

Meeting Notes

Meeting: Economic Health

Date/Time: 11-19-14

Location: ikuw Solutions

Notes by: Bob Horne, Applied Communications

Attended by: Kari Neal, Ruth Reineking, Sam Sill, Suzette Dussault, Eric Gabster, Kevin McManus, Matt Joseph, Marcy Allen, Brigitta Freer, Jenny Mish, Allen Sangster (Facilitator Assistant Intern), Laval Means (Development Services staff)

Updates

- At the next meeting the group should appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair that will also serve as representative and alternate to the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee will begin meeting in January, so that will mean a second meeting during a few months overlap with the focus group work for the person acting as a Chair or Vice Chair.
- Draft Community Profile (existing conditions) is now online at <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/27401>.

Background

Review a few key elements of the Focus Group Guidelines

- Inspiration section:
- Overview of core pillars – they help to set up the process for this project
- Overview of the City Council Resolution – In April, 2014, the Council passed a resolution in support of the process and starting point being exploration of policies that delve into the meaning of “focusing inward” for our community.
- Draft Value Statement – this document describes the background for the focus inward concept and lists many core values to consider. This document will be revisited by the Steering Committee toward the end of this process to see whether we need to make any adjustments to the statement.
- Goal/Objective/Action section:
 - The definition and examples of goal statements are shown in the guidebook.

Overview of the Values and Challenges process:

For the past five months the planning group has been collecting comments from community members through many topic-based listening sessions regarding values and challenges and ideas to address the challenges. The notes from the listening sessions are available on the website. The Summaries from the notes are the tools used tonight to help guide the process of developing Goals.

Goal Development Task:

Each group member identified key topics that they felt best relate to the focus group subject by reviewing the Summary Values material and circling five topics and reviewing the Summary Challenges material and circling five topics.

Group members shared their top priorities for the focus group from the Value topic list and the Challenge topic list.

High priority topics were chosen from the Values topics and the Challenges topics. Each group member was asked to write goal statements for any of the high priority topics (whether they came from the Values or Challenges lists).

Group members read off goal statements and some questions and clarification were discussed.

Project staff collected the goals statements and grouped them under the related topics.

The purpose of this process is to collect as many initial individual goal statement ideas and then through the next few months expect to see the statements become refined, combined, sorted and even possibly moved to another group or level of policy development (such as objective or action).

Topics Identified and number of people interested in exploring the topic:

- Sense of place- 3
- Infrastructure- 9/7
- Downtown-5
- Labor pool- 6
- Natural resources- 1
- Natural areas/outdoor recreation & parks and recreation (combined)- 4
- Local business- 9
- Good education- 3
- Cooperation among agencies- 3
- Economy-jobs- 9
- Affordable housing- 1
- Business development- 7
- Land use-zoning-subdivision- 5
- Funding- 4
- Development review process- 4
- Community character- 2
- Transportation-transit-multi-modal- 7
- Health & wellness- 1
- Culture & arts- 3
- University – 2
- Environmental Quality - 1

Initial Individual Goal Statements by Topic

Infrastructure

- Keep Missoula wired.
- Develop NewGen Broadband (fiber optic) network throughout the city (objective).
- Broadband opportunities.
- Effectively use TIF dollars in support of technology infrastructure.
- Free broadband city-wide.
- Ensure reliable and affordable next generation broadband service.
- Acquire city's water system.
- Have enough wastewater capacity to service the community and have the ability to expand as necessary.
- Build infrastructure support for renewable energy production.
- Provide the following: broadband, clean water (publicly owned), diverse neighborhoods including mixed use.
- Provide LED lights city wide to reduce energy consumption and light pollution.
- Develop infrastructure that good-paying employers want.
- Support housing development near business development to help reduce infrastructure needs by combining services.

Labor Pool

- Promote and develop alternatives to higher education in technology.
- More agile and better alignment between business needs and curricula in all educational institutions.
- Engage youth/millennials in community development.
- Promote associate degree programs in trades and labor: electricians, plumbers, wind & solar technicians, health care, and IT technicians.

Business Development

- Encourage investment and infrastructure for entrepreneurship.
- Incentivize/encourage outside businesses that fit the "Missoula" theme to relocate here.
- Develop air service.
- Promote rural outsourcing.

Transportation-Transit-Multi-modal

- Green belt city-wide; sidewalks all ADA compliant.
- Multi-modal to include: bikes, skates, skateboards, strollers, small/slow kids & adults, wheel chairs, walk/run, dogs.
- Develop compact multi-modal and transit accessible land use policy.
- Encourage the state to set up a matching funds program in support of air service enhancement.
- Develop land use policy based on transit access and focus inward concepts.

Local Business

- Promote local value-added products; encourage meat processing, canneries, and sustainable forest products.

- Encourage the state to invest in industries grant and loan programs and a matching fund for federal research dollars.
- Provide assistance to local businesses in selling products and services out of the area.
- Encourage local preference purchasing policies on the part of anchor institutions.
- Funding for entrepreneurs starting businesses that combat obesity and work with schools, non-profits, etc.
- Reduce taxes and costs of operating a small local business compared to larger businesses not considered “local”.
- Benefits- reduced and funding for costs of local businesses being “green” and using reused products and renewable energy.
- Easier/lower barriers to business funding.
- Consistent and predictable business regulations.
- Provide support to entrepreneurs in terms of lower regulatory barriers, education, and training.
- Have a plan to identify resources to encourage affordable start up for local entrepreneurs.

Economy-Jobs

- Protection of natural resources; investment in R&D for renewable energies.
- Research about renewable energy and other sustainable industries.
- Energy efficiency.
- Provide “new vision” of Montana jobs: tourism, agriculture, and technology.

Parking Lot

The idea of an investment pool that channels capital to local businesses was brought forward and put in the parking lot for later consideration.

Discussion Notes:

As Focus Group members identified topics they also spoke to why some of the topics were of interest and relevant to Economic Health and whether some topics should be combined.

- There are several topics that relate to housing including consideration of sprawl. Interest in considering the relationship between housing, where it is located and how it relates to our economy seems very relevant.
- Consideration of our natural areas and parks and recreation is important to the City’s economy because it’s a main reason why people choose to live here and it is seen as an asset to Missoula.
- Education is an important foundation to the economy including the University.
- Culture and Arts seems to be missing from the exploration of topics for economic health. (The facilitator noted that much of the discussion that took place in the Arts & Culture Listening Session was devoted the community-wide economic impact of art exhibits and cultural events and performances.) The Livability Focus Groups will likely be looking at Culture and Arts in more detail even if it doesn’t rise to a high level of exploration in this group. It may also be explored through objectives and actions.
- Transportation is an infrastructure back bone to so many things. Transportation, including transit and bike/ped, seems to touch all the topics and supports Focus Inward. Having efficient transit allows getting people to the places they want to go, whether it is home to jobs, home to recreation, travel to the university, etc.

- Health and wellness is an important economic factor because of the need for it to be affordable and accessible to all.
- Climate change relates to economic health when considering many things such as green building, transportation shifts and reduced infrastructure costs, eco-industries, increased wildfires and potential climate change refuges. It's a challenge to our values in a number of the high interest topics and it is likely a point of consideration in other focus groups as well, such as environmental quality.
- Clarify the difference between the "local business" and "business development" topic. Should they be combined? The "local business" topic is about support to the existing businesses while the "business development" topic seems to be more about incentivizing new businesses (attraction and start up) as well as small business development (retention). Keeping the topics distinct will help to put a focus on supporting local business.
- After the group elevated six higher-interest topics for goal development, one person raised the point that the list is all economic business as usual and doesn't reflect on the sense of place elements like our downtown, natural amenities and natural areas that make Missoula special. There was concern over not seeming to protect what we have and why we live here. The six main topics will get additional detail through development of objectives and actions that likely will delve into other characteristics of the community besides jobs. As an example, infrastructure could be viewed to consider culture, sense of place, parks and recreation, and natural amenities.
- In the context of this Focus Group, it is important to focus on economy. An attraction for people in certain jobs is that you can live where the lifestyle is appealing and still make a good living. The assets and amenities of our community will get discussed as components of each of these topics. Also, other groups will be exploring these topics.
- Concerns were raised over the redundancy of many elevated topics, yet there are some other topics that aren't getting explored. Topics could be combined now and then maybe pulled apart once objectives or actions are developed and vice versa (topics are kept separate and then end up being combined as objectives and actions are drafted). Also, the list of topics can be revisited at any time.

The following are clarifying questions and discussion among focus group members regarding some of the goal statements:

- Infrastructure should cover many things besides broadband and including parking.
- A good way to think about making conscious decisions about infrastructure distribution is to support particular land use relationships like the idea of housing development near business development.
- How effective can information and recommendations from the City's growth policy be at the state level? Support, needs and funding ideas from the state should be in this plan. Language in this plan demonstrates community support and has some weight at the state and federal level for suggesting change or directing action.
- State should be investing in research and development. Other states that have industries that are thriving have had their state invest a lot of money in those industries and have programs to support and encourage the industries. We have a lot of assets in bio-science in the state and we barely match the grant funds that are available.
- There are certain fields that can have alternative training. The University and some colleges can't react fast enough to changing needs in certain fields like information technology. There's too much bureaucracy in place with the University system to be able to react in a timely way. Technology skill needs can change very quickly. It's also important to consider training at the high school level so

students are either more prepared for the college training or the work force. Another example of changing skill needs is with health care services.

- It's important to expand the labor pool to direct people to other fields. This can help to keep the services and labor pool in the community. MEP has identified back office as an economic sector to focus on.
- The biggest incentive to business is predictability, efficiency, and quick service for development permitting.
- We should do more to engage the youth in the work force and view them as assets in the community. Engage our millennials in community and economic development.
- Provide a new vision for Missoula's economy. The focus around the State seems to have been on tourism and agriculture but the third leg in the stool should be technology. We need a new emphasis.

Next Steps

At December meeting: select chair and vice chair; review information from Asset Mapping project; review & discuss topics and goals statements from November focus group meeting; report on topics being covered by other focus groups; and move on to developing objectives.

Next Meeting Date: December 17, 2014, 5:15 to 7:15 PM, MonTEC Building Conference Room (1121 East Broadway)

Public Comment on items not on the agenda:

None received