplar downtown.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Form a Poplar Downtown Association</b>	<b>Mert Frank and Mike Make Poplar Great Again</b>	<b>MT Main Street Program</b>	<b>Association is formed</b>	<b>Late summer 2018</b>
<b>Apply for Downtown Master Plan Grant</b>	<b>John Grainger, Mayor</b>	<b>Great Northern Development – Grant Ap</b>	<b>Grant submitted</b>  <b>Master Plan Developed</b>	<b>Fall 2018</b>  <b>By 2020</b>
<b>Main Street Community Park And tree planting</b>	<b>Wilfred and Ashleigh</b>	<b>MSU Bozeman plans</b>	<b>Park Development</b>	<b>1 – 2 years</b>
<b>Adopt a lot</b>				

## EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND HEALTH

### ISSUE: Education Opportunities

Goal: Improve graduation rates, parenting, and offer alternative education choices.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Collect data on historical graduation rates</b>	<b>Keith Erikson</b>	<b>Access to Data</b>	<b>Data is in hand</b>	<b>1 month</b>
<b>Truancy data</b>	<b>Keith Erikson</b>	<b>Access to Data</b>	<b>Data is in hand</b>	<b>1 month</b>
<b>Parental Education to promote more parental involvement</b>	<b>Tribes Education Committee</b>	<b>Budget identifying programs</b>	<b>Participation surveys</b>	<b>6 months</b>
<b>Create alternative education opportunities</b>	<b>Fort Peck Community College OPI</b>	<b>Finance Dedicated space Personnel</b>	<b>Completion of program</b>	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Additional Assistance:</b>	<b>Dr. Kenneth Ryan, Mike Leiner, Deb McGowan, Dennis Four Bear, Abbie Oak</b>			

## EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND HEALTH

### ISSUE: Education and Law Enforcement

Goal: Improved coordination and cooperation with all law enforcement.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Study city county tribe fine structures and compare to national average.</b>	<b>Work Study with the college</b>	<b>Cooperation from each government</b>	<b>Data collected</b>	<b>6 months</b>
<b>Obtain examples of successful multi-jurisdictional governments and share how they function.</b>	<b>Tribal/County/City enforcement entities</b>			



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

### ISSUE: Splash Park

Goal: Build a splash pad/splash park for Poplar.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Establish our committee and partners</b>	<b>Frank Gourneau Shane Haverson</b>	<b>Phone, time, email</b>	<b>Hold two meetings</b>	<b>1 month</b>
<b>Site selection</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>City services available, available site, environmental review</b>	<b>Site selected</b>	<b>3 months</b>
<b>Finalize plans</b>	<b>Committee and needed engineer review</b>	<b>Final drawings Finalize plans for needed infrastructure</b>	<b>One set of final plans</b>	<b>January 2019</b>
<b>Funding asks</b>	<b>Committee, GNDC, ED</b>	<b>Set of final plans Letters of support</b>	<b>Identify 3 - 4 funding sources, complete applications</b>	<b>March 2019</b>
<b>Establish construction schedule</b>	<b>Committee and interested contractors</b>	<b>Engineer review - plans, survey ,etc.</b>	<b>Completed schedule</b>	<b>May 2019</b>
<b>Build it</b>	<b>Contractor who committed by letter</b>	<b>Funds for construction</b>	<b>Splash pad installed</b>	<b>July 4, 2019</b>

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING

### ISSUE: Solid Waste District for Class III

**Goal:** Facility for disposal of construction waste and recycling.

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Establish meeting with Roosevelt County</b>	<b>Deb Madison Tina Magnen</b>	<b>Time establish meeting date</b>	<b>One meeting with powerpoint</b>	<b>Oct 2018</b>
<b>Establish lots for Class III</b>	<b>Engineer</b>	<b>Money for the planning phase GAP AW</b>	<b>One feasibility analysis for class III</b>	<b>June 2019</b>
<b>Review recycling opportunities</b>	<b>Engineer</b>		<b>Feasibility option</b>	<b>June 2019</b>
<b>Complete district approval</b>	<b>County, Tribes, City</b>	<b>Ballot needed? Resolution?</b>	<b>District Established MOA with Tribe</b>	<b>January 2020</b>
<b>Purchase equipment</b>	<b>District meeting</b>	<b>Funds from district/Grant</b>	<b>Site, equipment purchased</b>	<b>October 2020</b>
<b>District meeting</b>	<b>County, Tribes, City</b>	<b>Fund from district/Grant</b>	<b>Open for Business</b>	<b>May 2021</b>

## **FORMATION OF STEERING COMMITTEE AND COACH SELECTION**

The Visiting Team could not have asked for more: the people of Poplar and Ft. Peck Tribes came together, worked hard, gave of their time and energy, and set a course for Poplar.

The next step was to formally identify the Poplar Steering Committee. This committee was formed by tapping the Home Team, at least one representative from each Working Group, and a Coach.

Poplar's Steering Committee includes: Economic and Workforce Development – Haven Gourneau; Community and Downtown Development – Ashleigh Weeks and Wilfred Lambert; Education, Culture and Health – Suzanne Turnbull; Infrastructure and Housing – Frank Gourneau, Deb Madison, and Ryan Kopp.

Tori Matejovsky, Great Northern Development, was asked to serve as Coach and graciously accepted the task. The role of a coach is to provide stability and support to the working groups as they begin their tasks and projects. The Coach also reports to the Visiting Team on a regular basis to keep the doors of communication open.

## **VERBAL REPORT SUMMARY TO TRIBAL COUNCIL – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Fort Peck Tribal Council graciously provided time for the Phase 2 Home and Visiting Teams to share a summary of all that had been accomplished to date.



## **WRAP UP OF THE LEARN PHASE AND ON TO THE LAUNCH PHASE**

Part of Phase 3 is completing this report which will serve as a further “launch” of the Steering Committee’s Work. The next segment of this document will include reports from the specialists who visited Poplar during the Phase 2 Team Visit.

## RESOURCE REPORTS FROM THE POPLAR VISITING TEAM

**Report by: Sue Taylor, Beartooth RC&D, Economic Development Director, P.O. Box 180, Joliet, MT 59041 Ph: 406-962-3914 Email: [staylor@beartooth.org](mailto:staylor@beartooth.org)**

### MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

#### Issue: Workforce Taskforce

**Recommendation:** The working group met during the Team's Phase II visit and had a good discussion that concluded with the realization that workforce development will be a key component to help drive economic development. The working group determined that a newly formed Taskforce would be in a position to create an Action Plan designed to address specific issues and opportunities identified during the Community Review.

Taskforce members would represent a cross-section of the community and could be appointed by the County Commissioners to give the group a formal structure.

Members identified to be a part of the Taskforce include:

- Poplar Schools Superintendent (James Baldwin)
- Northeast Montana Health Services (Peg Norgaard)
- County Commission (Gary MacDonald)
- Poplar Mayor (Greg Norgaard)
- Fort Peck Community College (Haven Gourneau)
- Tribal Economic Development (Rodney Miller)
- Industry Representation (Felix McGowan)
- West Electronics
- Financial Institution (Mike Lienen)
- Tribal Fish & Wildlife (Robby Magnum)

Haven Gourneau offered to host the initial meeting at the college and Commissioner Gary MacDonald offered to invite the members. It was further determined that Great Northern Development be asked to facilitate at least the first meeting and assist the group in the development of an Action Plan.

Rodney Miller provided a State of the Workforce Study (July 2017, prepared by Thomas P. Miller and Associates). We recommend the Taskforce reviews this document and use this document as a basis for the Action Plan.

In addition to the information provided in the Workforce Study, consider these elements, which were identified during the Community Review process:

- Survey of existing employers to determine specific needs and barriers
  - Analysis of survey results to determine priority areas to address
    - Include analysis of Phase I survey to determine community responses to workforce and economic development concerns
  - Research available programs to address specific needs
  - Host classes, workshops, and other training delivery methods to meet employer needs
- Community branding to overcome the negative stigma(s) connected to the community, which will be a factor in employee attraction and retention.
  - It is recommended that this activity be addressed and coordinated across several of the working groups to create a strong, common vision.
- Develop a plan to increase access to tradespeople (carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc.). This plan should include utilizing the Fort Peck Community College as a training partner, along with programs available through the Department of Labor and Industry.
- Workforce Housing Needs Assessment to determine the availability of housing to attract workers in the 80-120% of Median Household Income.
  - You may want to incorporate this as a portion of a larger study conducted to assess your overall housing stock and condition.
  - Work with Housing Improvement Program staff to achieve this goal.

Please keep in mind that these activities should be prioritized (low, medium and high) and a timeframe assigned. You cannot take on everything at once. You should also discuss specific industry sectors (agriculture, tourism, health care, etc.) and how much they contribute to your local economy when determining priorities.

The Action Plan template will be helpful as the group works through these activities. The best Action Plans are broken down into very specific steps and the Taskforce needs to keep in mind that a realistic plan will involve patience and long-term commitment. The Plan should be realistic, flexible, reviewed and adjusted at least annually.

**Recommended Resource(s):**

Great Northern Development for facilitation and access to a network of resources  
[www.gndc.org](http://www.gndc.org)

Small Business Development Center programs and staff at Great Northern Development. [www.gndc.org](http://www.gndc.org) Shandy Hanks [sbdc@gndc.org](mailto:sbdc@gndc.org) 406-653-2590 or 406-980-0052

POWER Montana retraining program from the Department of Labor & Industry Career change or enhanced training/retraining for coal-impacted workers. Primary focus of program is for currently displaced workers.  
Liz Ching, Coordinator [liz.ching@mt.gov](mailto:liz.ching@mt.gov) 406-696-4371

Employers Toolkit from BillingsWorks Workforce Council  
<http://www.billingsworks.org/employers/employers-toolkit/>

Internship Guide from BillingsWorks Workforce Council  
<http://www.billingsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Easy-Internship-Guide.pdf>

Iowa Employer Survey to use as a potential starting point:  
<http://www.wcedc.com/assets/files/pdf/2014%20Workforce%20Needs%20Assessment%20Survey.pdf>

Montana Registered Apprenticeship Program – assists in setting up structured yet flexible training programs recognized by federal and industry standards designed to meet the specific needs of Montana employers through on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction. Apprenticeship Programs can be sponsored by employers, employer associations, or labor/management groups (JATC's) that can hire and train in a real world working situation.

[www.apprenticeship.mt.gov](http://www.apprenticeship.mt.gov) Bo Bruinsma 406-655-6064 [BBruinsma@mt.gov](mailto:BBruinsma@mt.gov)

### **Housing Resources:**

Fort Peck Tribes Housing Improvement Program

<http://www.fortpecktribes.org/hip/>

Short-term housing rehabilitation could be conducted on a limited basis through the AmeriCorps NCCC program. Teams of 8-10 members complete projects that address essential community needs throughout the United States. If you were in a position to provide housing for the team, such as in the dorm during the summer, Poplar would rank well in the program.

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriCorps/ameriCorps-nccc>

The City of Red Lodge completed a Housing Needs Assessment in 2016 with existing staff at the Community Foundation. Their assessment may be useful as a template for Poplar.

<http://www.rlacf.org/media/Housing-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

## **MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Issue: Private Job Creation and Entrepreneurship**

**Recommendation:** Employment in Poplar is fairly dependent on public sector jobs. Community members and the visiting team agree that a wider range of private sector jobs would provide a more diversified, and more sustainable economy. Activities that would encourage private sector job creation include:

- Business retention to keep and grow what already exists
- Entrepreneurship initiative to increase the number of new business starts.
- Creative Arts support to increase access to markets for their goods. This could include seasonal and year-round opportunities. Online selling platforms should

- be explored as a viable sales and distribution option, either by a collective of artisans, or individuals. Ledger Art and Star Quilts were specifically mentioned.
- An improved physical environment to make the community more attractive to new residents and businesses. Recommend working with the Community and Downtown Revitalization working group on this task.
    - Incorporate a clean-up effort into your strategy

**Recommended Resource(s):**

Great Northern Development for a version of the Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) program [www.gndc.org](http://www.gndc.org)

Small Business Development Center for a series entrepreneurship skills training classes.

[www.gndc.org](http://www.gndc.org) Shandy Hanks [sbdc@gndc.org](mailto:sbdc@gndc.org) 406-653-2590 or 406-980-0052

Kauffman Foundation programs for Entrepreneurial Learning to assist in gaining a better understanding of an entrepreneur's needs.

<https://www.kauffman.org/what-we-do/entrepreneurship>

Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) is an art-centered business development program taught by working artists and open to all visual artists. <http://art.mt.gov/map>

Montana Governor's Office of Economic Development maintains a site selector report tool that would assist you to identify gaps in product availability. Navigate to the Generate Reports Tab, select the report type and choose city, county or radius filters. The MarketPlace Profile is included as an attachment to this report as an example of the information available.

<http://svc.mt.gov/gov/siteselector>

Montana Department of Commerce's Main Street Program has tools to assist in the development of your physical environment, primarily downtown revitalization.

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet>

**MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Issue: Job Creation based on Existing Assets**

**Recommendation:** Poplar has many assets that are conducive to job creation. Available water sources, sandy soil, agriculture resources and experienced ranchers, the industrial park, rail spur, Tribal industrial building, and the Buffalo Ranch. Jobs that are created by leveraging these assets are more likely to occur at a faster rate and be more sustainable than those that are not tied to an existing asset. This type of development is especially important in rural areas.

We recommend that this working group create a list of assets, discuss job creation potential for each of the assets, and develop an Action Plan based on the highest

potential. Start with those that can be accomplished in a relatively short timeframe and with existing financial resources and build from the success of these to move up to bigger projects.

**Recommended Resource(s):**

The Appalachian Regional Commission produced a “*Turning Assets into Opportunities*” report that is worth reading through to understand the benefits of this strategy.

<http://www.arc.gov/images/newsroom/publications/assets/assets.pdf>

Asset-Based Community Development is another strategy that would be useful in Poplar’s broader development goals. The ABCD Institute strategy builds on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations, and the supporting functions of local institutions to build stronger, more sustainable communities.

<https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/about/Pages/default.aspx>

**Branding Resources:**

*Destination Branding for Small Cities*

Book by Bill Baker. Excellent resource and practical information. Includes sections on Why Bother with Place Branding?, What is Being Branded and Why?, Mobilizing the Forces, and The Seven Steps to a Place Brand.

<https://www.amazon.com/Destination-Branding-Small-Cities-Second/dp/0984957405>

Roger Brooks – Destination Development International

Good resources and good content in the book, webinars and videos. There is a cost of \$250 per year to gain access to all the resources available, but Poplar area partners would benefit from the videos and webinars.

<https://www.destinationdevelopment.org/cpages/resource-center>



## Retail MarketPlace Profile

Poplar city, MT (3058975)  
Geography: Place

Summary Demographics						
2018 Population						857
2018 Households						330
2018 Median Disposable Income						\$29,865
2018 Per Capita Income						\$17,397
2017 Industry Summary	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$8,674,797	\$13,440,128	-\$4,765,331	-21.5	12
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$7,941,324	\$11,912,718	-\$3,971,394	-20.0	10
Total Food & Drink	722	\$733,473	\$1,527,410	-\$793,937	-35.1	2
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$1,725,139	\$0	\$1,725,139	100.0	0
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$1,381,935	\$0	\$1,381,935	100.0	0
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$184,641	\$0	\$184,641	100.0	0
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$158,563	\$0	\$158,563	100.0	0
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$221,079	\$0	\$221,079	100.0	0
Furniture Stores	4421	\$139,909	\$0	\$139,909	100.0	0
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$81,170	\$0	\$81,170	100.0	0
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$219,614	\$0	\$219,614	100.0	0
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$495,814	\$978,703	-\$482,889	-32.7	1
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$447,565	\$978,703	-\$531,138	-37.2	1
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$48,249	\$0	\$48,249	100.0	0
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$1,133,485	\$2,439,406	-\$1,305,921	-36.6	3
Grocery Stores	4451	\$1,031,432	\$2,201,428	-\$1,169,996	-36.2	2
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$48,882	\$0	\$48,882	100.0	0
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$53,171	\$237,978	-\$184,807	-63.5	1
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$431,707	\$0	\$431,707	100.0	0
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$1,096,803	\$7,767,681	-\$6,670,878	-75.3	2
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$273,350	\$113,417	\$159,933	41.4	1
Clothing Stores	4481	\$181,693	\$0	\$181,693	100.0	0
Shoe Stores	4482	\$28,074	\$0	\$28,074	100.0	0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$63,583	\$113,417	-\$49,834	-28.2	1
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$439,962	\$613,511	-\$173,549	-16.5	3
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$413,956	\$350,293	\$63,663	8.3	2
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$26,006	\$263,218	-\$237,212	-82.0	1
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$1,544,743	\$0	\$1,544,743	100.0	0
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$937,219	\$0	\$937,219	100.0	0
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$607,524	\$0	\$607,524	100.0	0
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$326,418	\$0	\$326,418	100.0	0
Florists	4531	\$18,208	\$0	\$18,208	100.0	0
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$85,488	\$0	\$85,488	100.0	0
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$54,957	\$0	\$54,957	100.0	0
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$167,765	\$0	\$167,765	100.0	0
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$33,210	\$0	\$33,210	100.0	0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$15,695	\$0	\$15,695	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$2,682	\$0	\$2,682	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$14,833	\$0	\$14,833	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$733,473	\$1,527,410	-\$793,937	-35.1	2
Special Food Services	7223	\$5,915	\$0	\$5,915	100.0	0
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$41,228	\$0	\$41,228	100.0	0
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$686,330	\$1,527,410	-\$841,080	-38.0	2

Data Note: Supply (retail sales) estimates sales to consumers by establishments. Sales to businesses are excluded. Demand (retail potential) estimates the expected amount spent by consumers at retail establishments. Supply and demand estimates are in current dollars. The Leakage/Surplus Factor presents a snapshot of retail opportunity. This is a measure of the relationship between supply and demand that ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents 'leakage' of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area. The Retail Gap represents the difference between Retail Potential and Retail Sales. Esri uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to classify businesses by their primary type of economic activity. Retail establishments are classified into 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector, as well as four industry groups within the Food Services & Drinking Establishments subsector. For more information on the Retail MarketPlace data, please click the link below to view the Methodology Statement. <http://www.esri.com/library/whitepapers/pdfs/esri-data-retail-marketplace.pdf>

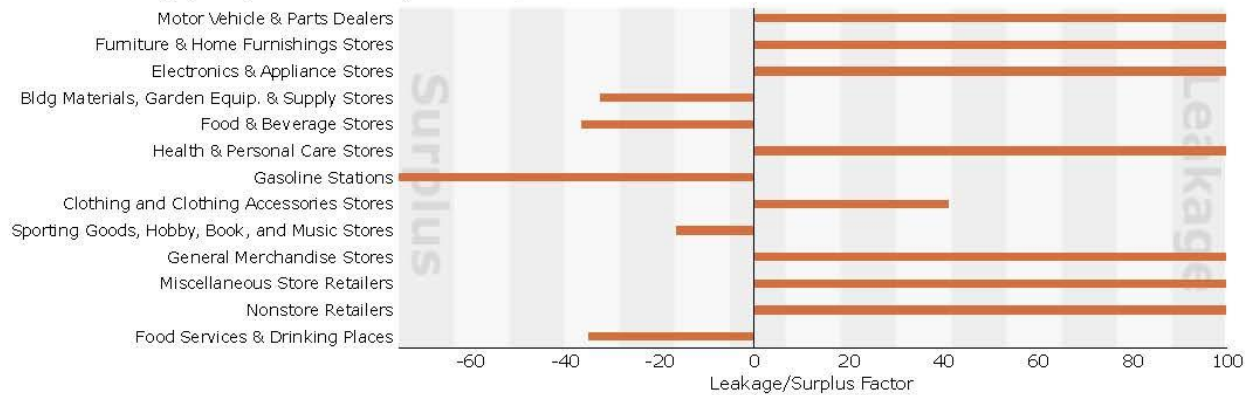
Source: Esri and Infogroup. Esri 2018 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. Copyright 2018 Esri. Copyright 2017 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

August 24, 2018

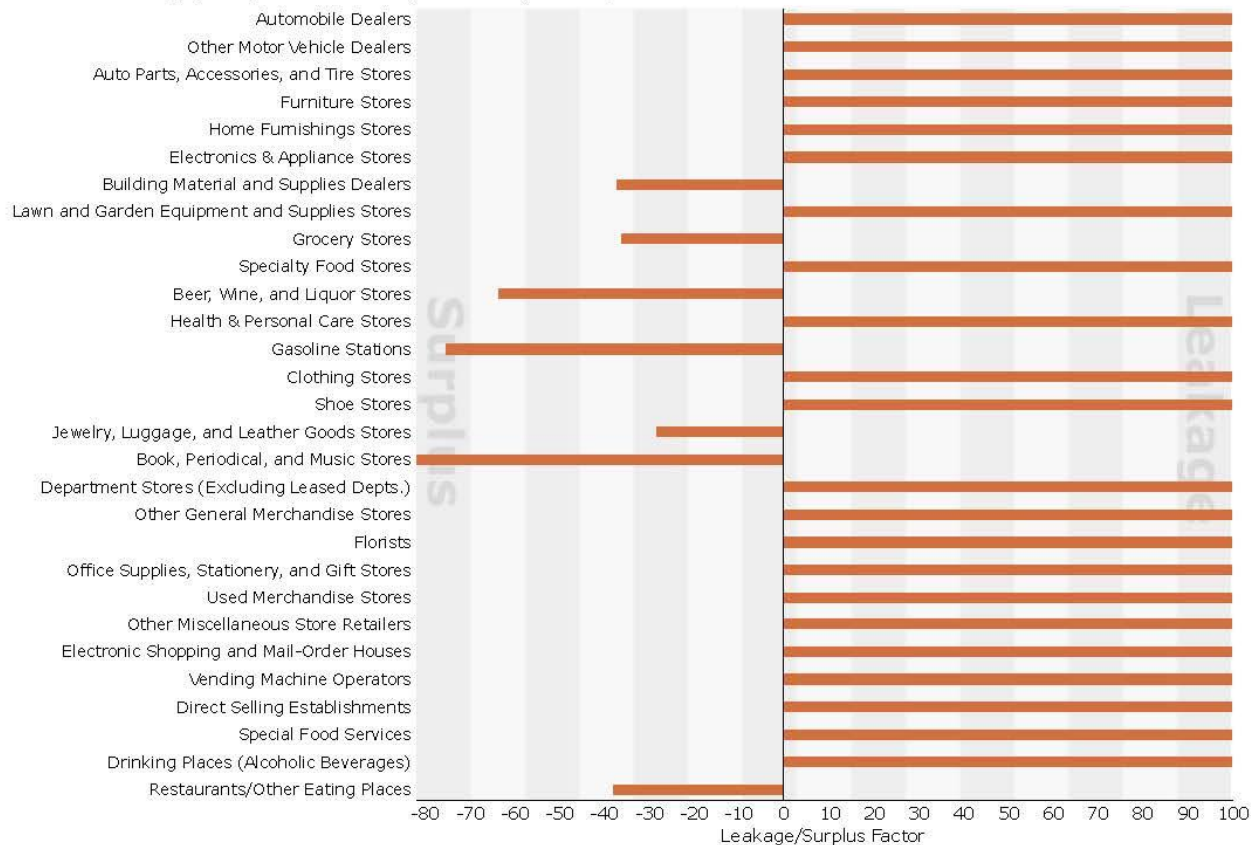
## Retail MarketPlace Profile

Poplar city, MT (3058975)  
Geography: Place

### 2017 Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Subsector



### 2017 Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Group



Source: Esri and Infogroup. Esri 2018 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. Copyright 2018 Esri. Copyright 2017 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

August 24, 2018

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**Report by: Liz Ching, MT Department of Labor and Industry, Workforce Services Division, Registered Apprenticeship Program and Tribal Communities Coordinator – Coal Impacted Communities; 2121 Rosebud Drive, Stop B, Billings, MT 59102 Ph: 406-696-4371 Email: Liz.Ching@mt.gov**

**MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The overarching theme for the participants in this topic session was jobs as a way to stabilize the community, create a self-sustaining economy, stop the downward spiral of mental helplessness and depression that accompanies joblessness and leads to other forms of negative behavior, and creates a positive outlook for the next generation.

Education at the elementary and secondary level was seen as the strongest element in creating a firm and stable jobs base. Conversations must take place with employers who must speak to their own workforce needs, both in number of employees and in skills, training and education, in order for their business to thrive. The Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) is seen as a strong partner, responsive to meet the current and future education and training needs of local residents, businesses and industry.

The Fort Peck Tribes have many projects proposed, in design or underway. These projects need to be vetted with FPCC and Great Northern Development Corporation (GNDC) to determine whether the workforce is available to implement the projects as designed. Great Northern Development Corporation is known to many as the regional economic development partner who collaborates with local, state, tribal and federal resources with knowledge about how programs fit together and are matched to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Refocusing on communicating the priorities of the various entities who participate in tribal and county-wide planning, regional economic development, regional workforce development and regional workforce education would combine efforts where it makes sense by supporting each other and agreeing on how reaching one goal at a time can help the region economically.

The BillingsWorks 2018 State of the Workforce report is an excellent resource that has been distributed statewide as an example of a focused effort on workforce development within the business/industry and education sectors.

## Recommended Resources:

- Fort Peck Tribes Assiniboine & Sioux State of the Workforce Study, July 2017  
Contact: Rodney Miller, Tribal Planning Director, [rmiller@fortpecktribes.net](mailto:rmiller@fortpecktribes.net), 406-768-2344
- BillingsWorks 2017 State of the Workforce Report  
Contact: Karen Baumgart, BillingsWorks Director, Big Sky Economic Development, [Karen@bigksyeda.org](mailto:Karen@bigksyeda.org), 406-869-8416

## Issue: Increase Trades

### Recommendation: A two-pronged approach -

- 1) Interview or survey employers about their needs, either through roundtables or existing regular meetings (local chamber, service organizations, local chapters of industry associations, etc.). This will be helpful to know their needs when coming back around to ask them about hiring local job seekers or potential apprentices. This could be built around Fort Peck Community College's business degree with students. If successful, this could also be built into a future process that offers feedback to employers about what trends are developing that could enhance or expand their business in the future.
- 2) Report back to Fort Peck Community College faculty on employer needs to make natural connections to include updating curriculum as well as internships and/or apprenticeships based on both associate degrees and certificates to connect the college with businesses and industry. Some of the certificate programs that would pair well with a student being prepared to enter state apprenticeship programs and earn higher wages if they make it to the Journeyman or Master level are:
  - a. Automotive Technology
  - b. Building Trades
  - c. Diesel Technology
  - d. Electrical Line Worker
  - e. Welding Technology

Other career choices include healthcare, information technology and more. Please refer to <http://apprenticeship.mt.gov/occupations> for a listing of apprenticeable occupations in Montana.

The MT Department of Labor and Industry is always looking to development new apprenticeable occupations that could be structured to follow certifiable training and pay standards. They work closely with both industry and trade unions.

### Recommended Resource(s):

- Montana Department of Labor and Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program: <http://apprenticeship.mt.gov>
- **NAME: Mr. Shannon Kadrmas, Glendive** CONTACT INFO: [skadrmas@mt.gov](mailto:skadrmas@mt.gov), 406-377-3314 or cell 406-559-7417
- **NAME: Mr. Bo Bruinsma, Billings** CONTACT INFO: [bbruinsma@mt.gov](mailto:bbruinsma@mt.gov), 406-655-6064 or cell 605-751-9037
- What Jobs will be in Demand in the next Decade?  
<http://lmi.mt.gov/MTLaborBlog/ArticleID/119/What-Jobs-will-be-in-Demand-in-the-next-Decade>
- Job Projections for Montana and its 5 regions <http://lmi.mt.gov/Projections>.
- An emphasis should be placed on a few students every year who can access resources like the Job Corps all the while planning to return home. [Apply for the Job Corps](#) where you'll receive the guidance and learn the skills needed to master a trade, be counseled for college or receive services like job placement, career counseling or relocation counseling. Job Corps is the nation's largest free education and jobs training program for young adults. There are three Job Corps Centers in Montana: [Anaconda](#), [Kicking Horse](#) in Ronan, and [Trapper Creek](#) in Darby.

### **Issue: Business Creation**

**Recommendation:** Residents wonder why Poplar businesses are no longer here. Why didn't they make it? What could open up and be successful? Are there regulations that make it difficult for businesses to operate and what can we do about them? What are some ideas for new businesses?

#### Ideas for New Businesses

- Develop the old Poplar airport for an industrial park that is open for commercial development.
- The Franz Bakery in Billings just announced they will not deliver bakery goods past Glasgow. Is this an opportunity for a bakery partnership that fills the need for breads and other goods on Highway 2? What about a partnership with the Hutterites?
- How do we develop the talent of Native Creatives in NE Montana and market their brands?
- Is growing hops a possibility with the fantastic growth in the brewing industry?
- Sidney Sugars employs 50-60 workers during harvest. Are we missing this as possibility for other industries?

- Fort Peck Tribes has been working with Off the Beaten Path for bison tours and is working up more tours. Are we training a workforce to accept this influx? Are we offering other types of hospitality that accompany these kind of tours?

### Recommended Resource(s):

- **GREAT NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (<http://www.gndc.org>)**  
Great Northern Development Center (GNDC) in Wolf Point provides professional services that empower others to reach their economic goals and improve their lives. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at GNDC provides confidential business counseling for small business owners and entrepreneurs. CONTACT INFO: 233 Cascade Street, Wolf Point, 59201, 406-653-2590, [info@gndc.org](mailto:info@gndc.org) or [sbdc@gndc.org](mailto:sbdc@gndc.org)
- **INDIAN COUNTRY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ICED) PROGRAM (<http://marketmt.com/ICP>)**
- **MADE IN MONTANA (<http://madeinmontanausa.com/>)**  
These programs under the MT Department of Commerce assist Montana Native businesses in developing and marketing their products both in and out of the state and helps build recognition for products that are "authentically Montana." That means they are grown, created, made, and/or enhanced in the state resulting in 50% or more in added-value. The program requires that individuals and businesses meet the program's value-added definition to utilize the trademarked image on their qualifying products.  
  
CONTACT INFO: MT Department of Commerce, 301 S Park Ave, PO Box 200533, Helena, 59620, 406-841-2870
- Indian Country Program Booklet:  
<http://marketmt.com/Portals/129/shared/ICP/docs/ICEDProgramBooklet.pdf>
- Heather Sobrepena, Section Manager, [hsobrepena@mt.gov](mailto:hsobrepena@mt.gov); 406-841-2775
- **HANDMADE MONTANA (<https://handmademontana.com>)** HandMADE Montana in St. Ignatius is a professional organization for art & handcrafted goods. We organize events (MADE fairs & workshops), provide resources to artists, and encourage growth and support in our community efforts. Thank you for supporting your local artists and a sweat-shop free economy.  
  
CONTACT INFO: Carol Lynn Lapotka, PO Box 1314, St. Ignatius, Montana, 59865, 406-214-9078

- **NATIVE AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION + MT INDIAN BUSINESS ALLIANCE / MIBA** (<http://www.mibaonline.org>) The NADC in Billings and the Montana Indian Business Alliance (MIBA) promotes private Indian business development by maximizing and developing resources that encourage and support Montana Indian Entrepreneurs.

CONTACT INFO: Leonard Smith, Executive Director, [lsmith@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:lsmith@nadc-nabn.org); 406-259-3804; [MIBA@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:MIBA@nadc-nabn.org); 17 N 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Billings, 59101

- **MONTANA COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CENTER** (<https://mcdc.coop/cooperative-advantages/>)

*A cooperative is an organization that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its products, supplies or services. Cooperatives are formed to meet the specific objectives of members, and are structured to adapt to member's changing needs. Working together as a group, members find they can accomplish more collectively than they could individually.*

*The benefits of belonging to cooperatives include:*

- **Access** to quality supplies and services at reasonable costs
- **Increased visibility** and leverage in the marketplace
- **Share in earnings** based on use of co-op
- **Effective political action**
- **Enhance local economy** through services and job creation

*An overview of cooperative advantages:*

- **Not for profit** (profit is made for the members)
- **Equal voice** of members/shareholders
- **Special tax treatment** (sometimes)
- **Limited liability** for members/shareholders
- **Exempt** from Blue Sky laws
- **Improved marketing** of member products or services

CONTACT INFO: Jan Brown, Executive Director, [jan@mcdc.coop](mailto:jan@mcdc.coop); 406-727-1517;

## **Issue: Business Retention**

**Recommendation:** Create a Business Council or Chamber that advocates for individual businesses and treats the existing business corridors as valuable assets for the community. The Poplar Phase 2 process has prioritized this process for implementation. Neighboring communities may be willing to speak to a group of businesses about their own successes and strategies for a successful business community alliance.

### Recommended Resource(s):

- NAME: Glasgow Chamber Executive Director Lisa Koski CONTACT INFO: 406-228-2222, [chamber@nemont.net](mailto:chamber@nemont.net)
- NAME: Sidney Chamber/Visitors Bureau Executive Director Susan Joy; CONTACT INFO: 406-433-1916, [info.chamber@sidneymt.com](mailto:info.chamber@sidneymt.com)
- NAME: 2018 Montana Downtown Conference, 10/25-26, Bozeman affiliated with the Montana Downtown Coalition.
- Take a peek at the process Bozeman is undertaking to update the Downtown Bozeman Improvement Plan. <https://downtownbozeman.org/plan>; CONTACT INFO: Downtown Bozeman Partnership Executive Director Chris Naumann, [chris@downtownbozeman.org](mailto:chris@downtownbozeman.org), 406-586-4008

### Issue: Increase Community Services

**Recommendation:** Begin an informal process for a planning and growth policy with the business community to gain support for this process. What does the community of Poplar want to look like in 5 years? What will that mean for residents, schools, seniors, workforce, the community college, healthcare, housing and more?

### Recommended Resource(s):

- **Montana Department of Commerce – Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP)** - <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CTAP>

The Community Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) provides professional planning assistance to communities across Montana in support of sound land use and development decisions, economic revitalization, and overall community resilience. Technical assistance is provided through workshops and trainings, direct assistance by phone or email, collaboration with local, state, and federal partners, the creation of model documents, and guidance on planning best practices.

- MT 211 mobile app - <https://www.montana211.org/faq.php>

#### Poplar Area Stressors – Community Survey

- Substance Abuse
- Crime & safety
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Homelessness



- Lack of Job Opportunity

#### Poplar Area Shocks

- Business closure
- Infrastructure failure
- Drought
- Severe winter weather
- Severe summer weather

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**Report by: Gus Byrom, MT Department of Commerce, Community Development Division, Outreach Coordinator; 301 S. Park, Helena, MT 59601 Ph: 406-841-2777 Email: gbyrom@mt.gov**

#### **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY**

#### **Issue: Downtown Revitalization**

#### **Recommendations:**

#### **Prepare a Downtown Revitalization Plan**

It is recommended that the City of Poplar, in coordination with the Ft. Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Roosevelt County, Montana Department of Transportation, Fort Peck Community College, and Great Northern Development Corporation, prepare a plan for the revitalization of the Poplar downtown consisting of that area along Second Avenue lying generally south of U.S. Highway 2. During the Resource Team meetings, the desire to re-develop and revitalize the downtown core of Poplar was consistently expressed.

#### Revitalization Plan Elements -

A revitalization plan for the Poplar downtown would encompass at least the following efforts:

- analysis of existing land use and building conditions;
- analysis of infrastructure – especially current water, wastewater, stormwater, roadway, on- street and off-street parking needs, and sidewalk conditions;

- consideration of streetscape alternatives, including streetlights, benches, pedestrian usage, and street trees, including related landscaping;
- review of marketing trends and opportunities, including promotion, signage, and wayfinding;
- consideration of historic preservation opportunities;
- consideration of design guidelines to promote a special community character;
- development of final plan implementation elements, including identification of individual actions and projects for improvement, assignment of responsibilities, timelines, and financing. This final section would focus on both short and long-range actions.

Many options can be considered design-wise in terms of the physical redevelopment of the downtown. The width of Second Avenue Southwest (approximately 60 feet) would accommodate diagonal parking, two lanes for traffic movement, as well as bulb-outs to better encourage pedestrian movement and provide space for street trees, benches, and public art. Figure 1 – see attached – is an illustrative example of a plan for continuing renovation of one of the key blocks in downtown Grand Junction, Colorado. Note that this plan includes a winding two-way roadway, staggered diagonal parking, and broad areas for pedestrian movements combined with extensive landscaping. This plan option and many more can be evaluated for Poplar’s downtown.

*Linkage to Tribal and Montana Department of Transportation Initiatives -*

To achieve success, it is vital that the proposed downtown Poplar planning effort be coordinated with the efforts of the Fort Peck Tribes to develop the master planned area in the vicinity of the Tribal headquarters’ offices as well as the efforts of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to make improvements to U.S. Highway 2 within the Poplar community. This concept of key, community linkages is sketched in the attached Figure 2.

Given the history, culture, and presence of the Tribal headquarters, redevelopment of the Poplar downtown should be considered in the context of efforts to redevelop and revitalize the entire Poplar community, as well as adjoining Tribal properties, so that all redevelopment and development activities can be coordinated, to result in a comprehensive community revitalization effort.

Recognizing the responsibility and resources of the Montana Department of Transportation and the key role played by Highway 2 in the community, cooperation

with MDT is essential. Contacting the Transportation Alternatives Program at MDT ( please see below ) would be a key first step in identifying possible assistance in implementing downtown improvements. In addition, extensive outreach to the current businesses and individual citizens and residents of Poplar in all stages of the development of the downtown plan is vital, supported by the efforts and resources of the Great Northern Development Corporation.

### **Establish a Downtown Improvements Association –**

It is also recommended that the City of Poplar support the establishment of an informal downtown Poplar improvements association. Such an organization comprised of downtown property owners and City representatives could lay the foundation for development of the downtown plan and eventual revitalization of the Poplar downtown area. Tribal participation should also be invited to facilitate coordination between the city and Fort Peck Tribes.

The downtown association could meet informally once or twice a month as necessary to advise the city on redevelopment issues as well as coordinate improvement efforts on the part of private property owners. The Poplar Downtown Association would play a key role in the development of the downtown master plan.

### **Create and Support an On-going Community Transportation Planning Process**

Directly related to Ryan Kopp's (Interstate Engineering) recommendation for a meeting to consider Active Transportation issues within the Poplar area, establishment of an ongoing transportation planning process would significantly enhance both the promotion and coordination of transportation improvements within the entire Poplar area. Representatives in this process would include the city, downtown association, general citizens, and Ft. Peck Tribes, working closely with the Montana Department of Transportation.

Figure 1. Downtown Plan Map from Grand Junction, Colorado

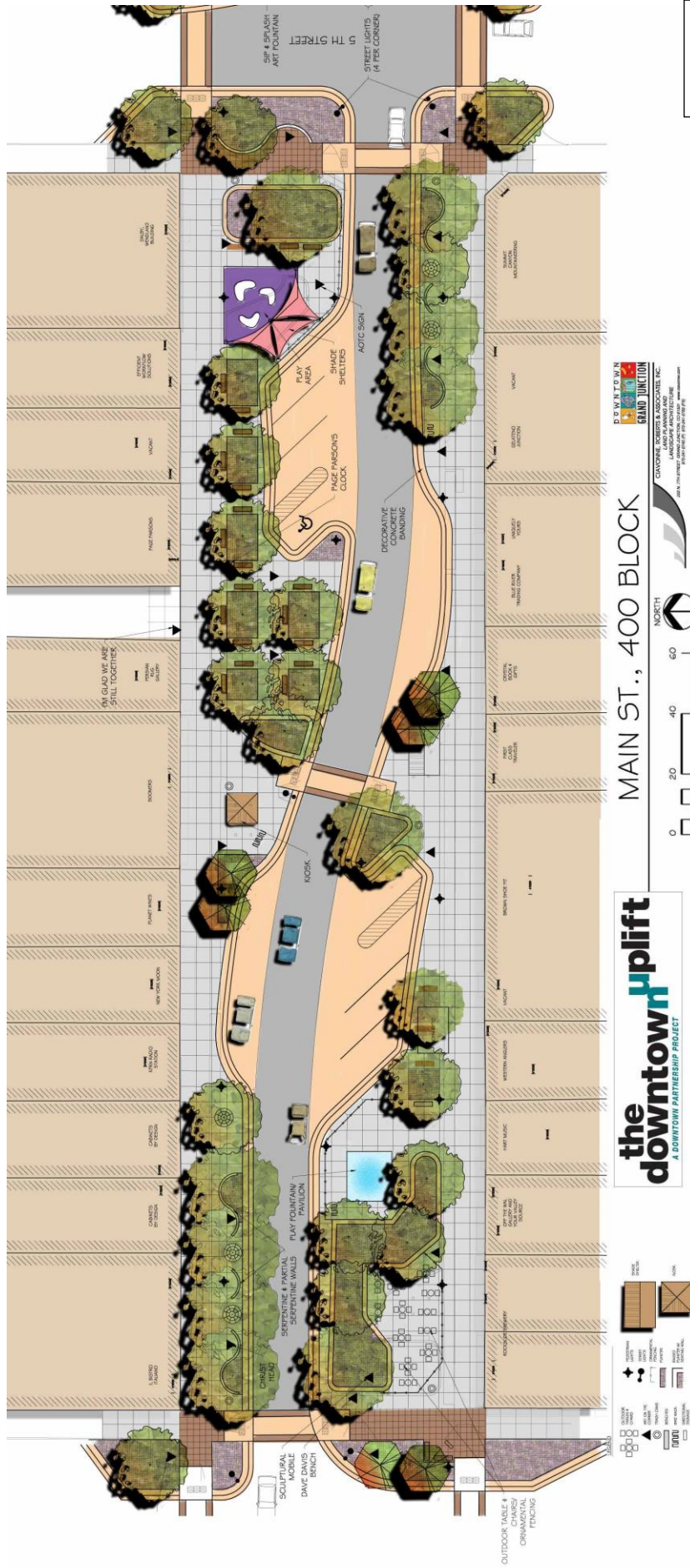
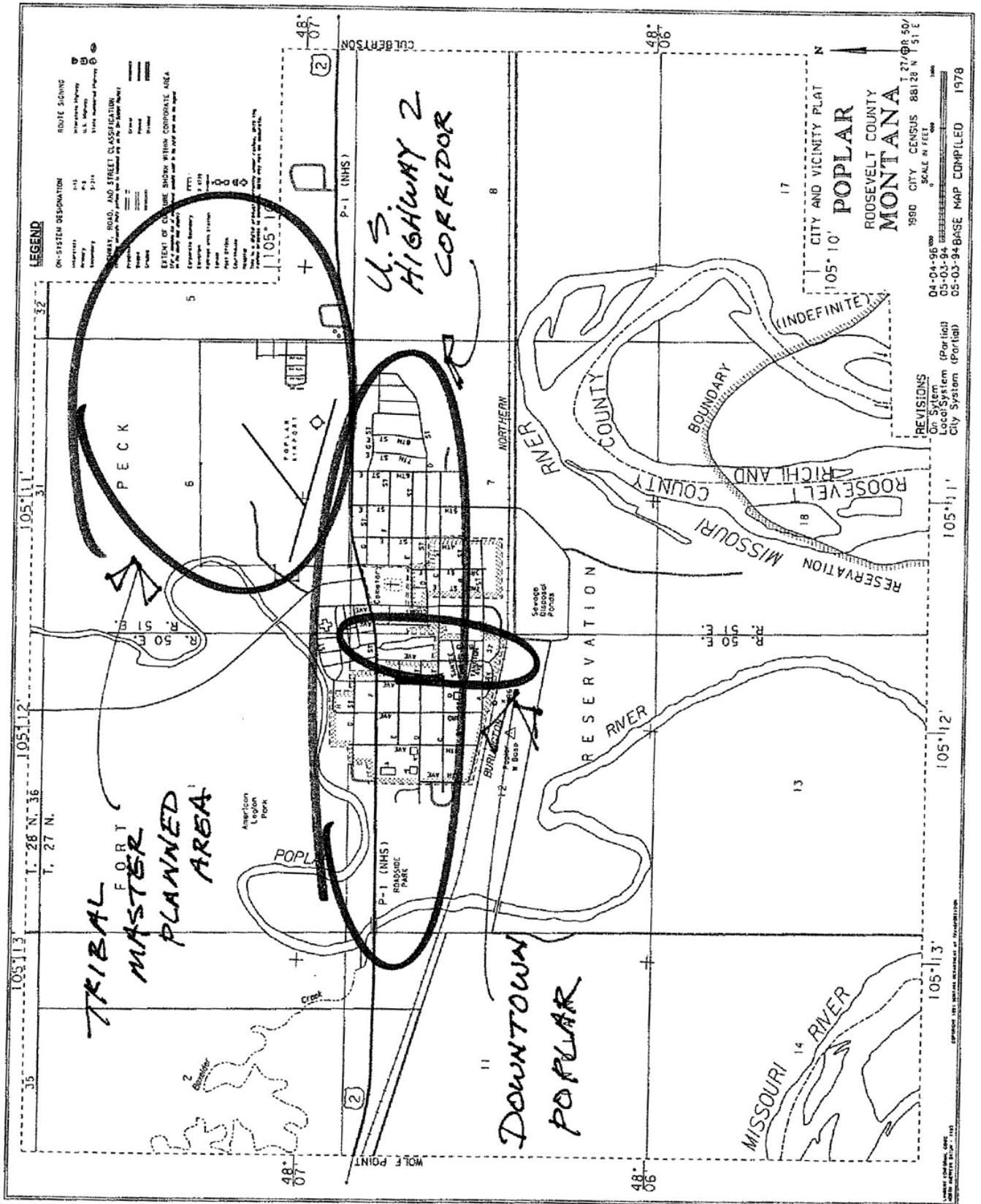


Figure 2. Illustration of Linkages – Planning Opportunities at Poplar



## Recommended Resources:

- Montana Main Street Program

The Montana Main Street Program can provide technical assistance oriented toward the revitalization of Poplar's downtown. With membership in the program, communities are eligible to pursue competitive grant funding for downtown-related planning or brick-and-mortar projects. A required first step towards membership is a local meeting inviting staff of the Community and Economic Vitality program of the Montana Department of Commerce to present about the potential of the program, downtown Montana success stories, and discuss next steps for Poplar.

Tash Wisemiller, Community and Economic Vitality Program Manager, (406) 841-2756, [twisemiller@mt.gov](mailto:twisemiller@mt.gov)  
<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet>

- CDBG Planning Grants

CDBG Planning Grants can be used for a wide variety of community development related planning needs. The grant ceiling is \$50,000. Funds have to be matched on a 1 to 3 basis ( \$1 local for every \$3 requested from the State ). Applications for current funds have already been received, but depending on the availability of Fiscal Year 2018 funds, a second round of CDBG Planning Grants may be available this fall that the City of Poplar could apply for to prepare a downtown master plan.

Galen Steffens, Planning Manager, (406) 841-2819, [gsteffens@mt.gov](mailto:gsteffens@mt.gov)  
<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/PlanningActivities>

- Key Resources

National Main Street Center <https://www.mainstreet.org/home>

Downtown Roundup and Thompson Falls Master Plans – good examples of Montana community downtown planning documents.

<http://www.roundupmontana.net/planning-documents.html>

<https://cityofthompsonfalls.com/downtown-master-plan>

- Publication -

Revitalizing Main Street, A Practitioner's Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization, 2009. National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://njtod.org/revitalizing-main-street-a-practitioners-gide-to-comprehensive-commercial-revitalization-2009/>

- Montana Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Program  
[https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta\\_application.shtml](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml)

Dave Holien – Transportation Alternatives Engineer – [dholien@mt.gov](mailto:dholien@mt.gov) (406) 444-6118

Note – on September 25, 2018 a workshop is scheduled in Glendive for local governments to learn about the Transportation Alternatives Program. Contact Dave Holien for more information.

### **Issue: Downtown Revitalization**

#### **Recommendations: Main Street Community Park and Tree Planting –**

Building on plans prepared by students at Montana State University – Bozeman, the Poplar city government is working on plans for park development to be located immediately adjacent to Poplar's downtown. Possible sources of assistance are outlined below. Tree planting assistance may also be available:

#### **Resources:**

- Park Development with Emphasis on Health/Exercise - Montana Healthcare Foundation
- (406) 451-7060 <https://mthcf.org/>
- Urban Tree Assistance – Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation - Urban & Community Forestry Grants <http://dnrc.mt.gov/grants-and-loans>
- Trails Assistance - Michelle McNamee, State Trails Coordinator, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks [michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov](mailto:michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov) (406) 444-7642
- <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/recTrailsProgram.html>

### **MAIN ISSUE: HOUSING**

During our listening sessions with the people of Poplar, deficient housing was often cited as a general problem in the community. Housing grant resources are available from the Montana Department of Commerce, Community Development Division for the following three programs- Community Development Block Grant, HOME, and Housing Trust Fund, as noted below. In addition, the Montana Board

of Housing administers the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program that can provide rental units for families with lower incomes.

### **Recommended Resources:**

- Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

Pending receipt of FY 2018 Federal HUD funds, the Montana CDBG program plans to accept applications for Multifamily (Large Scale) Housing this fall. The city can also apply for CDBG assisted housing rehabilitation funds (one home at a time) that can be used in combination with USDA Rural Development funds. Each housing project must demonstrate that the projected beneficiaries would be households earning less than 80 % of the area median income. Low interest loan assistance is also available to help businesses that would retain or create jobs for low and moderate income persons.

Julie Flynn, Housing Program Manager, (406) 841-2890, [Julie.Flynn@mt.gov](mailto:Julie.Flynn@mt.gov)

Gus Byrom, Outreach Coordinator, Community and Economic Vitality Program, (406) 841-2777 [gbyrom@mt.gov](mailto:gbyrom@mt.gov)

- HOME Program and Housing Trust Fund

Applications to the HOME program for affordable housing can be accepted at any time. Applications for the new Housing Trust Fund (multi-family housing) will most likely be accepted this fall, pending receipt of funds. The HOME program is designed to assist households with annual incomes less than 80 percent of the area median income. The Housing Trust Fund program is targeted to assist households earning less than 30 % of the area median income.

Julie Flynn, Housing Program Manager, (406) 841-2890, [Julie.Flynn@mt.gov](mailto:Julie.Flynn@mt.gov)

Gus Byrom, Outreach Coordinator, Community and Economic Vitality Program, (406) 841-2777 [gbyrom@mt.gov](mailto:gbyrom@mt.gov)

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/HOME>

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/HTF>

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, Montana Board of Housing



Mary Bair, Multifamily Program Manager, (406) 841-2845, [mbair@mt.gov](mailto:mbair@mt.gov)  
<http://housing.mt.gov/MFDevelopment>

- USDA Rural Development –

In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development has several programs that can assist single family and multi-family housing units. Contact information is provided below:

Cindy Coleman, Area Specialist – Multi-Family, (406) 657-6297 x 126  
[www.rd.usda.gov/mt](http://www.rd.usda.gov/mt)

Gail M. Pomeroy, Area Specialist – [gail.pomeroy@mt.usda.gov](mailto:gail.pomeroy@mt.usda.gov) Single Family :  
[gail.pomeroy@mt.usda.gov](mailto:gail.pomeroy@mt.usda.gov) (406) 657-6297 x 124

### **MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE:**

The City of Poplar recently received funding assistance from USDA Rural Development for wastewater system improvements. Primary financial resources for additional water and wastewater system needs are listed below:

#### **Recommended Resources:**

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

To be eligible to receive funds for public facility improvements, such as water and wastewater projects, the community must demonstrate that at least 51 percent or more of the households that are proposed to be assisted can be classified as low and moderate income (under 80 % of the area median income) according to data of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Data for Poplar shows the community at 70.89 % low and moderate income, exceeding the threshold for CDBG eligibility.

CDBG applications for public facility assistance most likely will be due this fall, depending on the availability of HUD funds. For more information, please contact the following:

Becky Anseth, Infrastructure Manager, (406) 841-2865 [banseth@mt.gov](mailto:banseth@mt.gov)

Gus Byrom, Outreach Coordinator, (406) 841-2777 [gbyrom@mt.gov](mailto:gbyrom@mt.gov)  
<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/PCF>

- Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP)

Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) funds are an excellent source of financial assistance for water and wastewater system improvements. The next round of TSEP applications for construction assistance is anticipated to be the spring or summer of 2020. Grants are expected to be available for assistance in preparing Preliminary Engineering Reports in May 2019. Preliminary Engineering Reports must be prepared for any proposed project prior to submittal of an application for construction assistance.

Becky Anseth, Infrastructure Manager, (406) 841-2865 [banseth@mt.gov](mailto:banseth@mt.gov)

Gus Byrom, Outreach Coordinator, (406) 841-2777 [gbyrom@mt.gov](mailto:gbyrom@mt.gov)  
<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/TSEP>

- State Revolving Fund (SRF), Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Mark Smith, Drinking Water Program SRF, (406) 444-5325, [marks@mt.gov](mailto:marks@mt.gov)  
<http://deq.mt.gov/Water/DrinkingWater/dwsrf>

Paul LaVigne, Wastewater Program SRF, (406) 444-5321, [plavigne@mt.gov](mailto:plavigne@mt.gov)  
<http://deq.mt.gov/Water/WasteWater/WPCSRF>

- USDA Rural Development – Montana

Eleanor Kindness, (406) 657-6297, Ext.125  
[Eleanor.Kindness@mt.usda.gov](mailto:Eleanor.Kindness@mt.usda.gov)

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/mt>

- Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation / Montana Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program

Lindsay Volpe, (406) 444-9766, [LmVolpe@mt.gov](mailto:LmVolpe@mt.gov)

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cardd/docs/resource-development/forms/2014rrglsupplement.pdf>

## Highway Improvements

Highway improvements must be coordinated with the Montana Department of Transportation, Glendive District, at the following:

Shane Mintz, District Administrator, District 4 – Glendive, Montana Department of Transportation <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/organization/districts.shtml> (406) 345-8200

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**Report by: Ryan Kopp, Interstate Engineering, Staff Engineer, P.O. Box 648, Sidney, MT 59270 Ph: 406-433-5617  
Email: [ryan.kopp@interstateeng.com](mailto:ryan.kopp@interstateeng.com)**

## MAIN TOPIC: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

### Issue:

Any time you drive through the Poplar Community, you will notice one thing: there are people always on the move, walking from here to there. You will also notice children trying to cross the busy Highway 2 corridor without a protected crossing. While spending some time in Poplar this week, I realized that the various government agencies; Fort Peck Tribes, City of Poplar, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) each have their own version of a sidewalk/trail project they are looking to move forward. The problem is that each entity is not communicating well with each other and I feel they can benefit from an overall Active Transportation Plan.

### Recommendations:

The safety of pedestrians is very important in any community, and especially in Poplar where foot traffic is a widely used form of transportation. Here are some ideas to grow and improve the existing pedestrian infrastructure:

1. Coordinate a meeting with the following groups: MDT, Fort Peck Tribal Transportation Program, Roosevelt County, City of Poplar and discuss the want/need of an overall transportation plan and the willingness to commit time and funds to the project.
2. Research grant opportunities and develop a plan for creating an Active Transportation Plan.

3. Using grant/matching funds, select a consultant to provide professional expertise and begin creating a report. Use as much local knowledge and manpower as possible to reduce cost.
4. Complete the report and begin divvying out a portion to each entity to accomplish.
5. Once again research grant opportunities (don't forget private sources as well!) for construction of the project.

#### **Recommended Resources:**

- Shane Halverson – City of Poplar
- Curry Kirn – Tribal Transportation Program
- Ryan Kopp – Interstate Engineering
- Montana Department of Transportation - [https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta\\_application.shtml](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml)

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***Report by: Kev Campbell, MT Department of Commerce, Office of Tourism and Business Development, Business Development Specialist, 301 S. Park, Helena, MT 59601 Ph: 406-841-2887  
Email: kev.campbell@mt.gov***

The people of Poplar, Montana have stories to tell about their community and the area and unique assets to share and preserve for generations to come. Besides improving the quality of life for residents and relatives, visitors and tourists would find many aspects of the community interesting and enjoyable. The educated traveler with or without children would find the rich history and culture of the area, along with attractions and activities worth stopping for. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed to make the community appear and actually be more visitor-friendly. Priority needs to be given to items that address immediate health and safety issues, like safe traffic signals, streets, sidewalks, etc. The next layer involves doing simple things that have significant impact when it comes to the community appearing to be a place safe and inviting to visit.

#### **MAIN TOPIC: Community**

#### **Issue: Appearance**

Residents agree that an inviting appearance, especially on Highway 2 and the main streets, is important to attracting visitors or those who would otherwise just drive through to stop and visit for food, gas, shopping, attractions or overnight stays.

## **Recommendation:**

Annual attention to trees along highway. Keep grasses and other vegetation mowed; sidewalks cleared. Add curb appeal along walking path with xeriscape plants, gravels, rocks that require minimum care (sagebrush and yucca are very attractive). Add benches along walking path; picnic tables to the park that is close to the highway and at the water access areas (sun shelters already exist). Plant more trees throughout town; not only do they help provide a greener space, they cool the local climate with shade and hold moisture. Fall leaves provide color and attractive dimension to the flat land.

Clean up garbage, perhaps have semi-annual Poplar Pride cleanup of yards, businesses and the highway. Remove junk vehicles, piles of dirt, debris...anything that is visible from Highway 2. Remove or replace signage that is negative or scary!

Place signage that is sturdy and permanent, perhaps with art installation (buffalo, tipi) at the entrance to town on Highway 2, east and west. Think about the Hi-Line and Poplar being not only a beginning, but the first stop traveling west or the last best stop traveling east!

Wayfinding and signage as to “what there is to see and do in Poplar”; not just “entering Poplar, Montana”. These could be sandwich boards put out just for events, or permanent banners hanging from street lights. Billboards on Highway 2 – the [Theodore Roosevelt Highway](#)

- Visit authentic Trading Post, turn here
- Visit Yellowstone Bison Herd (or whatever the name), turn here
- Museum and Trading Post, open
- Huckleberry Shakes
- Farmer’s Market or Peoples’ Market
- Signage to events held on campus of Fort Peck Community College
- Visit historic cannon from Battle of Camp Poplar

## **Recommended Resource(s):**

Montana Department of Transportation wayfinding and signage [guidelines](#)

Montana Dinosaur Trail | [mtdinotrail.org](http://mtdinotrail.org) – Fort Peck Interpretive Center at Fort Peck is “on” the trail; signage or billboard in Poplar directs folks on the Dino Trail to visit Poplar (museum, bison herd, trading post, tipi village, etc.)

Montana State Parks | [stateparks.mt.gov](http://stateparks.mt.gov) – [Recreational Trails Program, Recreation Grants](#) can be used to develop trailside facilities, trail maintenance and more

Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development – [MARKETMT.COM](http://MARKETMT.COM) and [VISITMT.COM](http://VISITMT.COM)

- Tribal Tourism Montana | [marketmt.com/ICP](http://marketmt.com/ICP) | Carla Lott, Tribal Tourism Officer  
[Carla.lott@mt.gov](mailto:Carla.lott@mt.gov) 406 841 2734
- VisitMt.com - Include business, attractions, events in the business listings  
searchable online directory on visitmt.com
- Tourism grants | [marketmt.com/grants](http://marketmt.com/grants) – available for cultural heritage  
preservation, visitor sites and niche product development  
Jan Stoddard, Bureau Chief, Industry Services Outreach [jstoddard@mt.gov](mailto:jstoddard@mt.gov)  
406 841 2894
- Missouri River Country tourism region | <http://missouririver.visitmt.com> (new  
website coming soon), coordinate/leverage tourism partners' efforts  
Carla Hunsley, Executive Director [2mtmrc@nemont.net](mailto:2mtmrc@nemont.net) 800 653 1319
- Montana Film Office | [montanafilm.com](http://montanafilm.com) | Allison Whitmer, Montana Film  
Commissioner [Allison.Whitmer@mt.gov](mailto:Allison.Whitmer@mt.gov) 406 841 2881

### Examples:

[Entrance](#) to Blackfeet Reservation at Browning, sculpture by Jay Laber

[Chester,MT](#) welcome sign

[Deer Lodge billboard](#) - Discover Historic Deer Lodge, Visit Grant-Khors Ranch, Old  
Montana Territorial Prison, exit now to city center

Medora North Dakota – “Medora - Explore It. Adore It.” Poplar Montana “the most  
Poplar place in Montana!” What’s missing in Poplar – U make it the most popular  
place in the state! “Welcome to the most Poplar place in Montana” What makes us  
Poplar popular – U! The most popular places in Poplar – trading post, bison herd,  
coffee pot, Tastee Freeze, Poplar River trail, etc.

## MAIN TOPIC: Economic Development

### Issue: Tourism and Visitors - Attractions

Residents agree that people visiting for business, education, vacations or traveling to  
other destinations are a valuable source of outside dollars that positively impact the  
local economy. Local attractions and amenities need additional development and  
sustainable plans to generate the interest and to thereby motivate travelers to stop  
and spend time and money in Poplar. There are several possibilities and examples  
that exist that could be expanded, further developed or reinvented using partnerships  
and resources that may not have previously existed.

### Recommendation for possible attractions, events, activities:

Develop self-guide driving tour to the bison herd(s), incorporate a mobile app, have a  
visitor tipi with information on the Yellowstone bison, the significance of the bison,  
have a food truck or tipi serving bison menu items, perhaps bison jerky, other specialty

foods. Use as art gallery, rental shop, gear sales, Made in Montana goods, sleeping quarters for seasonal workers and more!

Make existing museum, arts & crafts building accessible from highway (the chainlink fence screams “stay out”).

Have a visitor information, gift shop be located inside an actual tipi setup along side Highway 2. Visitors could go inside tipis for various demonstrations, viewing, etc. Have several set up and have actual Assiniboine and Sioux tribal members in authentic dress serve as ambassadors. Have a glamping tipi camp complete with luxury amenities (buffalo hide rugs, old west charm, etc.). This employs local people while providing education and cultural preservation.

Tipis are popular on Airbnb.com and glampinghub.com, please searching online for travel and lodging would find Poplar’s offerings and want to incorporate other experiences while staying in a tipi.

Hire or have volunteer Native Americans in authentic dress ride horses along side the tracks as Amtrak travels through twice a day, could link up with other stops along the highway in Wolf Point, Malta.

Restore the theatre on main street to its original glory. This would be part of the overall main street improvement project. Once restored, this would be a crown jewel historic building and attraction that locals could enjoy as well as visitors. Feature vintage films, documentaries, develop a film product to go along with the bison tour.

Develop paddle board route on the Poplar River with existing access points. Have a tipi with rentals available.

### **Recommended Resource(s):**

Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development – MARKETMT.COM and VISITMT.COM

- Tribal Tourism Montana| [marketmt.com/ICP](http://marketmt.com/ICP) | Carla Lott, Tribal Tourism Officer  
[Carla.lott@mt.gov](mailto:Carla.lott@mt.gov) 406 841 2734
- VisitMt.com - Include business, attractions, events in the business listings searchable online directory on visitmt.com
- Tourism grants | [marketmt.com/grants](http://marketmt.com/grants) – available for cultural heritage preservation, visitor sites and niche product development
- Missouri River Country tourism region | <http://missouririver.visitmt.com> (new website coming soon), coordinate/leverage tourism partners’ efforts
- Made in Montana, Grown in Montana, Native American Made in Montana | [madeinmontanausa.com](http://madeinmontanausa.com)

Lewis and Clark Historic Trail | [lewisandclark.travel](http://lewisandclark.travel) (nominate local places to be included on web map, free resource from The National Park Services

Montana Hi Line | [hilinetrail.com](http://hilinetrail.com) - online searchable site featuring Montana Cowboy and Indian Adventure

[American Indian Foods](#) / Intertribal Agriculture Council / USDA Foreign Agriculture Service

American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association | [www.aianta.org](http://www.aianta.org) - define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values

**Examples:**

Pale Horse Tipi Camp, Riel Houle <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/teepee-camp-reserves-tourist-destination-1.4718547>

[undercanvas.com](http://undercanvas.com) – glamping in canvas tents and tipis (Moab, Yellowstone, Glacier, Zion, Mount Rushmore, Grand Canyon and Great Smokies) founder Jacob Dusek is from Havre, Montana

[sundancelodges.com](http://sundancelodges.com) – in Canada

[Tipi Village](#) – in Browning

[Terry Bison Ranch](#) – bison train tour, guided trail rides and steakhouse

[montanadinnertrain.com](http://montanadinnertrain.com) – Charles Russell Chew Choo in Lewistown, small section of operating train with live re-enactment of train robbers to delight riders

Little River Smokehouse | [americanindianfoods.com](http://americanindianfoods.com) – buffalo jerky, meat sticks, sausages, packaged for retail sale



**Report by: Martin DeWitt, Montana USDA/Rural Development, Building A, 1629 Avenue D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT 59102 Ph: 406-657-6297 ext 121 Email: [martin.dewitt@mt.usda.gov](mailto:martin.dewitt@mt.usda.gov)**

**MAIN TOPIC: Economic and Workforce Development**

**Issue:**

The people of Poplar wanted to create economic opportunities in the community and address workforce development needs of the people. Specific areas stated were to increase the availability of the trades industry professionals, business creation and retention and to increase the availability of community services.

**Recommendations:**



The first steps toward developing your economy may be to survey the existing businesses in the community and identify their needs. This may be accomplished with the working group identified during the community meetings. Then you will have specific data to help determine a direction to address the needs.

Utilize Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) and Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) to identify existing local training programs and requirements for businesses to operate. Additional local resources for business development and workforce training opportunities is the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) that is hosted by Great Northern Development Corporation. They offer a variety of services for these specific needs.

If access to funding is required for any of the activities, for this topic, there are a few different sources to choose from. USDA Rural Development has funding to assist with technical assistance, planning, training and access to capital through Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG). Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) and the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP). Both RMAP and IRP programs can be accessed through the Loan Officer at GNDC. Additionally, Montana Big Sky Trust Fund (BSTF) has funding to assist with job creation and planning projects.

### **Recommended Resources:**

#### **USDA Rural Development**

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT\\_Home.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT_Home.html)

Martin DeWitt, Business Program Specialist, 1629 Ave. D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT (406)657-6297

#### **Montana Department of Commerce**

<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF>

Alyssa Townsend, Program Specialist, 301 S. Park Ave., Helena, MT (406)841-2748

#### **Great Northern Development Corporation**

<http://www.gndc.org>

Kelcie Bates, Loan Officer, 233 Cascade St., Wolf Point, MT (406)653-2590

Shandy Hanks, SBDC Director, 233 Cascade St., Wolf Point, MT (406)653-2590

#### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/CDBGED>

Tash Wisemiller, Program Manager, 301 S. Park, Helena, MT (406)841-2756

### **MAIN TOPIC: Community and Downtown Revitalization**

#### **Issue:**

The main topics that were discussed regarded blight removal, brownfields redevelopment, master plan development, community engagement and identify investors.

**Recommendations:**

Planning is key to proper development and addressing community needs in any situation. Equally as important to planning is the implementation and continuous review of the planning efforts. This allows the opportunity to identify priorities, address or adjust the approach and celebrate meeting the defined goals of planning. First area to address begins with developing an inventory of existing planning documents and determine what is obsolete and what is still usable documents. Develop committees utilizing local government, community organizations and youth to review and assist in updating the pertinent documents. Then identify funding assistance opportunities to hire a planning consultant as necessary and begin addressing needs.

Continue the support and efforts of the Tribal Department of Environmental Quality, they are advancing several sites to potential redevelopment. Make sure to leverage opportunities of other funding sources. Locally, GNDC has funding to address brownfields sites. USDA Rural Development has RBDG funds for technical assistance and planning efforts that can additionally provide funding for environmental assessments or revitalization planning to benefit business development. Revitalization may also be addressed through the Montana Main Street Program in the CDBG division.

**Recommended Resources:****USDA Rural Development**

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT\\_Home.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT_Home.html)

Martin DeWitt, Business Program Specialist, 1629 Ave. D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT (406)657-6297

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/CDBGED>

Tash Wisemiller, Program Manager, 301 S. Park, Helena, MT (406)841-2756

**Great Northern Development Corporation**

<http://www.gndc.org>

Tori Matejovsky, Executive Director, 233 Cascade St., Wolf Point, MT (406)653-2590

**MAIN TOPIC: Education, Culture and Health****Issue:**

Members of the community wanted education to become a priority in the community and to see the graduation rates increase along with expanded opportunities for alternative learning, cultural language/ heritage education and engaged parenting courses. Additionally, they wanted to address ways to allow the law enforcement to be

more effective and efficient to enhance public safety. There was also considerable discussion around opioid prevention and treatment.

**Recommendations:**

This topic will need to be driven by community engagement, potentially through focus groups that partner with the existing resources provided through the school district, college, city, county and tribes

These focus groups can develop a community listing of services and offerings throughout the community. Promote the availability of these services through community calendars, web presence and outreach.

Funding opportunities are limited in specifically addressing these needs as the burden of funding is expected from the local government.

**Recommended Resources:**

**USDA/ Rural Communities Opioid Response-Planning Program**

**USDA/ Tribal Opioid Response Grants**

<https://www.usda.gov/topics/opioids>

**MAIN TOPIC: Infrastructure and Housing**

**Issue:**

Throughout the meetings held there was concern mentioned over the availability of community facilities for solid waste, parks and a swimming pool along with infrastructure improvements to sidewalks, lighting and water systems. Additionally, Community members stressed the limitations to the quality of the existing affordable housing stock and the need to remove vacant and dilapidated housing.

**Recommendations:**

Potential options are to work through a community housing study to check on availability of existing structures for renovation or demolition and potential areas for expansion of existing availability. The housing study can provide a viable approach to prioritize need while addressing need to potentially revitalize existing structures. Research potential developers to accommodate adding to the existing housing stock that is well versed in tax credits and additional funding sources. There are a variety of funding programs to address infrastructure below.

**Recommended Resources:**

USDA Rural Development

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT\\_Home.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MT_Home.html)

- Gail Pomeroy, Area Specialist, Single Family Housing, 1629 Ave. D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT (406)657-6297

- Cindy Coleman, Area Specialist, Multi-Family Housing, 1629 Ave. D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT (406)657-6297
- Eleanor Kindness, Area Specialist, Water/ Wastewater 1629 Ave. D, Building A Suite 6, Billings, MT (406)657-6297
- Steve Troendle, Program Director, Community Facilities, 2229 Boot Hill Court, Bozeman, MT 59715 (406)5854-2551

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/CDBG/Housing/Overview>

- Jennifer Olson, Division Administrator, 301 S. Park, Helena, MT (406)841-2773
- Julie Flynn, Housing Development Program Manager, 301 S Park Ave, Helena, MT (406)841-2890
- Becky Anseth, Infrastructure Program Manager, 301 S Park Ave, Helena, MT (406)841-2865
- Galen Steffens, Planning Program Manager, 301 S Park Ave, Helena, MT (406)841-2819

**Great Northern Development Corporation**

<http://www.gndc.org>

Brianna Vine, Housing Specialist, 233 Cascade St., Wolf Point, MT (406)653-2590



**CONCLUSION:**

The Poplar Community Review has been a great success to date due to a dedicated Home Team, our top-notch Visiting Teams, and the enthusiastic, willing-to-work people of the Poplar area. The community is now in Phase 3: Launch! The Steering Committee structure is in place with Coach Tori Matejovsky to provide expertise and encouragement along the way. The Poplar Community Review Team looks forward to returning to the Poplar area and celebrating your success within the year. Thank you for sharing your valuable time, expertise, and passion for the Poplar area and its future with us.

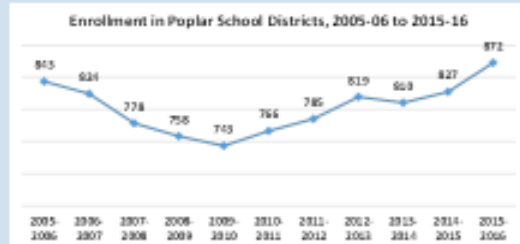
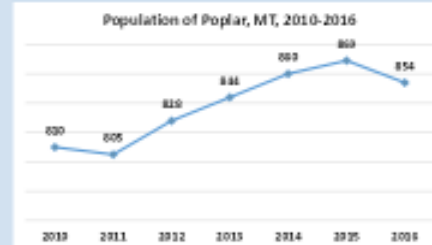
## Appendix A: Community Profile

# POPLAR, MONTANA COMMUNITY PROFILE



## POPULATION

	Poplar City	Roosevelt County
<b>Total population</b>		
2010, number	854	11,305
2010, number	810	10,425
Change 2010-2016, percent	5.4	8.4
<b>Components of population change, 2010-2016</b>		
<b>Net migration change (in-migrants minus out-migrants)</b>		
Number	---	256
Percent	---	2.5
<b>Natural change (births minus deaths)</b>		
Number	---	609
Percent	---	5.8
<b>Population by race, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
White	20	37
American Indian or Alaskan Native	71	55
Other	9	9
<b>Population by ethnicity, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
Non-Hispanic	100	97
Hispanic	0	3
<b>Population by age group, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
Under age 18	22	32
Age 18-64	66	57
Age 65 and older	12	11
Median age, 2012-2016 average, years	30.3	30.2



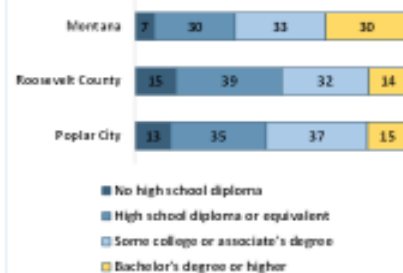
SOURCES: US Census Bureau, US Department of Education

## SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

	Poplar City	Roosevelt County	Montana State
<b>Income</b>			
Per capita income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	20,203	16,885	27,309
Median household income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	31,000	34,481	48,380
<b>Poverty</b>			
<b>Overall poverty, 2012-2016 average</b>			
Number	227	2,953	148,677
Rate, percent	28.7	26.9	14.9
<b>Children living in poverty, 2012-2016 average</b>			
Number	64	1,232	40,953
Rate, percent	36.6	34.6	18.6
<b>Food insecurity</b>			
Overall rate, 2015, percent	---	17.9	13.0
Rate among children, 2015, percent	---	24.4	18.8

SOURCES: US Census Bureau, Feeding America

### Highest level of education among those age 25 or older, 2012-2016 average

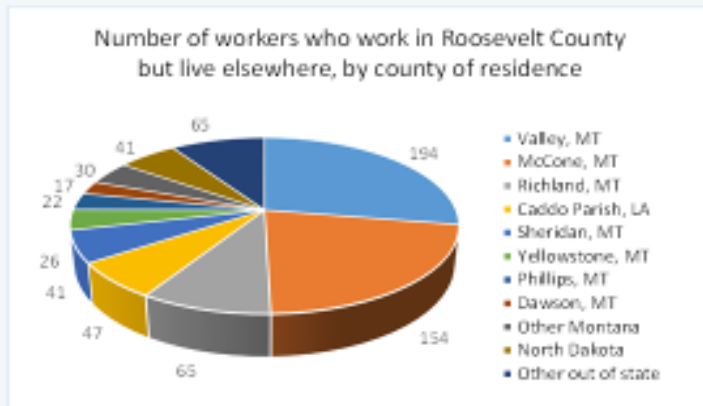
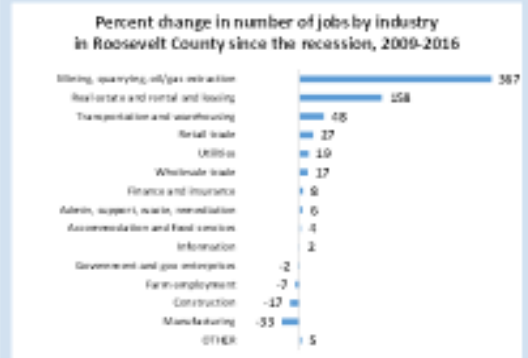
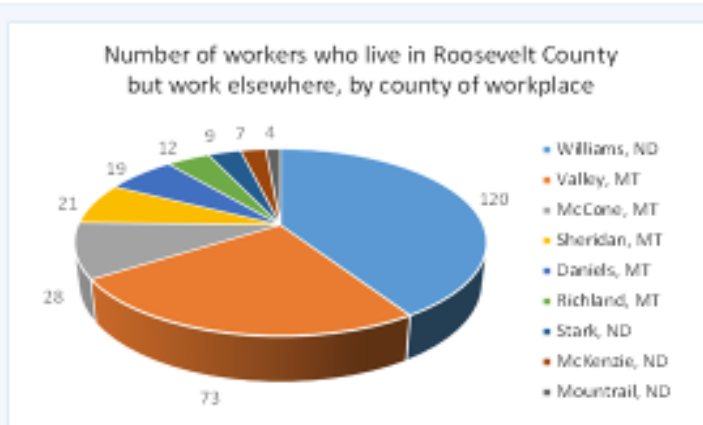
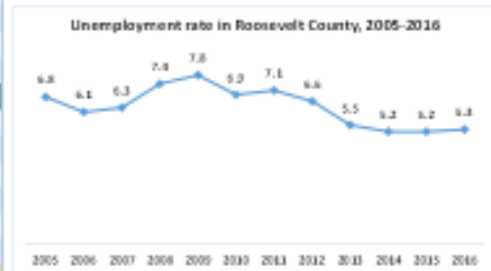


This project is supported by USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant #2016-10945. It is part of the AFRI Foundational program.



## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Poplar City	Roosevelt County
<b>Full- and part-time jobs</b>		
Total number, 2016	---	5,651
Total number, 2011	---	5,433
Total number, 2006	---	5,206
Change, 2011-2016, percent	---	4.0
Change, 2006-2011, percent	---	4.4
<b>Employment characteristics</b>		
Labor force participation rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	50.2	49.7
Unemployment rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	15.0	6.2
Self-employment rate, 2016, percent	---	28.8
Average annual pay, 2016, dollars	---	36,048
<b>Business establishments with paid employees, by size, 2015</b>		
All establishments, number	---	225
Establishments with 1-4 paid employees, number	---	122
Establishments with 5-9 paid employees, number	---	48
Establishments with 10-19 paid employees, number	---	36
Establishments with 20-49 paid employees, number	---	13
Establishments with 50 or more paid employees, number	---	6



NOTE: "Other" industries include forestry, fishing, and related activities; mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; utilities; transportation and warehousing; information; finance and insurance; real estate and rental and leasing; management of companies and enterprises; arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services; and other services.

SOURCES: US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Economic Analysis, US Department of Labor

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

	Poplar City	Roosevelt County
<b>Total housing units, 2012-2016 average</b>		
Number of units	358	4,082
<b>Housing tenure, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units</b>		
Owner-occupied units	42	56
Renter-occupied units	58	44
<b>Housing type, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units</b>		
1 unit, attached or detached	63	81
2-4 units	4	4
5 or more units	23	5
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	9	11
<b>Housing affordability, 2012-2016 average</b>		
Households spending 30% or more of income on housing costs		
Owner-occupied units, percent	16	12
Renter-occupied units, percent	17	19

SOURCES: US Census Bureau



## RESOURCES

Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/tools/economic-profile-system/>

- Poplar City – Demographics
- Roosevelt County – Multiple topics
  - Demographics
  - Socioeconomic measures
  - Agriculture, timber, and mining, including oil & gas
  - Services and tourism
  - Government
  - Non-labor income
  - Public land amenities
  - Federal land payments
  - Wildland urban interface

### PROJECT PARTNERS

Montana State University  
Montana Economic Developers Association

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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<http://www.communityreview.org>

**Appendix B: Community Satisfaction Survey Instrument**

**Poplar Community Survey**  
**Poplar Community Survey**

**Q1. Listed below are public services and community amenities. Thinking about availability, cost, quality, and any other considerations important to you, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your community? Please circle a number from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied), or “don’t know.”**

	Highly dissatisfied		Highly satisfied			Don't know
a. Local K-12 school system	1	2	3	4	5	DK
b. Childcare/early childhood education programs	1	2	3	4	5	DK
c. Housing	1	2	3	4	5	DK
d. Parks & playgrounds	1	2	3	4	5	DK
e. Bicycle & pedestrian access	1	2	3	4	5	DK
f. Condition of streets & roads	1	2	3	4	5	DK
g. Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5	DK
h. Internet service	1	2	3	4	5	DK
i. Appearance of downtown	1	2	3	4	5	DK
j. Appearance of neighborhoods	1	2	3	4	5	DK
k. Police protection/law enforcement	1	2	3	4	5	DK
l. Medical care services	1	2	3	4	5	DK
m. Mental health services	1	2	3	4	5	DK
n. Senior citizen support services	1	2	3	4	5	DK
o. Available jobs	1	2	3	4	5	DK
p. Pay rates (salaries/wages)	1	2	3	4	5	DK
q. Access to higher education (e.g., college, technical)	1	2	3	4	5	DK
r. Variety of goods & services available	1	2	3	4	5	DK
s. Responsiveness of local government	1	2	3	4	5	DK
t. Civic & nonprofit organizations	1	2	3	4	5	DK
u. Arts, entertainment, & cultural activities	1	2	3	4	5	DK
v. Friendliness of residents	1	2	3	4	5	DK
w. Availability of fresh fruits & vegetables	1	2	3	4	5	DK
x. Cooperation among local government agencies & community organizations	1	2	3	4	5	DK
y. Visitor attractions	1	2	3	4	5	DK

**Q2. Would you like to comment or explain why you rated your satisfaction with any of these public services and community amenities in the way you did? If so, please provide your comments/explanation here:**



**Q3.** Would you like to comment on your level of satisfaction with any other public services or community amenities that are not listed above? If so, please explain here:

**Q4.** In general, how effective do you think the residents of your community are at working together to solve challenges?

- Very effective       Somewhat effective       Not at all effective

**Q5.** Please briefly explain why you answered the previous question (Q4) in the way you did:

**Q6.** Have you been involved in a neighborhood or community project in the last 12 months? *For example, youth development, community beautification, fund raiser, etc.*

- Yes  
 No

If yes, please tell us the type(s) of projects you have been involved in:

**Q7.** Please complete this sentence: “I would be involved in more community projects if...”

**Q8.** Do any of the following factors challenge your ability to support Poplar’s locally owned businesses? *Please select all that apply.*

- Prices
- Hours of operation
- Parking
- Availability of products, services, or both
- Nothing/no challenges
- Other challenge(s)—please specify:

---

**Q9.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “I am proud of my community”?

- Strongly agree       Somewhat agree       Somewhat disagree       Strongly disagree

**Q10.** What is something you like about the Poplar community?

**Q11.** What is your sex?

- Male       Female       Prefer not to answer

**Q12.** What is your race? *Please select all that apply.*

- African American/Black    American Indian/Alaska Native    Asian/Pacific Islander    White    Other

**Q13.** What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic    Non-Hispanic

**Q14.** In what year were you born?

\_\_\_\_\_ birth year

**Q15.** What is your annual household income?

- Under \$25,000    \$25,000-\$49,999    \$50,000-\$74,999    \$75,000-\$100,000    Above \$100,000

**Q16.** Do you live in town or outside of town?

- In town    Outside of town

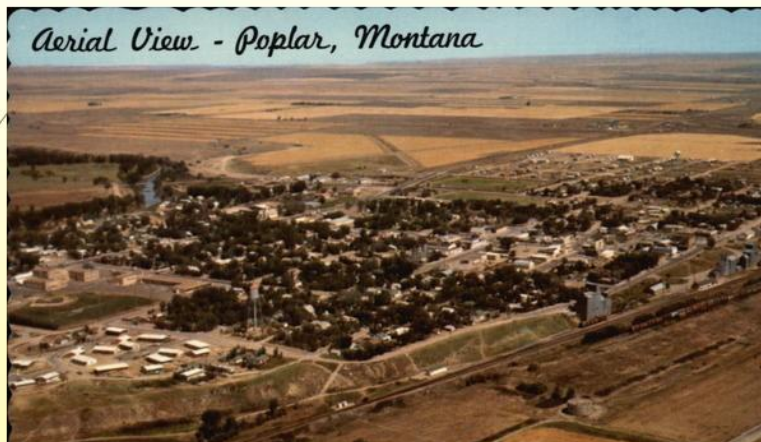
**Q17.** How many years have you lived in Poplar or the immediate area?

- 0-5 years    6-10 years    11-20 years    More than 20 years

# POPLAR AREA

## MONTANA COMMUNITY REVIEW

MAY 14 - 15, 2018 \* Phase 1



A service of the Montana Economic Developers Association in partnership with Montana Department of Commerce, Montana State University Extension, the University of Idaho and the University of Wyoming.

This project is supported by USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant #2016-10945. It is part of the AFRI Foundational program.

# COMMUNITY REVIEW REPORT

*for*

## ***Poplar, Montana***

May 14 – 15, 2018



The Montana Community Review Program is a collaboration of federal, state, tribal, and local governments along with the private sector and nonprofits. Montana Community Reviews are made possible with sponsorship from Montana Department of Commerce and coordinated by Montana Economic Developers Association.



## **SPONSORING AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

**Fort Peck Community College  
Great Northern Development Corp.  
Fort Peck Tribes  
Environmental Protection Agency  
City of Poplar  
Roosevelt County  
Make Poplar Great Again  
Poplar Schools  
American Legion  
Fort Peck Transportation**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The success of the Poplar Community Review is due to the many individuals who generously shared their time, opinions, and knowledge by serving on the home team, completing a survey, or participating in a listening session or other conversation with the visiting team. Special thanks to the following individuals: Ashleigh Weeks, Tori Matejovsky, Shane Halverson, Linda Weeks, Rusty Boxer, Martina Wilson, Ernestine Youpee, and Maureen Dionne.



L to R: Gloria O'Rourke, Tori Matejovsky, Paul Lachapelle, Wilfred Lambert, Gus Byrom, Martina Wilson, Linda Weeks, and Ashleigh Weeks.

## HOME TEAM TOPIC ORGANIZERS FOR POPLAR COMMUNITY REVIEW PHASE 1

### **Economic Development:**

Deb Madison, Fort Peck Tribes Office of Environmental Protection  
Rodney Miller, Fort Peck Tribes Economic Development Officer  
Tori Matejovsky, Great Northern Development Corporation

### **Eliminate and Redevelop Brownfields and Blighted Properties:**

Wilfred Lambert, Office of Environmental Protection

### **Culture and Health:**

Ashleigh Weeks, Office of Environmental Protection

### **Planning and Zoning:**

Shane Halverson, Public Works Director, City of Poplar

### **Best Practices in Governance across multi-jurisdictional areas**

Sam Azure, In House Attorney, Fort Peck Tribes

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Advance Visiting Team: Paul Lachapelle,  
Gloria O'Rourke, Gus Byrom

## INTRODUCTION

It was a privilege for the Poplar Advance Team to spend time in your culture rich community. Thank you for your hospitality, your time, and for sharing with the team the vision you have for your community.

Before diving into the report, thanks are due Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC) for its support of the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA). It is a partnership between MDOC and MEDA that makes the Montana Community Review program available across the state.

If you participated in the Poplar Community Review, you know that Poplar now has the distinction of being the second Montana Community Review. Due to a three-state grant project including Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana, MEDA is collaborating with the University of Idaho, University of Wyoming, and Montana State University to develop the very best review process in each of our states. Dr. Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho Extension, is leading and guiding the project.

As a part of the three-state collaboration, each state has its own Design Team. Members of the Montana Design Team include Sue Taylor, Economic Development Director, Beartooth RC&D; Gus Byrom, Community Development Division, MT Dept. of Commerce; Dr. Paul Lachapelle, Local Government Center, Montana State University, and Gloria O'Rourke, Coordinator, MEDA. The Montana Design Team is guiding the three-phase process to help identify community needs, build community capacity, and provide resource information to address community needs.



The Community Review website is now up and running at <http://www.communityreview.org>; it will prove to be of immense help to communities now and far into the future.

Thank you again for sharing your hope and vision for Poplar with the Poplar Community Review Team. Working together, much will be accomplished!

## MONTANA PROCESS OVERVIEW

The three-phase Montana Community Review Process begins with an application. The purpose of the application is to assist the Montana Design Team in learning about a community and to help in determining readiness for a team visit. In addition, if a community is under the umbrella of a Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC) the CRDC must agree to support the Community Review. With support from the CRDC, the MEDA Board lends its support; the Montana Design Team proceeds with implementing Phase 1.

In a nutshell, Phase 1 is the discovery process for all involved and includes a survey as well as a community profile. Phase 1 also includes a community visit from the Advance Team. Phase 2 is the learning phase of the process and involves digging deep into the topics and issues the community identified in Phase 1. Phase 3 is all about implementation, evaluation, and celebrating success.

## **POPLAR COMMUNITY REVIEW ~ PREPARATION FOR PHASE 1**

Approximately eight months prior to the Poplar Community Review, Tori Matejovsky, Executive Director, Great Northern Economic Development, indicated to MEDA that the community of Poplar was interested in an assessment process. The MEDA Board gave the “go” to proceed. In the meantime, the ID-WY-MT Community Review Teams were collaborating, researching, learning from each other, and fine-tuning each state’s process.

Tori Matejovsky and Ashleigh Weeks, Fort Peck Tribes Office of Environmental Protection, began making serious inquiries as to the process and worked hand-in-hand with the Montana Design Team to host the second Montana Community Review. Tori and Ashleigh completed the MEDA Community Review Application and identified topic areas that would likely come to the surface during the Advance Team visit. Great Northern Development and Fort Peck Tribes Office of Environmental Protection also assisted with a mailed survey and advertising for the Community Review. Over 300 people responded to the survey. In addition, the Polar Home Team helped with on-the-ground participation for the people of the Poplar area and planned the agenda and logistics for the Advance Team Visit.

### **PHASE 1 ~ Advance Visiting Team in Poplar**

Below is the Poplar Community Review Agenda.

#### **Monday, May 14**

	<b>Group Discovery Session</b>	<b>Location</b>
3:15 – 4:30 PM	Cultural, Community & Social Services	FPCC Greet the Dawn
4:30 – 6:15 PM	Business and Retail, Agriculture, Non-Profit and Church	FPCC Greet the Dawn

#### **Tuesday, May 15**

8:15 – 9:15 AM	Healthcare and Emergency Services	IHS and Riverside Clinic
9:30 – 10:30 AM	Tribal, Poplar City, & County Government	TEB Council Chambers
10:45 – 11:45 AM	Law and Justice	FPCC Greet the Dawn
12:00 – 12:45 PM	Lunch with Senior Citizens	Senior Citizen Center
1:00 – 2:15 PM	Youth and Educators	Poplar High School
7:00 – 8:00 PM	Town Meeting: MEDA Team Summary	American Legion Club



## Tour of Poplar

Local leadership conducted a tour some of which included: Tribal Building/BIA, Airport Addition (Headstart), Sustainable Village, Parks, A&S Industries, Poplar School, FPCC Buildings, and more.



## COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

Community listening sessions are open-ended, focus group-like discussions with key stakeholder groups identified by the home and visiting teams. The purpose is simple: we ask open-ended questions of a cross-section of community residents with diverse perspectives, listen to their answers, and reflect back what we hear. This means that for the most part, we're telling you exactly what we heard from residents; we also made a few observations and will share those at the end of this section.

Seven community listening sessions were held with the Poplar Community Review Advance Team. Over 100 people responded either in person or in writing their answers to three questions: 1. What don't you want to see happen in Poplar in the next five years, 2. What do you want to see happen in Poplar in the next five years, and 3. What, who and where are the assets that can benefit Poplar? Below is a summary of each of these questions based on what the team heard.



As listed on the agenda, the Poplar Community Review included listening sessions with the following stakeholder groups: Cultural, Community and Social Services; Business and Retail, Agriculture, Non-Profit and Church; Healthcare and Emergency Services; Tribal, Poplar City and County Government; Law and Justice; Senior Citizens; and Youth and Educators.

## What DON'T you want to see happen in Poplar in the next five years?

While it's never good to dwell on the things we don't want to see happen, the Poplar Review Team believes it is important that the conversation take place and the overriding themes be compiled and described. We asked locals to discuss and identify what they don't want to see happen in Poplar in the next five years and heard many items emerge that can be broadly categorized around three principal themes of 1. Drugs, Alcohol, and Crime, 2. Community Blight and Trash, and 3. Economic Decline. Listening session participants shared many comments as reflected by the following word cloud.

This word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked what they did not want to see in the community over the coming 5-10 years. Larger text indicates items mentioned most often.



### ***Drugs, Alcohol, and Crime***

In the listening sessions, people from different sectors consistently described concerns with the drug epidemic being experienced in the community and region. People expressed the vicious cycle of loss of jobs, dependence on drugs, increase in crime, harm to families, and eventual decline of the community. Poplar is not alone in this cycle; many communities across the nation are experiencing the same challenges.

Research is being conducted and action is being taken to turn the tide of this vicious cycle. Poplar can examine the information and determine a course to change the direction of its community. It can be done; Poplar can become the bright star of change for the rest of the state as well as the country.

### Community Blight and Trash

As the graphic above indicates, another often mentioned issue was trash and blight throughout the community. The people of Poplar expressed concern over trash found in rivers and streams, boarded up windows, empty decaying buildings, unofficial dump sites, and litter throughout the town. It was noted the landfill is not open convenient hours, thus people often dump in areas that are not appropriate. Many community members expressed the need to coordinate efforts to address the beautification needs of Poplar and restore pride in the community. By working together, the people of Poplar can transform their community.

### Economic Decline

Consistently, the issues of closed businesses, the lack of a vibrant downtown, panhandling, and unemployment were mentioned in the Poplar Community Review Listening Sessions. The people expressed the urgent need to find new avenues for Poplar, perhaps in agriculture, tourism, or education to begin the revitalization of Poplar.

### What DO you want to see happen in Poplar in the next five years?

On the flip side of what the people of Poplar don't want to see are all the things they DO want in order to be a community where everyone thrives. We've organized these ideas into these interrelated categories: Governance, Economic Development, Community Clean-Up, Education, Housing, Infrastructure, Culture and Health; and Downtown Revitalization.



This word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked what they do want to see in the community over the coming 5-10 years. Larger text indicates items mentioned most often.

### ***Governance***

Those attending the Poplar meetings clearly identified the critical importance of continual and on-going communication and cooperation between the Tribe, Roosevelt County, and Poplar town government. It was apparent to the Team in just the short time that Team Members were in the community that good communication already exists between the three entities. Representatives of all three governmental entities were well represented throughout the numerous conversation sessions.

### ***Economic Development***

Residents were very concerned about the lack of economic opportunities within the community and surrounding area. The loss of A & I Industries was repeatedly mentioned. Attendees at the sessions voiced the strong desire for jobs and reestablishment of an employment base such as Poplar enjoyed in some years past.

### ***Community Clean-Up***

Residents clearly want more attention paid to the solid waste disposal issue. Community litter needs to be addressed. Attendees voiced the need for better understanding of the current solid waste collection system. This was a major issue that repeatedly came up in the Group Discovery Sessions.



### ***Education***

Feedback strongly indicated support to reduce the dropout rate at the High School. Hope was expressed that the Ft. Peck Community College could provide an even greater role in supporting high school students so that the pupils are “early-on” put on the track to achieving a college-level education.

### ***Housing***

The need for increased supply and better quality of residential housing units repeatedly came up during the community meetings. Residents want fewer boarded up homes and more vigorous and healthy neighborhoods. The need for more rental units was articulated, as well as owner-occupied homes.

### ***Infrastructure***

A high degree of excitement was evident in regard to the planned park improvements proposed in the center of Poplar. Needs for improvement at the swimming pool were also frequently mentioned. Residents voiced strong support for the ongoing improvements that the city public works department is currently making to the city sidewalks. Many favorable comments were made commending the city for the recent sidewalk work.

More attention to street lights for greater nighttime safety was also voiced. Hope was also expressed for improved streets and roads in the community.

On a different note, support was also voiced for development of infrastructure in support of an areawide irrigation system that would provide more employment and make more efficient use of the significant water natural resource that the Tribe has access to along the Missouri River.



### ***Culture and Health***

The community clearly wanted more resources to serve those afflicted with drug addictions. Concerns were expressed that insufficient resources were available to assist those afflicted with drug addiction, other than transfer to expensive, out-of-state treatment and recovery programs. The corresponding impact of drug addiction was linked to a cry for stronger enforcement of laws dealing with use of illegal drugs, as well as more efforts to provide drug prevention education.

Mention was also made of the possible, future provision of a visitor center within Poplar that would provide education and training highlighting Tribal culture. Such a facility could serve as a magnet for the many tourists traveling U.S. Highway 2 between St. Paul - Minneapolis and Glacier Park. Comments were made repeatedly that Poplar could take more advantage of the numbers of tourists that are moving back and forth every day along the U.S. Highway 2 corridor.

### ***Downtown Revitalization***

At almost every session attendees described their attachment to Poplar's downtown, provoking many comments in regard to the past retail and general business activity that flourished in Poplar in earlier decades. Residents almost universally voiced support for the goal that the Poplar downtown be a renewed source of community pride and an attraction to residents and visitors alike.

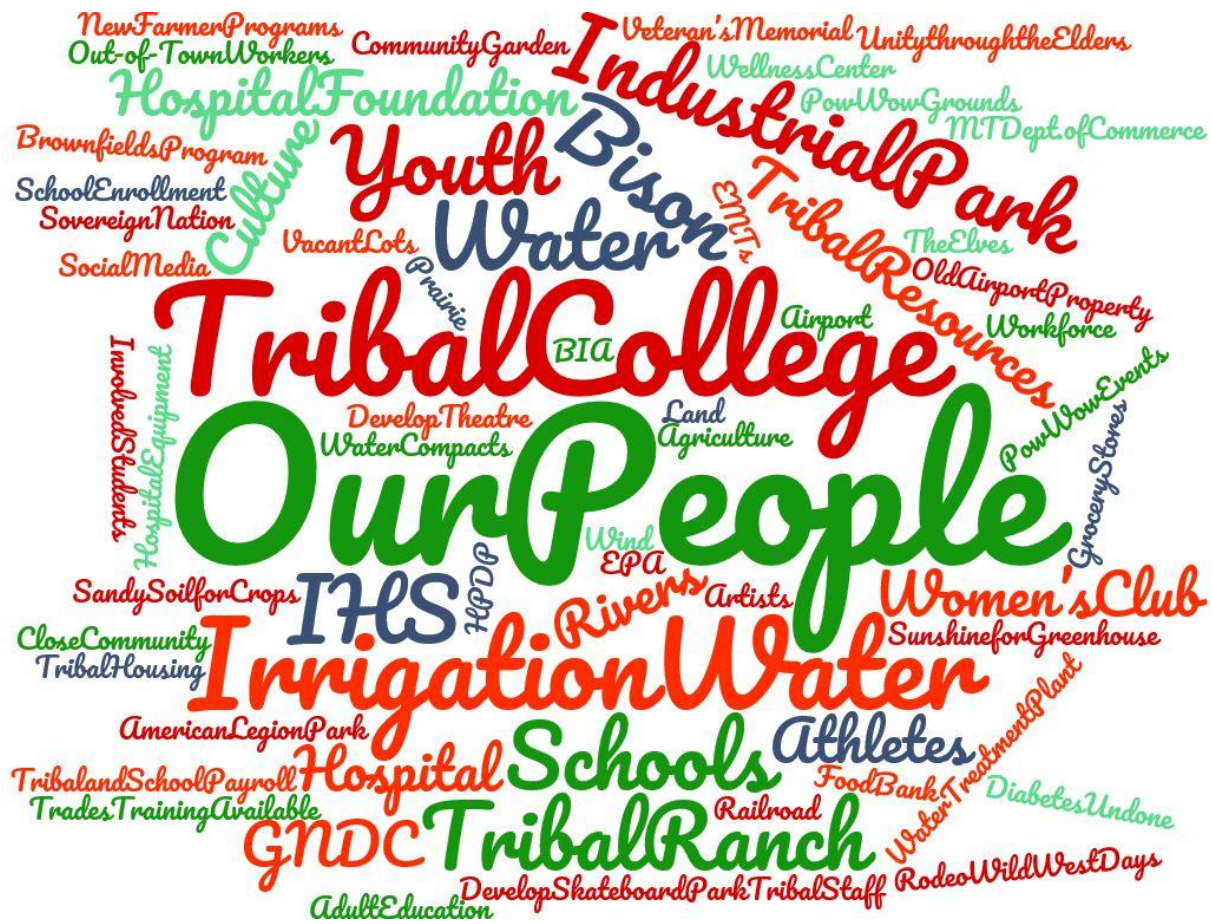


## What, who, and where are the assets that can benefit Poplar:

As outsiders looking in, we always take note of a community's setting within the surrounding landscape — whether it's forested, pastoral farmland, high desert, or near water. Next, we look for historic architecture or unique community features that define a sense of place.

We asked locals to identify assets such as people, organizations, natural resources, or places. Listening session participants shared numerous assets with us, as reflected by the following word cloud.

This word cloud visually represents the most frequently voiced responses when listening session participants were asked about assets and resources in the community. Larger text indicates items mentioned most often.



### Our People

As we often hear when visiting Montana communities, Montana is all about its people. Poplar is no exception and was consistently described as an engaged community because of the culture, tradition and influence of the entire community, particularly the elders who were described as caring people who serve as catalysts for the community to learn, teach and come together to get things done as a top asset.

In the listening sessions, people from different sectors of the local economy were cited as assets such as elders, government workers, school teachers, veterans, business owners and other professionals, EMTs, artists, athletes in the community and the youth. The Poplar Review Team often heard descriptions of the heart of the people of Poplar such as:

- The rich cultural traditions
- The vibrant workforce
- Community spirit and community pride are strong

In short, the people of Poplar were described as the biggest and most important asset in the community.

### **Places**

Those participating in the listening sessions stated the obvious about the unique and beautiful location of Poplar, particularly in proximity to the nearby Missouri River. Situated on the Fort Peck Reservation and near incredible outdoor and wildlife resources, Poplar is truly a Montana treasure with a rich history and great potential because of its strategic location on Route 2 and the Missouri River.

The team heard a long list under the category of places in Poplar. In summary: the nearby rivers and associated outdoor recreation, existing businesses and infrastructure such as the Industrial Park, the nearby public lands and open space including areas where bison roam, the park and pool including the American Legion Park, the community garden, Wellness Center, Powwow Grounds, Veteran’s Memorial, Tribal Ranch, old airport property, Food Bank and rich agricultural land. The potential for wind development was also describe as an asset to develop and which could help create a more vital community. Emotion was attached to the special “place” of Poplar with comments such as:



- The location near the Missouri River and great potential for water use
- The cultural connection to place
- A place where people care about and take care of each other

### **Organizations**

The Poplar Community Review Team was amazed at the large number of organizations actively engaged within your community. These organizations work hard to plan events, serve those in need, take care of the town’s physical needs, educate youth, provide healthcare, and so much more. The team heard about the local schools including the community college, Tribal government and related tribal originations, the hospital and Hospital Foundation, Women’s Club, and the Great Northern Development Center

As the graphic above indicates, the most often mentioned organizational assets included the schools, hospital, and Tribal College.

# Survey Results

A “Community Satisfaction Survey” was conducted in Poplar prior to the Advance Team visit. This survey was conducted by University of Idaho and the HELPS Lab at Montana State University. The full survey is included in Appendix B of this report.

## 1. Who Responded

Surveys  
Mailed:  
1,448

Surveys  
Completed:  
200

Response  
Rate: 17%

Online  
Surveys: 32

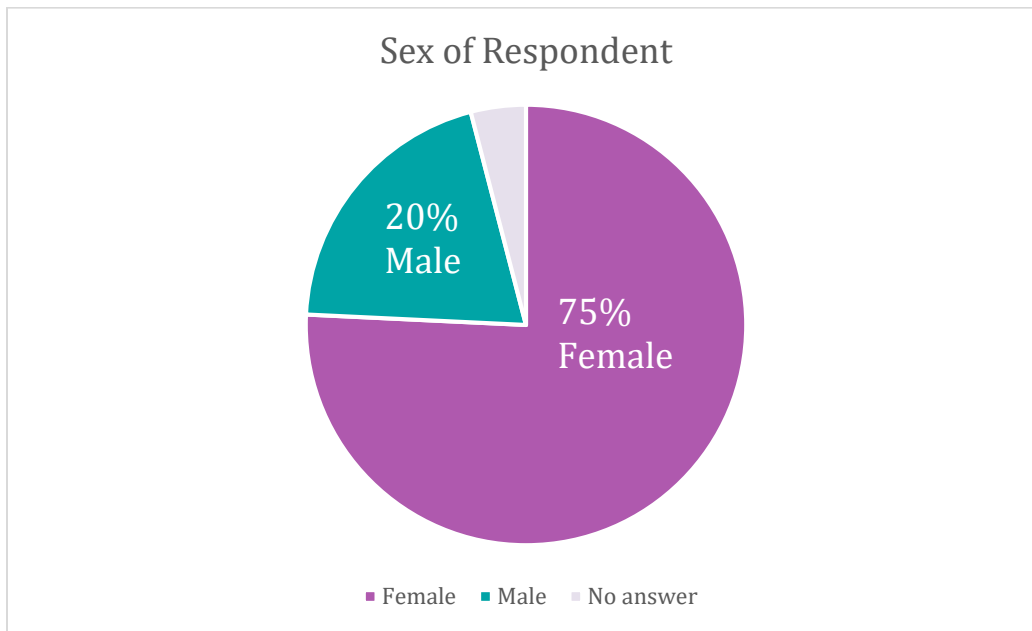
Paper  
Surveys: 168



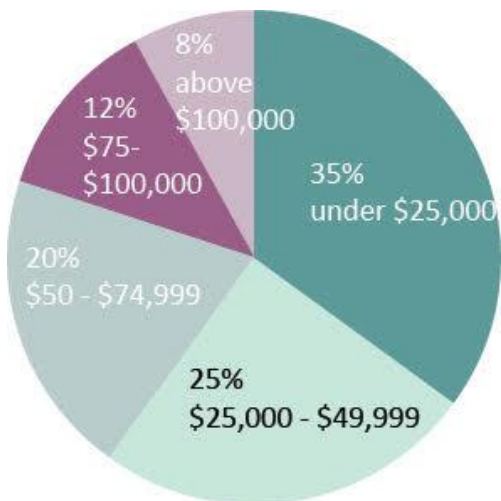


## Demographics

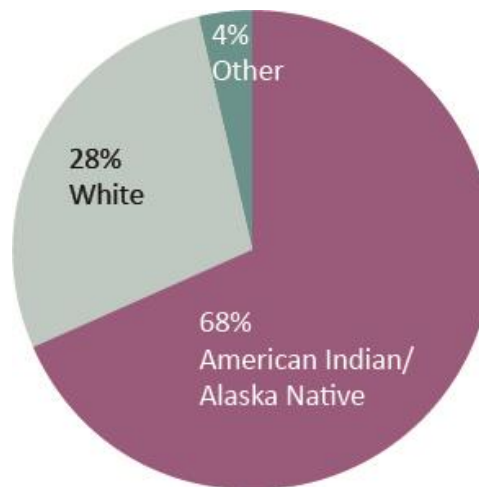
Mean age: 55 (average age of those responding)



### Household income

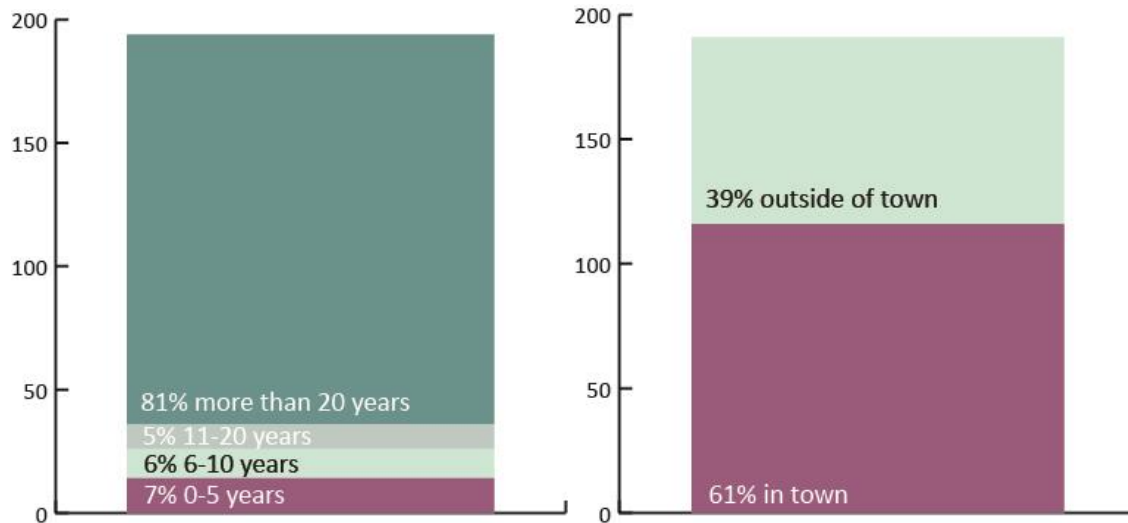


### Race & ethnicity



### Years in community

### Live in or outside of town



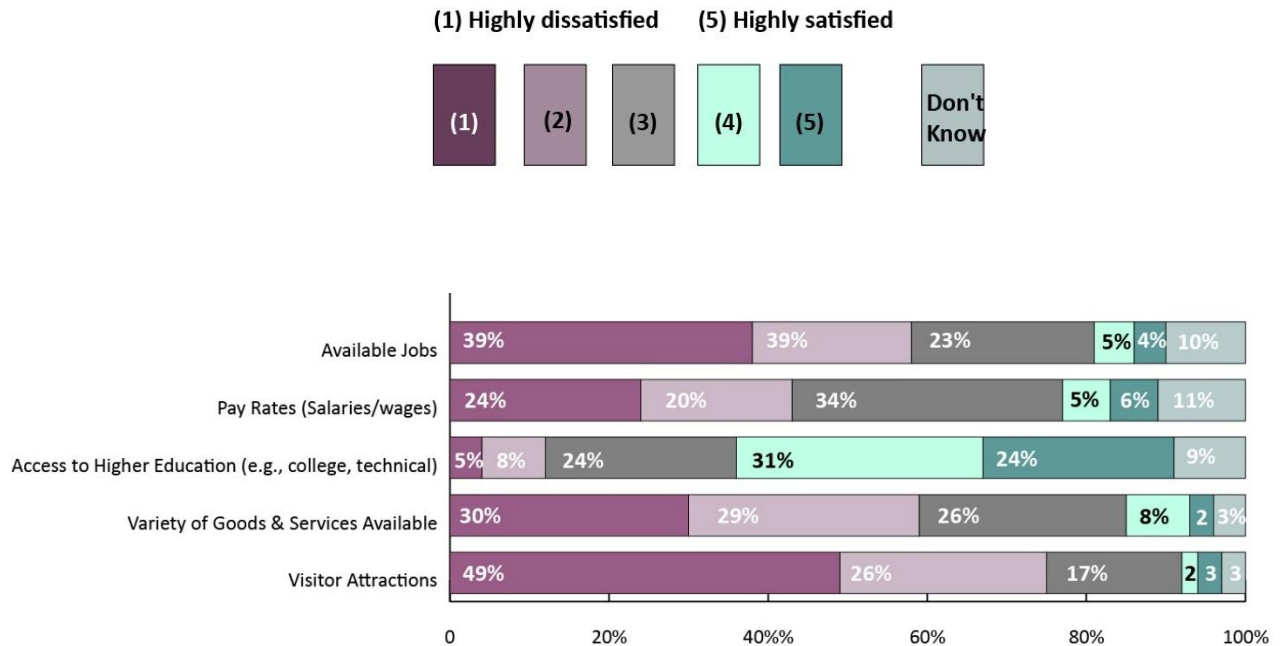
A note about the “satisfaction” section of the survey results: reported percentages are of those who answered the question. In a few cases many respondents did not select any of the options. Items where more than 15% selected “don’t know” as a response include “childcare/early childhood education,” “mental health services,” “senior citizen support services,” and “civic and non-profit organizations.” This is probably due to a lack of awareness or knowledge of the state of these services.

There were several opportunities for survey respondents to explain their satisfaction ratings and provide additional information and ideas. When balancing comments, which primarily explain negative ratings, and ratings, our sense is that most residents recognize and appreciate the efforts of groups like Make Poplar Great Again as well as several public initiatives but would like to see more people involved in those efforts, more results, and more support from local government entities. Further, there is a sense that residents want these governmental bodies to collaborate more in order to accelerate positive change.



## 2. Economy

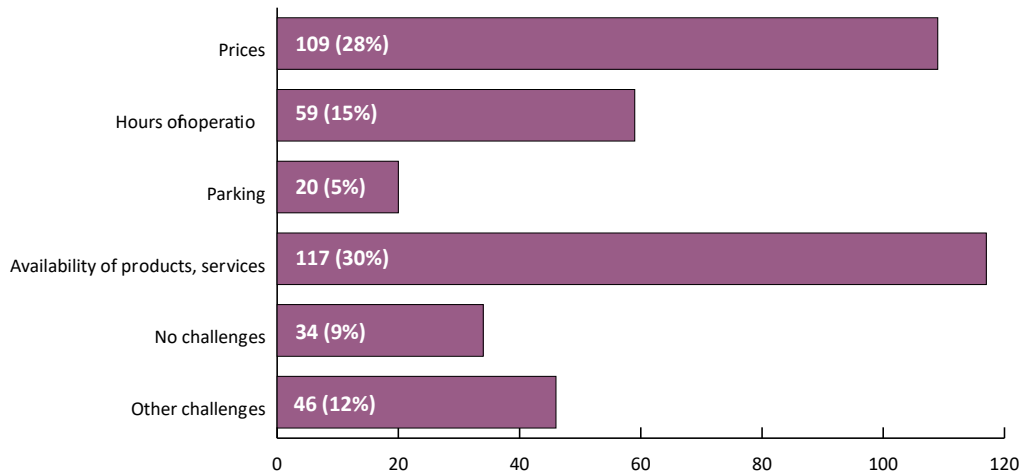
**Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?**



Items related to the economy that Poplar residents were most satisfied with included “access to higher education,” and “pay rates.” Having a local college and the predominance of tribal and other agency / government jobs likely explains these results.

“Visitor attractions” and “available jobs” were the items people are most dissatisfied with. Several comments mentioned the need for more businesses to increase the opportunity for residents to buy locally and to provide jobs. While comments are appreciative of pow wows and dances, they indicate a desire for a greater variety of local cultural activities and attractions that could capture more visitor dollars.

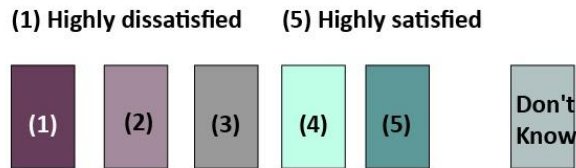
**Question: Do any of the following factors challenge your ability to support Poplar’s locally owned businesses? (Select all that apply.)**

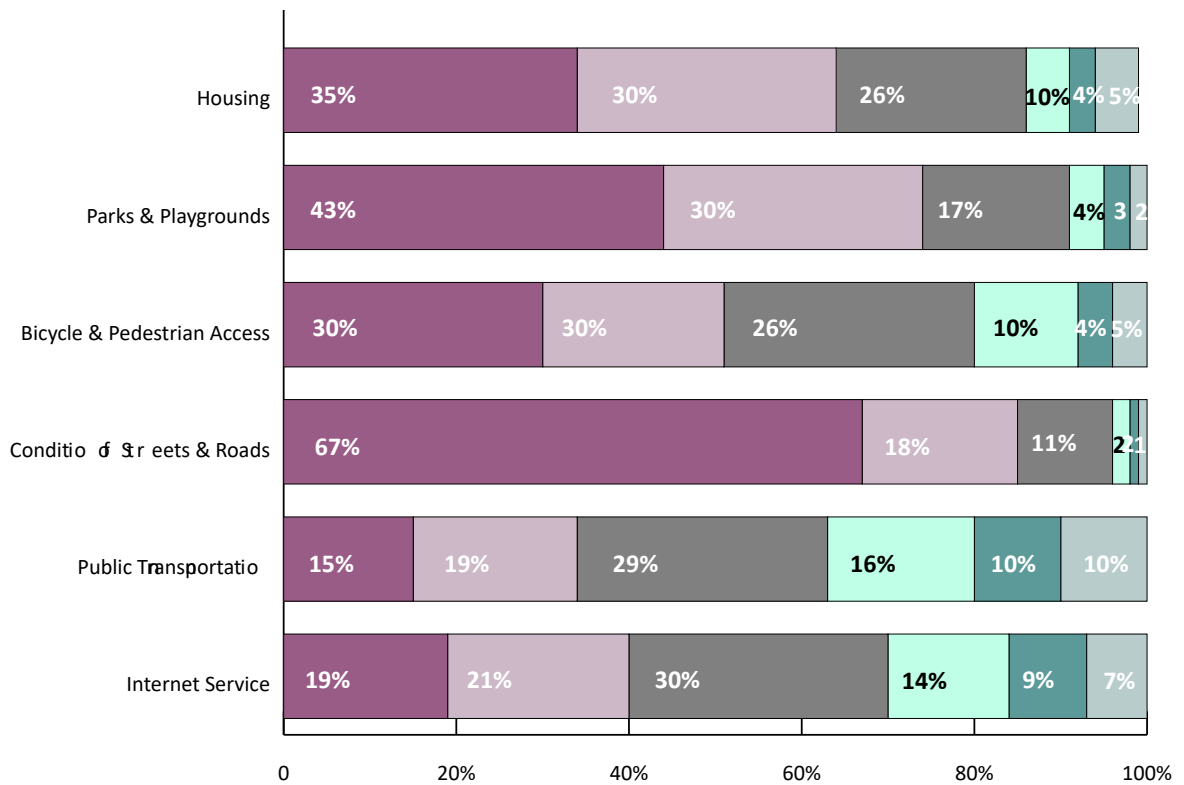


“Availability of products, services” was given as the greatest challenge to supporting local businesses. While locally available produce is acceptable to some, others feel the local stores get “end of the line” produce, which leads to round trips to Williston to buy groceries.

### 3. Infrastructure and Housing

**Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?**





“Housing,” “Parks & Playgrounds,” and the “Condition of Streets & Roads” were given the lowest marks among infrastructure and housing-related items. Housing concerns relate to both availability of quality housing and the state of disrepair and upkeep of many homes and properties in the community.

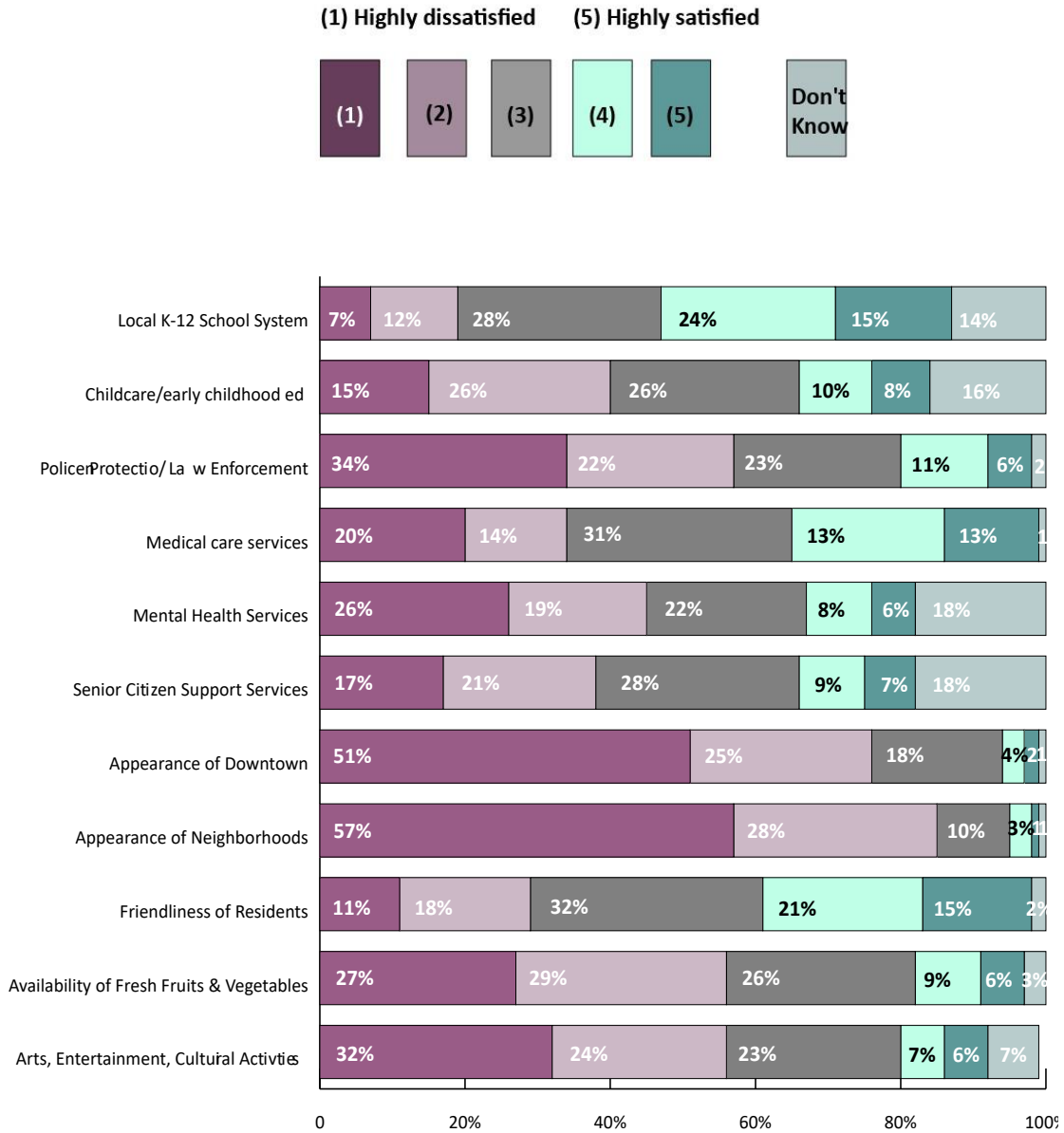
*Personal and public properties are frequently in a state of disrepair. Yards are trash littered, unkempt with many having junk cars.*

*Housing is extremely tight. Not much in the way of homes to rent or buy. Many neighborhoods are shabby, with abandoned houses next to ones where the owners are trying to keep their homes neat and clean.*

*Some of the things are just not there in our community, safe clean park and playground to take my girls and grandson too.*

## 4. Placemaking

Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?



People who responded to the survey are happiest with quality of education, medical services and friendliness of residents.

*Poplar people tend to be very friendly and helpful. If you need anything, friends and neighbors are there for you. They're welcoming and will invite you into their homes.*

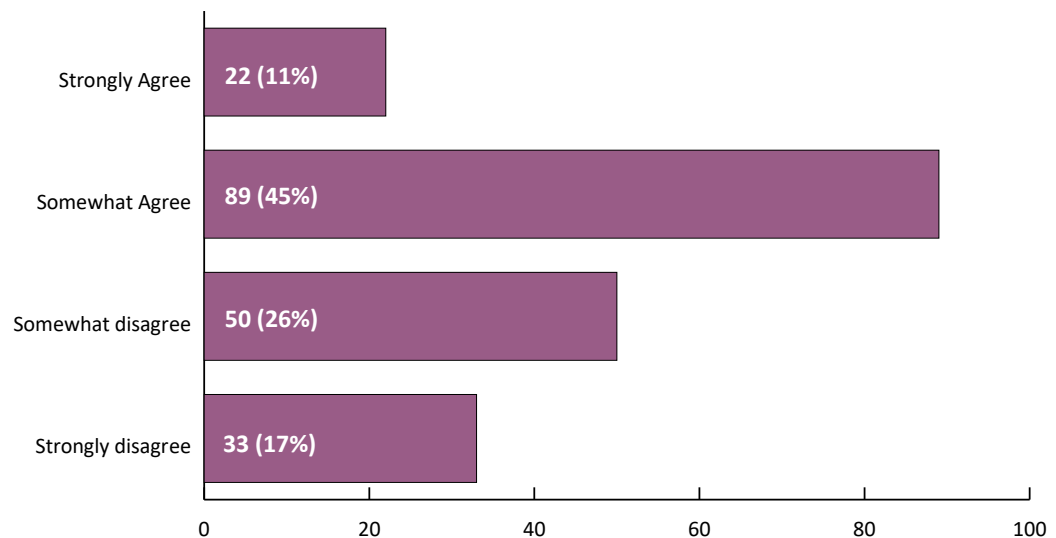
Appreciation for friendly, caring neighbors appears to be the only item among these that is universal, however. There were several negative comments about the quality of HIS care and education.

*The school system is streaks BEHIND and leaves students at a disadvantage.*

*Fort Peck Community College's main campus is located in Poplar and is a great asset to this community as it is providing affordable education and skills. Unfortunately many of the students are woefully unprepared for college level work.*

People are most alarmed about the visible indicators of community disorganization: deterioration of infrastructure, litter, people with obvious drug, alcohol and mental health problems, and unkempt property. There is a sense that if these issues could change course, other goals, such as economic development, and improved amenities, such as parks and shopping, could be attained.

**Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I am proud of my community"?**



This result (56% are proud, while only 43% are not) might seem surprising to some, considering the frequent comments and concerns expressed in survey results and during listening sessions about trash on the streets, unkempt properties and high visibility of homelessness and drug and alcohol abuse in the community.

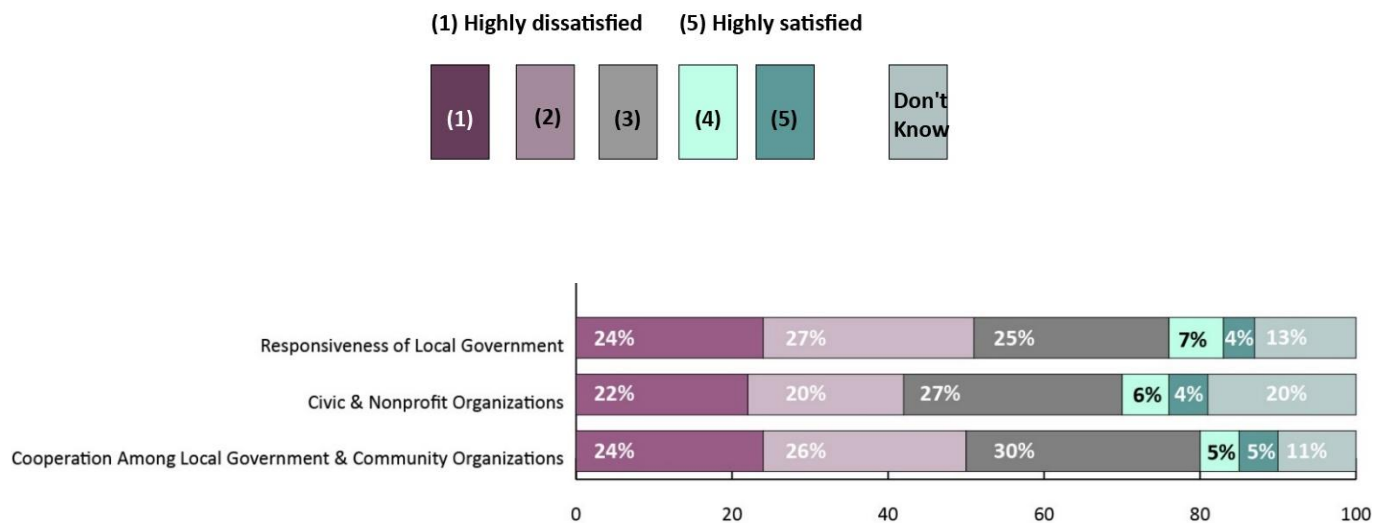
*The pride of our town needs to start at home. Sometimes when you start cleaning your yard your neighbor may kick in and do theirs.*

*The appearance of downtown is bad enough on its own but the vagrancy and panhandling that occurs downtown plays a major role in its decline.*

We read this apparent contradiction as a positive signal that survey respondents have hope, as well as a deep love of the Poplar community and pride in tribal identity and history.

## 5. Leadership

**Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your community?**



There appears to be mixed views about the capacity of local organizations and governments to effectively address Poplar’s challenges.



*There is not a lot of cooperation among agencies.*

*We have city, county and Tribal government. They don't talk to each other!*

*Seems like there are always lots of meetings about such things but we see few results of these meetings.*

*There needs to be more community/tribal organizations that care about creating change. Those who do care are not given a voice or access to resources.*

During the visit to the community in May, it was clear that city, county and Tribal governments DO communicate, but the prevalent perspective that they don't indicates a need to make that communication more visible somehow. Similarly, there is a perception that power is sometimes held by those who do not have the best interests of the community at front and center:

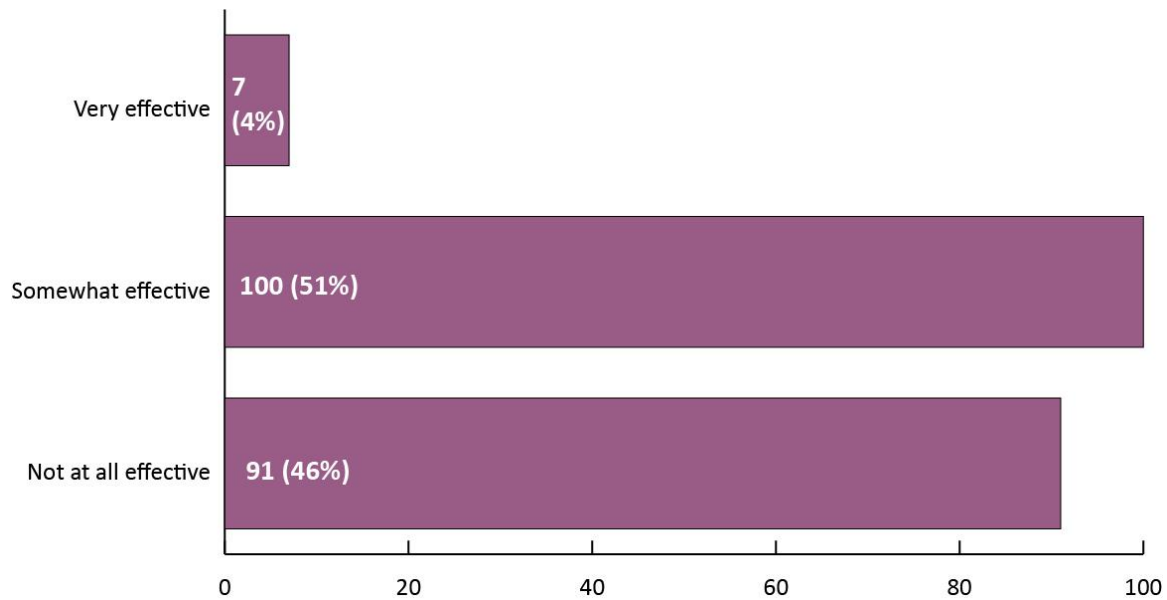
*Dishonesty is epidemic. Persons put into power positions for which they are untrained/uneducated. Misappropriation of government funding. Nepotism.*

*We need more police officers that will do their jobs. I've reported drug activity to several officers but so far nothing has been done.*

Again, this is not to say that these perspectives represent reality, but to make local governmental entities aware that this perception is out there. One goal might be to gain a deeper understanding of where these perceptions come from and address the root cause of these perceptions, whatever they are.



**Question: In general, how effective do you think the residents of your community are at working together to solve challenges?**



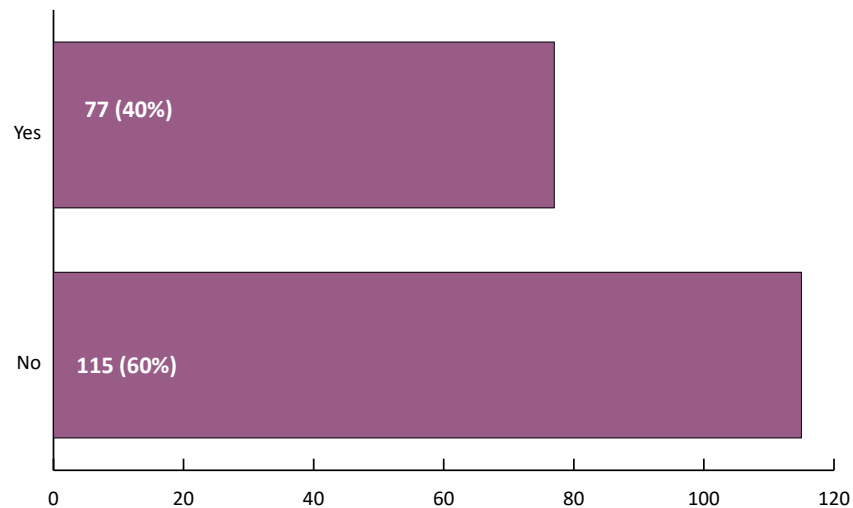
The split on this question recognizes the valuable (and valiant) efforts on behalf of the community, but also the monumental challenges that seemingly continue to worsen. For survey respondents, the glass is below the half empty point and they would like to see the level rise substantially.

In a state of social disorganization, residents need signals and direction, which they apparently feel are lacking. One respondent, citing a theory of social order, shared this observation:

*This issue makes people unwilling to make new or additional investments in the community as there is the appearance of either inability or unwillingness to uphold certain basic standards and accountability in the community.*

In other words, unless people think others are going to make an effort on behalf of the community, they won't either.

**Question: Have you been involved in a neighborhood or community project in the last 12 months? (For example, youth development, community beautification, fund raiser, etc.)**



While the majority of respondents have not volunteered in the past year, the number and range of activities in which local volunteers have been involved is impressive:

**Question: Please tell us the type(s) of projects you have been involved in:**

**Note: X's indicate number of different times that item was mentioned. Count the X's and add 1!**

- Donated to Walleyes Unlimited
- Donated to the Fire Dept
- Raised money by donating
- Poplar Cemetery
- X Various community activities
- I donate baking and cooking services for community activities
- Community service through work
- PETA (Buffalo Group)
- Round about road improvements for Highway
- Neighborhood watch/captain of the street
- Community patrolling
- Spay and neuter clinics
- X Poplar community Garden
- College garden
- And I have done a few things for the museum. But that is gone now, and site for pie social is also gone.

## Community Events

- Earth day celebration
- XX Wild West Days weekend
- Family days
- Community carnival
- I am also involved in preparing to play bells in the concert May 16
- Sunday with Santa
- Community Picnic
- Easter
- Halloween
- Color runs
- Book club
- Ladies club



## Elders

- Help sick and elderly get their porches, steps and ramps rebuilt each June
- Elder Support

## Community Action

- X Make Poplar Great Again
- Fundraiser by Bruce (Cubby) Damon for community projects.
- X fundraisers
- Tribal Tourism
- make a visible difference...tourism project
- Community project meetings.
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Beautification projects (mostly clean up days).
- We helped with the care of plants/trees in our community after they were planted last year
- In our sustainable village aka "Brad Pitt" community, they planted trees and flowers last fall and left post care (watering) up to the block leaders, which includes our household
- Cleaning up our street, picking up trash, mowing neighbors yards, endless work
- Community services: I pick up workers and take them around Poplar to pick up mattress and large items laying around homes

## Poverty

- I help the mission with holiday meals for the homeless and needy
- I help feed the hungry
- I am currently housing a homeless person who hopefully will soon get back on her feet
- I volunteered and helped cook, clean, and try to improve the New Life Mission for the homeless people sometimes serving up to 50 meals at lunch daily
- Donated to those in need
- Volunteer transport service and assistance helping sick people get to their physician and help them get what they need without harassment

## Drug Recovery/Prevention

- Work with recovering drug users
- drug and alcohol prevention groups
- I give money for resources for teaching courses that will strengthen people to fight and win the fight of addiction and broken homes
- drunk driving awareness



## Church activities

- "Church veterans"
- X Church
- Church fund raisers
- I pray
- Activities at the Assembly of God church in Poplar

## Youth & Family

- H.S. youth basketball team fundraiser for NABI
- Basketball fundraising
- Sponsor basketball and softball teams
- Poplar youth tournaments
- Fundraisers/sports club
- School sports functions
- Peewee softball
- X youth sports/recreation
- Volunteer with youth activities
- I crafted a teddy bear from a fur coat and donated it to be raffled to help a boy go to Carnegie H. P.A.
- I redo dolls, bears, toys for the Angel tree at Christmas
- Grad Nite
- Family days
- Community carnival
- Mentoring children for the past six years (We have learned that just a little quality time makes a huge difference in the lives of these children)
- Sunday with Santa
- December we made up 32 bags for all sizes of boys and girls, all sizes and ages NB through teens that had emergency clothing, toiletries, blanket, toy, stuffed animal to send with any child social services have to remove from their homes.
- Boy Scouts
- 4H Club
- X School
- toys for tots
- X Halloween/trunk or treat
- X Easter

- I have been involved with Tribal Elves
- XI helped out with the creators game camp w/the youth
- Tutoring
- I have purchased from the Music Booster Club
- I'm a student advocate
- Making blankets and quilts for various agencies in the area and for Denver Children's Hospital
- Youth Blast at church every Wednesday just to keep kids occupied and doing something
- Improving mental health services to youth
- "I serve with the nonprofit No Kid Hungry and we work on breakfast programs K-12. I also work with the community organization Health Promotion Disease Prevention. K-12 breakfast programs, K-12 nutrition, farm to school, The family dinner project (emphasis on emotional/physical benefits of family dinner)
- 4-H leader
- community picnic/kids days
- I go to the Juvenile Detention Center 2x per week and offer these children a new hope through the teachings of the Bible
- I took in a 17 year old girl who I had to go to tribal court for. It was a long process. I got her out of the state for treatment and is now getting her life back



**Question: What is something you like about the Poplar community?**

Last, and most definitely not least, survey respondents were asked to name one thing they like about Poplar. While there were several “nothing” answers and others used the opportunity to discuss aspects of the community they don’t like, the **OVERWHELMING** response was to name many positive aspects of the community. As you move forward to “make Poplar great again,” the best starting place is with your strengths and assets, of which you clearly have many!

*Note: **X's** indicate number of different times that item was mentioned. **Count the X's and add 1!***

**Social**

- Everyone knows you
- X Knowing just about everybody

- Everyone knows each other
- Has a great mix of people and artists
- Just going into a business, post office, or even school all the little kids that come up to hug me All the people that say hi to you in the community
- XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX The friendliness of the people
- The goodness and friendliness of its people
- The people here are typically kind and friendly
- People are friendly, closeness of community, caring people
- People are generally friendly, even through so much trauma
- It is a close community and culture is beautiful
- Very cultural
- People are nice, so friendly
- Friendly neighbors, good people
- Community is family.
- The way we stick together
- People really can come together as one, there are good people who want to stay here
- XXXXXXXXXXXX The people
- The people. hands down!
- Friendly people--we are family
- XXXXX I like that the community of Poplar will usually work together to help other community members in times of a medical emergency or crisis.



- There are a lot of good people here.
- X Family
- All my family is here, friends
- My church family and other good friends
- The children
- Great, hardworking people with amazing young people
- We are all proud of our kids!
- The small community
- There is a certain amount of serenity
- The sense of community I have
- I grew up here
- It's my home
- X It's home
- I was born here so I am loyal to my community
- It will always be where I grew up
- I was born and raised here and this town has potential
- It is my community
- A wonderful sense of humor
- The good friends that are still here
- X Low population
- Open spaces
- The isolation of location
- X It's a small community
- Small town allows me to know people on a more personal level



- Poplar is not as bad as some people say
- I am proud of Montana, there is no other state as beautiful

### Action

- X I like the small group of people who are willing to help out whenever wherever to make something happen for the community
- To see the ones who are trying to do good in the community
- The amount of people working and organizing to make Poplar beautiful
- Kenny Smoker is doing a great job at trying to improve things
- The people who go out of their way to make a difference
- There are some very good well-intentioned people in the community who want to do the right thing and not just painting their own wagon



### Traditional Institutions

- XX I think the kids in Poplar have a greater opportunity to participate in school activities than in bigger communities
- XXXXXXX There is a nice community college
- And the college. It provides educational employment opportunities for Poplar and communities for miles around! The school also has a number of really dedicated teachers. We sure need that!
- Reservation headquarters
- The FPCC has done much to bring better image and services to Poplar
- NE Montana Health service with Judy & Abbie giving care
- Our medical staff at our clinic and hospital
- Health care is good
- HPDP is tribal program called Health Promotion Disease Prevention
- Hospital and clinic
- Spotted bull recovery resource center
- X Snow removal is great
- Fire dept and law enforcement are responsive
- The Poplar Public Schools have been improving over recent years
- Poplar has a clinic, emergency room, nursing home, gas station, grocery stores, college, public school, many Fort Peck Tribal programs that serve the people and many good people
- There is so much potential! The school is an example. It cares!!!



- Language and cultural activities
- I love how the schools are promoting "Poplar Strong. Community Strong." It's good to see our community and youth being proud of being a Poplar Indian
- Sport events with school kids
- HPDP activities for kids in summer
- Cost of living is low

### Culture and Amenities

- Open show house show good movies recent ones
- X Pow-wows
- I believe Poplar has the resources to be a more productive community
- I like the location, being on Highway 2
- Excellent fitness center
- Cultural events
- X History
- Bike path/walkways for pedestrians
- Been lucky to fall into a good job and home.
- Fitness center
- XX Library
- Basketball
- Sports
- Poplar girls went to state this year
- The school athletes
- Youth involvement
- Kid's activities
- The coffee shop, The Percolator
- Flower boxes on the corners
- My church



