

# **CHOTEAU MONTANA COMMUNITY REVIEW PHASE 2**

**May 7 – 8, 2018**



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

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## CHOTEAU PHASE 2 OVERVIEW

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

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

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, the Visiting Team arrived in Choteau and toured the area, similar to the Advance Team’s visit in March. Next, a working lunch was held with the Home Team and Visiting Team to review the Phase 1 Report, briefly review the main topics and issues identified by the Advance Team, and to review the agenda for the rest of the team’s visit. A discussion of selecting a coach to serve as the contact point for the Launch Phase was held. Next, a two hour session was held with the people of Choteau; those in attendance broke into small groups based on the topic of most interest to them. Each group narrowed down issues under each topic to three and clearly defined the problem or project, named resources that would be needed, and listed people who could assist. Those in attendance gathered back together and one person from each group reported on the ideas discussed in their group.

That evening, a town meeting was held to review Phase 1, share highlights from the Phase 1 Report, and update the community on the projects and priorities identified that afternoon. Those in attendance voted to priorities each project under each issue. The community was invited to attend the next morning’s Working Group sessions to create action plans for the projects identified.

The morning of May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Working Groups that were formed the prior afternoon gathered and completed an Action Plan for their group’s tasks. One person from each Working Group was asked to serve as a leader on the Steering Committee.

A working lunch was held with the Home Team, Visiting Team and newly formed Steering Committee to determine next steps. Phase 3 was born! A Coach was selected and a meeting schedule set for the Steering Committee. Phase 2 concluded with the Visiting Team and Home Team providing a live stream report at City Hall.

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

## CHOTEAU LEARN PHASE VISITING TEAM

The following team was formed to assist Choteau in delving deep into issues and provide information to help Choteau move forward. The team members matched the topic areas the people of Choteau identified during the Listen phase, including **Business Development, Infrastructure, Tourism and Recreation, and Community Enhancement.**



L to R: Sarah Converse, Peggy Trenk, Paul Lachapelle, Steve Dogiakos, Lea McGiboney, Linda Stoddard, Lorie Higgins, Corlene Martin, Gloria O'Rourke, Sue Taylor, Jerry Grebenc, and Gus Byrom. Absent from the photo: Jolene Schalper.

- Dr. Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho Extension
- Dr. Paul Lachapelle, Montana State University, Extension and Local Government Center
- Sue Taylor, Beartooth RC&D, Economic Development Director
- Gus Byrom, MT Dept. of Commerce, Community Development Division, CDBG
- Jan Stoddard, MT Dept. of Commerce, Office of Tourism and Business Development, Industry Services & Outreach Bureau Chief
- Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development, Executive Director
- Jerry Grebenc, Great West Engineering, Senior Planner
- Lea McGiboney, USDA/Rural Development, Great Falls
- Jolene Schalper, Great Falls Development Authority, CEcD
- Peggy Trenk, Montana Housing Coalition
- Gloria O'Rourke, Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA)

Thanks to each of these team members for donating their time and expertise to Choteau!

## TOUR TIME

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



## CONCURRENT TOPIC SESSIONS

Following a working lunch, the Home Team and Visiting Team gathered with the community of Choteau at The Pavilion to identify projects under each topic and list people and resources that may be able to assist. Visiting Team members sat at the table of their specialty and assisted in planning next steps.

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

## SETTING PRIORITIES AND DEFINING ISSUES

### INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Possibility #1: PREPARE FOR MDT CPORRIDOR STUDY AND RECONSTRUCTION

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

- Money and Time
- Dovetail with water and storm water lines

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

- Mike Maple – City Public Works

- Jody – City Finance

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

**Possibility #2: SIDEWALK PLANS AND DATA; TREE PLAN MAINTENANCE AND DATA**

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

- At least two Volunteers
- Ipad
- Financing

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

City Public Works

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

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

**Possibility #3: VOLUNTARY NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP**

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

- Coordination by City Public Works
- Removal of debris
- Volunteer neighborhood contact
- Financing and equipment

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

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



Infrastructure Breakout Group

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**Possibility #1: TELECOMMUTING BUSINESS/BUSINESS RECRUITMENT STRATEGY**

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

- Ag Tech Fair
- Internet Marketing Knowledge
- Financing for travel for marketing
- Message for recruitment and materials

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

- Choteau Area Port Authority
- Chamber
- Governor's Office of Economic Development
- Choteau School
- City
- TBID

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 3 – 6 months



Business Development Breakout Group

Are you willing to make a time commitment

to help this possibility become a reality? List names and best contact (point of phone and/or email)

- Kurt
- Lonnie
- Steve
- Laura

## **Possibility #2: MAINTAIN AND SUSTAIN EXISTING BUSINESSES**

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

- Identify Resource support
- Better coordination and training

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

- Choteau Area Port Authority
- Great Falls Development SBDC
- SCORE
- Sweetgrass Development
- Chamber
- City

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 6 – 9 months

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

### **Possibility #3: FOSTER NEW STARTUPS AND NEW BUSINESS**

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

- Space
- PA
- Chamber
- Civic organizations
- Complexley,
- MUS Systems

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

PA

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): 6 to 9 months

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

## **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION**

### **Possibility #1: BRANDING AND MARKETING**

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

- Branding via Main Street Program Committee
- Social media platform – Committee to build

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

- Wendt – to build on what we already have
- TBID
- Museums
- MSU Extension
- Chamber
- USFS/FWP

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

### **Possibility #2: VISITOR CENTER**

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

- Training and Staffing

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

- Chamber
- City
- TBID

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

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

- Katie
- Roseann



Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Breakout Group

### **Possibility #3: EXPANDED RECREATION**

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

- Vision and strategic planning assistance
- Awareness – marketing
- Planning assistance

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

- Depends on focus i.e., dog park, yoga, biking, hiking, birding, scenic drives, ski hill, etc.

## **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT**

### **Possibility #1: LIBRARY REVITALIZATION**

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

- State Library
- Friends of the Library
- Library Foundation



- City of Choteau
- Teton County
- Examples such as ImagineIf Chester
- Consider: Information center, Community spaces, Meeting place, Coffee Shop, Garden, Trail Information Center.

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

- Friends of the Library

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

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

- Jennifer Birnel

**Possibility #2: MAIN STREET OOZE PROJECT (“ooze” refers to those streets/areas affected by the highway project)**

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

- MDOT – new highway
- City of Choteau
- Other city beautification projects
- City planners
- MSU Extension
- Choteau Arts Studio
- Choteau Activities
- Stage Stop to Teton Lumber
- Side street businesses
- Vacant lots/ppp
- Business signs
- Beautification



Community Enhancement Breakout Group

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

- City to appoint committee

Time frame (60 days, 6-12 months, more than 12 months): Plan in place within two years; basic improvements ahead of time.

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

- Corlene Martin
- Polly Cunningham
- Stacia Martinea

### **Possibility #3: INTERNAL COMMUNITY BRANDING**

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

- First develop communication plan and cohesion, i.e., who are we, what do we have, how can we share our assets?
- TBID
- Parks and Rec Board
- City of Choteau
- Chamber
- School
- Various organizations
- Ranches/Ag

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

- 4-H? City? Chamber? To be determined.....

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

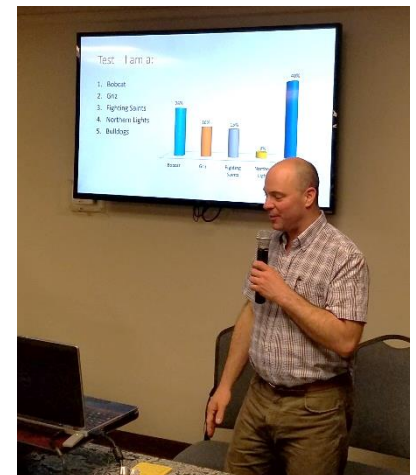
### **REPORT OUT and PREP**

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



### CHOTEAU TOWN MEETING – AFFIRMING PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES

A town meeting was held with the people of Choteau to update everyone on the work that was accomplished earlier in the day and to vote to affirm the issues and projects on the table. Group leaders reported out to those in attendance. Paul Lachapelle then used a voting/click process to determine priorities under each issue. The results: each issue under every topic was fairly even. This told both the Home Team and Visiting Team that everyone is on the same page in moving Choteau forward.



Above Left: Attendees learn of the progress made by the breakout groups. Above right: Paul Lachapelle guides the group through affirming the topics, issues, and priorities for Choteau.



Above: Vote with a Click

### **ACTION PLANS!**

The next morning, May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Home Team, Visiting Team, and community of Choteau met to form working groups to dig deeper into the issues identified the previous day. An Action Plan worksheet was used to guide the groups through each step. The results are on the following pages.



Infrastructure Working Group



Business Development Working Group



Tourism and Outdoor Rec Working Group



Community Enhancement Working Group

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

**MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE****ISSUE: HIGHWAY PLANNING PROJECT**

**Goal: Successful Highway reconstruction where the city is happy with the final design and product.**

**Champion: City Manager and Public Works; Mike Maples**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Advisory Committee designated and meets</b>	<b>City Manager and Public Works Tom Frownfelder Beth Barlow</b>	<b>Time, Personnel, and Funding</b>	<b>Four volunteers identified</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Hold first meeting with MDT</b>	<b>City Manager, Public Works, and Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Time, Personnel and Funding</b>		<b>July 2018</b>
<b>Apply for CDBG Planning Grant</b>	<b>City Manager, Public Works</b>	<b>Time, Personnel, and Funding</b>		<b>May/June 2018</b>
<b>Meet with residents about MDT meeting</b>	<b>City Manager, Public Works, Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Time, Personnel, and Funding</b>		<b>August 2018</b>
<b>Start Highway Planning Project</b>	<b>City Manager, Public Works, Consultant, Advisory Committee</b>	<b>CDBG Grant, City Match, Personnel Funding</b>	<b>Consultant under contract, Kickoff Meeting</b>	<b>September 2018 March 2019</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**ISSUE: GIS SIDEWALK AND TREE INVENTORY**

**Goal: Database for better management, planning, and maintenance of sidewalks and trees.**

**Champion: City Public Works**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Find Volunteers</b>	<b>City Public Works Manager Nancy Milewski</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>		<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Train Volunteers</b>	<b>City Public Works Manager and Volunteers</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>		<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Begin collecting data for sidewalks</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>		<b>June – August 2018</b>
<b>Begin collecting data for trees</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>		<b>June – August 2018</b>
<b>Completion of Database</b>	<b>City Public Works Manager</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>		<b>October 2018</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: INFRASTRUCTURE****ISSUE: VOLUNTARY NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP****Goal: Neighbor-to-neighbor program to address blight and clean up Choteau****Champion: City Public Works Manager**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b> <b>INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Obtain City Council's approval</b>	<b>City Public Works Manager</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>	<b>Approval received</b>	<b>May 2018</b>
<b>Identify volunteer champions</b>	<b>City Council Members Acantha and word-of-mouth</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>	<b>Volunteers identified</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Create plan and process</b>	<b>City Public Works Manger and Champions</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding</b>	<b>Plan is in place</b>	<b>June-July 2018</b>
<b>Champions communicate with neighbors</b>	<b>Champions</b>	<b>Time</b>		<b>July-August 2018</b>
<b>Champions organize pick up with Public Works</b>	<b>City Public Works, Champions</b>	<b>Time/Personnel Funding Equipment and Funding for Tipping Fees</b>	<b>Pick-up dates are set</b>	<b>August-September 2018</b>



**MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**  
**ISSUE: Keeping and retaining local businesses**  
**Goal: Foster, maintain, and grow local businesses.**  
**Champion: Josh**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Create list of businesses</b>	<b>Steve D. Brian McCollum Carole Bronson Stacia</b>	<b>Team members meet with 2 – 3 businesses</b>	<b>Meeting and report out</b>	<b>3 to 6 months</b>
<b>List of business resources</b>	<b>Josh and Mark</b>	<b>SBDC, Sweetgrass Development, etc.</b>	<b>On going</b>	<b>On going</b>
<b>Volunteer training to begin business retention expansion program/process</b>	<b>Lisa and Lonnie</b>	<b>Business trainer – Great Falls Development Authority</b>  <b>Date and time and place</b>	<b>Follow-up meeting with businesses</b>	<b>3 to 6 months</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**ISSUE: Fostering Start-ups**

**Goal: Fostering start-ups and entrepreneurship**

**Champion: Ed**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Ag Tech Taskforce</b>	<b>Ed, Lisa, and Rich</b>	<b>3Rivers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Identify businesses and participants</b></li> <li><b>2. Meeting</b></li> <li><b>3. Fair</b></li> </ol>	<b>3 to 6 months</b>
<b>Identify start-ups from business retention visits</b>	<b>BRE Team Heather Hodgkiss Carole Bronson Lisa Haas</b>	<b>Report out results</b>	<b>On going</b>	<b>On going</b>
<b>Youth Entrepreneurship program with the school</b>	<b>Blair</b>	<b>3Rivers 4H Wendy Haman</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Get school on board</b></li> <li><b>2. Information to kids</b></li> <li><b>3. Business Competition</b></li> </ol>	<b>3 to 6 months</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**ISSUE: Business Recruitment**

**Goal: Tell the stories of the people who choose to live and work here within a singular brand.**

**Champion: Blair**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Share Choteau successful business stories</b>	<b>Steve and Blair Partner with Branding Group Joe Haas Bre Lobdell Ed Garon Lisa Haas</b>	<b>YouTube Video 3Rivers</b>	<b>Video completed</b>	<b>3 to 6 months</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**ISSUE: Branding and Marketing**

**Goal: Consensus on brand and its dimensions.**

**Champion: See project leaders below.**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<p><b>Create steering marketing team</b></p> <p><b>Communicate and review what has been done to date</b></p> <p><b>Wendt meeting to review</b></p> <p><b>Review logos</b></p> <p><b>Check into other communities and their work.</b></p> <p><b>Test concepts</b></p> <p><b>Brand decision</b></p>	<p><b>Joe and Sandra will co-chair; Cory, Maggie, Flint, Deb, Joe Haas, Glenn Deuchler</b></p> <p><b>TBID, Chamber, Museums, CE Team, Infra Team, ED Team</b></p> <p><b>Internal branding: Ed Garon, Stacia Martineau</b></p>	<p><b>USFA, FWP, Lion’s, Soroptimists, Choteau Port Authority</b></p> <p><b>Funding: TBID, Choteau Port Authority, Central MT Tourism, Technical Assistance from MEDA program, MT Dept. of Commerce</b></p>	<p><b>Established Steering team and first meeting</b></p> <p><b>Meetings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Define decision making</b></li> <li>• <b>Finish final brand concept and application, i.e., logo, tagline, etc.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Fall 2018</b></p> <p><b>February 2019</b></p> <p><b>Finish Final Brand</b></p>

**MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**ISSUE: Expanding recreation**

**Goal: Expand current events and explore new options to increase and lengthen the stay of visitors to Choteau.**

**Champion: See project leaders below.**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Identify one event to expand and sell, for example, to NR visitors: Winter Rendezvous – add skijoring</b>	<b>Cory and Beth, Co-Chair Jane Hartman</b>	<b>Chamber, OAS Other communities for guidance: Wisdom, Lincoln, Red Lodge</b>	<b>Set up teams  Determine Action Plans, Tasks, Responsibilities</b>	<b>January/February 2019</b>
<b>Identify second event to expand sell to NR visitors: Spring Birding – add film festival</b>	<b>Beth and Julie, Co-Chair; Peggy, Nancy, Maggie, Eve, Nancy M, Sue</b>	<b>Chamber, FWP, Catering businesses, Wild Game Feed</b>		<b>Third Weekend in March 2019</b>

**MAIN TOPIC: TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**ISSUE: Visitor Center**

**Goal: Enhance visitor center hours, staffing, and signage.**

**Champion: See project leaders below.**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Expand hours and/or staff</b>	<b>Debbie, Terry Barch Co-Chairs; Beth, Julie Ameline, Cindy Cross, Tom Frownfelder</b>	<b>City Council, TBID, Chamber, possible Tourism Infrastructure Grant</b>	<b>Contact others Discussions held on four action steps.</b>	<b>Begin Fall 2018</b>
<b>Add Kiosk</b>		<b>Funding sources: TBID, MDOT</b>		<b>Apply September 2019</b>
<b>Review/add signage</b>				
<b>Donation box</b>				

**MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT****ISSUE: Library Revitalization****Goal: Remodel the library to make it ADA compliant and meet community needs including a collaborative work space, tech hub, gathering space, and more.****Champion: Jennifer**

<b>ACTION STEPS</b> What you need to do to reach the goal	<b>PERSONS OR PARTNERS RESPONSIBLE</b> Who is responsible for each action step	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED INTERNAL AND/OR EXTERNAL</b> Resources needed to complete action steps	<b>PROGRESS INDICATED = BENCHMARK</b> How you know that you have made progress on each action step	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b> When you expect to complete each action step
<b>Meet with stakeholders to introduce the ideas</b>	<b>Jennifer Birnel and co-leader Kathje Griffis</b>	<b>Place and time for meeting</b>		<b>June 30, 2018</b>
<b>Get buy-in from stakeholders and Friends of the Library</b>  <b>Gather information from PALS and Lions for lessons learned</b>	<b>Identify a committee to head up.</b>  <b>Assign committee roles.</b>	<b>People to communicate with PALS and Lions</b>  <b>State library consultant MLA</b>	<b>Committee identified and roles assigned</b>	<b>August 30</b>
<b>Gather community input on needs from different community groups</b> a. Surveys b. Community meeting with plans and choices c. Open house for input	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Social media presence</b> <b>Mailing lists</b> <b>Surveys</b> <b>Meeting space plans</b>	<b>Survey results compiled</b>	<b>December 1</b>
<b>Fundraising, Grant writing</b> <b>Architectural designs</b> <b>Cost estimates and bids</b>		<b>Sweetgrass Development</b> <b>Local Trades people</b>		

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

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

The next step was to formally identify the Choteau Steering Committee. This committee was formed by tapping the Home Team, at least one representative from each Working Group, and a Coach. Choteau's Steering Committee includes: Beth Barlow, Blair Patton, Corlene Martin, Debra Renteria, Jennifer Birnel, Julie Ameline, Laura Buck, Mary Sexton, Melody Martinsen, Michael Maples, Sarah Converse, and Steve Dogiakos. Several members of the Visiting Team asked to be included as well.

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



The formation of the Choteau Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee decided to meet the fourth Thursday of each month immediately following the Choteau Area Port Authority meeting. A conference call in option is available for those unable to attend in person.

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

The Visiting Team, along with the representatives from the Home Team, met at City Hall and reported live stream to the people of Choteau all that had been accomplished in the two day visit. Part of Phase 3 is completing this report which will serve as a further “launch” of the Steering Committee’s Work as the remaining information is provided from the specialists who visited Choteau.



# RESOURCE REPORT FROM THE CHOTEAU VISITING TEAM

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Report by Jerry Grebenc, Gus Byrom, and Lea McGiboney

*Note: See Appendices A – D for additional information on this topic.*

### INFRASTRUCTURE: Highway 287 Corridor Project

In the next few years, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will be undertaking a Corridor Planning Study for the eventual reconstruction of Highway 287 through the City.

The reconstruction of the highway will have long-term impacts upon the City including the appearance of main street appearance, its walkability and how the City replaces infrastructure beneath the highway such as water and stormwater lines.

It is essential that the City begin talking to MDT staff about the upcoming project and what can residents realistically obtain from the process. Along with understanding MDT's planning process, residents should use a City's driven process to develop consensus about the results residents want to see from the corridor study and the highway reconstruction.

### Proposed Implementation Steps:

1. The City will designate an advisory committee to work on this project.
2. The advisory committee will schedule and hold a meeting with MDT staff to discuss the corridor study process.
3. The City will pursue a Community Development Block Grant Planning Grant to fund a "main street" planning process for residents. This process would complement the MDT corridor study.
4. Schedule a public meeting to discuss the results of the committee's meeting with MDT and to determine the City's next steps.
5. Hire a consultant to facilitate the main street planning process.
6. Develop a "main street" plan, working cooperatively with MDT.

### Recommended Resources:

- Brian Bender, Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Deer Lodge, 406-846-2238, [bbender.deerlodge@gmail.com](mailto:bbender.deerlodge@gmail.com) The City of Deer Lodge recently went through a downtown planning process regarding the redevelopment of the City's main street, which involved close conversations with MDT about the project. The main street of Deer Lodge is maintained by MDT.
- Sheila Ludlow, MDT Great Falls Area Transportation Planner, 406-444-9193, [sludlow@mt.gov](mailto:sludlow@mt.gov)
- Doug Wilmot, MDT Great Falls District, 406-454-5887, [dwilmot@mt.gov](mailto:dwilmot@mt.gov)
- MDT Corridor Studies: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/corridor-studies.shtml>

## **INFRASTRUCTURE: Sidewalk and Tree Inventory**

### Sidewalks

Data collection effort will include documenting existing conditions and key attributes of sidewalks along the entire existing City street network. The completed product will allow for the efficient analysis of existing sidewalk conditions and identification of areas of the network in need of improvement, not meeting ADA standards, or lacking connectivity (i.e., missing segments). The data would be uploaded to the City's mapping system and would help the City use its limited resources to repair, replace and extend the sidewalk system in a logical manner.

### Trees

In 2012, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation developed a detailed tree inventory for the City. The inventory contains detailed information about the City's trees, including species, size and location. Unfortunately, much of the location information is not correct. This project would more accurately locate tree from the DRNC inventory, determine if they are still alive and the inventory would add all of the new trees planted in the City since 2012. An inventory of trees will help the City make sound management decisions including budget strategies and priorities. An updated inventory can provide the locations of trees that require pruning or removal to reduce risk, the number of trees located within the public right-of-way.

### Proposed Implementation Steps:

1. Identify volunteers
2. Train volunteers in the use of the hardware and software.
3. Volunteers will collect data on sidewalks.
4. Volunteers will collect data on tree.
5. Data will be provided to the City staff as it is collected.
6. Data will be uploaded to the City mapping system.

### Recommended Online Resources:

- <https://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/p2811.pdf>
- <https://www.bozeman.net/government/forestry/tree-inventory>
- <http://cityofpowell.com/assets/pages/city/documents/CityofPowellWyomingCommunityTreeAssessment2017.pdf>
- <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/community-facilities-programs>

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

MT DNRC Urban Forestry Inventory: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/forestry-assistance/urban-and-community-forestry/statewide-urban-forest-inventory>

Urban Forestry Network:

<http://urbanforestrynetwork.org/planting/inventory%20methods.htm>

Urban Forest Management Plan Toolkit: <http://ufmptoolkit.net/resources/tools/>

Missoula Urban Forestry: <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/230/Urban-Forestry>

### **INFRASTRUCTURE: Improving the Appearance of Choteau-Voluntary Cleanup**

The accumulation of debris and junk on some properties in the City has long been an issue. To improve the appearance of the City, a voluntary cleanup program is being considered. In a nutshell, the project would involve neighborhood leaders chatting with properties owners to identify people who have debris or junk that they would like removed. The neighborhood leaders, property owners would coordinate with the City to have the City help remove the materials to roll-off site/dump free of charge.

#### **Proposed Implementation Steps:**

1. Present the proposal to the City Council for its review and approval
2. Select a project coordinator, preferably from the City Council.
3. Project coordinator would identify neighborhood champions
4. The Public Works Director, project coordinator and neighborhood champions would develop an overall plan and process
5. Champions would communicate the project to neighbors
6. Champions would inventory a list of people will to participate.
7. Champions, project coordinator and Public Works Director would coordinate the removal of debris and junk with property owners.

#### **Recommended Online Resources:**

- <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3853/Clean-Up-Brochure-PDF>
- <http://www.lbds.info/civica/filebank/blobload.asp?BlobID=4935>
- <https://www.provo.org/departments/public-works/sanitation/cleanups-special-services>
- [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/neighborhood\\_and\\_community\\_services/community\\_services\\_division/community\\_cleanups](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/neighborhood_and_community_services/community_services_division/community_cleanups)
- <https://cityofirving.org/DocumentCenter/View/574/Clean-Up-Project-How-To-PDF>
- [http://www.moreno-valley.ca.us/resident\\_services/pdf/neighcleanpro.pdf](http://www.moreno-valley.ca.us/resident_services/pdf/neighcleanpro.pdf)

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

Keep America Beautiful: <https://www.kab.org/our-programs/great-american-cleanup>

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### **Recommended Online Resources:**

- <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3853/Clean-Up-Brochure-PDF>
- <http://www.lbds.info/civica/filebank/blobload.asp?BlobID=4935>
- <https://www.provo.org/departments/public-works/sanitation/cleanups-special-services>
- [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/neighborhood\\_and\\_community\\_services/community\\_services\\_division/community\\_cleanups](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/neighborhood_and_community_services/community_services_division/community_cleanups)
- <https://cityofirving.org/DocumentCenter/View/574/Clean-Up-Project-How-To-PDF>
- [http://www.moreno-valley.ca.us/resident\\_services/pdf/neighcleanpro.pdf](http://www.moreno-valley.ca.us/resident_services/pdf/neighcleanpro.pdf)

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

Keep America Beautiful: <https://www.kab.org/our-programs/great-american-cleanup>

**Summary of Infrastructure resources from MT Dept. of Commerce, Community Development Division that may assist Choteau in addressing identified needs:**

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

Pending receipt of FY 2018 Federal HUD funds, the Montana CDBG program plans to accept applications for Public and Community Facilities, as well as

Multifamily ( Large Scale) Housing, this fall. The city can also apply for CDBG-assisted housing rehabilitation funds ( one home at a time) that can be used in combination with USDA Rural Development funds. Each project must demonstrate that a majority of the beneficiaries would be low and moderate income. Low interest loan assistance is also available to help businesses that would retain or create jobs for low and moderate income persons.

### **Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP)**

Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) funds are an excellent source of financial assistance for water and wastewater system improvements. TSEP funds were used in 2015 in Choteau for wastewater collection and treatment plant improvements. The next round of TSEP applications for construction assistance will be accepted the spring of 2020.

### **HOME Program**

Applications to the HOME program for affordable housing can be accepted at any time, as well as applications for the new Housing Trust Fund (multi-family housing).

### **Montana Main Street Program**

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

### **Planning Grants**

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

The City of Choteau could apply for CDBG Planning Grant funds to prepare a Downtown Master Plan that would be developed in conjunction with planned improvements to U.S. Highway 89 as described in Jerry Grebenc's report.

### **Broadband-**

Funds are also available to assist schools with broadband needs.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE: HOUSING**

During our listening sessions with the people of the City of Choteau, deficient housing was often cited as a general problem in the community. There were a range of responses involving housing in Choteau. The housing available for purchase was very limited or unsuitable for buyers' needs. Many also mentioned that the cost of housing was high in Choteau than in other communities, which is enticing eligible homeowners to leave Choteau.

While several impressive, newer large homes have been built in the city, 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 unknown. 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 Choteau 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 City of Choteau 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 resources, please visit the following websites:

Lea McGiboney, USDA Rural Development (see contact information above):  
<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>

Sherrie Arey, NeighborWorks; 406-216-3512; [sarey@nwgf.org](mailto:sarey@nwgf.org) ; <http://www.nwgf.org/>

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**Report by Lea McGiboney**

***Note: See Appendices A – D for additional information on this topic.***

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: Keeping and Retaining Local Businesses**

The citizens of Choteau had great concern for the health of their business community. They understand that a diverse business environment is the path to growth for the whole community. The goal was set to identify businesses in the community and learn of their needs then foster them to keep them successful. Challenges include identifying resource support and providing better coordination and training for businesses. There was discussion about the pros and cons of business licenses, which was not pursued at this time.

### **Recommendations:**

The first step was to create a list of businesses that a team of volunteers would divide amongst themselves to meet with 2-3 businesses a week. The volunteers would need training on what to ask during the visits as well as coming up to speed on the business resources available to assist the community's businesses to succeed.

### **Recommended Resources:**

Josh is the champion for this topic.

Lisa and Lonnie would oversee working with/scheduling volunteer training with the help of the Great Falls Development Authority.

Steve D, Brian McCollum, Carole Bronson and Stacia will develop the list of businesses to visit. Each team member would then be assigned 2-3 businesses to meet with each week.

Josh and Mark will research business resources that may be of benefit to struggling businesses.

Jolene Schalper, Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA); 406-727-4481;  
[jschalper@gfdevelopment.org](mailto:jschalper@gfdevelopment.org)

Jason Nitschke, Small Business Development Council; 406-750-0314;  
[jnitschke@gfdevelopment.org](mailto:jnitschke@gfdevelopment.org)

Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Authority (Sweetgrass); 406-899-7959;  
[executivedirector@sweetgrassdevelopment.org](mailto:executivedirector@sweetgrassdevelopment.org)

Jan Brown, Montana Cooperative Development Center; 406-727-1517; [jan@mcddc.coop](mailto:jan@mcddc.coop)

Annamarie Robinson, Big Sky Trust Fund: [arobinson3@mt.gov](mailto:arobinson3@mt.gov)

Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications; 406-390-2288; [aboothe@itstriangle.net](mailto:aboothe@itstriangle.net)

Lea McGiboney, USDA Rural Development: (see contact information above)  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/business-programs>



USDA Rural Development can assist the Choteau community 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 City of Choteau to implement these funding programs or work with our trusted economic development corporate partners, Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA), Sweetgrass Development and Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) as well as local telephone and electric cooperatives like Triangle Communications and 3 Rivers.

The development organizations' missions are 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. GFDA 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. GFDA, Sweetgrass and MCDC 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 and 3 Rivers understand 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 GFDA, Sweetgrass, MCDC, Triangle Communications and 3 Rivers are well-educated in these programs and their associated requirements. They are a useful resource when developing affordable financing for projects of all sizes.

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: Fostering Start-ups and Entrepreneurship**

The champion for this issue is Ed

Some comments given were no industry or business progress in the community. While they didn't necessarily want a "big box" store moving in, they would like to see a thriving business economy, with restaurants, stores, etc. that would entice families to stay in the community and encourage other businesses, individuals and families to move there. The citizens of Choteau understand that a diverse business environment is the path to growth for the whole community. Ideas were to support women entrepreneurs; to look at businesses that create value-added products from locally grown resources, such as a brewery or export business; and support social gathering places, such as coffee shops. Keeping salaries and benefits competitive with other communities was also a stated need for Choteau businesses. Some ideas included:

1. Ag Tech Fair - The AgTech task force will be spearheaded by Ed, Lisa and Rich. They will match businesses with Tech providers, implement meetings and host/develop an Ag Fair.
2. Youth entrepreneurship programs in school. The Youth Entrepreneurship program will be the responsibility of Blair. He will work with the school and they will develop information for a business fair/competition. Another idea was to have technical skills classes in high school for apprenticeship programs.
3. Identify support businesses for businesses in the community already. The Business Retention Team will help spearhead the identification of support businesses. Heather Hodgskiss, Carole Bronson and Lisa Haas will assist them. Some ideas were a bike rental business for the summer biking on trails along the

ski slopes or other groomed paths, an RV “campground” for visitors, a ski shop in town, etc.

**Recommended Resources:**

Kurt, Lonnie, Steve and Laura have also volunteered.

Susan Wilson, 3 Rivers Communication; 406-467-2535; [susan.wilson@3rivers.coop](mailto:susan.wilson@3rivers.coop)

Local 4H

Wendy Haman

Choteau Port Authority

Chamber of Commerce

Governor’s Office of Economic Development; <http://business.mt.gov/>

Choteau School

Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID);

Jolene Schalper, Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA); 406-727-4481;  
[jschalper@gfdevelopment.org](mailto:jschalper@gfdevelopment.org)

Jason Nitschke, Small Business Development Council; 406-750-0314;  
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Jan Brown, Montana Cooperative Development Center; 406-727-1517; [jan@mcdc.coop](mailto:jan@mcdc.coop)

Annmarie Robinson, Big Sky Trust Fund: [arobinson3@mt.gov](mailto:arobinson3@mt.gov)

Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications: 406-390-2288; [aboothe@itstriangle.net](mailto:aboothe@itstriangle.net);  
<http://www.itstriangle.com/>

Lea McGiboney, USDA Rural Development (see contact information above):  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/business-programs>

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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.

The Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of new products. The goals of this program are to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income. Grant and matching funds can be used for planning activities or for working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product. Examples of planning activities include conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans for processing and marketing the proposed value-added product. Examples of working capital expenses include processing costs, marketing and advertising expenses, and some inventory and salary expenses.

There are many funders available to assist in business development; both on a state and federal level. Groups like GFDA, Sweetgrass, MCDC, Triangle Communications and 3 Rivers are well-educated in these programs and their associated requirements. They are a useful resource when developing affordable financing for projects of all sizes.

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

### **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: Business Recruitment**

Bringing new business into the Choteau community has been a huge challenge. Identifying telecommuting businesses as a component to diversify the business community was suggested. To accomplish this goal, it was determined that a marketing team be developed that would go to other communities to share Choteau's successful business environment and using the internet to market what Choteau has to offer. The speed and cost of internet service in the community is, right now, a concern to meeting this goal.

#### **Recommended Resources:**

Steve and Blair will partner with the Branding Group to develop marketing materials. This will include a YouTube video. Joe Haas, Bre Lobdell, Ed Garon and Lisa Haas have volunteered to assist.

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

Jolene Schalper, Great Falls Development Authority (GFDA); 406-727-4481;  
[jschalper@gfdevelopment.org](mailto:jschalper@gfdevelopment.org)

Sarah Converse, Sweetgrass Development Authority (Sweetgrass); 406-899-7959;  
[executivedirector@sweetgrassdevelopment.org](mailto:executivedirector@sweetgrassdevelopment.org)

Annmarie Robinson, Big Sky Trust Fund: [arobinson3@mt.gov](mailto:arobinson3@mt.gov)

Susan Wilson, 3 Rivers; 406-467-2535; [susan.wilson@3rivers.coop](mailto:susan.wilson@3rivers.coop)

Lea McGiboney, USDA Rural Development (see contact information above):

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The development organizations' missions are 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.

GFDA, Sweetgrass and MCDC 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.

## **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**Report by Jan Stoddard**

*Note: See Appendices A – D for additional information on this topic.*

### **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION: Branding and Marketing**

Choteau needs to develop a brand platform that can be approved and used by the entire community. This would be an external brand for visitors that could be adopted by various organizations including the Chamber, Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), Choteau Port Authority. It could also be used or incorporated into Choteau marketing efforts by local businesses and Central Montana Tourism. The brand platform would include brand strategies, creative concepts and application, logo, tagline, etc.

A separate team identified the need for an internal brand for the Choteau community and how the concept of an internal and external brand could align.

Some branding work has been completed. In 2017, Wendt Advertising completed initial brand research and recommendations in conjunction with a TBID website development project, [visitchoateau.com](http://visitchoateau.com). Several logo options were also created. This information needs to be distributed across the community as the beginning of a process to complete the

branding initiative. A decision-making process, specific deliverables, and a timeline need to be developed.

### **Recommendations:**

It is critical that a Marketing Steering Team be created to drive progress on the branding and other marketing projects. A number of volunteers have already stepped forward, representing diverse businesses and organizations. This steering team needs to define the process for this project including initial communications, stakeholders, how/who will make the final decision, and what is the communications and product delivery once a decision has been made and branded logos, taglines, etc. are available.

Meetings or communications with different stakeholders need to take place to communicate and review what has been done to date regarding branding and the process for developing a unified brand. The various stakeholders need to be identified and could include:

1. Tourism organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and TBID
2. Tourism based businesses and organizations including lodging, restaurants, retail, the Old Trail Museum
3. Municipal, county, state, and federal agencies with assets used by visitors including parks, trail heads, birdwatching, hunting, and fishing access sites, ATV/OHV trails, snowmobile and Nordic ski trails, hiking and cycling trails, etc.
4. Other community organizations including the Choteau Port Authority, Lion's, Soroptimists.
5. "Internal" branding enthusiasts (the Community Enhancement team is also addressing the need for an "internal" brand)

Equally important is reviewing relevant data provided by the Community Review process. Specifically, the survey data, Discovery Session comments and the Choteau Community Profile of this report will be of additional assistance. This information is found in Appendix A – D attached.

It is also recommended to ask Wendt Advertising to come to Choteau and hold a meeting to review their findings for the Choteau website project. Wendt Advertising has extensive experience in branding and marketing to Montana's visitors. Wendt could also review the logo options that were created and the reasoning behind the different concepts. They may also be able to provide a 'case study' (example) of another community comparable to Choteau and their process and results in developing a branding platform.

Once the stakeholders are on the same page, information has been distributed, benchmarking other communities is complete, specific deliverables can be identified for this project. What is needed (brand style guide and instructions on using the brand, taglines, logos, ad banners, signage, wayfinding)? Who will it be used by? How will the deliverables be distributed, and stakeholders educated as to use? What is the process for creating concepts and testing them?

Also, it is critical to determine funding sources for developing the deliverables. What is available from TBID, Choteau Port Authority, Central MT Tourism, and the MOTBD?

This branding project is targeted to begin in Fall of 2018 and complete by February 2019.

### **Recommended Resources:**

1. Check out the Montana state brand identified by the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development. The Montana Brand consists of three pillars: More spectacular, unspoiled nature than anywhere else in the lower 48, Vibrant and charming small towns that serve as gateways to our natural wonders, and Breathtaking experiences by day, and relaxing hospitality at night. There are several tools to help with understanding and using the Montana Brand:
  - [Discovering the Montana Brand](#)
  - [Using the Montana Brand](#)
  - [Defining the Winter Experience](#)
2. The Montana Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan 2013-2017 identifies different stakeholders, their roles and interactions in moving a brand into a plan. The Plan can be downloaded from this website, <http://marketmt.com/Resources/StrategicPlan>.
3. Central Montana Tourism Region represented by Executive Director Gayle Fisher can provide information on regional branding efforts and provide information on visitors that come to central Montana. <http://centralmontana.com/>
4. Ask the ISO Bureau at the Department of Commerce (Jan Stoddard, 406.841.2894) or MEDA (Gloria O'Rourke, 406.563.5259) in finding other communities comparable to Choteau who have had a similar branding project.
5. The Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR) offers a variety of reports on visitors coming to Montana. This includes [publications and reports](#), [interactive data](#) where you can build your own report, and a [survey tool](#) you can use to gather specific information at events or at specific locations.
6. MOTBD Tourism grants could be a source for Niche product development including website enhancements and signage. More information is available at <http://marketmt.com/Grants>.
7. The [Montana Main Street Program](#), established in 2005 and currently serving twenty-seven communities across the state, is a collaborative effort between the Community Development Division and the Montana Office of Tourism at the Montana Department of Commerce. The program 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. Choteau could look at applying to become a Main Street Program and put in an application to assist with branding or developing branding deliverables.

8. Roger Brooks is an internationally known expert in community branding. At <https://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com/> you can find free resources and opportunities to participate in webinars.

### **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION: Main Street Program with Branding and Marketing Tie-in**

The goal is to explore the Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development Main Street Program and options for Choteau.

The Montana Main Street Program, established in 2005 and currently serving twenty-seven communities across the state, is a collaborative effort between the Community Development Division and the Montana Office of Tourism at the Montana Department of Commerce. The program 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.

Using the National Trust Main Street Center Four Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization, the Montana Main Street Program provides 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. The Montana Main Street program offers technical assistance and expertise to member communities and awards competitive grant funding to communities actively working on downtown revitalization, economic development, and historic preservation. Acceptance into the MMS Program is competitive and based on community preparedness as well as resource availability at the state level; not every community that applies will be invited to join at the time of application

An annual competitive application process distributes up to \$100,000 to projects in Main Street identified communities. The grant round typically opens for a limited time in September. A list of current projects from downtown master plans to wayfinding to community branding is available at

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

#### **Recommendations:**

A Main Street Program working group has been formed which includes members from all four different Choteau assessment topic teams. The TBID and Choteau Port of Authority organizations should also be informed and involved. This is important because the Main

Street Program can fund historic preservation plans, downtown master and community improvement plans, PAR's for specific infrastructure projects, wayfinding and signage, and branding.

The working group needs to obtain more information about the program including a possible visit to Choteau by a representative from the Main Street program. Once there is sufficient information about the program, the working group would review it and make the decision of whether to apply. Resources would need to complete the application.

### **Recommended Resources:**

Information on the Main Street Program is located at on the Department of Commerce website, <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet/Purpose>.

- Guidelines and forms are located at <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet/RoadMap/GuidelinesForms>
- It is recommended that Choteau review the [Affiliate Community](#) designation allows all eligible communities the opportunity to learn and develop the Main Street Four Point Approach™ while accessing the resources and services of the program network. This tier is designed for communities entering the program and in the early stages of organization and capacity building.
- More information about the Montana Main Street Program grant program, including requirements and award criteria is available at <http://comdev.mt.gov/Programs/MainStreet/RoadMap/Services>

### **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION: Expanding Recreation**

The goal is to expand current events and explore new options to increase and lengthen the stay of visitors to Choteau.

Choteau has a wide array of recreation assets in close proximity to the community. This could include the dog park, yoga, biking, hiking, birding, scenic drives, the ski hill, etc.

Choteau can be the base for area recreation. Engaging visitors in recreational activities promotes overnight stays and consequently, increased visitor time and expenditures in Choteau. A focus on recreational visitors can increase visitation in shoulder and winter seasons which is also critical goal for the community.

There are many possible large projects. However, to start as soon as possible and generate immediate impact, two events were identified that could be expanded and marketed to participants out of the area and out of state.

1. **Winter Rendezvous** event using existing resources such as Nordic skiing, but also adding a new component, skijoring. Skijoring is a winter sport where a person on skis is pulled by a horse, a dog or a motor vehicle. The event would be held in January/February 2019.

2. **Spring Birding & Film Festival** event leveraging existing events such as the Montana Audubon Wild Game Feed and the annual bird migrations at nearby Freezeout Lake. Freezeout Lake is Montana's primary snow goose staging area, a place where as many as 300,000 snow geese and 10,000 tundra swans gather and rest before flying onward. The event would be held the third weekend in March.

### **Recommendations:**

Changing a local event into a destination event requires a clear strategy, task and timeline creation, ample volunteers to run the event, and funds for marketing and promotion. Key resources are needed to help with vision and strategic planning assistance, awareness (marketing), and planning assistance.

Each event needs a Chairperson/Co-chairs and steering committee. Choteau volunteers have already stepped forward to chair and participate on the event steering committees. Other strategic partners need to be identified such as Fish Wildlife Parks, the Chamber of Commerce, OAS, City, etc. These partners will depend on the focus or activities involved with each event. For example, FWP could provide experts to talk about birding.

A local school can also provide resources and volunteers to help at the events. Possible businesses that could provide services such as lodging properties, restaurants, catering businesses, etc. should be identified early in the process for initial planning and collaboration, and later for help in promoting the events.

The first steps include: 1) set up the full team, and 2) determine action plans, tasks, responsibilities. A budget and possible funding sources for each event will also have to be created.

### **Recommended Resources:**

1. Look to other communities for guidance on creating a successful skijoring event including Wisdom, [Lincoln](#), [Red Lodge](#), [Helena](#), [Big Sky](#), and [Whitefish](#).
2. There are many other Convention Visitor Bureaus that put on successful events or have created new destination events. The ISO Bureau at the Department of Commerce (Jan Stoddard, 406.841.2894) could also provide contact information for these CVBs and events.
3. There are many other articles and tools that could provide valuable information including [“Top Tips for Planning a Successful Community Event”](#), [Event Management Plan Checklist and Guide](#). Benchmark against other small town events that are successful such as those in this article [America’s 15 Best Small-Town Festivals](#).
4. Look for other birding resources for presentations or materials.
  - a. University of Montana - [Avian Science Center](#) is an institute within the University of Montana that involves faculty, students, and the general public in high-quality bird research, monitoring, and education related to the birds of Montana.
5. Compare other birding events.

- Annual Loon and Fish Festival, Memorial Weekend, Seeley Lake, Montana. Phone: 406-754-2971, E-mail: [slchamber@blackfoot.net](mailto:slchamber@blackfoot.net). Celebration of area wildlife. Local artisans workshops. Demonstrations and sale. Sponsored by Alpine Artisans and the Seeley Lake Ranger Station.
- Wings Across the Big Sky, Usually in June. Phone: (406) 443-3949, E-mail: [mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org](mailto:mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org)
- Bridger Raptor Festival, Usually in October. Bozeman, Montana. Phone: 406-585-1211. This event that incorporates the largest known Golden Eagle migration in the lower US with lots of raptor education and fun! Witness the largest known migration of Golden Eagles in North America. Watch 17 species of raptors soar the Bridger Mountain's knife-edge ridge. Festival activities include slide shows on raptor identification, kids' programs and a birds of prey presentation with ambassador eagles, owls, and hawks from the Montana Raptor Center.

### **TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION: Visitor Center**

Visitor Information Centers (VIC) play a vital role in attracting and servicing non-resident visitors. VICs do have the ability to extend trip length and traveler expenditures, managers should maintain the positive experiences visitors are having in the state of Montana by providing these preferences for location, facilities, and services.

A 2011 study by the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research found the majority of nonresidents stopped at Visitor Information Centers (VIC) during their travels and had positive experiences. These visitors prefer a variety of services and facilities, such as restrooms, free maps and brochures, and a place to stretch, rest, and relax. Regardless of changing trends in technology, visitors prefer that VICs have staff available to answer questions, give local insight, or provide travel directions, particularly if they are friendly, knowledgeable, and trained. All these factors strongly indicate that VICs remain an important part of the travel experience in Montana today.

The Choteau VIC is managed by the Choteau Chamber of Commerce with additional maintenance supplied by the City of Choteau. Current challenges include limited hours, staffing, and signage that is visible and easily seen by travelers at a busy intersection.

Many visitors do not arrive to a destination until early evening. If the VIC is not open to provide information about where to eat or stay, the visitor may continue on their way to the next community. Some communities have build kiosks to display information about availability, local businesses, upcoming events so this is available even if the VIC is closed. And, if there were additional staff or volunteers, they would need to be trained on information and resources that would encourage a visitor to spend within Choteau (places to stay, places to eat, family-friendly locations such as the Museum or local parks, other recreation activities and access).

Four action steps were identified: expand hours and/or staff, add a kiosk, review/add signage, and put out a donation box.

## Recommendations:

A VIC Steering Team was formed. Working with the Choteau Chamber and City Council, the Steering Team should determine show should be the lead for this project, and specific tasks and timeline for the four action steps. Understanding the importance of a VIC and working together

A budget would also need to be developed and funding sources identified. Funding sources could include the Choteau TBID, Montana Department of Transportation (signage), and Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development (kiosk and signage).

The VIC project schedule would kick-off in Fall of 2018 with the goal of being able to apply for a Montana Tourism Grant by September 2019.

## Recommended Resources:

1. The West Yellowstone CVB/Chamber has found new funding sources for their VIC. The West Yellowstone TBID contributes funding to keep the VIC open through the early evening. Previously, funding forced the VIC to close at 5 PM. The Town of West Yellowstone provides bathroom and parking lot maintenance, and more recently began providing additional funds for operating costs. You can contact MarySue Costello, Executive Director at the West Yellowstone CVB at 406.646.7701, for more information.
2. The ISO Bureau at the Department of Commerce (Jan Stoddard, 406.841.2894) could also help identify other communities comparable to Choteau with VICs for additional information or comparison.
3. MOTBD Tourism grants could be a source for funding the kiosk and signage. More information is available at <http://marketmt.com/Grants>.
4. Roger Brooks is a nationally recognized expert in helping communities with destination marketing. This link goes to a [presentation](#) about visitor centers. There are also other resources for community tourism development including an extensive program by the University of Minnesota. Here is one article, [Why should visitors love your town? Count the ways.](#)
5. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/community-facilities-programs>

## COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

Report by Sue Taylor

**Note: See Appendices A – D for additional information on this topic.**

## **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT: Library Revitalization**

**Recommendation:** The action plan working group is off to a great start with this project and Jennifer Birnel is a good local resource to move the project forward. She has the passion *and* the contacts. Choteau also has two good examples of previous success stories with the PALS group and the Lions work on the swimming pool.

There are few additional recommendations beyond the Action Plan created by the working group. Please make sure to contact PALS and Lions to learn more about the critical steps taken to see their projects through to completion, any cautionary items they encountered, and any local or external resources they were able to utilize. In addition, remember to continue to educate the community, gather input and buy-in, build excitement, and be patient throughout the process because it is likely to take longer than anticipated.

The valuable resources necessary and already identified during the work session include: State Library; Friends of the Library; Library Foundation; City of Choteau; Teton County; and examples such as ImagineIF Libraries <http://imagineiflibraries.org/>

Elements considered for the revitalization and identified during the work session include:

- Information center
- Community spaces
- Meeting place
- Coffee shop (revenue generator)
- Garden
- Trail information center.

We anticipate other elements may be added to this list as you continue to make this project a reality.

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

The Pew Research Center website has a presentation of an overview of three years of research into Americans' relationships with public libraries in the digital age. Their research indicated that 91% of Americans say libraries are important to their community as a whole and 76% say libraries are important to them and their family. While the information is a little bit older (2014), it is worth taking a few minutes to look at the presentation as it largely reinforces the reasoning behind the revitalization of the Choteau Library.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/08/18/public-library-engagement-in-the-united-states/>

The American Library Association's website has a Tips and Tools publication to build support for your rural library. This publication was updated in the spring of 2017 and should be referenced as you move towards the fundraising portion of the project.

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/olos/toolkits/rural>

For more information on this toolkit and other resources from ALA about rural libraries, please contact:

ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services  
50 East Huron Street  
Chicago, IL 60611-2798  
800-545-2433, ext. 4294  
[diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org)

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

### **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT: Main Street Reconstruction**

**Recommendation:** This issue is addressed quite well in the Infrastructure portion of the report. Please take note of the proposed implementation steps and resources in that section, especially this statement, “It is essential that the City begin talking to MDT staff about the upcoming project and what can residents realistically obtain from the process.” This project should be view as something MDT will be doing **with** the City and not **to** the City. You must be involved early in the process and work to develop realistic expectations.

The businesses located along this corridor *and on the side streets, connecting to the primary corridor* will be greatly impacted and will need to be given the opportunity to plan for the disruption well in advance of construction. They should consider strategies such as creating back door entrances for customers, offering delivery services, regular Facebook and social media updates for their business, additional internal and external signage, and setting aside a little surplus cash to provide an operating expense cushion prior to the construction and help see them through the reduction in shoppers during the construction period.

The advisory committee should insist on weekly construction meetings with the contractor’s representative and lead engineer so the committee can ensure timely communication and fewer surprises. The Town of Lovell, Wyoming worked with the engineering firm and contractor to develop a plan for a rolling project where two to three blocks were disrupted at a time versus the entire 8-10 block area. This strategy allowed the businesses a shorter time for little to no customer traffic. One conversation that occurred during the Lovell project was a detour around the construction zone, but this was highly discouraged by DOT because they had witnessed cases of traffic getting used to the detour during construction and people did not always return to the traffic pattern taking them through the downtown.

It will be important to communicate well and often during the planning and construction phases. The City may want to consider appointing a lead communications person to head up this task so the communication is consistent. The newspaper and social media will be key delivery vehicles for this information.

You may also want to consider having a few “mini celebrations” to add a little fun into a fairly tedious process. This can be as simple as passing out ice cream treats to the workers or to the drivers passing through the construction, or having the volunteer fire department hosting an afternoon barbeque with hamburgers and hot dogs, or posting a sign indicating weeks left, or days, or hours as you near completion.

During the topic work sessions we also discussed looking at vacant properties along the corridor and how they might be put into more productive use and beautification overall as a part of the conversation. You should keep those items in mind along with the resources identified at the work session and the three community members who volunteered to actively participate in the project, as the plan is developed to ensure you can leverage the opportunity to put on a fresh face during and after this project.

Resource: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/community-facilities-programs>

### **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT: Branding (Internal)**

**Recommendation:** A successful branding effort enhances tourism, economic development and community pride. A community brand is more than a logo and tagline, it is a This topic is a partial crossover with the Business Development and Tourism and Marketing topics, but the Enhancement Working Group has a primary interest in the internal aspects (community pride and communication) of branding.

Important questions to ask during the development of a community brand include:

- What do you want to be known for?
- How can you stand out from the crowd and create your unique selling proposition?
- What thoughts, feelings and emotions do you want to come to mind when you hear Choteau?
- How can you gain improved results from your resources (people, organizations, and money currently being spent)

Once you have identified your brand, logo and tagline make sure that it becomes as fully integrated as possible through social media platforms, existing business advertising, a basis for business and workforce attraction, logo on City vehicles and letterhead, and promotional materials. Many of these can be accomplished within existing budgets and others will carry a price tag. You can also develop logoed merchandise to sell to residents and visitors in limited quantities.

Recommended steps:

- Review existing materials developed in connection with branding
- Meet with members of the Business Development and Tourism and Marketing working groups (Tourism and Marketing internal branding leads are Ed Garon and Stacia Martineau) to determine priorities and overall strategy to address all facets of branding
- Identify lead agency, organization or individuals
- Develop Action Plan and communication plan based on above steps



- Consider establishing a new annual event that promotes and reinforces your brand

**Recommended Resource(s):**

Choteau TBID  
Parks and Rec Board  
City of Choteau  
Chamber of Commerce  
School District  
Ag community

*Destination Branding for Small Cities*

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

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

Roger Brooks – Destination Development International

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

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

**CONCLUSION:**

The Choteau Community Review has been a great success due to a dedicated Home Team, our top-notch Visiting Teams, and the enthusiastic, willing-to-work people of Choteau. The community is now in Phase 3: Launch! The Steering Committee is meeting, Working Groups are meeting and making progress, and Coach Jerry Grebenc is providing expertise and encouragement along the way. The Choteau Community Review Team looks forward to returning to Choteau and celebrating your success within the year. Thank you for sharing your valuable time, expertise, and passion for Choteau with us.

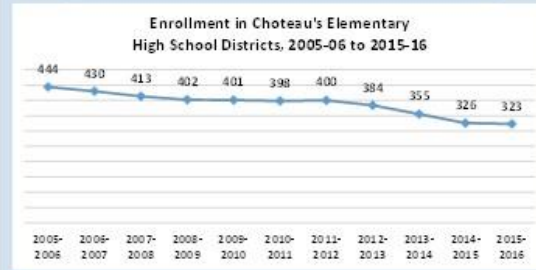
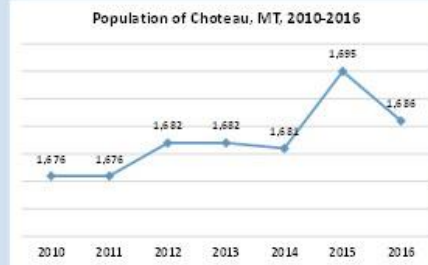
**Appendix A: Community Profile**

# CHOTEAU, MONTANA COMMUNITY PROFILE



## POPULATION

	Choteau City	Teton County
<b>Total population</b>		
2016, number	1,686	6,056
2010, number	1,684	6,073
Change 2010-2016, percent	0.1	-0.3
<b>Components of population change, 2010-2016</b>		
Net migration change (in-migrants minus out-migrants)		
Number	--	-102
Percent	--	-1.7
Natural change (births minus deaths)		
Number	--	29
Percent	--	0.5
<b>Population by race, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
White	94	95
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4	2
Other	2	3
<b>Population by ethnicity, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
Non-Hispanic	98	99
Hispanic	2	1
<b>Population by age group, 2012-2016 average, percent of total</b>		
Under age 18	13	24
Age 18-64	61	54
Age 65 and older	26	22
Median age, 2012-2016 average, years	50.8	44.6



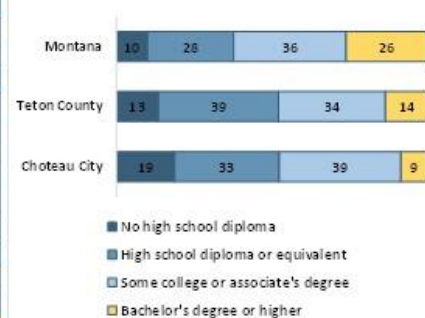
SOURCES: US Census Bureau, US Department of Education

## SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

	Choteau City	Teton County	Montana State
<b>Income</b>			
Per capita income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	25,974	25,740	27,309
Median household income, 2012-2016 average, dollars	39,375	49,047	48,380
<b>Poverty</b>			
Overall poverty, 2012-2016 average			
Number	158	631	148,677
Rate, percent	9.5	10.6	14.9
Children living in poverty, 2012-2016 average			
Number	8	157	40,953
Rate, percent	3.7	11.2	18.6
<b>Food Insecurity</b>			
Overall rate, 2015, percent	---	11.7	13.0
Rate among children, 2015, percent	---	17.4	18.8

SOURCES: US Census Bureau, Feeding America

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

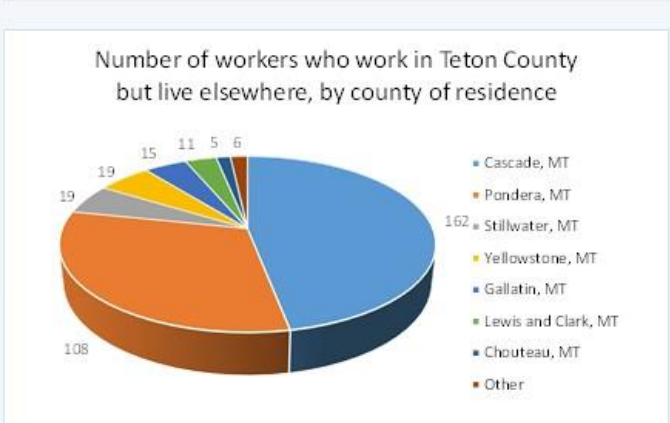
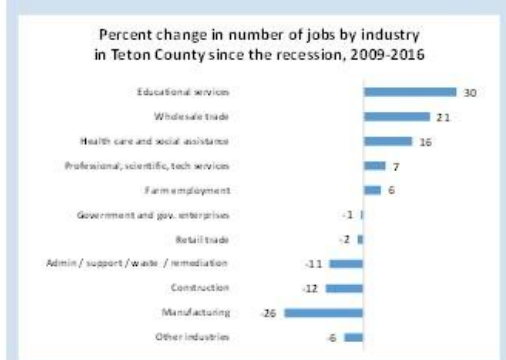
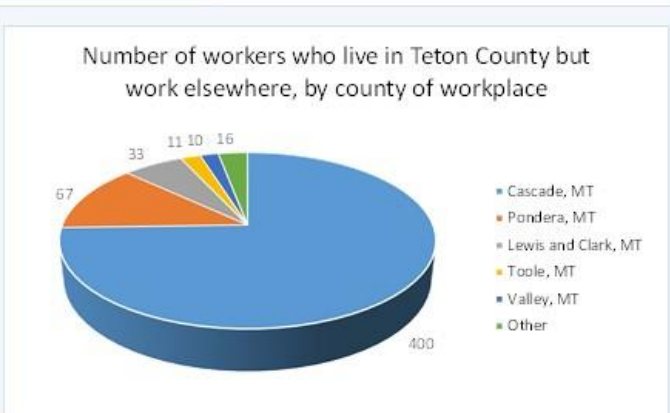
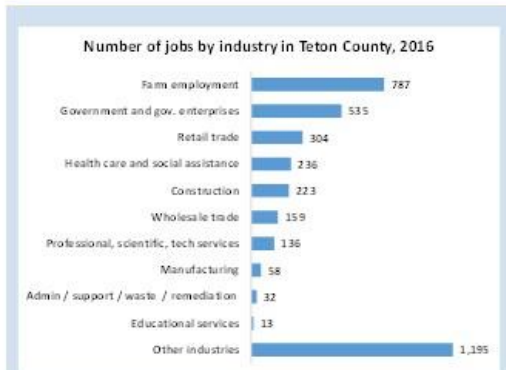
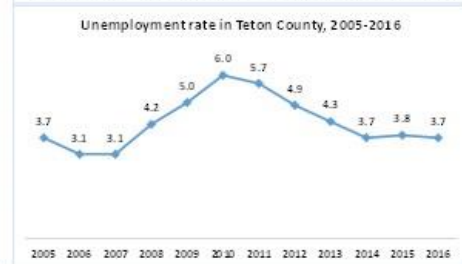


This project is supported by USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant #2016-10945. It is part of the AFRI Foundational program.



## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Choteau City	Teton County
<b>Full- and part-time jobs</b>		
Total number, 2016	---	3,678
Total number, 2011	---	3,632
Total number, 2006	---	3,634
Change, 2011-2016, percent	---	1.3
Change, 2006-2011, percent	---	-0.1
<b>Employment characteristics</b>		
Labor force participation rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	56.5	61.4
Unemployment rate, 2012-2016 average, percent	3.3	5.5
Self-employment rate, 2016, percent	---	46.2
Average annual pay, 2016, dollars	---	33,383
<b>Business establishments with paid employees, by size, 2015</b>		
All establishments, number	---	211
Establishments with 1-4 paid employees, number	---	151
Establishments with 5-9 paid employees, number	---	32
Establishments with 10-19 paid employees, number	---	16
Establishments with 20-49 paid employees, number	---	9
Establishments with 50 or more paid employees, number	---	3



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

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

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

	Choteau City	Teton County
<b>Total housing units, 2012-2016 average</b>		
Number of units	945	2,882
<b>Housing tenure, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units</b>		
Owner-occupied units	59	70
Renter-occupied units	41	30
<b>Housing type, 2012-2016 average, percent of housing units</b>		
1 unit, attached or detached	72	81
2-4 units	5	2
5 or more units	16	7
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	8	11
<b>Housing affordability, 2012-2016 average</b>		
Households spending 30% or more of income on housing costs		
Owner-occupied units, percent	14	18
Renter-occupied units, percent	38	30

SOURCES: US Census Bureau



## RESOURCES

Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System

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

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

## PROJECT PARTNERS

Montana State University

Montana Economic Developers Association

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Gloria O'Rourke

[gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)

<http://medamembers.org/meda>

<http://www.communityreview.org>

**Appendix B: Community Satisfaction Survey Instrument**

**Choteau Community Survey**

**Choteau Community Survey**

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

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

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

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

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

- Very effective       Somewhat effective       Not at all effective

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

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

- Yes
- No

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

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

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

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

**Q9.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Choteau is a good place to raise a family"?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q10.** How important or unimportant is encouraging tourism in the area?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Very unimportant

**Q11.** What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

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

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

**Q13.** What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic

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

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

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

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

**Q16.** Do you live within or outside the Choteau city limits?

- Within city limits
- Outside city limits

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

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

# **CHOTEAU, MONTANA**

## **COMMUNITY REVIEW**

**MARCH 19 – 20, 2018 \* Phase 1**



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

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

**Phase 1**  
**COMMUNITY REVIEW REPORT**  
*for*  
***Choteau, Montana***

MARCH 19 – 20, 2018



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





## SPONSORING AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

**Choteau Area Port Authority  
Choteau TBID  
Lion's Club  
Teton Economic Development Corp  
Stage Stop Inn**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of the Choteau Community Review is due to the many individuals who generously shared their time, opinions, and knowledge by serving on the home team, completing a survey, or participating in a listening session or other conversation with the visiting team. Special thanks to Mary Sexton, Corlene Martin, and Steve Dogiakos with Choteau Area Port Authority.

Finally, the visiting team thanks the organizations, businesses, and individuals below for their contributions of support, time, and information to this project.

**Choteau Area Port Authority  
Sweetgrass Development**

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

- ❖ **Economic Development – Corlene Martin**
- ❖ **Tourism and Recreation – Mary Sexton**
- ❖ **Art and History – Susan Luinstra**
- ❖ **E-Commerce – Steve Dogiakos**
- ❖ **Seniors and Youth – Blair Patten**

## ADVANCE VISITING TEAM

### **Gloria O'Rourke, Coordinator and Advance Team Lead**

Montana Economic Developers Association  
118 E. Seventh St; Suite 3F  
Anaconda, MT 59711  
Ph: 406.563.5259  
gloria@medamembers.org

### **Dr. Lorie Higgins, University of Idaho**

Dept. of Ag. Economics and Rural Sociology  
875 Perimeter Dr. MS 2334  
Moscow, ID 83844-2334  
[208-669-1480](tel:208-669-1480) P  
higgins@uidaho.edu

### **Dr. Paul Lachapelle, Montana State University**

Associate Professor, Extension Community Development Specialist  
Department of Political Science, Local Government Center  
P.O. Box 172240 | Wilson Hall 2-117  
Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-2240 USA  
w: MSUcommunitydevelopment.org o: (406) 994-3620 e: paul.lachapelle@montana.edu

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

The Community Review website is now under construction at <http://www.communityreview.org>; it will prove to be of immense help to communities in the near future. Stay tuned.

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



Choteau Advance Team  
LtoR: Gloria O'Rourke, Lorie Higgins, Paul Lachapelle

## **MONTANA PROCESS OVERVIEW**

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

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

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

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

Representatives from the Choteau Area Port Authority began making serious inquiries as to the process and worked hand-in-hand with the Montana Design Team to host the first Montana Community Review. The Choteau Area Port Authority completed the MEDA Community Review Application and identified topic areas that would likely come to the surface during the Advance Team visit. The Choteau Area Port Authority also assisted with a mailed survey and advertising for the Community Review. Over 300 people responded to the survey. In addition, the Port Authority formed the Home Team to help with on-the-ground participation for the people of Choteau and planned the agenda and logistics for the Advance Team Visit.



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

Below is Choteau Community Review Agenda.

## Choteau Community Review Agenda

March 19 & 20, 2018

All meetings are at the Hinch Building at 304 N. Main unless otherwise noted

- 12:00 – 1:20 Working Lunch Meeting for Advance Visiting Team, Home Team and Cross Section of Community Members - Welcome and Introductions; Review of Agenda and Process
- 1:30 – 3:15 Tour of Choteau and Surrounding Area
- 3:30 – 3:50 State of the Community  
Jack Conatser, Mayor  
Jodi Rogers, Finance Officer
- 4:00 - 5:30 Economic Development Discussion
- 6:00 Team Dinner and Preparation for Open Discovery Session
- 7:00 Public Discovery Session, Stage Stop Inn - South Fork Room
- March 20
- 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast Meeting Stage Stop Inn
- 9:00 – 10:20 Recreation Discussion
- 10:30 – 11:50 E-Commerce Discussion
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 1:50 Ag Discussion
- 2:00 – 2:50 Youth & Seniors
- 3:00 – 3:50 Arts & History
- 4:00 – 4:50 Always Lived Here, Came Back Here, Chose to Live Here
- 5:00 – 6:30 Team Dinner at Hinch Building
- 7:00 Town Hall Meeting - Stage Stop Inn, South Fork Room

## Tour of Choteau

Corlene Martin, Choteau Area Port Authority, conducted a tour including:

1:30 - 2:00	Mike Maples	Sewage Treatment Plant
	Drive By	Jerry Dunckel's Neighborhood
2:00 - 3:00	Drive By	Choteau Schools
	Drive By	Sunset Court Apartments
	Drive By	Benefis Teton Medical Center
	Drive By	Skyline Lodge
	Drive By	Mountain Front Market
	Drive By	Water Works Building
	Drive By	Richem Well
	Drive By	Airport Hill to
	Drive By	Choteau Golf Course
	Drive By	Choteau Airport
	Drive By	Back down the hill
	Drive By	Through Country Club Addition
	Drive By	Pro-West Subdivision
	Drive By	City Park
	Drive By	Rex's & Elevators
	Drive By	Left at 4 Way Stop
	Drive By	Teton County Courthouse
	Drive By	Swimming Pool
	Drive By	Up the Bellview to the top of Byrd Hill
	Drive By	Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile site
	Drive By	Through Main Street
	Drive By	North of Town to the Canyon Road
	Drive By	Back to the Hinch Building



## COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

Community listening sessions are open-ended, focus group-like discussions with key stakeholder groups identified by the home and visiting teams. The purpose is simple: we ask open-ended questions



of a cross-section of community residents with diverse perspectives, listen to their answers, and reflect back what we hear. This means that for the most part, we're telling you exactly what we heard from residents; we also made a few observations and will share those at the end of this section.

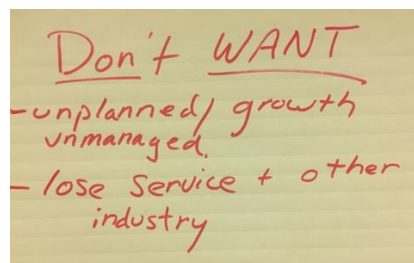
Ten community listening sessions were held with the Choteau Community Review Advance Team. Over 150 people responded either in person or in writing their answers to three questions: 1. What don't you want to see happen in Choteau in the next five years, 2. What

do you want to see happen in Choteau in the next five years, and 3. What, who and where are the assets that can benefit Choteau? Below is a summary of each of these questions based on what the team heard.

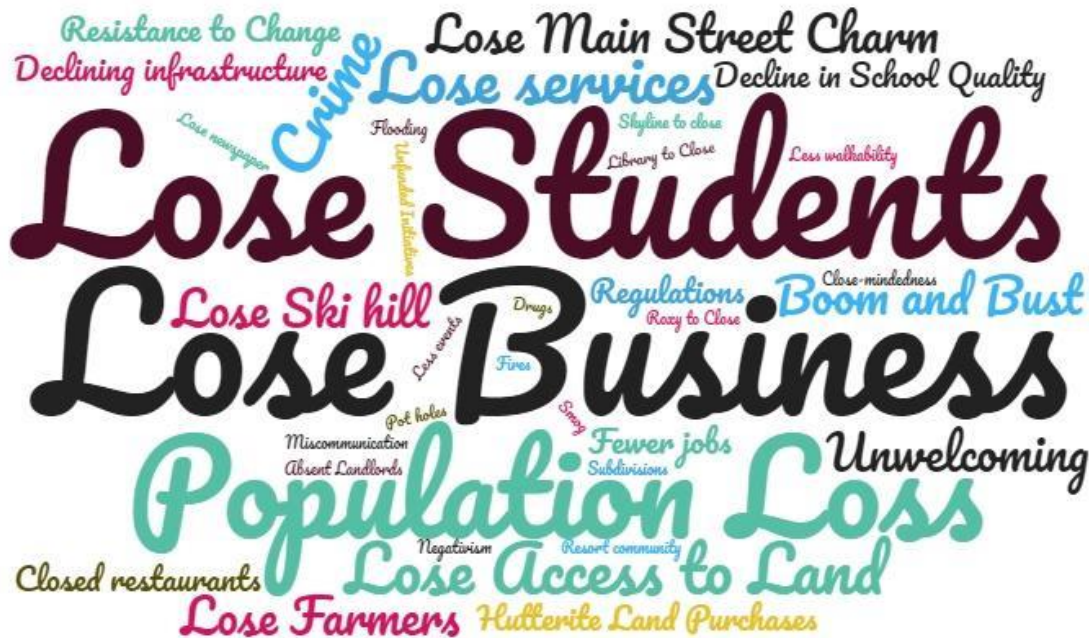
As listed on the agenda, the Choteau Community Review included listening sessions with the following stakeholder groups: Economic Development, Open House, Recreation, E-Commerce, Agriculture, Youth and Seniors, Art and History, and Always Lived Here, Came Back Here, Chose to Live Here.

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

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



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



**Population Loss**

In the listening sessions, people from different sectors consistently described concerns with the loss of population to the community and region. Specifically, individuals discussed their thoughts on how the loss of students after they graduate, leave for college or take jobs outside of the region and then don't return will impact the community. The loss of farmers and farming and ranching opportunities because of various pressures was also heard. Some described the resistance to change by some in the community as a concern to addressing current issues. As was repeated regarding assets and identifying what people want to see happen, a stable population of residents, particularly young people, is seen as integral to the future of Choteau.

**Loss of Business Opportunities and Infrastructure Decline**

The Choteau Review Team often heard descriptions of the importance of maintaining existing business and infrastructure in the community and concerns with the loss of businesses, future business and job opportunities and the needs of maintaining and servicing the many infrastructural needs in the town. Specifically, discussion focused on Main Street and the need to prevent further loss of a business and retail presence in the store fronts. Concerns of the impacts of boom and bust economies in other areas and how future scenarios may impact the community were discussed as well as related issues of crime and drugs. Equally important was the need to address recent factors that have impacted or been associated with the ski hill, local restaurants, library, and impacts to schools and other critical infrastructure such as streets and subdivisions.

As the graphic above indicates, the most often mentioned impact was loss of businesses which was discussed as influenced by the loss of population and students in particular. Related to this is the





## Community Enhancement

*Operation Facelift:* Though visitors to Choteau frequently remark on the picturesque quality of Choteau's downtown, locals feel it is time for some cosmetic improvements – paint and façade updates while retaining the charm and spirit of Choteau.

Main Street will be reconstructed by Montana Department of Commerce in 3 – 4 years and there will be major upgrades then. The community will need to make some decisions about design and features, but in the meantime, could be creating more curb appeal in the run up to the overhaul.

Residents would also like to see some community clean up, especially at the entrances to Choteau. Cleaning up properties and screening would help give visitors a more inviting first impression.

*Welcome and Engage Newcomers:* Connecting with newcomers has been hit and miss, it seems. We heard reports that sometimes people new to town don't know how to get involved, do not feel welcome in local hangouts, or in some way feel marginalized by the close-knit town. In discussions, part of the problem identified was that there isn't a single source where most people get their news and information about community activities. In other words, there is a lack of awareness sometimes when there are new residents in town, especially of those who telecommute. One solution discussed was to rekindle a kind of Welcome Wagon program and identify other ways to enhance the existing culture of care and connection among residents.



*Live Local:* We were told Choteau is the kind of town that inspires residents to “live locally,” which involves being engaged in community, sharing the good and pitching in to fix the bad, at multiple levels. Like the Welcome Wagon idea, many in Choteau want to identify new ways to foster this approach to community life.

*Restaurants:* One of the most often mentioned desires, by far, was for a variety of eateries, from supper clubs to bistro fare, that can be sustained in Choteau. According to some we spoke with, there is no place to eat on Sunday evenings. This item could easily fit into the other categories below in that culinary businesses can be great economic drivers, especially as a cornerstone of the tourism industry.

## Economic Activity

New businesses and higher wages topped the list of what residents want for Choteau. However, creating an environment that fosters both is multifaceted. Choteauans say paths to a Choteau where everyone thrives will involve more support for local businesses, marketing Choteau's assets, and a concerted focus on E-Commerce development, recreation and value-added agriculture.

*Live Local, Buy Local:* “Buy Local” is a useful concept for small towns, but Choteau residents argue that supporting local businesses really comes out of a personal commitment to community – to “living locally.” This includes the careful care and feeding of Choteau's anchor businesses. When there are major initiatives to grow new businesses or recruit from other places, local businesses can feel neglected.

*Market Choteau:* Choteau went through a branding process, but the visiting team left without a clear sense of what it is. It is the “front porch to the Rockies” on the Chamber website, the visitor's guide says it is “the little town next to everything,” while there are references to Choteau being a “Gateway” at the visitor's center. One key to successfully marketing a community is consistent, multifaceted use of the brand

message. That marketing Choteau was frequently mentioned as a need by discovery session participants suggests the brand isn't widely known or utilized. We heard things like "be ready to sell Choteau as the place to come for relaxation and a break from the world – to unplug," "find Choteau's identity," "capitalize on history tourism," and "some identity for Choteau – branding – to make us unique...something to unite us all."

*E-Commerce Development:* In addition to basic business / entrepreneurship training for youth and adults, locals would like to see some specialized training and services geared toward internet businesses. Even Main Street businesses could benefit from an enhanced online presence. Establishing a "co-work" space in Choteau was mentioned a number of times. As a growing number of Americans work from home, co-work spaces are offering a way to share equipment such as printers, a premium broadband connection, coffee pots and meeting spaces and video conferencing gear.

It was also suggested that the library could play a larger role in providing space for these classes and youth needing to complete required service projects could choose to assist local businesses with their website and social media sales and marketing efforts. Choteau has a triad of assets (youth, telecommuting workers, and a library with capacity) that if connected, could help build world-class businesses in the heart of Choteau.

*Light Industry & Value-Added Agriculture:* While some discovery session participants said they would gladly welcome the meat packing plant being discussed in Great Falls, most expressed a preference for light, quiet industries. Food processing for niche markets – ways to add value to locally produced crops and livestock – was mentioned several times as a type of business that builds on local culture and available economic assets.

### **Tourism and Recreation**

While some residents feel tourism is not the ideal target for economic development, most believe it definitely has to be part of the economic mix for Choteau. Agriculture has become more automated and the number of farms has declined (as farms have grown in size), leading to a need to develop other kinds of assets available to the community.

*Leverage Assets:* Most of the comments we heard related to recreation and tourism involved leveraging assets like the park, creek, rodeo grounds and Pavilion, Choteau's history, Stage Stop Inn, the arts, dinosaur bones, museums, solitude, the ski hill (if a way is found to reopen and sustain it), fishing, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

We heard that some critical components of successfully leveraging these assets are missing. Wayfinding and signage, aligned businesses, and more community events are among the identified missing pieces.

*Wayfinding:* A comprehensive signage and wayfinding plan that uses a brand-driven design to link Choteau's assets, from the ski hill to Freezeout Lake, was recommended as was maps and guides to trails, access points and viewing sites. These maps should be available from local businesses that visitors might frequent.

*Recreation Businesses:* A place that rents and sells outdoor recreation equipment would be a good fit for Choteau, according to a number of residents. Guiding and outfitting businesses, as well as craft and art-related businesses, including craft brewing, would cater to the same market.



*Youth Amenities:* Park playground equipment is outdated and probably doesn't meet current safety standards. A recent effort was initiated but was suspended before completion. However, we are told there is still lots of interest and that playground improvements are a priority.

*The Arts:* A greater emphasis on the arts would also have benefits for local residents while enriching visitors' experiences. A downtown art center is a goal of the local arts organization. An art walk, art classes and shows were also mentioned as possibilities given an abundance of artists in the region.

*Events:* Community events, like Choteau's famous 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities, are effective and sustainable ways to bring visitors and their dollars into rural communities. Some in Choteau believe it is feasible to develop a range of annual festivals and art shows.

### **Infrastructure**

Other ways that residents would like to put a shine on Choteau include fixing roads and streets, taking down dead trees, a more visible arts presence downtown, sidewalks in most neighborhoods, and improved walkability. One suggestion was for a walking path from the Stage Stop Inn to Downtown.

Workforce housing is another issue that inhibits new families from taking root. Cost is one issue, but availability of adequate housing stock presents significant challenges to those who want a home in Choteau.

An adequate assisted living facility is another desire for Choteau. Residents want to age in place rather than move to Fairfield or Great Falls.

*Health and Safety:* Besides sketchy playground equipment we heard concerns about the safety of children walking to and from school. Some drivers tend to speed past the school complex, but according to residents of the neighborhood, are rarely ticketed. Bike lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks were also mentioned as a need in Choteau.

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

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





## **Places**

Those participating in the listening sessions stated the obvious about the unique and beautiful location of Choteau. Between two national parks and near incredible outdoor and wildlife resources, Choteau is truly a Montana treasure. A favorite quote the team heard was, “We ARE a Hallmark Card.”

The team heard a long list under the category of places in Choteau. In summary: outdoor recreation, birding, existing businesses, Freezeout Lake, public lands, museums, pool, parks, ski hill, essential services, amenities, and agricultural land. Emotion was attached to the special “place” of Choteau with comments such as:

- Enjoy the small community, small family feel
- Picturesque Main Street
- A place where people care

## **Organizations**

The Choteau Community Review Team was amazed at the large number of organizations actively engaged within your community. These organizations work hard to plan events, serve those in need, take care of the town’s physical needs, educate youth, provide healthcare, and so much more. The team heard about the incredible 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, existing businesses, the quality education provided by the school, pool facility, hospital and health care, Choteau Area Port Authority, and your award winning newspaper.

As the graphic above indicates, the most often mentioned organizational assets included the school, StageStop Inn, hospital, Soroptimists, and Library.

# Survey Results

A “Community Satisfaction Survey” was conducted in Choteau prior to the Advance Team visit on March 19<sup>th</sup>. This survey was conducted by University of Idaho and the HELPS Lab at Montana State University. The full survey is included in Appendix B of this report.

## **Survey Respondent Description**

### **Response**

*Surveys completed:* 312

*Response rate:* 31%\* (of 1206 surveys sent, about 150 had address problems and were returned)

*Surveys completed on line:* 177

*Paper surveys completed:* 135

\*NOTE: This is an excellent response rate!  
Thanks to the people of Choteau and the Port Authority!



### **Sex**

*Female:* 175

*Male:* 105

*Prefer not to answer:* 31

## **Other Demographics of Respondents**

*Mean age:* 61 (average age of those responding)

*Median Income:* \$50-75k (range most often reported)

*Race & ethnicity:* Approximately 93% white

*Live inside or outside of community:* About 70% in the community

*Years in community:* 9% under 5 years, 29% from 6-20 years and 61% over 20 years

A note about the “satisfaction” section of the survey results: reported percentages are of those who answered the question. In a few cases a majority of respondents did not select any of the options. Those items include Childcare/Early Childhood Education, Public Transportation, and Mental Health. This is probably because respondents did not know enough to answer or because services, such as public transportation, are very limited.

There were several opportunities for survey respondents to explain their satisfaction ratings and provide additional information and ideas. Although there were lots of accolades for the Choteau’s people, places and organizations, responses tended to focus on why people are less than perfectly satisfied with items on the survey. Some of these comments are included here when they reflect other comments, are constructive, and suggest ways that life in Choteau can be improved. Please do not overemphasize those sentiments in your overall takeaway from this section – the glass is more than half full!

## Infrastructure

Respondents were more SATISFIED than dissatisfied with the following aspects of infrastructure, though the percentage of those who were satisfied is, in all cases, under fifty percent. That such a high percentage of respondents selected the neutral category suggests mixed feelings about that item.

- Appearance of Downtown (46% vs 21% dissatisfied and 33% neutral)
- Appearance of Neighborhoods (43% vs 20% dissatisfied and 37% neutral)
- Bike and Pedestrian Access (44% vs 25% dissatisfied and 31% neutral)
- Internet Service (36% vs 32% and 32% neutral)
- Housing (27% vs 24% dissatisfied and 48% neutral)

Responses to “*Would you like to comment or explain why you rated your satisfaction with any of these public services and community amenities in the way you did?*” tended to explain concerns more than reasons for being satisfied. That said, the positive comments mostly focus on the beauty of Choteau, and the quaint, friendly, small town look and feel of the community.

This comment explaining a lower rating for bike and pedestrian access represents many of the related responses to this question

*“Sidewalks and pedestrian routes in Choteau are generally poorly designed and maintained, often times dangerous given vehicle traffic, and sometimes overrun with business or industrial activities.”*

This last part was echoed in other comments that cars, boats and work vehicles often line the streets, perhaps because there is little off-street parking. One respondent suggested a “*S.I.D. to fund our sidewalks and streets?*”

Though bike and pedestrian access got more high ratings than low, many commented about the lack of sidewalks, the dangerous conditions for children walking to school, snow and ice removal, especially in areas frequented by senior citizens, and the need for bike and walking paths for safety (several mentioned the narrow shoulders on the highway), to promote more active lifestyles and to attract bike tourists.

Similarly, though Internet Service also received fairly high ratings, there were quite a few comments about the speed and cost of internet service. The concerns likely come more from younger respondents, those who rely on the internet for their livelihood and newcomers to the community who come from places where internet service is higher quality and less expensive. Improvements in the works by Three Rivers will result in overall increase in satisfaction with broadband.



An exceptionally high number of responses selected the neutral category with regard to housing. This is probably because most people are happy with their own homes. That said, there were quite a few comments that suggested a lack of available housing creates challenges for newcomers, young families looking for a starter home, and renters. The consensus is that housing costs are high, given relative quality and lower wages and salaries for local workers. This comment represents much of the sentiment we read (and heard in listening sessions) with regard to housing:

*“We have lost several friends that chose to move to Fairfield or other areas close by so that they could afford their house. We know Choteau is a beautiful town and we have the Teton County Courthouse here, yet we wonder why housing is so much higher than other neighboring areas. It is sad to see people have to choose other locations to live due to the housing cost when they were already making the sacrifice of less pay to live in such a beautiful, friendly and safe place!”*

Respondents were more DISSATISFIED than satisfied with the following aspects of Choteau’s infrastructure:

- Public Transportation (51% vs 3% satisfied and 34% Don’t know)
- Condition of Roads & Streets (45% vs 23% satisfied)

The high number of dissatisfied and “don’t know” ranking for public transportation is likely because there is very little public transportation available. There were a few follow-up comments about it:

*“We need bus transportation to Great Falls + for in town (to golf course). Also, bike paths along Hwy. 89 to Bynum + Fairfield.”*

Choteau’s streets and roads, like many other small western towns, are in fair to poor condition. The good news is that MDT will be coming through in three to four years to reconstruct Main St.

and the highway. Unfortunately, most other streets in town won't be impacted and with a limited tax base, street and road improvement is likely to be a slow process.

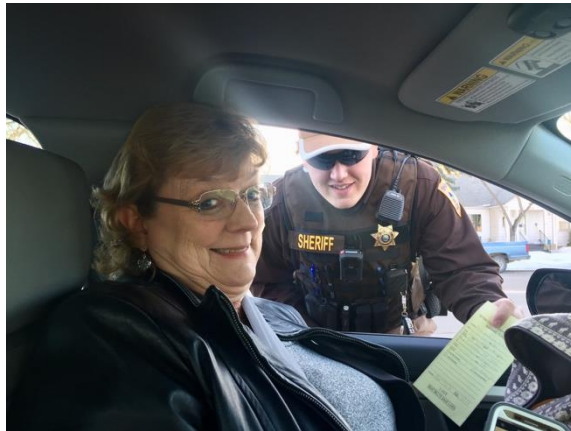
## Public Services

Surveyed residents were more SATISFIED than dissatisfied with the following services:

- Police protection/law enforcement (71% vs 9% dissatisfied)
- Local K-12 school system (78% vs 6% dissatisfied)
- Childcare/early childhood education (64% vs 10% dissatisfied and 53% no answer)
- Medical care services (49% vs 21% dissatisfied)
- Senior Citizen support services (53% vs 14% dissatisfied and 26% neutral)
- Responsiveness of local government (40% vs 23% dissatisfied and 33% neutral)

There were few comments about law enforcement, which one respondent noted is *“friendly and helpful!”* Concerns primarily centered around city code enforcement, which is less about how local officers do their jobs and more about city management of code enforcement. There were a few comments by residents who would like to see more enforcement of speed limits and other traffic violations.

However, the visiting team got to see local law enforcement in action and based on our experience we think they are doing a good job spotting traffic law violations!



Most of the comments about the K-12 school system in Choteau were positive: *“The educators in our school system have been fantastic over the years,”* and *“School system is top notch.”* There were a number of concerns about bullying, however, especially in the grade school. Other concerns were about homework (or the lack thereof) doing a disservice to students by *“not challenging them beyond what they can complete during the school day.”* We had not heard about either of these issues during listening sessions.

One person suggested the curriculum needs to be updated to “prepare youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” which would involve...



*“A more play-based curriculum utilizing lots of outdoor time for K-3 and project-based learning for 4-12 with a well-rounded education to mean a complete incorporation of arts, music, trades, and classical education as well as technology. We have a supreme outdoor venue...lets create an outdoor adventure and science and art school!”*

The other topic most commented about was a desire for local access to higher education. One respondent said he/she would like to see access to higher education via *“live streaming classes coordinated with places like the Hospital, Public Library, High School, etc.”* Along with a wide range of degree or continuing education options, dual credit classes for high school students was also mentioned.

Choteau residents are happy to have a local medical facility, but would like to have at least one local doctor and higher wages for workers in this sector (and others, such as teachers).

- Mental health services (26% vs 12% satisfied and 40% Don't know)

This response to mental health services is likely due to a lack of knowledge of what is available, and/or little need for these services among the survey respondents. Concerns were not raised during listening sessions.

## Business and the Economy

Residents were more DISSATISFIED than satisfied with all of the items in this category, which is not terribly surprising since it is the reason the Choteau Port Authority requested the community review.

- Available jobs (50% vs 10% satisfied and 29% neutral)
- Pay rates (49% vs 9% and 26% neutral)
- Variety of goods and services (46% vs 19% satisfied and 33% neutral)
- Access to higher education (38% vs 17% satisfied and 24% Don't know)
- Variety of industry (61% vs 6%)

Another question on the survey asked respondents how important promoting **tourism** is for Choteau (only seven people taking survey did not answer this question):

- Very important: 58%
- Somewhat important: 29%
- Somewhat unimportant: 10%
- Very unimportant: 3%





One person summed up the majority of comments on the subject of jobs and wages: *“we need more jobs to keep people here and better wages to attract them.”* With regard to retail, many noted the challenge of sustaining local businesses when people do their shopping in larger communities:

*“We could use more shopping opportunities too, but so many people drive to Great Falls to shop, it is little wonder that businesses find it hard to stay open. We need a way to change attitudes so people shop local first.”*

Another question on the survey asked respondents what challenged their ability to support local businesses. The responses were:

- Availability of products, services or both: 38%
- Prices: 24%
- Hours of operation: 16%

We heard concerns about hours of operation with regard to being visitor friendly, but for local residents this is not as big an issue.

Other economic points made by those who chose to explain their ratings:

- Diversify the economy – it’s the path to growth
- Embrace telecommuting as a component of that diversity
- Embrace tourism as a component of that diversity, but also build agricultural opportunities such as value-added products from what is locally grown
- Support women entrepreneurs as a diversification strategy
- Focus on aligning the cost of living with wages and salaries
- Focus on revitalizing Main Street – many are concerned about the growing number of empty buildings
- Elected leaders should align themselves with these priorities

There is wide acknowledgement that the Choteau region is rich in recreational opportunities. The one survey respondents most connected to economic development is the ski hill.

*“We need to open the ski area!”*

*“Encourage the ski hill to move its rental and equipment maintenance into Choteau and not up on the ski hill (might help reduce costs for them as well as provide added incentive for folks to return to town).”*

*“A couple cross country ski trails – groomed or not – could be set up with local unused land, the golf course, etc. Even one set up outside of town but not all the way at the ski hill would entice travelers.”*

*“Create a local bike trail in the community and a business to rent bikes for folks to use (...with also mountain biking on the ski hill).”*

One person expressed appreciation for the range of recreation opportunities in Choteau:

*“Excellent recreation opportunities (gyms, running club, yoga, etc.). The Soroptimist walking path, the beauty of the landscape!”*

Another idea to entice travelers was shared by a survey respondent: *“RV parking downtown.”*

During listening sessions we heard about the need for more social gathering places, coffee shops, restaurants and lots of interest in a craft brewery. This was also reflected in the survey comments:

*“The community needs a brewery.... It is a growing industry, provides a “non-bar atmosphere” for locals to congregate and numerous people now travel specifically to visit breweries.”*

## **Quality of Life and Civic Engagement**

Some of the quotes below were in response to the question asking for explanations of satisfaction ratings and some are in response to the question about how effective residents are at working together. Of those answering the effectiveness question, 18% selected “very effective,” 71% selected “somewhat effective,” and 11%, “not at all effective.” In explaining a “somewhat effective” rating, one person commented,

*“Projects tend to take an extended time to come to fruition and it is difficult to keep that nucleus of people working consistently through literally years to bring a project to reality. Because of this I rated effectiveness at only somewhat effective. It’s not that we don’t have people willing to volunteer, it’s just very difficult to sustain the energy and the commitment over the long periods of time needed.”*

Unlike with economic indicators, residents were more SATISFIED than dissatisfied with all aspects of local quality of life and citizen involvement in the community. In response to the question, “Is Choteau a good place to raise a family?”, 93% of those answering the question said “Yes.”

- Friendliness of residents (78% vs 9% dissatisfied)
- Parks & playgrounds (68% vs 8% dissatisfied and 27% neutral)
- Availability of fresh fruits & veggies (60% vs 14% dissatisfied and 26% neutral)
- Civic and non-profit organizations (58% vs 8% dissatisfied and 27% neutral)
- Recreation/entertainment opportunities (52% vs 18% dissatisfied and 28% neutral)
- Responsiveness of local government (37% vs 20% dissatisfied and 33% neutral)

- Arts, entertainment & cultural activities (36% vs 25% dissatisfied and 34% neutral)



Friendliness of residents topped the list in terms of satisfaction. The few who expressed dissatisfaction felt outsiders and newcomers are not always welcomed to participate in local organizations or decision making. We did hear some comments during listening sessions about this and there was a good deal of discussion about focusing on being more welcoming and inclusive in engaging all residents in community activities.

Despite some comments about a desire to update the playground equipment in the park, 68% of those who responded to the parks and playgrounds item were somewhat or highly satisfied. Related to this, recreation and entertainment options appreciated by survey respondents include the golf course, movie theater, skiing and other outdoor activities and the events at the park/pavilion/rodeo grounds.

In the next tier is availability of fresh fruits and vegetables. Comments were appreciative of the *“Wonderful fresh food because of Jill’s Market and the Hutterites.”*

Though more were satisfied than dissatisfied with arts, entertainment and cultural activities, the smaller margin is likely due to both recognition of high quality local artists and art organizations and a feeling that more can be done in this area. These ideas are also linked to prospects for economic development that brings visitors who come to town, spend lots of money, and then go away.

*“The Roxy does a great job bringing movies to our community and enjoy supporting their work. Some other rural communities have had success tapping into small film festivals with much success. Polson has multiple events that are community supported and, again, bring consumers to the community.”*

*“Tap into the idea of more events – Dupuyer has Grizzly Days, Ivan Doig Day, etc. Perhaps we can have AB Guthrie Day, Old North Trail day, etc. and target getting those events advertised via Facebook groups, and papers in Helena and Great Falls.”*

The community in general, civic organizations and responsiveness of local government received high marks from residents:

*“The community and people are amazing. Very kind and helpful!”*

*“Whenever there is a need, there is a quick and generous response.”*

*“Choteau is a wonderful small town that has a lot to offer for its size. There is a caring group of people that live here. Great place to raise kids!”*

There is recognition of strong, effective leadership and action that has some traction:

*“The civic and non-profit organizations deserve the highest accolades. Fundraisers are always well supported for the swimming pool, the animal shelter, pavilion, scouts, 4-H, weather beaters, food pantry, and various church projects. The generosity of local citizens is outstanding!”*



*“Thank you to the groups of people working on our challenges.”*

*“There's an enthusiastic group of citizens who are involved. We need more of them.”*

*“I think that members of our community concerned with the development of our city are greatly determined to work together to get some things going.”*

*“Throughout the years, Choteau residents have been very good about facing the problems of the community and solving them. People in Choteau are generally willing to put out much energy and thought towards solving problems.”*

That said, several comments responding to the question about how effective residents are at working together suggest that elected leadership and residents could be more open to change, willing to try new ideas, and less resigned to the status quo:

*“There seems to be a difference between two groups of people, those who would like change and those who want things to remain the same.”*

*“But change IS happening, whether we like it or not. So why not step up and take charge of that change?”*

*“I have routinely heard that we need to be careful about the future because we do not want to be the next Bozeman or Missoula. I think that will always be expressed as a concern but should not be given as a reason to not do anything.”*

*“After a while, people just give up.”*

And though active organizations are applauded for local initiatives, some think there is a need for more coordination and alignment of visions among them:

*“The community usually has several diverse groups or opinions. Very conservative to fairly open-minded and more liberal. Depending on the issue, sometimes the opposing opinions do not come together, causing a stalemate.”*

*“My sense is that there are many groups working hard to make improvements in the community. However, these groups are not always good at communicating with each other, so efforts are duplicated or even conflicting with each other.”*

That is not to say that people are not hopeful. Positive begets positive and that shines through this comment:

*“People in our community are willing to go above and beyond to help determine what can be done to make it better. It takes many people to make progress on such a large project. If we continue to get a few more each time, we’ll all be working together towards the best possible solutions for our community.”*



To that point, many recognize the need for new voices in these efforts – particularly younger residents. This was in response to “I would volunteer more if...”:

*“We need new blood to help keep these projects going and to spread the work around.”*

*“I’d also be more willing to help if I knew people my age (25-30) would be there helping.”*

And to the point that some in the community feel there are barriers to being meaningfully involved, this person finished the “if” sentence with:

*“More people of Choteau make you feel like it’s your hometown too.”*

Another elaborated on this idea:

*“Too many people are excluded from many of the organizations/committees that discuss these issues and often ignore comments that are contrary to their predetermined outcomes.”*

That this was echoed in listening sessions suggests there is a very real perception, among some Choteau residents, of exclusiveness with regard to who is welcomed into community conversations.



### Volunteerism in Choteau

Kudos to Choteau for having such an engaged, giving and caring community. We asked whether respondents to the survey volunteered in the last year and if they did, what did they volunteer for. Of those answering the question *“Have you been involved in community projects in the last 12 months?”*, **46% said yes and 48% said no.** We then asked respondents to list the community projects they have worked on. Counting all the volunteerism reported by survey respondents was quite an undertaking! Here is the list:



<p><b><u>Cultural</u></b>  Old Trail Museum 3  Museum (old trail?) 5  Shakespeare in the Park 2  Fireworks 4  4th of July 7  Rodeo 2  Easter egg hunt 3  Art 5</p>	<p><b><u>Youth</u></b>  OFA Scholarships 4  Boy Scouts 8  Girl Scouts 2  Swimming Pool 6  School 24  Youth 15  4-H 5  Playground 4  Reading Buddies 2  Sports 6</p>	<p><b><u>Health and Safety</u></b>  Soroptimist 5  Fire Dept 6  EMS 4  Hospital 10  Health 6  Search and Rescue 2  Red Cross 3  Food Pantry 8</p>
<p><b><u>Community Quality of Life</u></b>  Senior Center 6  Church 20  Animal Shelter 7  Lions Club 17  Community Educ 2  Clean-up 5  Service 11  Fundraising 52  Library 4  Community 26  CASA 2</p>	<p><b><u>Economic Development</u></b>  Port Authority 2  Chamber 5  Visitors Center 2</p>	



## **Appendix D: Listening Session Notes**

**The following is a listing of comments made by participants during Choteau Listening Sessions.**

### **CHOTEAU COMMUNITY REVIEW**

**MARCH 19 – 20, 2018**

#### **What don't you want to see happen in Choteau in the next five years?**

##### Economic Development Discovery Session

- Rex Market, Ace Hardware – don't want to see lesser quality in businesses if current owners retire.
- Don't want more businesses to close. Ditto
- Don't want young people discouraged due to lack of jobs.
- Don't want to see numbers decline in school system
- Don't want to see hospital ever close.
- Initiatives that require more volunteers and more donations.
- Don't want to see this Community Review process fail.
- Ditto all of the above regarding hospital and schools. Ditto
- Ditto, ditto, ditto
- Don't want people to move away due to lack of jobs.
- Don't want to lose the sense of a family community – not a boom community.
- Overabundance of water running down the street.

##### Open House - Choteau Town Hall #1

- Rapid growth, boom town
- Unplanned, unmanaged growth
- Loss of economic vitality /
- Economic stagnation
- Reduction in population/
- Decreasing diversity
- Business closure ////
- Esp. restaurants & clothing
- Lose services
- Fewer good \$ jobs /
- Young people leaving
- Marijuana
- Lack of affordable housing
- More regulations
- Permanent closure of the skill hill
- School enrollment decline ///
- Class C (school)
- Schools to close
- Decline of health services
- Loss of hospital ///
- Skyline to close

- Focus on \$/grants to the detriment of goals
- Environmentally unfriendly
- Ugly, large lot subdivision/commercial lots
- Continued abuse of authority towards all
- Resistance to change
- Not respecting right of others in pursuit of better economics, private property and kindness
- Decline of pride and main street aesthetics //
- Strict ordinances
- Lack of welcome
- Traffic /
- Crumbling infrastructure
- Pot holes
- Unoccupied businesses
- Smog
- Increase in drugs & drug related crimes
- Slow communications access
- Lose the newspaper
- Close-mindedness
- Oil & gas development
- Forest fires
- Young farmers to leave

#### Recreation and Tourism Discovery Session

- No generic anywhere-in-America businesses show up; no canned experiences
- Unclaimed development – needs to benefit the community, be supported by the community
- Uncontrolled recreation access – don't want 50 trails when one will do
- Don't want land access compromised
- Continue to lose businesses
- Don't want to see basic character of this landscape change
- Don't be afraid of change; we must modify to attract people
- Don't want to lose the charm that makes Choteau Choteau
- Don't want to see negativism on tourism
- Do not want it to be over-run by people, i.e., Bozeman
- Don't want people to be apathetic about change, yet maintain charm
- Closed off attitude
- Don't want miscommunication between multiple generations

#### E-Commerce Discovery Session

- No more empty buildings on Main Street
- Decline of population
- Cultural conflict between traditional population and newcomers
- Don't want to lose the ability to walk here – keep the character that lends to walking
- Not too much growth, not too much nor too big
- Don't lose ourselves in the digital world.
- Don't want a resort town or just a fly fishing town
- Further deterioration of infrastructure

- Unsafe roads or walking conditions
- Don't look like we are in disrepair;
- Hostility toward telecommuters and fear of Amazon
- School enrollment drop and/or consolidation
- Drug use to increase
- Inability to manage growth
- Increase in crime or loss of safety
- Lack of leadership
- Continued lack of option for internet service providers

#### Agriculture Discovery Session

- Decrease in number of family farms
- Young producers discouraged from coming home
- Huge oil development
- School shut down or keep shrinking
- Town to die
- Increasing average age
- New taxes or increases in fees that discourage new businesses/industry
- more ag-supporting businesses leaving town
- lose small businesses
- absentee landowners buying things up
- subdivision of good irrigated ag land
- Hard to compete with purchasing land with tax exempt groups
- medical services declining

#### Youth and Seniors Discovery Session

- More businesses closing
- Closed restaurant
- Losing quality educators; due to wages
- Keep young families away due to jobs or housing
- Keep our children from returning – due to jobs and social options
- Become apathetic to what is here
- Hidden opportunities for spouses to find work
- Declining enrollment – less students
- Fewer people; or fewer young people who will procreate
- Reduction in people to lose staff
- Businesses closing, less students
- High school graduates not come back
- More crime and drug use
- Don't want a Starbucks on every corner

#### Arts and History Discovery Session

- Do not want to lose our museum.
- A lot more people in town.

- Stores close, dentist leave, doctors leave
- Population to decline
- More young families leave
- Shrinkage of the library
- Access to public lands shut down; access to our history
- Don't want to decrease in community events or decrease in volunteer organizations

#### Always Lived Here, Came Back Here, Chose to Live Here Discovery Session

- Get smaller
- Become Williston North Dakota
- Boom and bust development
- Continued economic stagnation
- Leave opportunities on the table
- More deterioration in downtown
- Lose hospital
- People get burned out
- Increased population density
- Crime
- Roxy close
- Lose core businesses (drug store, gas station, market...)
- Schools lose enrollment
- Decline in quality of school
- Sustainable businesses

#### **What do you want to see happen in Choteau in the next five years?**

##### Economic Development Discovery Session

- Add more jobs, year round jobs; ditto
- Bring in more events to sustain local businesses, ditto
- More workforce housing; newer housing yet affordable
- Increasing enrollment in schools
- More local support from people who live here to shop here
- Live local!
- Recreation supply/rental business – either as a business or provided by city
- Signs for trail heads; ditto
- More welcoming (signage, beautification) to tourists; remove junk piles
- Market the entire town, welcome visitors
- Welcome new people (who do you belong to question)
- Apply for grants to assist property owners on Main Street to improve buildings – whether installation, furnace, - reduces overhead for the business
- Create a county wide port authority – expand the Choteau Area Port Authority (tried a mill levy and it failed)
- More activities for kids, i.e., tournaments, new playground, Cowboy Hall of Fame,
- Niche markets/branding
- Submit for the Winter Olympics. 😊

- Adopt a health and/or safety policy to guide the types of businesses that may come in, development, and change.
- Market the town! Business signs are good but market the entire town and the things to do here.
- Upgrade to the playground
- Community Garden
- E-commerce/telecommute showcased here; encourage the existing in home businesses
- Engage the existing e-commerce workers; socialize them
- Set up co-working space
- Value added ag – using the food resources we have.
- Night life – social gathering
- Have a person to recruit industry for a more diverse economy
- Affordable housing for young families

**Priorities: E-Commerce; Affordable Housing, Jobs will drive all of it**

### **Open House - Town Hall Meeting 3/19**

- Increase in diverse opportunities /
- More diverse businesses downtown
- Unique education opportunities
- Get folks to come back
- Broadband / fiber //
- Chair at the entrance of Choteau
- Value-added ag
- Isakson's general store – merchandise
- Pride – ordinances that are community friendly
- Better main street parking
- Community focus (mntns, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc.)
- Recreation trails
- Better roads
- Better restaurants
- Leadership
- Business friendly climate
- Micro-brewery
- Welcoming for cultural diversity
- Business sustainability and longevity
- Community & school connections (jobs shadowing & life skills)
- Summer programs for youth (education, fun)
- A more welcoming atmosphere for tourists/visitors /
- Growth
- Businesses to employ people
- Winter & summer recreation - facilities
- Use school infrastructure
- Neighborhood solar projects
- Ski hill functioning
- Housing for lower income & assisted living /
- Available employees
- Collaboration among younger & older population
- Meat packing plant
- Family wage jobs //

- Vibrant main st.
- Promote positive
- Celebrate seasonal opportunities
- Find identity
- Community college
- Promote ourselves
- Full service restaurant
- Increased collaboration
- Increased hours of business
- Capture \$ of travelers
- Increased info on outdoors
- More events
- Successful young farmers
- Improve economy
- Improve support of schools
- Good governance – adherence to an objective set of standards
- Stability in the eateries
- Agreement on central revitalization theme
- More people shopping locally /
- Workforce training
- Proactive, not reactive on development
- More arts downtown
- Promote more use of local parks – pavilion
- Good coffee shop with high speed internet connection
- Greater involvement of state universities
- Outside money coming in – businesses to locate that don't need huge infrastructure investment
- Quiet industry (computer-based)
- Art & cultural activities
- Business incubators like co-work spaces (attract biz's that don't really want to go overseas)

#### Recreation Discovery Session

- Embrace the value of our public lands; especially the protected public lands we have here
- Be ready to sell Choteau as the place to come for relaxation and a break from the world: Unplug
- Support our local businesses
- A store that caters to camping, fishing, hiking activities
- Supper club restaurant
- Closed businesses open again.
- Expanded business hours – although hard to staff
- Ripple effect of hiring people – spread the wealth
- Get a share of the e-commerce trade
- Untapped day recreation options – guide services, i.e., fishing guides
- Ski area – impacts the entire economy
- A place for younger generation to gather; or daycare access
- Winter activities and events
- Main Street more tourist friendly
- Explore a hidden economy – lawyers, doctors, small industry in an area

- Develop or focus on commercial retail businesses; rentals – instant gratification stores – don't have time to order on the internet.
- Expand the use of the information center – i.e., migration info when birds fly in, more specific information. Expand the hours.
- Categorize recreation activities by summer – what are we missing in Winter, Summer, Spring, Fall – and plan according to the seasons.
- Growth built around sustainable assets – don't reinvent ourselves.
- Connect people to our assets via transportation
- Connectivity within the city itself – a sidewalk from the StageStop; easier to follow walking trail.
- Walking path through nature areas and downtown
- Interpretive center built on to the visitor center at the old trail museum.
- Get ideas from those who have been in business for a long time.
- Opportunity to work with Boy Scout tourists

#### E-Commerce Discovery Session

- Continue responsiveness of internet provider
- Approach google for internet assistance
- Improved google map accuracy
- Intentional recruitment on Choteau website – how to move here, why to move here, etc.
- “I am moving to Choteau, what do I need to know”
- A place to hang out when I have been in my home office all day.
- Improved sidewalks and bikes for safety
- More law enforcement – high speeds near school
- Open restaurants
- More advertising for growth around tourism for those coming through the park
- Advertise Choteau on purpose – showcase remote workers and opportunities here
- Cultural things like Shakespeare in the Park
- Be more welcoming to the nerds – get your geek on!
- Make more technical training available.
- Shared working space –
- Keep small town feel – small town friendliness
- Increase in affordable housing -
- Increase in jobs for individuals and families
- Education on how to create Etsy store, etc.
- Stronger collegiate representation – more higher ed classes
- More volunteerism across the board – all ages
- Use of the library from Noon to 3:30pm - use it for technology and assistance
- Full time for director for the Library
- Learn from other small communities – those near us and others
- Learn lessons from White Sulphur Springs
- Capitalize on history tourism – working on story maps
- Ap for when walking the community to share – also Montana Memory Project
- Ski area operating
- Studio for producing videos, pod casts, school curriculum - adults create content to share; involve students
- Remote worker club/network so that we know each other

## Agriculture Discovery Session

- Leverage assets (e.g., theater)
- Develop ag assets – ag support needs
- Hub for ag support needs
- Support what we have – buy locally
- Ag based businesses – malt plant – value added
- Water rights issues settled (eating up fees)
- No shortsightedness in rejecting businesses that want to locate here
- Openness to change
- More crop markets – ways to get products out of the state
- Sell commodities in a timely fashion
- Awareness of what is available in community
- Get rail into Choteau
- Selfish baby boomers be willing to invest in community – utilize taxes in a positive manner
- Tax funded efforts to establish new ag businesses – get rail back from Columbia – community owned ski hill
- More winter recreation
- Tax to fund infrastructure
- Everyone is okay with paying taxes because everyone is benefitting

## Youth and Seniors Discovery Session

- A place to eat on Sunday night
- More jobs for students year round
- More opportunities for students – i.e., someone moved to Helena for photography classes
- More businesses – sustainable
- Incentive package from banks for teachers or families to purchase a home
- Increased base pay for teachers; ditto; teachers prep for multiple classes even though smaller size. Larger school teachers teach the same thing over and over.
- Want to see housing allowance for teachers
- Improve quality rentals
- Greater connection between talented people in our community to connect with our youth, our aging and share their talents and expertise.
- More community involvement – core groups work better together and engage those on the “fringe” of the community
- Welcoming people who come into the community via Welcome Wagon
- Support young families -help them volunteer
- Enjoy the school newsletter
- Encourage kids to go to vo-tech; vo-ag
- Entrepreneurship program

## Arts and History Discovery Session

- Keep Small town
- Some identify for Choteau – branding – to make us unique with common ground. Have ag, dinosaurs, recreation, need something to unite us all.



- Museum growths; more interest in museum
- Community increase jobs; increase arts community
- Art Center – bring people together for the arts
- Unity between locals, businesses, and all that is available; i.e., Great Falls schools bring students to our museum
- Open people eyes to the connections that are available and we work better together
- StageStop fully utilized and cultivated for conferences, i.e., history conference
- A garden project for an Iris Columbine Festival – usually around June 25th
- More infill of empty lots on Main Street
- Architectural street scape of the community – i.e., one simple picket fence around empty space
- Cemetery tour with live re-enactment.
- Prairie Mountain Players
- Walking tour ap; adapt for Choteau and input data
- 3,400 visitors at the old trail museum this year
- Ski Run
- Nursing Home
- Better coordination of events so that they don't happen on the same night
- Community Calendar

#### Always Lived Here, Came Back Here, Chose to Live Here Discovery Session

- Elder care
- Sustainable businesses
- Playground
- Address drug problem
- Look into mysterious health issues
- More community-minded people
- Affordable housing
- Ability to attract different businesses – diversity – professional class
- Coffee shop
- Co-working space
- Small business
- Revitalized main street
- Creative use of empty buildings
- Maintain school size (barely viable)
- Increased business opportunities
- Assisted living facility – something between the lodge and the hospital
- Infrastructure – sidewalks
- Shared space developments in empty buildings – with educational components- trades
- Cleanup efforts
- All infrastructure
- Vibrant main street
- Entrances need a facelift
- Promote library & museum more
- Market what we have here
- Market region – link assets (all the picturesque towns – views)
- Tie assets together

## What , Who, and Where are the assets that can benefit Choteau?

### Economic Development Discovery Session

- Outdoor recreation and the lack of people
- Existing businesses – we have a lot! Discover more niches
- Existing businesses are very well run – high quality.
- Market the quality of our public school system; Ditto, Ditto
- No one can compete with Choteau and our mountains; use them!
- Location – huge draw for Yellowstone to Glacier Route
- Forest Service Office – wayfinding signs to them to get help
- Good hospital
- People ready to work for change
- Support school sports – pennies on the dollar
- People who care; may not always agree but we care.
- Water and sewer capacity is huge; ready for growth up to 5,000; surpasses EPA guidelines
- Small industry that will use the services that we have
- Service organizations seem to be reviving – Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Lion’s Club, huge asset
- Volunteer Fire and EMT services

### Open House - Town Hall Meeting 3/19 / = ditto

- Human resource pool
- Ski hill //
- Local volunteer animal shelter
- Pool //
- Host of government offices
- County seat – courthouse //
- Two museums //
- Movie theater //
- We ARE a Hallmark card
- Aura of Americana
- Solitude & remoteness
- Chamber of Commerce
- Spring creek & park around it //
- Nicest nine hole golf course in the area //
- Ball diamonds
- Rodeo grounds /
- Weatherbeater
- City campground
- Extension
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration /
- Ag tech knowledge among local producers
- Stagestop inn //
- Hospital //
- Outdoor recreation
  - Hiking /, fishing /, wildlife /, beauty //
- Clean air
- Public lands
- Rocky Mountain front
- Great downtown – walkable

- Clean town
- Retirees
- Civic pride
- Choteau activities
- Essential services
- Warm giving people /
  - Churches, charitable groups, volunteer orgs, Lions
  - Choteau education foundation, Soroptimist ////
- School ///
- Grocery stores
- Night skies
- Lack of pollution
- Healthy opportunities
- Choteau community art studio
  - Front range art association
  - Great artists in the area /
- Pavilion /
- Skyline lodge
- Inclusive/nice people
- Library //
- Airport /
- Dinosaurs
- Grizzly bears
- Water system
- City workers
- Birding – snow geese
- Volunteers
- Rex's
- Mt Front Market
- Expanded internet
- Newspaper
- Food pantry
- Health department
- Agriculture (feed lot – elevator)

#### Recreation Discovery Session

- Walking trail
- Skating Rink
- StageStop is a visitor center
- Proximity to protected public land
- Athletic opportunities
- Crossfit studios
- Yoga
- Aerobics
- Water aerobics
- Frisby golf
- Dog walking opportunities
- Golf Course
- Seasonal beach north of town
- Dinosaurs – rich deposit of dinosaur eggs
- Airport – need to utilize it more; used to have a fly-in

- People – our younger people that have the enthusiasm and willingness to contribute their expertise to our community.
- Old North Trail
- Hospital
- County seat and having the Forest Service
- Campgrounds
- City park
- Nature Conservancy
- On the road to Glacier
- Cyclists come through here on the way to South Dakota
- Birding

#### E-Commerce Discovery Session

- Ski resort
- State Library representative
- Library
- Outfitters – expand their use
- Internet access – needs improved but still an asset
- Location, Public Lands, Highway
- Interested community members
- Federal employees - under utilized – especially Forest Service
- Great cost of living
- StageStop
- Bring in someone from another similar community and share their experience
- Use the network from the e-commerce people who live here
- MSU Extension
- Pavilion and StageStop
- Montana Memory Project
- We are conference ready!
- Cross promotion with other communities are on the route to Glacier
- Nonprofits/service organizations are tremendous
- Accessibility to our public buildings
- Hospital and health care
- Skyline and Beehive
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration
- Chad's company with drone and photography work
- Former military residents
- Yard Sale Site – on social media 4,700 people; has handled emergency info

#### Agriculture Discovery Session

- Basic infrastructure – school, hospital, banks, buildings
- Diverse landscape for ag and for recreation – lots of untapped potential
- I really enjoy and see the value of this process
- Hard working people – work ethic
- We have all we need here
- Great producers – great products

- Lots of little things to do
- Easy to get around
- Unique geography – plains, mountains
- We know each other
- Willing to try new things (mostly – progressive)
- Banks
- Fsc office
- Chemical salesman
- John Deere
- Worldwide tech company
- Charlet bulls – largest in the world
- Water
- Bynum (reservoir)
- Eureka reservoir- but seems to be overused

#### Youth and Seniors Discovery Session

- Enjoy small community - keep it small and sustainable
- Keep the family feel to the community
- Keep unique atmosphere
- Cowboys and Dinosaurs
- USDA/Forest Service
- Ag
- Schools
- Hunting
- Recreational Opportunities
- Rocky Mountain Front
- School System
- Teton Ski Area

#### Arts and History Discovery Session

- Ice Cream parlor
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Museum
- Northwest Trails
- Museums
- History
- Strong community
- StageStop Inn
- Weatherbeater
- Endless outdoor opportunities
- Near Glacier Park
- Encourage people to stop here
- Fireworks, Rodeo, and Parade
- Cattle ranching, farming, what we do is real; share the experience
- Students with 25 hour volunteer requirement – put them to good use
- Medical facilities
- Dentist

- Eye doctor
- P.T.'s
- Art Center – not in the best place but still....
- Artists

Always Lived Here, Came Back Here, Chose to Live Here Discovery Session

- Multi-generational community
- Natural environment
- Community spirit
- Wildness
- Rocky Mtn Front
- Freezeout
- Dupuyer Ivan Doig committee
- Silver tsunami
- Library
- Museum
- Golf course – rec facilities
- Pristine environment
- Dinosaurs
- Gathering place – park/pavilion
- Cute main street – picturesque
- Amenities
- Orgs that support low income families
- Neighbors helping neighbors
- Scholarships
- Mountain front market (farm to table option there)
- Location – proximity to outdoor rec opportunities
- Life we want
- Apple pie small town
- Great people – all generations
- Quality of ed – schools