

RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

For

FORT BENTON CHOUTEAU COUNTY MONTANA

DECEMBER 7 – 8, 2016

In Partnership with: Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce, Chouteau County, City of Fort Benton, Bear Paw Development Corporation, Montana USDA/RD, Montana Dept. of Commerce, Triangle Communications, Montana Business Assistance Connection, Senator Jon Tester, and Montana Economic Developers Association.

INTRODUCTION

It was a privilege for the Fort Benton Resource Team to spend time in your community and experience this unique and beautiful area of Montana. Thank you for your hospitality, your time, and for sharing with the team the vision you have for your home.

Before digging in to the report itself, I would like to thank 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 Resource Team projects available across the state.

Special thanks are due to the leadership of Fort Benton who supported the team's visit and made arrangements for Listening Sessions, the team tour, lodging, meals, etc. The local team was: Tim Burmeister, Stacy Bronec, Keith Ballantyne, Paul Tuss, Anne Boothe, and Larry Bauer. Sponsors who made this event possible: Ft. Benton Chamber, Chouteau County, City of Ft. Benton, Triangle Communications, Bear Paw Development, The Grand Union, Community Improvement Association, River Press, First Security Bank, Benton Pharmacy, and The Governor's Keep.

Finally, I applaud each and every team member who dedicated hours of work and volunteered their expertise in order to participate on the team: Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications; Lea McGiboney and Craig Carlson, MT USDA/RD; Alyssa Townsend-Hudders, MT Dept. of Commerce/Big Sky Trust Fund; Brian Obert, Montana Business Assistance Connection and Cheryl Ulmer, Great Falls Regional Director for Senator Jon Tester.

Each team member's contact information is provided in the following report. Please feel free to call on any of us for additional information or support. It would be our pleasure.

The stage is now set for the future of the Fort Benton area. There are a number of short term and long term accomplishable recommendations that the resource team has provided in this report. Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do—what kind of project you want to tackle. It is also important for the entire community and county to be involved in finding ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity that has involved a large number of citizens will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the suggestions, pick out one, and get started. It can be done. It is your choice, your decision; you can do it!



Gloria O'Rourke, MEDA Team Coordinator

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT

According to Montana Department of Commerce program requirements, Resource Team Assessments are to be approved through the community's Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC). The CRDC for Fort Benton/Chouteau County is Bear Paw Development Corporation with Paul Tuss serving as Executive Director. Fort Benton's local leadership initiated the request for a Resource Team to visit. Tim Burmeister, Fort Benton Chamber, Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications, and Paul Tuss served as liaisons and coordinators for the team's visit. Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) provided staff support for the coordination of a resource team to assist Fort Benton in evaluating its assets and challenges and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of the area.

Under the direction of Tim Burmeister and Anne Boothe, an agenda was developed, logistics arranged, as well as budgeting and publicity for the assessment. Resource Team members were selected to visit, interview citizens, businesses and community leaders to develop options for projects for Fort Benton. The team members were selected based on their fields of expertise that local leadership indicated would likely be needed to respond to the problem or project areas identified.

Throughout the Resource Team Assessment December 7 – 8, over 70 people in the Fort Benton area attended listening sessions and made comments. All notes from all listening sessions as well as those submitted via email or handwritten are included in this report. The team was available for listening to the following 10 groups: Education/Educators, 40 and Under, Agriculture/Value Added Ag, Medical/Hospital/Law Enforcement/EMS/Fire/Government Entities, Churches/Nonprofits/Service Organizations/Social Agencies, Cultural Heritage/Tourism/Arts/Recreation, Senior Citizens, Retail/Business/For-Profit Entities, and Students/Youth.

Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communication and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing recommendations in this report. The three questions were:

- What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Fort Benton?
- What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Fort Benton?
- What projects would you like to see completed in two, five, ten and twenty years in Fort Benton?

Upon completion of the tour and listening sessions on December 8th, the team went in to a work session to identify main topics and issues. A Town Hall Meeting was held that evening for the team to share its summary of all that was heard.

The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze the things said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into this final report to the people of Fort Benton. The report is available on the MEDA website at <http://www.medamembers.org> under the Resources tab and the Resource Team Assessment tab.

A Town Hall Meeting is planned in early March. The purpose of the meeting will be to briefly review the report and guide attendees through a three step process to identify projects, set priorities and create working groups for action.

The team is always available for support and follow-up questions or resources. MEDA will check in on progress made by the working groups in six months and return to Fort Benton in one year to celebrate successes.

**Fort Benton
RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT**

December 7 – 8, 2016

TEAM ROSTER



Local Leader Contact: Tim Burmeister, Ft. Benton Chamber;
Certified Regional Development Corp: Bear Paw Development;
Special Assistant: Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications

Anne Boothe, Economic Development Specialist
Triangle Communications
P.O. Box 880
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406.654.1487
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Lea McGiboney/Craig Carlson
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12 3rd Street NW, Suite 300; Great Falls, MT 59404
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Gateway Economic Development District
225 Cruse Avenue Suite D
Helena, MT 59601
406.465.0619
www.mbac.biz
bobert@mbac.biz

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MT Dept. of Commerce, Biog Sky Trust Fund
301 S. Park
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406.841.2748
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gloria@medamembers.org
www.medamembers.org

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT

Attention: Fort Benton and surrounding area

Wednesday and Thursday DECEMBER 7 & 8

LISTENING SESSIONS

Various times and locations, see details →

8:30-7:30PM - Thursday TOWN HALL MEETING

Murphy Neel Building, downtown Fort Benton

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

It is a planning process that brings a team of resource providers and economic development professionals to Fort Benton for one and half days to tour the community and listen to its residents and turn what they learn into an action plan to help Fort Benton and surrounding area identify and reach its goals.

WHAT DO THEY NEED FROM YOU?

They need you to answer three questions:

1. What are Fort Benton/Chouteau County's strengths?
2. What are Fort Benton/Chouteau County's challenges?
3. What projects should take place within two years?
five years? ten years? twenty years?

Conducted by the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) and Bear Paw Development Corporation in partnership with the Montana Department of Commerce.



Thank you to our hosts and sponsors: Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce, Chouteau County and the City of Fort Benton

Triangle Communications, The Grand Union, Community Improvement Association, River Press, First Security Bank, Benton Pharmacy and The Governor's Keep

If you'd like to become a sponsor or have questions about the sessions or town hall meeting, please contact
Paul Tuss, Bear Paw Development (406) 265.9226
Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications (406) 394.2888 or
Tim Burmeister, Fort Benton Chamber and
the River Press (406) 622.3311 or Keith Ballantyne (406) 781.7148

"The world is run by those who show up!"

Robert B. Johnson

Plan to attend
the Listening Session(s)
that best fit you:

SESSION SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, 12/7/2016

MEDA team arrives early afternoon in Fort Benton, holds orientation and community tour. This is a private activity for MEDA team and sponsors.

3:45-4:30 PM – Education /Educators
Fort Benton High School Library

5:30-7:00 PM – "40 and Under" age group (families welcome) with local leaders

Club House VFW Post w/no host dinner

Thursday, 12/8/2016

All sessions will be in the Lewis & Clark Room of the Grand Union unless otherwise noted.

7:15 – 8:00 AM

Agriculture /Value Added Ag
(w/no host breakfast in Union Grille area)

8:30 – 9:15 AM

Medical, Hospital, Law Enforcement, EMS/Fire, any Governmental entities

9:30 – 10:15 AM

Churches, Non-profits and Service Organizations, Social Agencies

10:30 – 11:15 AM

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Arts, Recreation

11:30 –12:45 PM

Senior Citizens – all invited.
LOCATION: No host lunch at the Golden Age Center

1:00 – 1:45 PM

Retail, Business, For-profit entities

2:00-2:45 PM - BREAK

2:55 – 3:30 PM: Students/Youth (group and class to be announced)

LOCATION: FBHS Library

3:45 – 6:30 PM: MEDA Team work session & dinner (private)

6:30 – 7:30 PM

(Thursday, 12/8/2016)

TOWN HALL MEETING

LOCATION: **Murphy Neel Building**

open to the public- all community members are invited and encouraged to attend.

FORT BENTON/CHOUTEAU COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS
MAIN TOPICS
December 7 – 8, 2016

The Main Topics and Issues listed below are a summary of the comments, ideas and suggestions made during the Fort Benton/Chouteau County Resource Team. These topics and issues form the outline for the Fort Benton/Chouteau County Resource Team Report. Topics and Issues can be added when the team returns to Fort Benton in March.

<p>MAIN TOPIC: MEDICAL ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Hospital Renovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mechanical systems – Phase 1 ■ Timeline concerns ■ Clinic – Phase 2 ■ Renovation to hospital itself – Phase 3 ✦ More Geriatric Specialists ✦ Lab workforce and equipment needs ✦ Need for coordination and awareness of bus availability <p>MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Senior Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assisted Living ■ Transportation ✦ Quality and Affordable Rentals ✦ Renovation of dilapidated housing ✦ Absentee Owners ✦ Available land development/residential lots? <p>MAIN TOPIC: QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Organized growth ✦ Daycare – with education piece, i.e., Montessori ✦ Entertainment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Movie Theatre ■ Rec Center - Alternative space for indoor activities ✦ Needed for attraction and retention of workforce ✦ TACO BELL! (Variety of restaurants and open longer) ✦ Healthy fresh food options ✦ Better understanding of those in need 	<p>MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Roads ✦ Sidewalks ✦ Streetlights ✦ Façade improvements ✦ Streetscape – Historically appropriate <p>MAIN TOPIC: LOCAL ECONOMY ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Diversify Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Value added ag ■ Manufacturing ■ Telework – (mobile professionals) ■ Lodging ■ Brewery ✦ Man Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workforce ■ Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> EMT/Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Service Organizations <p>MAIN TOPIC: MARKETING ISSUES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Existing and Potential Businesses/Industries ✦ Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Signage – in town and out ■ Off season/year round activities ■ Use of natural resources – especially the river ■ Fort Benton Historic Site ✦ Ft. Benton itself
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Fort Benton Resource Team: Front row L to R – Lea McGiboney, Cheryl Ulmer, Craig Carlson.
Back Row: Brian Obert, Alyssa Townsend, Gloria O’Rourke, and Anne Boothe.

REPORT BY: ALYSSA TOWNSEND
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Note: “Where to Find Funding” from the Montana Historical Foundation is at the end of this report.

MAIN TOPIC: MARKETING FORT BENTON

Fort Benton has many unique draws, and the community is well aware of it. It was described as a “hidden gem”, with the special beauty and tourism resources of the river mentioned several times by the listening session participants. In addition, there are outdoor recreation options, the history of the area, as shown by the historical buildings and centers, and finally community spirit, which appeals to the cultural heritage tourist.

Issue: Existing and Potential Business/Industry development

It appears the people of Fort Benton appreciate amenities in Great Falls, but also recognize the need for certain services to remain in town if Fort Benton is to remain a full-service community.

How does the community entice more small business development, and support those businesses that are already creating jobs in Fort Benton?

Recommendation:

- Areas of new business development were identified:
 - Pulses, grown in Montana are being shipped to Canada for processing. Could an investor be persuaded to open a plant here in Montana to sort and clean the product? This proposal has been discussed previously, and is worth another look.
 - Geriatric specialists are needed in Fort Benton, to serve the increasing aging population, as well as lab technicians.
 - Another grocery store and pharmacy was mentioned several times by the community, that stays open late. It was also noted how appreciative people are of the one already in town.
 - It is reported that Fort Benton has no accountant or plumber in town.
 - The Made in Montana database shows that there are eight businesses in Fort Benton who make their own products. Is there interest for someone to open a “Made in Fort Benton” store to sell these products? Perhaps with an emphasis as well on the local specialty crop, kamut products?
 - Day care providers are in short supply in Fort Benton.
 - A “fast food” place was requested by the young people of Fort Benton. This doesn’t necessarily mean a franchise, but could be a local small-bites eatery, or even a few food trucks in the summer.
 - An antique store/quilt shop would tap into a market of consumers that have discretionary income and will bring new dollars into the community. This sort of store would also fit in nicely with the historical emphasis of Fort Benton.

- If not created already, BSTF may be able to assist with a baseline profile report of the town could be helpful in marketing Fort Benton to businesses and families. This would include sections that cover all the benefits of living in Fort Benton (low crime, good school, recreation opportunities, strong community, available workforce). It would be something in-hand to share when new businesses approach the Chamber for information.
- The Chamber and the Fort have excellent websites for attracting tourists, business and families. Make sure the two do not overlap information, and have links to the other.
- Businesses who have not already done so can work with the Made in Montana (MIM) program to determine their eligibility. When approved, the business obtains a free online listing from the state MIM website, and materials identifying the product as Made in Montana (such as stickers). Members are invited to the two-day Made in Montana tradeshow, bringing their products to wholesale buyers and the public--a much wider market. This service is completely free.
- For those businesses that are looking at diversifying their product line, BSTF might also be able to assist with a grant for a product development plan.

Recommended Resources:

Lonie Stimac
 Montana Department of Commerce
 Made in Montana Program and Native American Made in Montana Program
<http://www.madeinmontanausa.com/>
 406.841.2757

<http://www.madeinmontanausa.com/growninmontana.aspx>

Small Town, Big Ideas—Good Strategies and Case Studies
 “Two small rural communities in the mountains of North Carolina build civic infrastructure and partnerships, and at the same time boost tourism by elevating heritage and cultural assets and revitalizing downtown.”

http://www.iog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/pdfs/stbi_final.pdf
<http://www.rural-design.org/community-issues/declining-population?c=resources>

Alyssa Townsend or Annmarie Robinson
 Montana Department of Commerce
 Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program
<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF>
 406.841.2748, 406.841.2250

Issue: Tourism Signage

Signs were noted as needing to be repositioned and replaced on the road leading to Front Street, and on Front Street itself.

Recommendation:

If the Growth Policy, currently being finalized, does not identify a master plan for Front Street, or key areas where signs should be placed, this could either be incorporated into the Policy, or a separate Master plan for Front Street jointly funded by the BSTF program and either USDA-RBDG planning grants or Community Development Block Grants could assist with this effort. Typical cost for a plan is

around \$30,000 or less, and a small investment on the part of Fort Benton would be needed (check program requirements).

For a project to move from planning to construction, and how state/federal programs can assist:

Step 1: Master Plan for Fort Benton's Front Street: BSTF open application round ends on March 1, 2017 (Bear Paw Development applies), USDA RBDG deadline is also March 1, 2017 (Fort Benton or Bear Paw Development applies), CDBG opens on July 1, 2017 (Fort Benton applies). Please check program requirements to confirm that Fort Benton is eligible for these federal programs.

Step 2: Use the Plan to apply for further funding through the Tourism Grants, to assist with projects such as signage, visitor center revamp or expansion. Grants open July 1, 2017, City or Bear Paw Development can apply. *Please contact Carol Crockett with Tourism Grants to assist in determining if a Master Plan is needed to apply for the Tourism Grant program (see below for her contact information).*

At the same time, use the plan to encourage renovation of buildings on Main Street to bring in a potential lessee. When a prospective business is found, apply to BSTF for an engineering plan to assess the structure and cost of improvements. Cash match, if available, should come from the lessor, business or TIF funds if available. Ensure the PER/PAR meets CDBG, EDA and USDA requirements, leaving the project open to further funding options.

Step 3: If feasible, proceed with further funding for construction through the CDBG, EDA or USDA programs, and private funding.

Step 4: If the construction or renovation results in job creation by the business, and the focus is on out-of-state sales, consider pursuing a grant through the BSTF Job Creation program, or a loan through the CDBG Program.

Recommended Resources:

Paul Tuss, Executive Director
Bear Paw Development Corporation
<http://www.BearPaw.org/>
406.265.9226

Carol Crockett
Montana Department of Commerce
Tourism and Business Development Grant Program
<http://tourism.mt.gov/MarketingDevelopment/TourismGrantProgram>
406.841.2796

Alyssa Townsend or Annmarie Robinson
Montana Department of Commerce
Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program
<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF>
406.841.2748, 406.841.2250

Kirk Keysor
Economic Development Administration (EDA)-Montana
<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=280447>
406.599.9795

Gus Byrom
Montana Department of Commerce
Outreach: Community Development Division (CDBG)
<http://comdev.mt.gov/>
406.841.2777

Lea McGiboney
USDA-Great Falls Area Office
Lea.mcgiboney@mt.usda.gov
406.727.7580 Ext. 4
<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants/mt>
<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

Issue: Tourism Off Season/Year Round Activities and Marketing the Fort

However, a conflict is presented with the comments from the community. Several participants would prefer to preserve their small town feel by limiting the tourism activities to only a certain time of year, which others feel that year-round tourism can buoy the local economy during the winter months. Currently the town has about 120 days when the tourist attractions are open. Does the community want to be seen as a retirement community, or appeal more to families, year round with promotional events?

Recommendation:

- Fort Benton is a charming town any time of the year. It is understandable that locals would want to have a quieter season in winter, but for those families who have needs that include access to year-round work, this discussion will need to be carefully navigated. Perhaps a “town-hall” continued discussion to determine some low key tourism options, as facilitated by a consultant to keep the conversation fluid and productive. If a consultant is chosen to facilitate meetings and create a marketing plan, be prepared to commit to the process and implement some of the recommendations from the action plan.
- Good signage will also assist to direct tourists to only those areas determined by the town as points of interest. This could include Front Street and the river, the Fort, and the centers/museums. During festivals this is also important to assist those in the service industry and the local police.
- Can the Fort be opened at certain times of the year for celebrations, such as weddings and holiday celebrations in December? Possibly a fall or winter fundraiser for the Fort, with marketing in Havre and Great Falls? Options could include:
 - A Night at the Museum
 - A Winter Family Fun Day with hands on-activities
 - Kamut Day in coordination with MT Flour and Grains, with a baking competition!
 - A Big Bison Burger Challenge
 - River Days Fall Picnic

All of these options would appeal to families and are kid-friendly.

Recommended Resource(s):

<https://www.salsalabs.com/fundraising-event-ideas-for-nonprofits>
<http://www.giveforward.com/p/fundraising-ideas/ideas-fundraising-events>

Paul Tuss, Executive Director
Bear Paw Development Corporation
<http://www.BearPaw.org/>
406.265.9226

MAIN TOPIC: LOCAL ECONOMY

Issue: Diversify the Economy and Grow your Workforce

There are several active businesses in the area, with some gaps in services. We were told that there is no accountant in town, or a plumber, meaning additional cost when one is called in from Great Falls. Job creation, and bringing in new families was voiced as a concern to ensure the town is economically healthy. The largest employers in town appear to be public entities, such as the hospital, the school, the courthouse, with some large private businesses, such as MT Flour and Grains, the two fertilizer plants, and Wilray Welders.

Recommendation:

- Coordinated effort between the school and the employers to “home grow” employees with the specific skill sets needed. Employers report that hiring people from Great Falls (and expecting them to drive back and forth or move to Fort Benton) has not been successful. Encourage youth through a starter program that would enable them to train in Great Falls and have a job waiting for them on their return.
- Use of career pathways to support high school students with job readiness. This is the integration of classes in high school towards a particular career focus, such as welding, that eases the high school-to-college transition. Most colleges, such as the one in Great Falls and UM, also offer dual credit classes that the high school student takes and counts towards college credit as well.
- Code Montana is a program, with courses offered at no cost to high school students, that teaches students programming. This training can lead to a job that can be done anywhere where there is good internet access, which is a great option for staying in Fort Benton. It can also lead to scholarship options at Montana Tech for the student.
- To tie in business needs with student activities, look at best practices for a “Student Business Ambassador” program. This can act as a business mentorship for the teen, provide skill sets that are real-world useable, soft skills in customer service, and ties the teen with the local business. The program would also provide the business with general assistance, and often provides a fresh perspective from a not-often heard from demographic, resulting in problem solving for the business, and accessing new markets. This opportunity could be offered either through the Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce, or the high school.
- Start an email distribution list of graduating high school students, and send news of Fort Benton, highlighting graduate’s activities/news. This could also be a place to advertise jobs that are available in Fort Benton.

- Use the apprentice programs, as encouraged by the State and local businesses. Consider hiring nontraditional students, such as previous homemakers and those retraining for a new profession at a later age.
- Encourage the current businesses to remain open on Sundays, or consider later hours, and offer additional paid promotion in the newspaper for this amenity, if the business agrees (Chamber of Commerce or potential newspaper ad donation?).
- The city can promote the business revitalization effort by touting the low cost to lease and plans to revitalize Front Street (see the “Marketing” section).
- Another option is to start a “business incubator” where space and computers are available for starter businesses, and an intro business class is offered. Bear Paw Development Corp. in Havre may be able to assist with offering such classes. Business incubators can be housed in libraries, community centers, even churches if the space is available. The SBDC program can also assist with business startup.
- If a building needs restoration, BSTF can assist with a Preliminary Architectural Report that meets other state and federal funding programs guidelines towards actual renovation.
- An ordinance may also be needed to encourage commercial property owners to maintain their empty properties and encourage new business growth on Front Street.
- Northwest Farm Credit Services offers grants “for projects such as building or improving facilities, purchasing necessary equipment to facilitate a program, and funding capital improvements that improve a community’s infrastructure, viability and/or prosperity.”
- Triangle Communications offers Business Boost grants “for education, training or assistance to new or expanding businesses located within Triangle’s service area.”

Recommended Resources:

Apprenticeships-for those interested in apprenticing, and for those businesses who would like to start or join an apprenticeship program.

<http://apprenticeship.mt.gov/>

Student Job Readiness:

<http://mus.edu/BigSkyPathways/>

<http://opi.mt.gov/programs/CTAE/CTE.html>

Code Montana

<http://codemt.org/>

Mentoring best practice example-mentorship program, grant opportunity:

http://www.sthelenchamber.com/i_want/to_inspire_young_people/business_ambassadors

<http://youth.gov/youth-topics/mentoring/considerations-starting-mentoring-program>

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Havre:

Bear Paw Development Corporation
<http://www.BearPaw.org/SBDC.php>
406.265.9226

Northwest Farm Credit Services Rural Community Grant Program:
<https://www.northwestfcs.com/Stewardship/Rural-Communities/Rural-Community-Grant-Program>
They also offer youth scholarships, basic financial workshops, and a loan program for young beginning Ag producers

Triangle Communications Grants:
<https://www.itstriangle.com/economic-development/business-boost-grants>
They also offer youth support, scholarships, and community vitality grants

Alyssa Townsend or Annmarie Robinson
Montana Department of Commerce
Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program
<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF>
406.841.2748, 406.841.2250

Issue: Brewery needed

The community would like a brewery.

Recommendation:

- Visit with the Montana Brewer’s Association. They might be aware of a brewer who is interested in opening a second craft brewery in an area like Fort Benton, and already have the experience/capital to take the risk with a business expansion.
- When an interested party is found, apply to BSTF for a feasibility study that would analyze costs, capacity, operations, and a marketing analysis to determine if a brewery would do well in Fort Benton.
- A brewery would fill a need for a community social hub, but also businesses such as a homemade candy store, an organic/good food store, or a unique bakery (perhaps Wheat MT might be interested?).

Recommended Resources:

<http://montanabrewers.org/>

Alyssa Townsend or Annmarie Robinson
Montana Department of Commerce
Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program
<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF>
406.841.2748, 406.841.2250

Issue: Fresh volunteers needed

The EMT, Fire and other service organizations have a core group of volunteers that have been active for several years. However, they are getting older and need new volunteers to “carry the torch” for these crucial services.

Recommendation:

- Can a fund be set up, with private and public donors to pay for the course needed to become a volunteer? Could a business sponsor a volunteer to be trained? In turn, the volunteer could “pay back” the course in volunteer hours as required.
- Again, tap into the youth in Fort Benton: a service project, in coordination with the local churches or Chamber, that requires a certain number of volunteer hours to be completed before high school graduation? Junior EMT?
- Tax breaks for volunteers--this was mentioned by listening session participants. We are not aware of any current tax break options for volunteers or abatements for businesses that encourage volunteer work with their employees.
- We were told there is a Community Improvement Association in Fort Benton. Does the Association have a plan in place with an itemized list of priorities and strategies?

MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE**Issue: Façade Improvements and Streetscape-Historically appropriate**

Basic improvements were noted as needed along Front Street. Funding and technical assistance with this specific problem is available through the State and with funding provided from the local Tax Increment Financing District.

Recommendation:

Consider becoming a Montana Main Street Program Affiliate. From the website: “Affiliates receive training and support from the Montana Main Street Program staff, are able to apply for annual grant funding (towards facade improvements, etc.) with a local match of 1:5 (\$1 of local match for every \$5 committed by the state), and are invited to attend our regional workshops and conferences at a reduced cost (depending on program budget). Affiliate communities are required to submit quarterly reports to the Montana Main Street Coordinator”.

Recommended Resources:

Tash Wisemiller

Montana Department of Commerce

Montana Main Street Program

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

406.841.2756

MAIN TOPIC: QUALITY OF LIFE AND BRINGING IN FAMILIES

Many times the resource team heard from different attendees: if we do not attract families to our community, the town will not thrive. Choteau County’s population is predicted to drop in the next 40 years by 10%, while Cascade County is predicted to grow in population by 32% within the same timeframe (State Outdoor Rec Plan, 2014-2018). However, participation by Americans in Wildlife viewing increased by 8% between 2008-2012 (Ages 6+), Hunting increased by 5.1%, Freshwater fishing by 13.6%, and Camping by 10.4%. Fort Benton has an opportunity to develop here and this would appeal to families.

In addition, these deterrents were identified by participants that keep families from moving in to Fort Benton: few rentals, houses for sale are overpriced and need maintenance; few well-paying job options, and lack of services, such as daycare and entertainment.

Issue: Organized Growth

There was very little participation in the 40 and Under evening listening session. If a community is interested in attracting a target group, they must first have representation from that demographic for ideas and input--in their own words. What is working currently for young families? Where do they need assistance?

Recommendations:

- All stakeholders need to be present. Make sure they understand that their input really matters. As mentioned previously, it is understandable that locals would want to have a quieter season in winter, but for those families who have needs that include access to year-round work, this discussion will need to be carefully navigated. A consultant can facilitate meetings and create a “marketing” plan to guide not only tourism development, but also organized growth in areas that would prove beneficial in attracting business development and job creation.
- When visiting at the Senior Center, many seniors have large families, with children all over the United States. How about an initiative, similar at a local level to the Governor’s “Come Home to Montana” initiative? Perhaps a good start would be a survey the parent could send out to their adult child, asking what would bring them back to Fort Benton?
- We were also told here is also a perceived disconnect between retail businesses and those operating the museums and interpretive centers. Is there a forum available for communication with all parties, perhaps a monthly town hall meeting to discuss growth in Fort Benton?

Recommended Resources:

Attracting young business people and families to Fort Benton:

<https://jarche.com/2006/07/attracting-young-educated-people-to-small-towns/>

<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/bcjmw/downloads/59520.pdf>

https://www.bestthinking.com/articles/economics/public_economics/strategies-for-attracting-generation-y-people-to-rural-areas

<http://bostinno.streetwise.co/channels/why-millennials-want-to-start-their-own-business/>

Consultant Services:

http://www.manta.com/mb_45_A62E608C_27/marketing_consulting_services/montana

Issue: Daycare Needed

Recommendations:

Encourage the creation of the Head Start program by either an existing daycare provider, or an interested person. Grants are available to assist with program development that helps children from 0-5 with school readiness, as well as their social and emotional development. This program assists low-income families, and costs may not be as high for the parent. There are three Head Start Daycare Programs in Great Falls, and participants may be able to offer insight on the program process.

Recommended Resources:

<http://mtheadstart.org/>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>

Issue: Entertainment and Food

Recommendations:

These community amenities were listed as needs by the very population the Fort Benton Community hopes to keep—the high school kids and those with young families. While they may seem like less of a priority initially, consider that having these options in the community will go a long way towards keeping discretionary funds in Fort Benton, enhance spending in town, and shows that the community is catering to all its citizens.

- How about an outdoor Community Movie Night in summer, with a projector? This would also be a good fundraiser, or bring in food vendors.
- A “fast food” place was requested by the young people of Fort Benton. This doesn’t necessarily mean a franchise. If a brewery is planned, a sectioned off area that does not serve alcohol, but healthy snacks/non-alcoholic drinks only would also serve this purpose.
- A recreational center or multipurpose center was requested that could also incorporate a daycare. Could include specific programs to encourage activities for the elderly?
- Local Outfitters or Walleyes Unlimited may consider hosting a Kid’s Day, where kids are introduced to fishing, boating on the river, wildlife viewing. Perhaps in addition to the excellent Spring Fishing Derby?
- We were told there is a bus that travels to Great Falls for medical appointments. Can this also be expanded to include trips for families and the elderly to do clothes shopping, etc? This would be an excellent service to many in the community, if only one day a week.
- Consider starting a Meetup group in Fort Benton for a walking or hiking group.
- Food cooperatives are also popular with families, and locally grown food is healthier and cheaper. This may be an option for the community.

Recommended Resources:

Food Truck Favorites

<https://www.thrillist.com/eat/nation/21-best-food-trucks-in-america-of-2014-thrillist-nation>

Movie Night:

<http://www.southernoutdoorcinema.com/howto.htm>

<http://howtofundraise.com.au/fundraiser/outdoor-movie-night/>

Start a Meetup group!

<https://www.meetup.com/>

Kid’s Day

<http://www.montanawalleyesunlimited.net/kidsday.htm>

Montana Food Co-op

<https://www.montanacoop.com/>

Best Practices

<http://wmgcoop.com/about>

Issue: Better Understanding of Those in Need

We were told that 90 children in Fort Benton have been identified as qualifying for free or reduced lunch in the school system. This is a strong indicator of basic services needed by the vulnerable populations in Fort Benton.

Recommendations:

- To understand the level of poverty in the community, more research is needed. From City-Data.com, we are aware that 210 households have an income of \$30,000 or less. 36 households have an income of \$10,000 or less. Looking at the median household income only is unreliable, as there are 15 households in Fort Benton that make over \$200,000 per year and this skews the data.
- The cost for a meal at the Senior Center is \$4.00 per meal, or \$116.00 per month. While this is not excessive, part of this cost may be allayed by applying for grant funding, if this option has not been pursued already.
- Triangle Communications offers 4-H Beef grants that could be used by the Senior Center for meals. They also offer grants to support senior citizens and health, safety, and human organizations.
- An idea is to have a Youth and Eldercare Pantry of household cleaning and personal cleaning items. Funds are raised for this effort through grants with businesses, such as Town Pump. Please see the resource list below.

Recommended Resources:

Research

<http://www.city-data.com/city/Fort-Benton-Montana.html#b>

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx>

Senior Center Grants, if not already utilized

<https://www.ncoa.org/national-institute-of-senior-centers/tips-for-senior-centers/federal-funding-for-senior-centers-101/>

<https://montana.grantwatch.com/grant-search.php>

Triangle Communications Community Vitality Grant and the 4H Beef Grant

<https://www.itstriangle.com/community-support/community-vitality-grants>

<https://www.itstriangle.com/community-support/4-h-beef-grant>

Eldercare Pantry Best Practice

<http://www.goodsamhelenahelena.org/placer-pantry.html>

http://helenair.com/news/local/placer-pantry-to-offer-personal-care-items-for-those-in/article_ea3ddc60-47ed-11e1-bd46-0019bb2963f4.html

Town Pump grants

<https://www.townpump.com/foundation/>

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MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING

Issue: Cost of Renovating Older Homes

During the listening sessions, there were quite a few comments about the need for rehabilitation of many homes in Fort Benton. This was confirmed by an individual that has inspected many homes in the community. In particular, it is believed that many senior citizens living on fixed incomes have a health or safety related issue in the home that needs to be repaired. This could involve roof repair, electrical issues, plumbing problems, inadequate windows and doors, and other items of concern.

Recommendations:

During our tour of the town, it was noticed that the housing stock is older and some of it is in need of repairs. We heard that the cost of the repairs can sometimes be prohibitive to the residents. USDA Rural Development believes helping people stay in their own home and keep it in good repair helps families and their communities. Homeownership helps families and individuals build savings over time. It strengthens communities and helps many kinds of businesses that support the local economy.

Through its 504 Housing Program, USDA Rural Development can assist with the costs to repair and renovate homes. Grants are only eligible to residences that have a member of the household who is 62 years of age or older to remove health and safety concerns in the home.

We fund public and nonprofit organizations who apply for the Housing Preservation Grant. This grant is available to repair and rehabilitate individual housing, rental properties, or co-ops owned and/or occupied by very-low and low income families. Rural Development partners with and provides grants to a sponsoring organization for repairs or rehabilitation of housing occupied by low and very-low income people. We have worked with organizations like the Human Resources Council District, City of Shelby, and Montana Board of Housing.

Another potential resource for affordable funding may be the Human Resource Council District and NeighborWorks, and Opportunities, Inc. They have programs and services for low to moderate income families and individuals. Funding for repairs may be available through the weatherization programs they administer. The Dept. of Energy also has a weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) for low income families.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

USDA Rural Development: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/single-family-housing-programs>

Montana Board of Housing: <http://housing.mt.gov>

NeighborWorks: <http://www.nwgf.org/>

MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING

Issue: Affordable Housing Stock

During our listening sessions with the people of the City of Fort Benton, deficient housing was often cited as a general problem in the community. There were a range of responses involving housing in Fort Benton. The housing available for purchase was very limited or unsuitable for buyers' needs. Many also mentioned that they were concerned about purchasing as they feared they might not be able to sell the property in the future.

While several impressive, newer large homes have been built in the Northeast part of the town, these are neither typical nor accessible for the average income earner in the community. The development of more modest new housing was not observed. Land availability for future housing development is limited. Without the ability to develop new housing, the community will not be able to accommodate new growth. It is also likely that some businesses considering a relocation may avoid Fort Benton if they do not feel that their employees could find suitable housing.

Recommendations:

To counterbalance the income gap with the cost of housing, USDA Rural Development partners with the applicant's local lender through our Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program. The rural home loan guarantee program assists low to moderate income families who cannot obtain conventional financing. Because a down payment is not required, this program helps borrowers by reducing closing costs. The guarantee also costs less than comparable mortgage insurance premiums.

If a borrower cannot qualify for conventional or guaranteed financing, USDA Rural Development provides affordable funding to purchase single-family housing. Also known as the Section 502 Direct Loan Program, this program assists low- and very-low-income applicants to obtain decent, safe and sanitary housing in eligible rural areas by providing payment assistance to increase an applicant's repayment ability. Payment assistance is a type of subsidy that reduces the mortgage payment for a short time. The amount of assistance is determined by the adjusted family income.

A number of factors are considered when determining an applicant's eligibility for Single Family Direct Home Loans. At a minimum, applicants interested in obtaining a direct loan, must have an adjusted income that is at or below the applicable low-income limit for the area where they wish to buy a house, and they must demonstrate a willingness and ability to repay debt.

USDA Rural Development also partners with other funding sources to help make homeownership affordable like Montana Board of Housing (MBOH) and NeighborWorks. MBOH's public purpose is to provide decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing for lower income individuals and families in the State of Montana. Montana Board of Housing accomplishes this purpose by issuing tax-exempt bonds, administering federal housing programs and working partnerships with many other housing providers throughout Montana.

NeighborWorks goal is to build strong neighborhoods, creating successful homeowners and promoting quality, affordable housing, primarily for low- and moderate-income families. It has been very successful in implementing Rural Development's Mutual Self-Help program. This program enables NeighborWorks to provide technical and supervisory assistance to participating very-low and low income families in self-help construction of their home.

As a source for rental housing, Rural Development also has the Section 538, Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program.” The program works with qualified private-sector lenders to provide financing to qualified borrowers (of which the Town of Ft. Benton would qualify) to increase the supply of affordable rental housing for low and moderate income individuals and families in eligible rural areas or towns. The funds may be used to purchase and improve land, provide necessary infrastructure, construct a multi-family housing unit, and/or purchase and improve an existing multi-family rental housing project.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

USDA Rural Development: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/single-family-housing-programs> and/or <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/multi-family-housing-loan-guarantees>

Montana Board of Housing: <http://housing.mt.gov>

NeighborWorks: <http://www.nwgf.org/>

MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS REVITALIZATION

Issue: Incentive for Business Development

The citizens of Ft. Benton had great concern for the health of their business community. Some comments given were no industry or progress, a lack of quality day care in the community, a need for a pulse crop plant, and good paying/quality employment opportunities are limited. While they didn’t necessarily want a “big box” store moving in, they would like to see a thriving business economy, with restaurants, a movie theatre, stores, etc. that would entice families to stay in the community and encourage other businesses, individuals and families to move there.

Recommendations:

USDA Rural Development can assist Fort Benton develop its economic potential through our Business Programs. The programs work through partnerships with public and private community based organizations and financial institutions to provide financial assistance, business development, and technical assistance to rural businesses. The programs help to provide capital, equipment, space, job training, and entrepreneurial skills that can help start and/or grow a business. The funding is intended to help improve the quality of life in rural communities by enhancing economic opportunities and ensuring self-sustainability for generations to come.

Loans, loan guarantees, and grants are available to individuals, businesses, farmers and ranchers, public bodies, non-profit corporations, and private companies in rural communities. The financial resources of the Business Programs are often leveraged with those of other public and private credit source lenders to meet business and credit needs in under-served areas.

USDA Rural Development can partner with the Town of Fort Benton to implement these funding programs or work with our trusted economic development corporate partners, Bear Paw Development, and local telephone and electric cooperatives like Triangle Communications.

Bear Paw Development’s mission is to help improve regional economic conditions. They provide clients with access to essential resources, providing technical support to entrepreneurs and community groups, assisting communities in planning and implementing public works projects, and coordinate public and private investments. Bear Paw Development has a very successful Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) loan portfolio with Rural Development. The IRP provides gap financing for a business’ acquisition and expansion costs, purchase and development of land and real estate, machinery and equipment, and start-up costs. They can provide technical assistance through our Rural Business Development Grant Program (RBDG) for many projects including strategic planning, business counseling, market research, feasibility studies, distance adult learning for job training, and rural business incubators.

Triangle Communications understands that to have successful communities, we need to have successful businesses within and supported by the community. They apply for our Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program to provide funding for rural projects.

Under the REDLoan program, USDA provides zero interest loans to local utilities which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses (ultimate recipients) for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility is responsible for repayment to the Agency.

Under the REDGrant program, USDA provides grant funds to local utility organizations which use the funding to establish revolving loan funds (RLF). Loans are made from the revolving loan funds to projects that will create or retain rural jobs. When the revolving loan fund is terminated, the grant is repaid to the Agency.

The funds may be used for community facility projects, such as hospitals, clinics, fire, ambulance, police and sheriff, and senior citizen centers; as well as business incubators; to purchase equipment for education and training for rural residents; or for a business’ venture capital to start-up, expand, or to purchase fixed assets. The intent of the program is to promote job creation and retention in a community.

There are many funders available to assist in business development; both on a state and federal level. Groups like Bear Paw Development and Triangle Communications are well-educated in these programs and their associated requirements. They are a useful resource when developing affordable financing for projects of all sizes.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

USDA Rural Development: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/business-programs>

Bear Paw Development Corporation: www.bearpaw.org

Triangle Communications: <http://www.itstriangle.com/>

MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issue: Tourism

Another concern during the Fort Benton listening sessions was that the town “can’t be seen.” Fort Benton benefits from being located in a beautiful valley and most of the business district has breathtaking views of the Missouri River. It is the county seat for Chouteau County and a portion of the city was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1961. As such, capitalizing on tourist traffic visiting the historic sites of the Town or enticing tourists passing through the area to stop along the way for goods and

services would lend a boost for local businesses. Proper signage along the US 87 is imperative to attract these opportunities.

Recommendations:

While Rural Development would not be able to assist with signage to make Fort Benton more recognizable, we would be able to assist with establishing a potential anchor business, such as a 24 hour restaurant and truck stop, off US 87 through our business programs. This could entice travelers to stop and visit the Town to see what it has to offer.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

USDA Rural Development: [USDA Rural Development: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/business-programs](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/business-programs)

MAIN TOPIC: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issue: Community Facility improvements

A lot of concern was expressed during the Fort Benton listening sessions in the area of the hospital, it happens to be one of the main employers in the community and has a lot of physical needs. Other subjects brought up included the clinic; a reliable transportation system to Great Falls for seniors or for citizens that can't drive; a day care center; and an upgraded detention center.

Recommendations:

Rural Development Community Facility loan and grant programs assist rural communities with technical assistance to identify and plan community facility needs that exist in their area, identify public and private resources to finance those needs, and provide affordable funding to develop essential community facilities.

Loans, loan guarantees, and grants are available to public bodies and community based non-profit corporations to finance the purchase, construction, and/or improvement of community facilities, including purchasing equipment and paying related project expenses.

Essential services include health care facilities; child and adult care centers; public safety such as police, sheriff, fire and ambulance; detention centers; telemedicine and distance learning equipment; street improvements; and local food systems such as community kitchens, food banks, and food hubs.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites:

USDA Rural Development: [USDA Rural Development: https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-communities-nonprofits](https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/programs-services-communities-nonprofits)

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Regional Director

Senator Jon Tester

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MAIN TOPIC: MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

Issue: Need for coordination and awareness of bus availability to and from Great Falls for medical needs.

Recommendation:

There was mention from community members that there is a bus that was once used for transporting folks from Fort Benton to Great Falls for medical services. It is recommended that there should be some communication between individuals, specifically seniors, and the hospital to see what the status is of that bus.

The other recommendation would be for the community to reach out to the North Central Montana Transit out of Havre. There is a bus that travels from Havre to Great Falls twice a week to transport folks for medical needs.

Resources:

Jim Lyons

North Central MT Transit

P.O. Box 80

Havre MT 59501

406-265-3699

lyons@ncmtransit.org

www.opportunitylinkmt.org

Rachel Court, Regional Director

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MAIN TOPIC: LOCAL ECONOMY

Issue: Diversify Economy

It was very interesting to listen to the conversations from each faction of folks we spoke to, from students to seniors. Seniors were very comfortable with the retail services offered in Fort Benton with the exception of more places to eat. And students too were fairly comfortable with the retail services provided, with the exception of dining. In fact, it seemed like students were happy to travel to Great Falls and other areas of the

state for shopping – “it is a get a way opportunity.” However, one of the suggestions that come up multiple times, besides Taco Bell, was a brewery in Fort Benton. Currently there is no such thing in Fort Benton.

Recommendations:

- Visit with the Montana Brewer’s Association or the Montana Distiller’s Guild.
- Travel to Great Falls or Havre and meet with the local brewer’s there and see if they are aware of anyone who might be interested in opening a craft brewery in an area like Fort Benton.
- Encourage local businesses to work together and brainstorm on ways to increase entrepreneurship.

Recommended Resources:

<http://montanabrewers.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/montanadistillers>

Tash Wisemiller
Montana Department of Commerce
Montana Main Street Program
<http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/Mainstreet>
406-841-2756

Erinn Donnell
Montana Department of Commerce
Made in Montana Program
<http://www.madeinmontanausa.com>
406-841-2757

MAIN TOPIC: QUALITY OF LIFE

Issue: Healthy fresh food options

With the mixed group of 25-40 folks, there was discussion about the availability of healthy fresh food options.

Recommendation:

The community could consider a community garden. In every single meeting there was mention of the “sense of community,” strong community support, community pride, “this is a piece of heaven.” A community garden is one way of answering the desire for healthy fresh food options and improving the quality of life.

Great Falls has an organization called Gardens from Garbage; Westside Orchard Garden. Their mission is about food sustainability – teaching, organizing and producing. Envision a world of sustainable, fresh and local food communities.

www.gardensfromgarbage.com
Mike Dalton (aka Captain Compost)
406-868-2359
Building Community Gardens
Kathryn Gear Hutchison
Alternative Energy Resources Organization
Helena MT
406-443-7272

MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING

Issue: Availability of quality and affordable rentals and housing

Housing concerns were expressed in every listening session; from high school students to senior citizens. A young teacher at the high school said it took her over six months to find a decent place to rent and it was really more than she could afford, but didn't have much choice. Some mentioned that there are old homes that are in bad shape and should be torn down. There are houses for sale in Fort Benton, but they aren't affordable. Consequently, they sit vacant.

Recommendation:

Seek funding assistance from the Montana Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant and HOME programs as well as USDA Rural Development for low interest direct and/or guaranteed loans. Rural development grants are also available to qualified households for rehabilitation assistance.

NeighborWorks in Great Falls has a rental development program that is ran by Neil Fortier. In the last few years they have partnered in the development of rental property whether it be new construction, purchasing and renovating existing rentals and/or co-developing with other businesses. I believe NeighborWorks Great Falls is limited to Great Falls, however, it would certainly be worth it to invite Neil to a community meeting and have him explain what they do and if there are any opportunities for Fort Benton.

Resources:

Neighborworks
Sheila Rice or Neil Fortier
509 1st Ave. S.
Great Falls, MT 59401
406-761-5861
nfortier@nwgf.org

Montana Department of Commerce
Home Division
301 South Park Avenue, Ste.240
P.O. Box 200528
Helena, MT 59620
<http://Housing.mt.gov>

Tom Atkins, Housing Director
USDA Rural Development
Bozeman Area Office
2229 Boot Hill Court
Bozeman, MT 59715
Tom.atkins@mt.usda.gov

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www.itstriangle.com

MAIN TOPIC: MEDICAL

Issue: Hospital Renovation

Throughout the community we heard the importance of medical services and need to update the current hospital and clinic facilities in the Fort Benton community. Residents seem to understand the direct correlation between maintaining critical medical services and local economic and community vitality.

Missouri River Medical Center has initiated various investigative processes that include business feasibility, preliminary architecture planning and thorough review of funding options for identified phases of improvements, renovation and new construction.

Recommendation:

Continued support of ongoing efforts championed by the Missouri River Medical Center, its Board of Directors in partnership with the healthcare foundation, city and county officials and Bear Paw Development should remain a priority.

To ease concerns expressed in several listening session regarding awareness and current status on the project, I make these additional recommendation:

Upon adoption of appropriate funding strategy by the above officials, a simple marketing strategy for the project as a whole and identified project phases should be developed and shared with residents and various groups of Fort Benton and surrounding areas. Some low costs ideas include:

- Fact/FAQ sheet or brochure for the project/each phase – this can printed for general distribution, posted on local websites and social media, direct mailed with customer statements, etc. Don't forget to include all employees and keep them informed.
- Third-party endorsements/spokespersons – we heard from medical providers, staff and patients in listening sessions, these are powerful statements that should be shared with community.
- Conduct a special event – open house, public forum, etc during National Healthcare, Nursing Home or Nurses week. This could include ribbon cutting ceremonies with the Chamber of Commerce for each phase.
- Consider appointing a project specific committee or task force consisting of a cross section of residents (youth, senior, public health, business, etc) to assist with community outreach. Informed and empowered, this committee could be an extension of the hospital board allowing board members to continue their focus on project implementation and operations.

Recommended Resources:

National Rural Health Associations – outline of economic impact of rural hospitals (middle page under “Materials to review and share”

<https://www.ruralhealthweb.org/advocate/save-rural-hospitals>

American Hospital Association – infographic: Rural Hospitals: A Community’s Anchor

<http://www.aha.org/content/16/2016-2-Rural-Infographic.pdf>

National Hospital Week always falls on the the week of Florence Nightingales birthday, May 12. 2017 dates are May 7-13. #MyHospital - <http://www.aha.org/presscenter/myhospital.shtml>

National Rural Health Day <https://nosorh.org/about-national-rural-health-day/>

National Nursing Home Week – the Spirit of America 2017, May 14-20, 2017

https://www.ahcancal.org/events/national_nursing_home_week/Pages/default.aspx

Montana Healthy Communities – includes webinar series and mini grant opportunities.

<http://healthinfo.montana.edu/mt-healthy-communities.html>

Issue: Lab workforce, specialists and equipment needs. As in many Montana communities workforce availability, especially within the medical field was identified as a concern. It appears the Hospital is using many creative options and is working hard to resolve workforce issues. Matching funds for equipment and special projects are often available from various sources and should be researched periodically.

Recommendation: Medical Center, EMS and other public safety entities in Fort Benton should seek counsel of Bear Paw Development to assist in the identification of funding opportunities.

Additionally, Anne Boothe of Triangle Communications can assist with an online grant search for specific identified need via MEDA’s GrantStation membership. aboothe@itstriangle.net

Recommended Resources:

Triangle Communications Community Vitality Grant Program offers monetary support (up to \$1000) to organizations or groups that are positively impacting their communities within the Triangle service area. Eligible projects include: civic improvements; special events; job creation; senior citizens; culture and arts; health, safety and human organizations and others.

Medical equipment and costs associated with workforce recruitment and development may be eligible via the simple online application on their website. <http://www.itstriangle.com/community-support/community-vitality-grants>

<http://www.mthcf.org/> - a relatively new state grant opportunity from the recent sale of Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Call for proposals has been announced, deadline in February, equipment and special project will be considered. Matching funds are required.

Issue: Medical and Senior Transportation. We heard several concerns regarding the lack of public transportation in the community and many relied on friends and family for transport to specialized appointments and meeting other connections (air) in neighboring Great Falls.

It should be noted that Missouri River Medical Center does own a small bus but because of liability concerns, it has limited use and availability by residents and staff.

Recommendation:

Interested residents could approach local officials or non profits to learn of historic or current efforts/considerations to identify a qualified organization to provide transportation services to the general public, including the elderly and disabled. Limited grants and funding opportunity for capital and operation assistance is available via the Montana Department of Transportation and there are many examples of regional and county transit entities that a local program could be modeled after. Participation in these programs does require local sponsorship and fiscal support.

It should be noted that most systems in the region (including Chester and Shelby) receive partial funding from local tax proceeds and/or fees. The first step in Transit Planning should include business planning and feasibility. Planning grant resources include the Rural Transit Assistance Program and the Montana Department of Commerce CDBG Planning Grant program.

An immediate and alternative solution is neighboring transit programs that currently have direct routes to Great Falls (airport, medical, shopping) and could transport residents with advance reservation – see contact information for Liberty County Transit and Central Montana Transit. Fees would apply for this service.

Recommended Resources:

Rural Transit Assistance Program and Montana Transit Grants and Funding options

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_transit.shtml

Mt. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program – planning grant assistance, local match required. <http://comdev.mt.gov/programs/cdbg>

Liberty County Transit - according to program Director, Glenda Hansen they have on several occasions picked up residents at Sunrise Bluff and are very happy to serve Chouteau County residents with advance notice for intercity transit to and from Great Falls. They do require a small fee.

Chester, Mt.

(406) 759-5244

<http://www.chestercommunitycenter.com/inter-city%20trips.htm>

Central Montana Transit and Fort Belknap Transit – current transit route includes their “green line” which operates regularly between Fort Belknap and Great Falls with the closest schedule stop at Jitter Bugs in Box Elder. According to Director Jim Lyon, previous conversations about stopping in Fort Benton with local officials have had minimal interest because of costs/fees to participate.

3152 US2 Havre, MT. 59501

(406) 265-4762

<http://opportunitylinkmt.org/north-central-montana-transit/>

DAV Transportation Network <https://www.dav.org/veterans/i-need-a-ride> The DAV offers rides to and from the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center from locations throughout the state. For further information concerning this option, please contact one of the Hospital Service Coordinators shown below. This is a free service for our veterans.

Hospital Service Coordinator for Western Montana - Call 1-877-468-8387 and stay on the line to ask for the operator to transfer your call to the DAV transportation office. You may also call 406-447-7760 to reach the office directly. Hospital Service Coordinator for Eastern Montana - Call 1-888-461-5000 ext 2143 or 406-651-2143.

MAIN TOPIC: QUALITY OF LIFE

Throughout our visit to Fort Benton, we witnessed a strong sense of community and appreciation for the healthy lifestyle, access to recreation, the river & area history, public schools and volunteer spirit within - all positive aspects for a quality of life.

Issue: There is strong and diverse participation in the various organizations and entities in Fort Benton but in listening to the various sectors of the community, there seems to be an unspoken rivalry. I truly believe this is a result of powerful passion for the quality of life and loyalty for Fort Benton. I hope my view will be taken as a positive opportunity.

Recommendations: Acknowledgment of this issue or concern is my foremost recommendation. With knowledge, we often have the greatest capacity for understanding, change and collaboration.

A second approach could be to hold annual community roundtable or study circle for all entities, individuals (including nontraditional sectors such as church, school), business, government (include local, BLM, FWP, all with local presence). The overall goal is to learn, share and collaborate.

This can be done very informally, allowing each group/individual to speak for a very limited time (5 minutes each) and share their immediate and long term needs/goals – if they have a written plan, ask them to bring copies. Invite questions and identify cross sectors and opportunity for collaboration and let it happen naturally.

Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Study_circle

Chouteau County MSU Extension could be asked to facilitate process.

Issue: Organized Growth -

Overall, we heard residents are content and satisfied with their life in Fort Benton. They are also keenly aware the same is challenged by impending change rural communities face to maintain and grow business vitality, basic services and school enrollments. At issue is the need for organized growth and planning that involves citizen driven priorities and the legacy of Fort Benton.

Through Bear Paw Development Corporation, the community may consider applying for planning grants to hire a consultant to complete a downtown revitalization or improvement plan.

This plan could include an outline for revitalization of the downtown core, leverage of public/private investment, improved non-vehicle modes of transportation (walk and bike paths), community signage,

removal of blight, and affordable housing for mixed use real estate. Off season or winter activities were also identified as a need in the session - a community recreation center could be considered as part of the revitalization plan.

Recommendations:

- Organize a citizen driven Task Force or Committee comprised of River & Plains Society, CIA, Chamber, local officials and community members to investigate existing and historic plans for downtown, industrial and recreational park improvements, street, sidewalk, infrastructure, growth policies, economic development strategies and more for the purpose of understanding what is place and not duplicating efforts. The Task Force could then help identify gaps and research current options and examples for downtown improvement or master plans, streetscapes, traffic, pedestrian and bike routes, promotion and image building, etc. If greater need is identified the committee should follow appropriate paths to share and communicate with local officials regarding the need and potential resources. This group could have multiple purposes – please also see my recommendations for Economic Development as these issues areas and recommendations overlap.
- Schedule an informational meeting/presentation with the [The Montana Main Street Program](#). This Department of Commerce led program follows the National Trust four point approach to downtown revitalization, along with a range of services and assistance to communities striving to enhance economic and business vitality while maintaining local historic integrity, quality of life, and sense of place. Program staff can provide program and partnership details and funding opportunities.

Recommended Resources

Tash Wisemiller (406)841-2756

Montana Department of Commerce Main Street Program <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet>
Their “Resources” page includes community planning documents, educational materials, useful links, etc.

Funding Opportunities for Planning Grants, Business Loans and Grants:

Debra Demarais, Section Manager

Community Development Block Grant –Economic Development Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave. Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2736 Email: ddemarais@mt.gov Website: <http://cdbged.mt.gov>

Annmarie Robinson, Section Manager

Big Sky Trust Fund Program

Montana Department of Commerce

301 South Park Ave. Helena, MT 59601

PH: 1-406-841-2744 Website: www.bstf.mt.gov

Smart Growth in Small Towns and Rural Communities - technical assistance programs, reports, webinars lots of great tools and ideas. <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-small-towns-and-rural-communities>

Fort Benton and Chouteau County have a historic Growth Policy and with assistance of the Planning Department, recently completed a community survey that is being incorporated into an updated plan. Every effort should be made to partner with this existing effort.

<http://www.co.chouteau.mt.us/pages/development.htm>

Glasgow, Montana – Downtown Revitalization Plan – small rural community example

http://www.glasgowchamber.net/uploads/1/3/6/5/13653496/glasgowrevitalizationplan_6.26.15.pdf

Community Preservation and Montana Certified Location Government Program can provide \$1-5000 to certified cities for their historic preservation programs. <https://mhs.mt.gov/Shpo/Communitypres>

Issue: Daycare (or lack of) within the conversations about business development and workforce need, we heard concerns for the lack of child care and early childhood educational programs.

Recommendations: Host an open meeting for all interested persons, inviting Family Connects of Montana, area HRDC, Montana Cooperative Development Center, Bear Paw Development to obtain a better understanding of current providers, potential need and misc. provider opportunities. This meeting should include roundtable discussion, prioritization of local daycare/preschool needs - invite volunteers to move forward.

Recommended Resources:

The **Montana Department of Health and Human Services** - Multiple resources, including grant funding is available here <https://dphhs.mt.gov/qad/Licensure/Become-a-Child-Care-Provider>

Family Connections of Montana - <http://familyconnectionsmt.org/> learn more and request a presentation via their Community page.

Montana Cooperative Development Center can provide technical assistance in cooperative development. <http://www.mcde.coop/mcdc>

Examples and stories of interest:

Discovery Kidzone Montessori School – Helena <http://www.kidzonemontessori.com>

The Children’s House – Great Falls <http://childrenshousegf.org>

Mt. View (Washington) Cooperative Preschool <http://www.mtviewcoop.com>

Is there a child care shortage in Havre? <http://www.havredailynews.com/story/2016/10/07/local/is-there-a-child-care-shortage-in-havre/510512.html>

Issue: Entertainment. Community members (adults and students) expressed a need for winter or off season spaces for entertainment, recreation and fitness.

Recommendations: A diverse group or committee should be organized to further investigate and formalize a 3 year plan. The plan should include an inventory of current activities, locations and available space, prioritized goals and an action plan.

Resources: Some ideas from other communities include:

Movie Theater – Harlowton Theatre Project is a school run program that operates the local movie theater. With a school advisor, students manage and operate the historic downtown theater. Student workers are provided scholarships for the hours worked at their graduation. In lieu of a theater space, Fort Benton

students might utilize the existing auditorium space and offer special showings.

<https://www.facebook.com/HarloTheater> Mrs. Kim Misner is the advisor and can be reached at (406) 632-4324.

Crossfit Gyms often utilize flexible space with minimal investment – it might be worth asking if there are any coaches in the community. Some insightful articles include:

<http://theboxbuilders.com.au/start-a-crossfit-box/>

<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/082015/economics-crossfit-gym.asp?lgl=bt1tn-baseline-below-textnote>

<http://firetowercrossfit.com/about-us/our-story/> (Helena Fire Tower Crossfit)

<https://map.crossfit.com/>

Follow the Missoula example – identify 20 things to do in the winter in Fort Benton.

<http://destinationmissoula.org/20-things-to-do-in-the-winter>

Organize a local Recreation group – the City of Malta recently re-authorized the Malta Parks and Recreation Department. With a volunteer committee, they invited community ideas/suggestions. Several activities followed and this past year, the City hired a part time director to coordinate activities – fees collected offset wages. <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=malta%20parks%20and%20recreation> With social media, they are able to publicize activities which include: Tiny Tots Recreation, Adult Co-ed Basketball/Volleyball and Softball, Exercise classes, ice skating, kayak adventures on the Milk River, Youth Soccer, Basketball and Flag Football. It's been a huge success. Contacts are Julie Tatafu (406) 654-4178 or Natalie Judd (406) 686-0986.

A new funding resource discovered - Lowe's Toolbox for Education -

<http://www.toolboxforeducation.com/index.html>

Issue: Fresh Food options

Recommendations: Explore existing programs and opportunities regarding local foods and community based food systems in Montana. Andre Giles of Montana Flour and Grains, local coordinators of the Missouri River Landing Farmers Market, school students/advisors are tremendous local assets.

Recommended Resources

The Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) works to link people, sustainable agriculture and energy solutions. Their website provides extensive links to programs such as the Montana Farm to School, Montana FoodCorps, Community Gardens and more <http://aeromt.org/food-ag/>

Mt OPI supports the Farm to School program for k-12

http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/Farm2School.html

MSU Extension provides information on Family and Consumer Sciences including healthy living and food and nutrition. <http://www.msuextension.org/nutrition/>

Montana Department of Ag provides Rural Assistance including Food & Agriculture Development Centers, Farmers Market Assistance and Rural Community Development Grants.

<http://agr.mt.gov/Topics/Rural-Assistance>

The Abundant Montana Directory shows The Missouri River landing Farmers Marketing in Fort Benton is held on Thursdays July thru September. <http://aeromt.org/farmers-market/united-states/montana/fort-benton/missouri-river-landing-farmers-market/>

MAIN TOPIC: LOCAL ECONOMY

Issue: We heard concerns among several groups about the aging population, attracting young families, strengthening the local business community and augmenting the local agriculture economy.

There are many official definitions of economic development (jobs, tax base, quality of life etc) but the reality is it starts at home and no one can do it for you. Yes, there are resources and people (like me) that want to help, but it must be locally driven. One of my mentors retired this year and he left a retirement speech entitled “My Swan Song.” I’m sharing some of his bits of wisdom here (tailored a bit to Fort Benton.)

- Economic development is not about jobs. Economic Development is about strengthening communities so job creation can occur organically.
- Rural matters. The economies of rural and urban parts of any state are interdependent. That economic dependence is real, measurable and significant. Rural manufacturing performance sends economic ripples into urban areas and agribusinesses generate additional business-to-business spending. Don’t short-sheet rural.
- Studies clearly show that small businesses are the true job generator in any community. Pay attention to them. Existing businesses can be like dogs. They are faithful to where they live, but if you don’t pet them every once in a while, it’s hard to keep them under the porch. If you focus on small business growth and entrepreneurship, other businesses (recruitments) will naturally follow.
- A healthy downtown will usually mean a healthy community. Revitalize, re-grow, and reinvent. This will combat neglect, abuse and abandonment, which so many downtowns have experienced. A strong downtown can be a major stimulator for economic growth and potentially a key revenue generator for local government.
- Youth will form the backbone of the community for the next 50 years. If they have opportunities to learn new skills, participate in a business plan competition, appreciate the community’s assets, practice leadership, enter an internship program with existing businesses, and identify and become mentors, your community has a better chance to grow and prosper.
- Every community should promote strategies that support the three-legged stool that encourage 1) asset development (infrastructure, arts and workforce programs), 2) innovation and entrepreneurship, and 3) technical assistance.

He further encourages that you must be totally engaged in the future of your community. You are in a position to positively affect the direction of your community and create a better place for the next generation of workers, families and residents.

Your community is special. You have history, economic opportunity, neighbors who care about each other and a great quality of life. If aliens ever come from another planet and asked you to show them the best of America, you would bring them to Fort Benton.

Recommendations:

I strongly encourage local officials, the CIA, River & Plains Society and Chamber to engage regional planners and economic development professionals to assist in further analysis and discussion of the issues and concerns

presented. A joint committee can be the catalyst to success – invite us to join you at regularly scheduled meetings or round table conversations.

Please see similar recommendations and resources under Quality of Life

Apply to [Triangle Communications Connected Community Challenge](#) program which promotes Smart Rural Communities throughout their service area. The process follows national priorities that include “Access, Adoption and Use of Broadband” in communities. Using a local committee and local technology assets, existing needs and opportunities are reviewed along with demographics of who’s not online and why.

The final aspect of the program is a simple community Broadband Action Plan and includes a \$2500 grant to implement priorities.

Value added agriculture and diversification of the local economy was also identified as a need. Strong Chouteau County assets to build on include successful pulse crop production, existing value added efforts such as those by Andre Giles, Bob Quinn and others. I found it difficult to locate collective information regarding these and other Agriculture assets – if none is available, I suggest developing a local inventory with contacts. This inventory could be included in a “Local Industry” page on the Chamber, City, County websites and at the Montana Ag Center.

Recommended Resources

Bear Paw Development, including Executive Director Paul Tuss and their staff with expertise in community planning, food & Ag, finance and business and cooperative development in addition to myself, Anne Boothe with Triangle Communications are ready to serve the Fort Benton community with technical assistance and guidance

Triangle Communications Economic Development Programs <http://www.itstriangle.com/economic-development>

Learn more about telework, return to rural initiatives and more opportunities for online work and entrepreneurship via these websites:

<http://www.broadbandmt.com/>

<http://www.itstriangle.com/smart-rural-connected-community-challenge-tookit>

Fostering Telework in our Rural Communities <http://www.itstriangle.com/economic-development/news/209-fostering-telework-in-our-rural-communities> and

<https://www.facebook.com/trianglecommunityconnect/?ref=bookmarks>

Sustainability of Montana breweries – New kind of business identified in listening sessions

http://www.sidneyherald.com/community/sustainability-in-montana-breweries-new-kind-of-business/article_2a01aa9c-55d7-11e6-b065-0f696d5362b5.html

Tourism essentials for small towns: WiFi and Workspace <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/07/tourism-essentials-for-small-towns-wifi-and-workspaces.html>

Smart Growth in Small Towns and Rural Communities - There are some great resources here, including information on the [Cool and Connected pilot](#) technical assistance program.

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-small-towns-and-rural-communities>

What businesses would work in a small town? Filling empty buildings

<http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/09/what-businesses-would-work-in-a-small-town-filling-empty-buildings.html>

Business incubator ideas for small towns. <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/09/business-incubator-ideas-for-small-towns.html>

Seven Best Practices for Creating Rural Economic Vitality (Rural Development Initiatives)

http://rdiinc.org/newsletters/2014-02/seven_best_practices_creating_rural_economic_vitality

One of the best resources to learn about your community is the **Montana Site Selector** - go to the Generate Reports tab and make selection for various reports for Fort Benton <http://svc.mt.gov/gov/siteselector>

MAIN TOPIC: MARKETING

Issue: Tourism is a major industry in Fort Benton and we heard several issues including need for off season visitors to help sustain and strengthen existing and new businesses, need for additional lodging rooms to attract bus tours and more.

Recommendations:

1. Consider a Market or Retail Gap Analysis for the greater Fort Benton area. This type of research can enhance the business mix and the position of Fort Benton as a destination for both local residents and those outside Chouteau County. Results can help to strengthen existing businesses and assist in business recruitment and entrepreneurship.

Establish a local committee of task force to research options, establish priorities and plan of action.

- Formal approach—seek planning grant funds from Mt. Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant Economic Development (CDBG ED) or Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Program Category II Planning Projects.

Both programs require partnership with local government and/or the Certified Regional Development Group such as Bear Paw Development and local matching funds to hire and work with a consultant

- Informal approach –work through Chamber of Commerce to prepare and implement a Consumer Survey (you have a wonderful local expert at Survey Solutions) using mixed method (online and printed format.) Anne Boothe with Triangle Communications can assist with a SurveyMonkey process at no cost to the community.
2. Consider working with the Office of Tourism and Business Development Tourism grant program which offers funding in these categories:
 - Tourism Digital Development: Website development or enhancement; responsive website design; regional or statewide mobile app development and digital development initiatives.
 - Tourism Event Paid Media Advertising: National magazine advertising or national digital advertising

- Insure all businesses fully utilize free listings on state tourism www.visitmt.com This could also be an ideal student or single volunteer effort –aided by the Chamber and businesses involved. Enter your business information via this link http://www.travelmontana.org/OURPROGRAMS/survey_forms

Grant cycle opens on July 1, 2016 and is ongoing until all funds are expended.

3. Understand Montana signage laws and coordinate effort to include all business entities within community. <http://www.montana.interstatelogos.com/state/home.aspx>

Understand Sign Exemptions and work with local and state MDT officials to create uniform directional signs to downtown Big Timber from all highway entrances to community.

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/oac/sign_exemptions.shtml

Recommended Resources

1) For Market or Gap Analysis -

- Extension website -full overview and examples of Downtown Marketing Analysis -includes samples of business and consumer surveys <http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/analysis-of-opportunities-by-sector/retail-service-businesses>
- Becky McCray of [Small Biz Survival](#) says it best: “If we can see what your local spend on a category, versus how much of that is spent locally, we can spot opportunities. Look at this [example from Waterloo, Illinois](#) See all those negative numbers? Those are dollars flowing out of the community. Local people are spending in those categories, just not in Waterloo. That means it’s an opportunity. A new business could start in any of those categories, and know that locals are already spending for them.”
- The full article What Businesses Would Work in a Small Town? Filling empty buildings can be viewed at <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/09>
- Downtown Sheridan Business Plan -retail market analysis begins on page 18. <http://downtownsheridan.org/wp>

2) State Tourism and Digital Marketing efforts

- Carol Crockett
Montana Department of Commerce
Tourism and Business Development Grant Program <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/forms>
<http://tourism.mt.gov/MarketingDevelopment/TourismGrantProgram>
406-841-2796 ccrockett@mt.gov
- Montana No and Low Cost Advertising and Marketing Opportunities
<http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/forms/No&LowCostMarketing13.pdf>
- The Montana Main Street Program <http://mtmainstreet.mt.gov/default.mcp>

General Resources for community branding & marketing.

*****Roger Brooks is a renowned** community branding consultant. To hire him is \$\$\$, but he has a lot of free resources on his website plus he offers webinars often. **I'd suggest the Chamber host "Lunch and Learn" opportunities to watch offerings together – these are great for communities or individual businesses.**
<http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com/about-roger/>

American Independent Business Alliance.
<http://www.amiba.net/buy> -local campaigns, complimentary "shop local" materials

Encourage partnership of local Artists and Art Organizations to fully take advantage of available grants, programs and services – work to coordinate with local tourism and marketing efforts.
<http://www.art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs.asp>

Brand local food products on menus. Encourage positive comments about great food, places to stay or play onto www.GetLost.MT.com from your guests and visitors

Humanities Montana–regular, major and opportunity grants.
<http://www.humanitiesmontana.org/grants/index.php>

REPORT BY: BRIAN OBERT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Montana Business Assistance Connection

Gateway Economic Development District

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Helena, MT 59601

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bobert@mbac.biz

MAIN TOPIC: MEDICAL

Issue: Hospital Renovation

Missouri River Medical Center, Benton Medical Center and all related medical services including elder care are on the minds of the community. Looking at the aging demographics of the State of Montana and the greater Fort Benton area lends one to think this should be an area of great importance. The medical offerings, as well as the education system are the underpinnings of a city or region and are vital to give an area a sense of community. Without one or the other, a place becomes a piece of land you own, not a community that you live.

National changes in health care have been vast and difficult for most facilities. Rural health care has always been a perilous financial endeavor due to limited resources to meet changes. In this manor, rural health care has been disproportionately impacted by the drive to optimize operations and costs. Health Care is now a volume industry, to overcome the capital competitive disadvantage, a rural facilities focus heavily on customer service and quality care. That means emphasis on a kept facility with personalized care that larger facilities cannot match is imperative.

Missouri Fiver Medical Center is an aged structure, which fortunately was well designed and built in its time. The changing times and preferred standards of customer care are creating the requirement for revisions. Hallways are large and rooms are spacious which helps to overcome the age of the facility. The current Heating Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems are aged and in need of upgrade and replacement. Unfortunately, options such as performance contracting are only marginal help when it comes to the capital costs associated with such upgrades. The wide hallways and larger than normal rooms now become a burden without efficient HVAC systems. Conversion of the Hospital and Nursing Home into a Critical Access Hospital (CAU) with skilled swing beds is likely the most financially responsible solution. Unfortunately, the current HVAC system does not provide the ability to isolate and control varied areas of the facility in an efficient manner. Your competitive advantage of large rooms is undermining the budget one BTU at a time. This is why energy efficient HVAC systems and controls are of great importance to reduce the added costs associated with larger than usual CAU rooms.

Health Care is a very personal service. The competitive advantage that a rural health care facility has over larger urban facilities is their ability to provide intimate and personal attention to their customers. A rural facility can brand themselves with an over-the-top sense of hospitality. This brand must start early and must be maintained over the life of the client. Every opportunity to bring value and care to a customer must be taken advantage of. It is suggested that you look at all opportunities to provide any and all service to the potential clients. This includes high school sports physical, CDL health exams and if possible all county health nurse care including SNAP, immunization and senior in-home care benefits. A client that is comfortable with the idea of coming through the doors, is a client that will drive volume and minimize leakage to the urban centers. A

loyal customer will increase opportunities to provide services that generate income that can overcome areas the loss money. Health Care is a feeder type industry. The local first contact must capitalize on any and all services for your captured market before you relinquish that patient to the larger urban facility which is Benefis Health Systems in this case. Even then, once you relinquish that patient to the care of a specialist, you must try to capture any additional opportunity which includes CT, imaging and blood work locally, before they go to their specialist. Remember, your intimate nature eliminates wait times that will be experienced at the larger facility.

Digital records now allows new opportunities for a rural center. A Hospital/CAU/Clinic is a business like any other, a significant amount of effort needs to be expended to market the facility. A well-executed marketing plan can push your potential customer area out further than currently realized, increasing your volumes. A wide variety of health care providers between the CAU and Clinic is vitally important. A modern clinic with a variety of health care professionals on staff or rotating in is important to create a pipeline for the CAU/Hospital. Unfortunately, the current clinic is aged and designed poorly. The reuse of this facility would appear to be putting good money after bad. A well designed clinic with potential for ancillary professionals to periodically provide services is the most effective way to create customer loyalty.

A rural facility should think of your service as cradle to grave. With the regions aged demographic, continuum of care is a significant opportunity to Fort Benton. Your regional shows that Fort Benton can provide a thoughtful and interesting glide path of growing old with grace and worth. The days of living in your house or on the ranch until it becomes apparent that you will likely hurt yourself, is not acceptable. Creating an apparent pathway that makes the aging process understood and compassionate is critical. The “Continuum of Care” model is a right sized, right timed philosophy of living. Moving from the large family house into a smaller independent space with minimal yard maintenance should then be followed by an assisted living facility with appropriate oversight that then migrates into a skilled facility. The Hospital needs to have entry points in all of these timeframes that makes the client aware and comfortable with the organization. With Fort Benton’s physical location, and plethora of community activities and cultural attractions creates a space that could be capitalized upon. You are close enough to the specialists that are available in Great Falls, but have the small town appeal and charm that a significant percentage of population are looking for.

Recommendations:

Health Care is a significant anchor to maintaining and growing a community. Here are ideas to consider to maintain and expand your health care in the region:

- Review and modify the Missions, Vision and Core Value Statements for the Missouri River Medical Center and Clinic to reflect ease of use and outstanding care and compassion. You are a unique community, your pathway to success should be unique or else you will be lost in the mist of options.
- Review the “Cost Report” on a routine basis. Always tie the mission with the cost report and vice versa
- Without promotion, something terrible happens... nothing! (P.T. Barnum) You must create a marketing campaign in all areas of the Health Care offerings. A loyal customer is a lifetime client, i.e. you need the general public to become accustomed with using the facility from physicals to broken bones. Customer care at all levels is key. And refresh and repeat this marketing pitch often.
- Review the elder housing and assisted living opportunities in the region. Greater control of and possible ownership is likely a significant piece of your continuum of care approach. Controlling the timing from private residence into assisted living into skilled nursing is critical. A privately owned apartment or assisted living facility tries to hang onto their customer as long as possible. This many times is at the detriment of the elder resident. Try to create opportunities and space that engages the client when they are still in their “private pay” days. This helps to offset the costs associated with the days when the customer is on the Medicaid system.

- Review the opportunity to take over as much as possible the County Health Nurse activities. Customer loyalty and familiarity is a key to usage.
- Continuum of care must include the knowledge that Medicaid care will be provided. The County Commission should review, if not already using, the Intergovernmental Transfer (IGTs) funds. IGTs funds are problematic, but if incorporated into a robust care program are a great way to leverage additional Federal funds.
- An active, targeted and professional Health Care foundation must live and breathe the mission and vision statements of the Hospital and community. This is a significant means of driving private funds into the facility. Create the Plan, then working the plan will generate financial equity through charitable giving at end of life.
- Funding for the capital improvements to the HVAC system are vital. A well-conditioned air space that provides year around comfort is vital. Do not forget the control systems when making changes. Current pneumatic systems will not give you the control that you need.
- Capital investment funding for the HVAC and Clinic are vital. Look for as much local capital gifting as possible, this is not sexy but needed. Then look for possible funds from Montana Facility Finance Authority (MFFA) and the Intercap funds from Montana Board of Investments. Additionally, review the potential of leveraging the County cash reserve CD's as collateral for these programs or with local banks. Loans that are CD backed are usually very favorable.

Recommended Resources:

For additional information and ideas, please visit the following websites in relationship to Health Care.:

- Where you live Matters: <http://www.wherelivematters.org/>
- Montana Facility Finance Authority: <http://mtfacilityfinance.com/>
- Board of Investment – Intercap loan Program: <http://investmentmt.com/INTERCAP>
- Montana DPHHS – IGTs funding: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/biennialreports/SeniorandLongTermCare2015.pdf>

LISTENING SESSION NOTES

The following pages are the notes taken from listening sessions in Fort Benton, December 7th and 8th.

STRENGTHS AND ASSETS ~ Ft. Benton

Educators

- **Pride and the legacy of our mascot and our school.**
- **Our people – just working with a broad type of people makes us very fortunate.**
- **I am not from here but I love it here.**
- **Strong community of support.**
- **Many opportunities here even though we are a small town. People share what they know.**
- **Ditto**
- **There is so much to do here!**
- **Strong sense of community; it is so visible.**
- **People are open minded which can be rare for a small town.**
- **Ditto.**
- **Very unusual for people to be welcoming to newcomers when you live in a small town.**
- **People go away and then choose to come back here.**
- **Going for 100% graduation rates.**
- **Unique classes – we provide a well rounded education.**
- **We are the county seat – which helps.**
- **There is a good relationship with the schools in small towns that surround us.**
- **Community pride – from our elderly to younger students.**
- **Robust amount of elderly in our community; they support our students and our levy. In turn, we support our senior citizens.**
- **Museums, hospital, proximity to Great Falls**
- **Very giving community; people willing to volunteer and share their crafts.**
- **We have a strong culture for the performing arts.**
- **Recreation – I could go on forever; I love the hunting and fishing.**
- **The river is awesome.**
- **We have a special beauty. Who knew there was life beyond Eddies Corner?**
- **This is the place.**
- **Wonderful theatre.**

40 and Under and Local Leadership

- **Ag community**
- **Small close community – we support each other**
- **Good healthcare**
- **Tourism**
- **I don't know anything different**
- **Small town schools**
- **It is fun!**
- **Love the outdoor activities- fishing, hunting**
- **Friendly and family oriented**
- **River access**
- **Good place to raise kids**
- **Hunting**
- **Safe**

Agriculture/Value Added Agriculture

- Small community
- We are in the center of the best quality wheat producing county in the state
- Close to Great Falls – both a + and –
- Geography
- A lot of country around here – and the river is a unique
- Only place in the U.S. that has three 110 car shuttle loaders
- Dependable workforce with local ties
- On-task workforce; will follow through
- MT Flour and Grain - realize they need to sustain employees with benefits
- People from Great Falls and/or outlying areas buy retirement homes in Ft. Benton.
- Snowbirds buy homes here.
- Two banks – for a town this size that is excellent.
- Courthouse right here in Ft. Benton
- 24 hour emergency room
- New upgrade with ambulance location
- Very low crime rate, especially petty theft

Medical, Hospital, Law Enforcement, EMS/FIRE, Government

- Small town; we care about each other and know each other's names.
- People tend to care about this community as opposed to just living here.
- Ditto
- Community spirit; excellent ambulance service that is well equipped
- Nice community to have healthy lifestyle
- Easy to walk, bike, - can do the river walk in the dark.
- Great hospital staff who care
- Ditto all of the above.
- Ditto walkability, safety, closeknit
- Great school system
- Great volunteers in an emergency situation
- Hospital, ambulance, EMS all have to work together – and we do.
- Hospital has new boilers
- Physical Therapy department is very good; expanded into the school.
- Health Awareness Class – Reach program – gets students in Junior High interested in health careers.
- Low crime area

Churches, Nonprofits, Service Organization, Social Agencies

- Formation of the bell choir
- Amazing assets for such a small town
- Tourism industry
- Great school system
- Businesses that help our nonprofits
- Energy and number of our organizations who work to improve our community
- Community Improvement Association – umbrella for some other nonprofits
- CCPA - Performing Arts; every other year hold state convention
- Woman's Club – very active; backpack program for students to go home with food
- Signs are going to be re-done that showcase historical highpoints
- Angel program – to fill needs of children in low income families/poverty
- Chamber of Commerce – runs info center in summer; attend tourism conferences

- Museums – supported by Geraldine, Big Sandy, Square Butte, etc., members from all over – including out of state.
- Community runs on volunteers – whether churches, CIA, River Plains Society, etc.
- The river – it is what makes Ft. Benton so special geographically.
- Outstanding schools.
- Tourism – and retirement community.
- We are still a full service town.
- Agriculture is still the big dog around here.
- We don't know how lucky we are to live here.
- Very friendly and welcoming community; beautiful
- You drive your car and everyone waves.
- Pig Wrestling and the Demotion Derby – my favorite.
- Chouteau County Fair
- Sister city to Calgary and McCloud
- We have a lot of friends that could work for us economically.
- Central Montana Tourism Committee

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Arts, Recreation

- Preservation and history of the district as an economic development tool.
- Montana and Ft. Benton History
- River – and river outfitters; ditto
- Ditto all of the above
- Ft. Benton is a gem; has everything you need, nothing you don't need.
- Volunteers and service organizations
- Museums – ditto; people are generous with their time and money
- Sense of community
- Great schools
- It is all about the people and are hard working nonprofits
- Winter Celebration – brings in people and enjoyed by locals
- River Press
- Existing Chamber of Commerce
- This is a piece of heaven.
- 80% of clientele is repeat customers
- The County funds the ferries.
- Museums – buy a ticket for one and get in to see all three.
- Tax Increment Finance District

Senior Citizens

- Small town and you know everyone
- Nice hospital, theater, swimming pool, library, schools – a lot for a small town.
- Summer Celebration, Art in the Park, Farmers Market in the summer
- Beautiful park
- Deer walking around
- After awhile you know everyone who lives here.
- You know your way around.
- Streets are snow plowed well on the main streets
- People always know there someone who can help you. But you have to ask.
- High School Seniors come and help two days per week for an hour. They have done painting, cleaning, etc.
- Senior bus from Liberty County

- Friendly people – it is home
- So much to see and do – not necessarily exciting, but interesting.
- Know everyone
- Location, love, small town, home

Retail, Business For-Profit

- Historical past – it oozes from the sidewalks.
- Self-sufficient community – we have needed commodities: hospital, bars, history, museums, car wash, bowling, hotels, river view, walking bridge, laundromat, county seat, etc.
- River is a huge draw – float trips and historical
- Location, close to Great Falls and an airport – but not in the city so have the small town feel.
- Low crime
- Retail – great to have the grocery store and hardware supplies
- Local ownership of the town – people invest in this community in many ways.
- Generational families – if people don't recognize me they recognize my name.
- Community has evolved since the 70's – 80's because people are working hard to preserve the best of Ft. Benton.
- Run in to people from anywhere here – maybe New Jersey or Switzerland. Likely doesn't happen in many small towns in Montana.
- Medical care is great; can make timely appointments without long waiting list.
- Specialists here can connect with those in Great Falls if needed.
- 4-H
- Library

Students – Sophomores at FBHS

- Small and close knit communities
- Opportunities of living in a small town
- We can all get a job at 15 where you probably can't other places, i.e., snack places, restaurants,
- Ditto
- We put on good events
- Our athletic events are supported
- Job opportunities
- Hunting, hiking, the pool
- Jobs
- Farmland
- Smaller classes for the school
- Small
- Community comes together.
- Not a lot of drama.
- Online courses
- Recycling program (volunteer)
- Summer reading program (volunteer)
- Dual credit classes - online

CHALLENGES ~ Ft. Benton

Educators

- Property taxes are due; our property seems to be being compared to Great Falls values.
- We don't have industry to contribute to our tax base.
- Aging population
- Maintaining and growing our businesses to keep our children here
- Attract new businesses to grow our enrollment
- Lack of daycare
- Losing skills such as car repair; some have left for Great Falls as Great Falls is not that far away.
- Summer jobs are hard to come by for our students.
- Not a lot of high wages jobs
- Rentals are very tough to find. Houses are for sale, but not for rent. Some of those for sale are in very poor shape, and others are high end.
- We are "wheat locked" for development.

40 and Under and Local Leadership

- Latch key kids
- Underprivileged families
- People work for less/low pay scale
- Day care
- Competition with Great Falls
- No tax base – farm ranch community
- Keeping restaurants – especially all around family restaurants
- Hard to keep doctors here
- We have a bus for medical trips but no one seems to use it; or it is not available.

Agriculture/Value Added Agriculture

- Competition for markets globally
- Resistance to change – new training is required on Federal level
- Ag producers tend to be bad about sustaining their employees with benefits
- Housing – better than it was but still needs improvement
- Some houses need to be torn down
- Retail struggles – one grocery store – hard to compete against Great Falls.
- No accountant in town

Medical, Hospital, Law Enforcement, EMS/FIRE, Government

- Volunteer shortage – need at least 20 volunteers but have 14 – 15.
- All volunteer service is not connected to county or city – funding comes through grants, billing, and donations. Insurance regulations make billing difficult.
- Crew does get a small stipend, but not enough here for them to stay and live – so have older volunteers.
- Equipment – do have new ambulance but just had to repair transmission in another ambulance. Need to put in railing system as required by the state.
- Hospital radiators are bad – hard to control temperature in rooms and for staff. Bid is for over \$100,000. Plumbing in hospital is also an issue. Air conditioning is down so a rental unit was used; expensive but did work well for patients.
- Need a clinic – the old nunnery does not begin to meet federal standards.
- Detention center needs some work but holding our own.
- Hard to keep detention staff.

- Challenging new requirements for deputies to be trained – now need direct supervision which doesn't provide expanded service.
- Mental health care in-depth services are almost non-existent
- Lab work is very short all across the state.
- Almost 100 students who need food in our school system

Churches, Nonprofits, Service Organization, Social Agencies

- Consolidated farms and upgraded equipment – need far less people to do more work; this is one cause of Ft. Benton losing population and business. i.e., used to have four grocery stores.
- Identifying needs in our community and how to overcome some of those needs
- Homes that are empty
- Keeping hospital and medical center updated for our aging population
- Need more lodging; need more rooms – if a tour bus came here, not enough places for people to stay
- Some Churches struggle financially
- We ask our businesses for help too often – we knock on their doors constantly.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Arts, Recreation

- Assist local businesses
- Younger people need to get more involved
- People may feel more connected with the community online rather than attending meetings to accomplish projects.
- Finding places to eat in town that are open off hours; especially during major holidays
- People may be in town for the 4th of July, but restaurants are closed.
- County-wide = roads through the county are so bad they are unsafe for school children
- Infrastructure repairs
- More tourism needed;
- Turned away a tour bus call because not enough lodging
- Funding the signage along the river
- Everything here moves slow

Senior Citizens

- Getting medical care – transportation to Great Falls to see doctors
- Daycares have closed.
- We have learned how to cope.
- My pipes froze up my air conditioner quit
- Medical – distance to Great Falls and specialists.
- Groceries
- Lack of jobs for young people
- Farms are bigger – businesses pushed out of town
- Changes in Ag
- We don't get the middle aged/business community
- Distance to VA
- Need plumber
- Year around tourism
- Restaurant with a family environment.

Retail, Business For-Profit

- Need young people

- **Preserve our small town feel yet sustain ourselves**
- **Aging buildings**
- **Housing is a problem – great old houses that need love and investment**
- **Food – glad we have a grocery store but have food sensitivities so hard to find special items.**
- **Need more businesses**
- **Home rental situation is terrible**
- **More food options in our grocery store**
- **We as a community need to make it advantageous to use vacant buildings.**

Students – Sophomores at FBHS

- **Roads – in town and out of town**
- **Not much to do – a lot to do in the summer**
- **Fewer opportunities than big schools as far as classes – languages, technology, etc.**
- **Drive 40 minutes to go shopping or a see a movie**
- **More things to do in town our age**
- **Clothing stores, more restaurants**
- **Fast food**
- **Not as many academic opportunities ditto**
- **No privacy – if you do something wrong people know about it for weeks.**
- **Ditto fast food – Taco Bell**
- **Lack of music opportunities in the school**
- **Too many deer around**
- **Limited sports and extracurricular activities – i.e., no baseball**
- **More to do - like BMX**
- **Sidewalks are bad**
- **More sports**
- **We lose power and internet for hours and days at times.**

PROJECTS AND VISION ~ Ft. Benton

Educators

- Moderate growth with young families.
- Light industry or agriculture to keep our small town feel but help us thrive.
- A reason for young people to come.
- Poverty reduced.
- More development of small grains; alternatives to wheat
- Would need housing opportunities to be more of a bedroom community for Great Falls.
- Learn where the community could grow – identify land for development.
- Continue the amenities and improve them; beautification.
- More restaurants that are open morning, noon, and night.
- More signage to get people off of the highway and into Ft. Benton.
- More celebrations to promote our town.
- Bring “The Hoot” here.
- Maybe play Class B football again.

40 and Under and Local Leadership

- More jobs so that young people can stay here
- More winter tourism – snow shoeing, cross country skiing
- Less is more – I am content.
- New vet clinic in Geraldine
- New hospital
- Rail through Geraldine
- Grain prices increased
- More dining options

Agriculture/Value Added Agriculture

- Get the hospital through its three phases;
- New businesses, value added such as a fish plant – take barley and make it into fish food;
- Grow the businesses we currently have so that they thrive
- A wild dream but to improve rail access – bring it into town again.
- We need a pulse plant – sorting, cleaning, packaging
- Senior Citizen Center – other places – figure out parking

Medical, Hospital, Law Enforcement, EMS/FIRE, Government

- Have facilities so that a cardiologist will come here at regular intervals to serve patients.
- New clinic – very important to serve our patients.
- Actual paid Fire and EMS Services
- More young people and younger volunteers involved in emergency service work.
- Affordable housing so that younger families will come
- Better marketing of our emergency services – a united approach
- Promote home businesses – perfect fit for volunteers
- Ditto the need for younger volunteers.
- Increased staff and/or deputies or consolidate more so work together even better.
- Encourage young people to participate by doing a Junior EMT program.
- Expand ability for tele-health.
- Advertise Ft. Benton from the highway
- Fix the train depot – worked with showcasing the dog, how about the depot
- More hotels and conference rooms

- Streets improved
- Signage to direct people to the downtown and off the highway
- Fill the vacant store fronts (need the people!) December – May is very quiet.

Churches, Nonprofits, Service Organization, Social Agencies

- Take advantage of being along the way between two National Parks
- More signage outside of town to show the way to downtown.
- More traffic drawn in to Ft. Benton
- Churches work together to cycle/host a hot meal on a regular basis for the poor
- Forming an inter-faith Ministerial Association
- More lodging opportunities – to accommodate tour buses
- Front Street reflects the 1880's and/or Ft. Benton's glory days in history

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Arts, Recreation

- Value added ag projects need to be explored, enhanced to ultimately stabilize our population.
- Market Ft. Benton for young people to move here – but need housing, too.
- Build attendance at the museums
- Continue but need to do more marketing together with chamber, museums, etc.
- Complete reconstruction of the Fort.
- Get front of the Ag Center redone
- Businesses are in all of the empty businesses
- Fill our industrial park
- More restaurants and open longer
- New brewery and hotel becomes a reality.
- Greater knowledge of this little treasure – more signage
- Emphasis on following Lewis and Clark down the river – remains unspoiled to this day
- More housing to accommodate our needs.
- Wendt Advertising marketing projects is successful.

Senior Citizens

- Figure out why the bus is not being used. I.e., the community paid for it but does not get to use it?
- A reliable transportation system – need insurance, someone to maintain the bus and a driver.
- Assisted Living facility – we have a nursing home, but nothing in between.
- More businesses
- Year round business opportunities
- Family environment restaurant

Retail, Business For-Profit

- More to do in the evening although we do have the great outdoors
- Movie Theatre
- Co-Op for organic foods - ditto
- Variety of restaurants
- Possibly create a rental agency or home management company to oversee the renters to rent vacant homes.
- Food trucks in summer time to accommodate more customers for restaurants
- Healthy place to exercise with a daycare in a room right next door; a community space
- Community work space; incubator space
- Promote ourselves as a bedroom community for Great Falls
- Must improve signage
- Microbrewery

- **Raise our level of uniqueness – class it up as we preserve it.**
- **Both city and county work together to provide enhancements that would encourage growth or sustainability.**
- **Good amount of home schooled students – consider a Montessori type organization**
- **Thinking and planning ahead to have wise growth in 15 to 20 years to preserve our small town atmosphere.**
- **Improve communication between retailers and historic groups.**
- **Bike rental business**
- **Green house facility for local growing**

Students – Sophomores from Fort Benton High School

- **Fast foods and a hang out space**
- **More things to do – entertainment, work**
- **Movie Theatre – with food**
- **More entertainment**
- **If it were like a big city I would come back**
- **More people who stay here – ditto, ditto**
- **Cheaper housing – better places to live**
- **Better roads, ditto, ditto**
- **Rec center with basketball hoops – co-ed basketball league; ditto, ditto**
- **Hockey team**
- **Rent out paddleboards and kayaks**

Where to Find Funding

State and Local Funders

1. 3 Rivers Communications: <http://www.3rivers.net/grants%20%2526%20sponsorships>
Events that promote rural communities
2. Big Sky Economic Development Trust Fund Planning Grant:
<http://businessresources.mt.gov/BSTF/Planning/Information>
Planning and Job Creation grants
3. Butte Citizens for Preservation and Revitalization, Inc.:
<http://www.buttecpr.org/services/grants.php>
Preservation of historic buildings in Butte
4. Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation: <http://www.dpwfoundation.org/grants/>
Funding for organizations that support education, health and human services, arts and culture, and community service
5. The Foster Foundation: http://thefosterfoundation.org/Grants_Guide.asp
Supports programs including building/renovation, equipment, matching/challenge support, program development, research, scholarship funds, and seed money
6. Humanities Montana: www.humanitiesmontana.org
Supports public programs in history, philosophy, literatures and languages, and other disciplines of the humanities
7. Jerry Metcalf Foundation
www.jerrymetcalfmontana.org/grantguidelines.html
Funding for visual, performing, and literary arts, historical research and preservation, environmental research and conservation, and education and community health
8. J.M. Kaplan Fund: www.jmkfund.org
Funding for efforts to inventory and protect North American industrial architecture
9. Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation: Community Partners
http://www.lowes.com/cd_The+Lowe's+Charitable+and+Educational+Foundation_474741445
Supports public education and community improvement projects
10. MDU Resources Foundation: <http://www.mdu.com/integrity/foundation>
Grants for the support of arts and culture, education, health and community development
11. MJ Murdock Charitable Trust: www.murdock-trust.org/
Performance and visual arts projects which enrich the cultural environment
12. Montana Arts Council: http://art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs_ca.asp
Operations, capital, special projects, and endowment development categories for historic preservation activities
13. Montana Community Foundation: www.mtcf.org
Funds fields of interest such as human services, affordable housing, public education, or the performing arts
14. Montana Conservation Corps: mtcorps.org

Volunteers complete conservation projects in local communities, national forests, state and national parks, wildlife refuges and federally designated wilderness areas

15. Montana Department of Commerce, Community Development Block Grants:

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

Housing and neighborhood renewal, public facilities, planning grants, and economic development projects

16. Montana Department of Commerce, Tourism Grants Program:

<http://tourism.mt.gov/MarketingDevelopment/TourismGrantProgram>

Construction costs associated with building and/or remodeling or preserving existing tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites and artifacts, costs associated with purchasing new and/or existing tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites and artifacts, and equipment purchased for specific tourism project operation

17. Montana Department of Transportation, Community Transportation Enhancement Program: www.mdt.mt.gov/business/ctep

Pedestrian and bike trails, scenic easements, historic and archaeological sites, historic highway programs, and landscaping and community beautification projects

18. Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office

<http://mhs.mt.gov/shpo>

Offers subgrants as available to Montana communities to support preservation efforts in accordance with federal grant programs.

19. Montana History Foundation: www.mthistory.org

Preservation of historical assets of importance to Montana history including buildings, oral histories, and collection/archival preservation

20. Montana Main Street Program: <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet>

Helps communities strengthen and preserve their historic downtown commercial districts by focusing on economic development, urban revitalization, and historic preservation through long-range planning, organization, design, and promotion

21. Montana Preservation Alliance: www.preservemontana.org

Assistance to communities and owners of historic properties

22. Montana State University: www.msucommunityresources.org/grantopps.asp

Grant Opportunities list of 'community-friendly' grants; i.e., those grants that organizations and special interest groups in small, underserved, struggling rural communities have a reasonable chance of competing for on a level playing field

23. Northwestern Energy Charitable Giving Program:

https://app.trueimpact.com/app/proposal_submit.php?id=150

Education, health and human services, civic and community, culture and the arts, and resource conservation

24. Steele Reese Foundation: <http://steele-reese.org/>

Supports nonprofit organizations working in the areas of rural education; health; human/social services; the arts and humanities; and land, water, and wildlife conservation and historic preservation

Federal Grant Makers

1. American Association of State and Local History

<http://www.aaslh.org>

National association that provides leadership and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful to all Americans.

2. **Grants.gov**

Source to find and apply for federal government grants

3. **Institute for Museum and Library Services:** <http://www.ims.gov>

Provides funding for conservation assessments and projects to museums and libraries for arts education, dance, design, literature, local arts agencies, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, and visual arts

4. **National Endowment for the Arts:** <https://www.arts.gov/grants>

Supports projects that exhibit, preserve, and interpret visual material through exhibitions, residences, publications, commissions, public art works, conservation documentation, and services to the federal and public programs

5. **National Endowment for the Humanities:** www.neh.gov/grants

Provides grants for high-quality humanities projects in four funding areas: preserving and providing access to cultural resources, education, research and public programs

6. **National Historical Publications and Records Commission**

<http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/>

Supports projects in archives and museums focused on document preservation

7. **The National Trust for Historic Preservation:** www.nthp.org

Offers several types of financial assistance in preservation-related projects

8. **Preserve America Grants (National Park Service):** www.preserveamerica.gov

Supports preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education and historic preservation planning

9. **US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration:** www.eda.gov

Provides funds for technical assistance, planning, and development of projects that result in the creation of significant levels of private sector employment

10. **US Department of the Interior:** <https://www.nps.gov/history/index.htm>

Funds projects that encourage preservation of National Historic Landmarks

11. **US Department of Agriculture:** <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

Offers programs in the area of housing and rural community development that can be of assistance to preservation efforts